



# Power Positioning Dot Com

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*Internet Marketing Strategies for Turning Your Online Business Into a Powerful Magnet*

*From the author of "The 10 Commandments of Power Positioning"*

By Michel Fortin, "The Success Doctor"  
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# PREFACE

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## What's "Power Positioning" Anyway?

*"Wise men profit more from fools than fools from wise men; for the wise men shun the mistakes of fools, but fools do not imitate the successes of the wise."*  
 — Cato the Elder quoted in Plutarch's "Parallel Lives"

**Power Positioning:** /'pau(-&)r || p&-'zi-sh(&-)ni[ng]/

**n 1:** A skillful blend of the *art of positioning* (i.e., to establish a position in the mind, in relation to the competition or the marketplace, as unique, original, different or superior) and the *science of direct response*. **2:** To empower (to make effective use of) one's position in the marketplace, product category or niche. **3:** A marketing approach defined by the process of both: 1) Increasing perceived value as to attract an abundant quantity of high quality *prospects*, and 2) effectively converting those prospects into profitable, long term, referral-minded *relationships*.

Several years ago I wrote a booklet called "The 10 Commandments of Power Positioning," the predecessor to the one you're currently reading. The story behind this little booklet is quite interesting because, at the time, I never would have imagined how popular it would become. And the reason is that this tiny booklet, which was primarily used for promoting my consulting practice earlier in my career, came to be almost as a fluke.

When I began my career as a professional speaker, I often gave seminars on branding, direct marketing and selling techniques. A small business supply and services store in Ottawa (Canada), called "The Mailroom," specializes in conference room and office equipment rentals (like photocopiers, computers, printers and the like). They happened to be located near one of my clients at the time. Since I love joint ventures, I approached them in order to seek new networking opportunities.

(Later in this book, you'll learn an effective *Power Positioning* technique called "Partnering for Profit," which will guide you in creating networking and referral systems with strategic marketing alliances. But for now, let's return to the story behind this book.)

Together, we decided on conducting weekly onsite workshops. These seminars were a way for both promoting my services and at the same time increasing traffic to the store. It was a strategic partnership of sorts that helped me to get some limited exposure in the Ottawa area, while at the same time building perceived value for The Mailroom and their conference room rentals.

Luckily, The Mailroom marketed my seminars extensively. Press releases were distributed about this new guy in town called “The Success Doctor” offering free seminars on marketing for small businesses. Flyers were placed in each rented mailbox and enclosed with each mailed invoice. Indoor signs and a large outdoor one screamed “Learn How to Magnetize Your Business!” to everyone walking by.

And sure enough, attendance grew.

I gave a lot of handouts in order to give more than what was expected. I wanted to give as much good, actionable information as possible. Having participated in countless seminars, from the likes of Dan Kennedy, Zig Ziglar and Brian Tracy, I know how important it is to give away something of value that can be used after the seminar is over. Meant to be more than keepsakes, these materials provided tools attendees could use in their own businesses to improve their results.

While their primary purpose was not to market my services directly, these materials helped develop an awareness of my consultancy and services among the local business community. I was still quite unknown at the time but I didn’t want to spend a lot in advertising. This was a great opportunity.

Creating the materials was easy. I had previously written many articles and reports on “street-smart” marketing. But I packaged them in the form of a small booklet — a compendium of sorts — that I gave away as handouts. The Mailroom cheerfully photocopied them for free (of course, with their contact information on the cover), keeping in mind that I had no website at the time and limited exposure.

And amazingly, that little conference room, which could only seat around 20 to 25 people, was almost always filled — sometimes with people standing in the back of the room, as there were no more seats available. As seminars grew in size and popularity, I had to increase their frequency to twice a night and then twice a week. Finally, I was delivering three to four seminars a night, three times a week — almost always to a packed room. The response was tremendous.

While I realized that people attending loved handouts, I felt that I needed to offer something extra — a little bonus as a way to reward people for their participation. Since at the time I didn’t have anything of a substantial nature to offer, I promised participants a free book based on the many topics discussed in the seminars. Handouts would thus include a coupon attendees could mail to my office as to receive a free copy. (While giving out free booklets was a novel idea at the time, costs were minimal as The Mailroom took care of my printing needs. It’s the beauty of strategic partnering!)

One of the reasons I used the coupon tactic was to prevent the people who attended from participating for the sole purpose of obtaining free copies of my book. But the *real reason* was the fact that I took a risk since it was a book I had yet to write. It was much like Bill Gates’ famous “vaporware” strategy. (Mr. Gates was infamous for making promises of releasing yet unwritten software, which he would promote even before it was coded.)

Originally, I thought it would have taken some time before any coupons would be mailed to my office. But I was wrong! As surely as shadows follow, book requests started to avalanche into my office after the first week of using the coupon strategy. People were literally begging for the booklet. I was impressed — but anxious nonetheless. So I had no choice but to move quickly. I had to write fast... Real fast.

While I did have this small packaged compilation of articles readily available, it needed to be fattened with more usable information. It also had to be organized in such a way that it would read more like a book, and would be easier to understand and implement. So I placed them under ten different, broad categories and expanded on some of their various parts. I even added multiple real-life examples from my own experiences and my dealings with clients.

And after a sleepless week of furious typing, the result became the 60-page melting pot known today as “The 10 Commandments of Power Positioning.” And since the day the first copy was given out, I have

literally distributed over 100,000 copies of the booklet in both its physical and digital versions. (If you would like a free copy, visit <http://SuccessDoctor.com> and download the electronic version.)

Overall, the response was truly overwhelming. But when I crossed the digital divide and my consultancy became an online business however, I soon realized, often with complete and utter amazement, how well my *Power Positioning* strategies apply so well to the online business — and oftentimes even more so.

First, in order to market my website I applied a technique I've been using successfully in the offline world to the web: Writing articles and submitting them to online publications. The reason? It was cheap (it didn't cost me anything). It also helped me to build my brand, because my articles were promoting the *Success Doctor* — my knowledge and expertise — and not my services in a direct sense. And finding online editors whose publications targeted my market — editors also in need of fresh articles — was a cinch.

In fact, unlike the bricks-and-mortar world the web is replete with starving editors. Quite frankly, however, at the time I didn't know if this would work — but it did. Delighted with the response, I applied other *Power Positioning* techniques... And the results were similar. My website began to generate over 1,000 hits a day without any advertising. It's as if *Power Positioning* was made for the online world!

After some time, I started to do a little research and found something interesting. I discovered that these tactics were also being used by some of the most successful online marketers — whether they actually knew it or not. Even some of the more reputable, big brand ecommerce stores were using these simple yet often ignored strategies (ignored by the masses, that is).

And then, it hit me like a ton of bricks: What if I could preach what I practice?

Let me stop here for a moment. You may be asking at this point, “What's *Power Positioning* anyway? And why does *Power Positioning* work so well online?” To answer that question, let me give you a little background in order to put everything into proper context.

I was born with a physical disability — something my perfectionist father could not accept, which drove him to abuse, to alcoholism and later to mental illness. I was therefore immensely scarred to the point of fearing rejection excessively (it's common among adult children of alcoholics, often referred as “ACOA,” which is a sister organization to Alcoholics Anonymous). But I wanted to overcome this fear.

Then a quote from Henry David Thoreau inspired me. It says, “Do what you fear and the death of that fear is certain.” So I jumped into sales in order to fight my fears directly — there's no better way for submitting oneself to constant rejection than through selling!

I was no overnight success, that's for sure. But years of failure and even several bankruptcies later, my persistence paid off. What I found is that it is far better to position myself in a way to attract good quality clients to me rather than to prospect wastefully and endlessly — and subsequently, to be continuously rejected. That became the key to my success. I went from **prospecting** to **positioning**, and became the top salesperson in Canada for a Fortune 500 company. In fact, I was rarely prospecting!

What marketing experts call “positioning” is the process of placing your firm or product, in the marketplace and particularly in the mind, above your competition or in such a way that pulls prospects to you. But what contributed to my success was not positioning in itself but a set of strategies that, once applied, helped me to gain that favorable position. As a result, clients were pursuing me rather than the other way around.

As a young salesperson, my employers began to ask me to teach other salespeople my techniques. Then companies began to hire me to do the same. Consequently, I packaged my techniques under the banner of *Power Positioning*. The aim was to help businesses become like magnets and attract clients to them — reversing the marketing concept completely.

Later, I discovered that, on the Internet, no one knows you exist. The web is intangible. It lacks physicality and location. It is also user-driven, and therefore marketers have no control over what people see and hear. Consequently, it is pretty difficult to hunt down qualified prospects online. On top of that, many sites get inundated with traffic that will never buy or never be genuinely interested in one's offering. Poorly targeted marketing is commonplace on the web since there is no tangible target at which to aim. Plain old textbook marketing is not enough to succeed in this new electronic marketplace.

Similar to *Power Positioning* in offline sales, an online business must reverse the marketing process too — it must become like a magnet in order to consistently attract an abundant stream of good quality prospects to its door. Nevertheless, the parallel was astounding — so astounding in fact that I have come to believe that *Power Positioning* is an integral part of successful Internet marketing.

Since much of my work up to that point was generic in nature or written in a bricks-and-mortar context, I decided to expand on my strategies by writing articles on how *Power Positioning* could be applied to the web. I later became the chief editor of The Internet Marketing Chronicles “ezine” (a free email newsletter serving over 125,000 subscribers weekly) and used these concepts as a basis for my weekly editorials. It was then that I felt a need to put a more complete, Internet-oriented version together.

Hence, this book became the result.

You may ask, “So why *Power Positioning Dot Com*?” Understand that the Internet is a *direct marketing process* and not just a medium. But not too many people agree with me. In fact, pundits from both branding and direct marketing camps have been slugging it out with each other ever since the web began.

For example, branding experts say the web should be used as a branding tool. Direct marketers say the web should be used as an electronic, direct sales catalogue. Both seem to be diametrically opposed. But in my opinion, however, these two concepts can (and should) be used together — it's a powerful combination.

In general, *Power Positioning* means to empower one's position in the marketplace. Being different than or superior to the competition is one thing, but to consistently maintain that position is a different story. To do so, a brand needs to energize, manage and nurture the relationships it has developed. So *Power Positioning* is the result of skillfully blending the art of positioning and the science of direct response — fundamental marketing processes that represent the two greatest forces in marketing: **Attraction** and **persuasion**.

Online, one can easily translate them into traffic “generation” and “conversion,” of which the lifeblood of any Internet business is comprised. In other words, the purpose of any online marketing effort is, first and foremost, to generate traffic. But it is just as important to convert that traffic into serious, long-term, residual business. In a global economy, and in an increasingly fragmented and competitive marketplace, the lack of focus on these two key areas can become detrimental over time, particularly for the small business or entrepreneur. (And keep in mind that, on the Internet, time is considerably shorter.)

When Jack Trout wrote the very first article on the subject of positioning in 1971, I'm sure he didn't know at the time how his landmark work in the field was going to change the way businesses market today — including the web. As he states in his recent book “The New Positioning,” co-authored with naming consultant Steve Rivkin, “People think that positioning is a new concept — but unlike things like excellence and quality, which appeared quickly on the scene, positioning slowly crept up on us.”

But positioning online is not enough. And contrary to popular opinion, the Internet is more than a mere communications medium. Unlike the TV or radio, where audiences are subjected to the whim of broadcasters and their advertisers, the Internet is completely user-driven, customizable, dynamic and interactive. Thus, the web is also a direct response tool. In fact, direct marketing is not only possible online but also an intrinsic, underlying element of its very existence.

*The Internet is what I call “directional” marketing — a means of directing people to specific outcomes.*

For example, like a salesperson trying to obtain an immediate, favorable response to her proposition, direct marketing is in the same way an attempt to lead the visitor to some sort of outcome — be it to click, buy, join, call, email or whatever. “Direct” also means to *direct visitors* and not just to market to them directly. That’s why I call it “directional marketing” rather than “direct marketing.”

Unfortunately, many online businesses are still ignoring this extraordinary opportunity they have to grow through directional marketing. Many of them suffer from what is commonly referred to as the “build-it-and-they-will-come” syndrome. Their websites are mere silent billboards erected with the single hope that presence alone will generate revenue. (You’ve probably heard it before. You may even be guilty of this.)

More often than not, many online businesses still market their offerings in very basic, institutional and likely repetitive ways that are commonly used in their industries or to which they are accustomed. For example, they rely solely on search engines and branding-oriented banners. I believe, however, that many business owners largely misinterpret direct marketing and, consequently, avoid it for many reasons.

One of them is the risk that’s involved. Many shady characters have used pressure and misleading tactics to sell their wares. Business owners know that all too well. And they also know that, especially with the help of the Internet, people today are more informed than ever before. Online shoppers are more discriminate and sophisticated — capable of comparing and refusing offers at the mere click of a mouse.

As a result, most online businesses place direct marketing on the backburner. But that’s not the only reason. Institutional, branding-oriented or image-based marketing is also terribly attractive to the ego. (We all want to see our names in lights, don’t we?) And many businesses, particularly smaller ones, love branding since they have a natural tendency to be — or at least to want to look — like the “big guns.”

While larger corporations have the necessary budget to burn in such high-risk techniques, small businesses don’t. The success (if any) of purely institutional marketing requires time, repetition and money. And it is also the reason why the media tell their advertisers, when inquiring as to why their ads were not successful, that it takes repetition for an ad to work. While it is an easy and profitable excuse (profitable to the medium and not the advertiser, no doubt), it is true nonetheless.

Repetition is necessary in these cases — and therein is the problem. Who has thousands of dollars to test their advertising? And while some companies do, institutional advertising may still not be successful in the end. Therefore, branding alone is very risky. On top of that, it is incredibly difficult to track, manage and measure. I wholeheartedly agree that entrepreneurs and advertisers are risk-takers. But they usually take calculated risks, which is far from being the case here.

I believe that the real problem in most unsuccessful marketing has nothing to do with *how* you market, which makes successful marketing so elusive in the first place, but with *what* and to *whom* you market. While branding should never be a goal in itself, it should be the natural byproduct of an effectively implemented and intelligently executed direct marketing strategy. By blending positioning with direct response, it can help to multiply an online business’ awareness, traffic and sales.

Of course, positioning a company, product or even a website does in some way use a branding-oriented, image-related approach. But as you will soon find out by reading this book, it goes beyond that. This is why I call it *Power Positioning*, for it is more than just positioning. You need not only get prospects’ attention but also bring good, higher quality prospects to your site — and subsequently, to successful and profitable outcomes.

So there you have it.

Before we begin, there’s one more thing: I’m not declaring to have all the answers. I don’t have a degree from Harvard, a fancy title from some corporate army or an extensive marketing background. I was, still am and will continue to be, like you, a marketer. I’m on the frontlines, day after day, in the unforgiving

battlefield of the online marketplace trying to make a buck in order to survive. In short, I'm no different than most marketers out there.

However, the strategies that I teach come from an incredibly colorful background. I worked in many different industries in my life: I was a purchasing manager, a salesperson, an office clerk, an accounting clerk, a waiter, a consultant, an executive, an advertising agent, a cook, a college professor, an electronics dealer, a musician, a temporary help agent, an insurance agent and much, much more. In essence, I worked in or with over two hundred completely different and totally unrelated industries.

With an intense love for learning, I became a virtual sponge, soaking as much information as I possibly can along the way. In each industry I've had the wonderful opportunity to work, I learned a little bit about what the industry is, how it works and how it markets itself — both poorly and successfully.

And what I learned is this: What makes one company tick is no different than what makes any other company tick — it is only applied in a different way. Consequently, the ideas, techniques and concepts explained in this book are borne of experience — from the constant application of these techniques in many of the companies for which I worked or with which I was associated.

Thus, I sincerely believe that these techniques are applicable to your company, your website and your online marketing strategy too. I personally don't like puffery or techniques that just "sound good." (Believe me, I've heard my share in my life.) And I'm sure that, for you, it's the same thing. So I prefer to teach what I have done to succeed, or what I've learned from what others have done to succeed, and not just what *I think* is the way to succeed.

Nevertheless, it is for those reasons that I believe this book can become a valuable asset to you, and it is my hope that you not only recognize its value but also profit from it as I have. It is also my hope that this book becomes a useful tool in growing your business, and that it is not examined for its writing style or for the purposes of gender equality.

Moreover, this book contains many examples in order to show you how *Power Positioning* can be applied in various situations; some are true, others are fictionalized. However, I have changed many of the names in order to respect and protect the confidentiality of my clients.

In the end, realize that business is not an exact science. It is subjected to a diverse number of variables, such as the country and industry in which one operates. Therefore, keep in mind that your results may vary from those depicted in this book. No results are guaranteed in any way.

Finally, I am a businessperson like you and not a lawyer or accountant by any means. The advice contained in this manual is strictly for educational purposes and should not be regarded as professional advice, legal or otherwise. If you wish to apply the tips contained in this manual, you are taking full responsibility for your actions. I encourage you to seek the counsel of a competent professional, if and when applicable. As with all information you encounter, your own judgment is required and expected.

I sincerely hope that the strategies included in this book will help you in your endeavors as they have in mine. Enjoy and thank you for your confidence!

Regards,



Michel Fortin  
The "Success Doctor"

# CHAPTER ONE

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## Stop Promoting... Start Positioning!

*“Business has only two basic functions — marketing and innovation. [...] Don’t try to innovate for the future. Innovate for the present!”*

— Peter F. Drucker

**Positioning.** What does this word mean to you? Do you associate it with large companies with million-dollar marketing budgets? Do you tend to look at it as some highly technical marketing approach? Do you think that such a process requires a great deal of creativity? Expertise? Specialized knowledge?

Up until recently, your assumptions would have not been too far off the mark. While the term has been around for a few decades, positioning has resurged lately and is often talked about among marketing circles. It’s the latest buzzword, even though Jack Trout first coined the term a quarter of a century ago. It’s quite a controversial subject that has too many connotations to number. But in my estimation it is more powerful than to what many care to admit, especially for an online business.

However, while large multinational chains and corporations all over the world have successfully used positioning, more and more individuals and small businesses are slowly recognizing positioning as a viable (and profitable) marketing approach.

Yet positioning a product or a company is not entirely found in its actual marketing process. It includes every single aspect of a business’ operations. This includes direct marketing, staff relations and even order fulfillment. For example, many tend to ignore the fact that simple customer service, including complaint management, is also a fundamental marketing system.

*Power Positioning* illustrates this vast extent. And it is for this reason that this book includes a set of ideas and strategies that go beyond advertising, promotion and even positioning itself. However, as you read this book you will notice that most of the topics deal with, or are built on, not one but four major, foundational concepts. They are the “The Four Power Positioning Pillars.”

## The Four Pillars of Power Positioning



Focus



Target



Multiply



Direct

### ***Pillar Number One — Focus***

The first pillar deals with the essentials of positioning an online business, its products or services, and its people. But more important, it's to increase their perceived value by focusing on a niche or a core audience. Positioning, in its simplest definition, is the process of placing a company, website or product above the competition in the mind. It involves many aspects, from names and offers, to benefits and customer service.

But to focus is to laser-target specific areas, be it in your branding or promotional efforts, that will generate the highest and most profitable perceived value in all aspects of your business — marketing being only one of them. This process includes finding one's unique selling proposition (or "USP"). Defining that aspect is difficult. Often, it may require manufacturing one in order to gain a favorable position.

You may have heard of the term "USP" before. But in terms of *Power Positioning* however, it goes way beyond that. Simply, generating a USP is to find or even manufacture one's most marketable, competitive edge, and transforming that edge into a viable, compelling, memorable, irresistible and impacting message. Also, it includes psychologically projecting an aura of superiority, exclusivity and credibility, and doing so without stating it outright. The more it is implied (and not stated), the stronger the position will be.

Promoting through positioning — in other words, promoting in ways that help to position a company or product as superior in the mind — is far more important than simply promoting the fact that a company merely exists. Unfortunately, "open for business" marketing is the way most companies promote these days. Instead, the goal should be to go from being "in business" to being "the business of choice." It may be a complete shift for some but it's one that can literally multiply one's marketing results.

### ***Pillar Number Two — Target***

The popular misconception is that traffic leads to success. The more traffic you get, the more sales you will generate. While that is true to an extent, and like blindly prospecting for clients in the offline world, generating unqualified, untargeted traffic that will never buy is wasteful and utterly silly. No matter how much traffic a site generates, if it doesn't lead to sales then what's the point of increasing it? Promotion alone is not enough.

Since cyberspace lacks physicality and tangibility, an online business remains unknown until it actually does something to get others to realize and recognize that it does exist. And for the same reasons, finding prospects that are genuinely interested in and qualified for a website's offering can be quite a challenge. Target marketing therefore, as explained in this book, goes beyond simply segmenting, finding, appealing to and advertising to your market.

*Power Positioning* helps to define a product's perfect customer profile and all of its related areas, qualities, activities and characteristics — and even complementary and unrelated areas — that can help a business to precisely pinpoint where good, qualified prospects happen to be or congregate online. It can also help to predetermine how they will react to its marketing message.

Ultimately, the goal is to focus on specific areas and audiences that will generate a steady stream of quality traffic — traffic that will buy (or refer others), and do so again and again. Along with the other pillars, focused, targeted marketing can multiply one's marketing punch, increase the mileage of any promotional activity and give a bigger bang for one's marketing dollar.

### ***Pillar Number Three — Multiply***

In the bricks-and-mortar world, a strategy called “propagation marketing” helps to leverage a firm's marketing efforts by persuading and enabling others to market for them — such as by creating networking systems with strategic marketing alliances. Joint venturing, cross promotions and reciprocal marketing are some of the many successful multiplication strategies that exist.

But the third pillar is a concept that seems to be innate to the web. For one, the web has popularized the affiliate program, giving anyone with an Internet connection the ability to market a company and expand its reach. For another, since computers make it easy to copy and download files, a company can proliferate on the web astonishingly fast and at virtually no cost. When done well, one's marketing can spread rapidly online and appear as if it has taken a life of its own, like a virus — hence the term “viral marketing.”

Viral marketing is not a new concept. You've probably heard of it or even used it before. But *Power Positioning* can help a business proliferate on the web while at the same time provide the other three pillars additional leverage, value and momentum — such as by using viral marketing in order to establish a solid position in the marketplace quickly, and producing results that are effortless, trackable and measurable.

For example and as you will learn later in this book, being the first is crucial for establishing an unshakable position — Jack Trout and Al Ries call this the “Law of Leadership.” But owning a solid and unshakable position in the marketplace is not to be the first but to be the *first in the mind*. Therefore, by multiplying one's marketing one can achieve this more effectively and efficiently.

### ***The Fourth Pillar — Direct***

Merely being online is never enough. One will never be able to grow one's business to the level to which it could be if one fails to use the many underutilized tools and opportunities at one's disposal. Selling is only one of them. However, unlike a store where one can visually and physically appreciate what one is buying, the web can make the selling process quite challenging.

The problem, though, is the fact that most online business owners tend to look at selling as a transactional process only. Selling is indeed a process but not a single event. From copywriting and advertising, to building credibility and relationship marketing, selling effectively in the online world relies on many factors and processes. For example, one of them is to use better, more audience-focused words. Another is to personalize and to become more interactive with visitors. And the list goes on.

In this day and age where communication channels like the web are automating the business and transactional processes, people are yearning for a more human approach in the decision-making approach. And in the midst of fierce competition, capturing people's attention and then developing long-term relationships with them will become more difficult over time. These days, more and more people frown upon puffery and aggressive sales tactics. The web is certainly not immune to this practice.

So the sales process must go beyond the transaction and foster credibility, trust and believability. Permission (or “opt-in” email) marketing, direct marketing and relationship marketing all boil down to the process of leading visitors to some sort of positive outcome. And that outcome must also help position the

company as well. Above all, through *Power Positioning* the goal of any Internet business should be to convert a higher ratio of website visitors into happy, loyal, long-term, referral-minded customers.

## The Driving Forces Behind Power Positioning

Nevertheless, I truly believe that ideas based on these four concepts are powerfully effective because they have made tons of profitable business for many entrepreneurs. They have for me. But whether you want as little as some business to keep you busy or as great as a parade of clients to beat a path to your door, these strategies will certainly help you either way.

I admit that it's not always an easy task. Several of these techniques do require some work on your part. In other words, many of them are general (or generic) in nature, and will require some time and creative effort for their application to your specific situation. While many of them are practical and some real-world examples are included in order to help you, some are meant to only guide you in building your own unique style and thus create the level of business you seek.

But before we begin, and in order to help you appreciate how these techniques can and should be applied to your situation, the first thing you will need to understand is the concept that underlies this book. In other words, let's take a closer look at why *Power Positioning* exists and why it has become necessary.

In today's society we have experienced two major shifts that have revolutionized and almost completely changed the entire business landscape. They are: 1) Competition and 2) information. The first and most important one of these is *competition*. The fact that business is becoming increasingly hypercompetitive is truly an understatement. Large corporations aside, small to medium-sized businesses, home-based businesses and self-employed professionals are growing at an explosive rate.

Undeniably, the Internet has certainly been a catalyst in this process. It offers anyone with mouse-in-hand and a will to make a living enjoy the freedom — and fruits — of being in business. But while this appears to be a recent trend, remember that it was the way things used to be up until the turn of the last century. Back then, tradespeople, farmers and shopkeepers formed the basis of our earlier, capitalistic society. Everyone was in business. There was no such thing as a “job.”

However, when the industrial revolution took place following the agrarian age, people then started to leave their rural farms, shops or villages in search for full-time, permanent, secure, pension-oriented jobs in the heart of urban America. Fortunately though, entrepreneurialism seems to be a returning trend and the Internet has certainly fueled its resurgence. Yet as the web globalizes the business world in more ways than expanding markets and opportunities, competition too has multiplied exponentially as a result.

*The more businesses get started, the greater the competition becomes.*

Moreover, in the brick-and-mortar world a company may have to deal with the diversion a neighboring competitor may create. But once online however, millions of competitors have instantaneously become neighbors. There are no boundaries on the web. Additionally, the deadliest of competitors is often not another competing company but the online client who can compare-shop at the single click of a mouse — as well as other companies whose sole purpose is to enable that process.

There's no longer a need to walk from one store to another in order to compare product prices, quality and terms. Some Internet business models enable that experience at the simple click of a mouse. Even the mere existence of the web, which grants the online consumer the ability to retrieve information in nanosecond speed, creates a whole new monster with which online businesses must contend.

Speaking of retrieving information fast, this is the second significant shift we have experienced. The “information age,” the “knowledge-based economy” and the “information revolution” are buzzwords with

which we are quite familiar these days. However, the fact is that this shift is not caused by information itself but, more specifically, *access* to information.

Information has always been available to some extent. But the Internet enables the consumer to access and retrieve all kinds of information in a matter of seconds. No longer is there a need to wait for a catalogue to arrive in the mail. That may seem to be a cost benefit or a marketing one from the business standpoint, but it is also a drawback as businesses are now subjected to a far more educated and sophisticated consumer.

Another example is that the ability to retrieve information in almost nanosecond speed has caused entire layers of middle managers to be wiped out from huge corporations. Greater and faster access to information has been instrumental in the massive restructuring of many of today's large corporations — giving birth to those worn-out expressions we seem to hear, like corporate “reengineering,” “downsizing,” “resizing,” ad nauseum. Incidentally, laid off employees have as a result packed their “bags” to become their own companies, ultimately fueling the first shift mentioned earlier — and a *vicious cycle* emerges.

People have the ability to not only retrieve all kinds of information about anything but also do so at the simple touch of a keypad. Consequently, today they are more informed than ever before. Needless to say, the “severely under-hyped Internet” (a phrase once used by Marc Andreessen, co-founder of Netscape and makers of the popular web browser) is skyrocketing in population with every single second. NUA Surveys (at <http://www.nua.ie/>), in September of 2000, found that there are 378 million people on the Internet.

Thus, access to information as fast and as vast as the worldwide web, together with employers facing more and more disgruntled employees in today's highly litigious and constantly fluctuating working atmosphere, are contributing factors to these extensive changes. Combined, these shifts literally force upon us the task of looking at marketing from an entirely different perspective. Being “in business” is no longer enough.

Enter “Power Positioning.”

## The New Perception

So what does all this mean? It means that, for a person or business to be able to be — and remain — in business, the marketing process must be such that it places that business at the top of a prospect's mind at all times. In essence, it is not so much to look for more business but to be the business *of choice* (and thus attract it). Online, this philosophy is far from being hyperbole, for these two major shifts, which can either successfully multiply or seriously erode any business, is severely intensified by the existence of the web.

For every category of business that exists out there, there are thousands of competitors fighting for the same market (as well as that market's very limited attention). To illustrate, take search engine results, which used to be lean and mean in the early days of the worldwide web. Today, they are packed with websites that are, more often than not, irrelevant, misleading or inappropriate to a person's specific need or investigation — slowly defeating the purpose of search engines in the first place, both as a search tool and as a viable traffic-generating tool for businesses.

According to some studies, the Internet is filled with over thirty million webpages if not more. (In fact, search engine Google has recently reported to index well over 560 million websites.) It's no wonder people are becoming more and more disenchanted with online marketing. Additionally, since the information revolution has helped to educate people on what's available, prospecting for and persuading others in order to have them buy into an idea is not as effective as it used to be.

Let's face it: Today, businesses are not the only ones gathering marketing intelligence. Consumers are more sophisticated as well. As a result, using traditional, broad and oftentimes overbearing online sales and marketing techniques, in a supercompetitive society, not only may be ineffective but also can backfire.

The better alternative therefore is to become like a powerful magnet, a compelling force that consistently attracts prospects and customers to your online business — customers of a higher quality too — rather than the other way around. It is to attract pre-qualified prospects so that, once identified and isolated, there is virtually very little to no selling required. As direct marketing expert Dan Kennedy once wrote, in his book “No B.S. Sales Success.” “Prospecting is **OUT**. Positioning is **IN**.”

On the Internet, I realized how well Dan’s philosophy is even more important, as blindly prospecting on the web takes more money, more effort and more time to achieve the same level of results it used to produce in the offline world. And to say that the Internet simplifies one’s marketing only muddies the waters.

Ultimately, the goal is to be the one from whom people choose to buy or with whom to do business, among *all other choices* — and for them to do so in an instant. Therefore, positioning is such that, when a prospect needs a particular product or service, your firm or website comes to their minds instantaneously... Without any question or doubt. In other words, it is a process by which a psychological anchor has been placed in the mind so that consumers come to choose one specific product or company over another instantly.

Finally, it is only fair to note at this point that Al Ries and Jack Trout, the contemporary fathers of the positioning concept, probably never realized how much they were ahead of their time when they wrote their first book, “Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind.” Their landmark work, which offers extraordinary insights into the way the mind works, has literally changed the way marketers advertise. The book was written in an age when “www” didn’t even exist. What’s interesting though is that, twenty years later, the Internet doesn’t really change things... *It only amplifies them.*

# CHAPTER TWO

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## Hooked on Mnemonics

*“Marketing is not a battle of products but of perceptions.”*  
— Jack Trout and Al Ries

Top-of-mind awareness is the result of a thought, such as a name or a process, that remains in one’s consciousness at all times. A term originally coined by Ellis Verdi, the once president of the National Retail Advertisers Council, top-of-mind awareness can be achieved through marketing a business in a way that it remains firmly fixed in the uppermost consciousness of one’s marketplace.

In terms of *Power Positioning* though, top-of-mind awareness goes a little further. A business should not only be the first to come to mind but also be perceived as being superior instead of just being available. On the Internet, this is an important element since people no longer have the time to search for specific websites, and competition for their attention is fierce. Perceived superiority is as essential as oxygen.

Generally, people would far rather go to a site that: 1) Pops into their minds the moment they have a need and 2) do so without having to resort to an inconvenient search — such as peering into thousands of links to no avail. Think of it: How many times have you tried to access a certain website by guessing and typing a web address into a browser without having to resort to any search engines? If you’re anything like me, you do it quite often.

In my marketing and information technology classes at the college where I teach part-time, I often ask this question of my students and the answer is always a resounding “yes.” Sure, the search engines are too becoming more sophisticated and relevant, and they will always have a place in online marketing. But the fact remains: In today’s “microwave-fax-email” world, people want things fast. And the search engine is often a tool of last resort in many cases.

In addition, if your online promotional efforts up to now have been to simply generate sales, you are solely (and wrongfully) seeking cash instead of cashflow. Usually, you accomplish this by offering price reductions and sales promotions. On the other end of the spectrum however, if you’re a big believer in branding you are merely advertising the existence of your site, business or product, with the notion of continually conveying messages that only give people warm, fuzzy feelings about you.

While both are good approaches in and of themselves to a certain extent, there are better ways of accomplishing the same results based on these philosophies. Individually however, they offer only one of three things: 1) A short-term boost in business but without achieving any substantial, long-term results, 2) long-term results but at a significant expense of time and money, or 3) absolutely no results at all, be it short- or long-term.

For example, price-based promotional efforts may bring in some business and for others it may even bring in a lot of business in a very short amount of time, which is why it is so addictive. As Ellis Verdi once said during a keynote speech he made at a recent NRAC conference, “Discounting is like a drug.” This is indeed a great analogy since, as the short-term effect wears off, the company will soon find itself with the need to discount further in order to stay in business — like an unshakable drug habit.

Similarly, branding is like a drug too. It is terribly flattering to the ego because many business owners love to see their names in the spotlight or to instill warm, fuzzy feelings about their company in the marketplace. “Looking good” becomes a priority over “making money.” And what I call “blind branding” is costly, unpredictable and difficult to manage. Consequently, the bottom-line can often be easily ignored when businesses are entranced with that psychological high most branding practices provide. In short, branding alone can be costly, even deadly.

Ask this question, “Do I want to look good or do I want to be profitable?”

Let’s not forget marketing activities too. Here’s a case in point: I often — and often passionately — teach about the negative effects of unwanted, unsolicited commercial email (or “spam”). Unquestionably, spam is profitable in the short-term as well — which is why it is so overused. But like so many marketers on the web these days, spammers think about cash instead of cashflow. *There is a huge difference.*

Spam will generate sales because a shrinking minority of people will respond favorably to it, giving a short, temporary boost to any online business. However, like a drug the effect usually never lasts and the need to keep spamming will emerge sooner or later. And similarly, the hangover can be quite painful — with ISPs deactivating, flames abounding and authorities looming.

## Perceived Truth is Greater

So if you want to create a constant flow of business let alone cash, you must therefore start thinking in terms of creating an awareness of your business, website or product so that clients find and then choose you instantaneously above all other choices, especially when the need presents itself — the latter is the key.

The mere knowledge of your company or product should inherently create an interest in and a need for them, and it should also place your website at the forefront in the mind — you will be recognized as the superior choice in your industry or category. There is a tremendous difference between claiming superiority and being known as superior. Claims often tend to be less credible due to their biased, self-interested, “one-way” nature. Promotional messages can often negate the awareness-creation process. If any awareness were created at all, it will only be short-lived.

So it is more important to create awareness of your online business and, at the same time, instill a sense of credibility, trust and superiority in the minds of your target market.

A few years ago, a mentor in the speaking business once told me, “Perceived truth is more powerful than truth itself.” I live by that notion because one of the most powerful and at the same time most destructible of all human characteristics is *perception*. The way people perceive your product, company or website can either make you or break you — and do so very easily.

Why is that? They say that you shouldn’t judge a book by its cover. But unfortunately, if that saying exists it is because we as human beings have the naturally inclination to do so. It’s pure and simple — that’s just the way things are. But many business owners tend to fight that notion with strong reverence and passion — and then wonder why they are not selling well. Just like a salesperson friend of mine, who donned long hair, once said, “They’ll come to like me once they get to know me.”

But perception is a barrier that exists between people, and between people and things — even businesses and products, for that matter. As Dan Kennedy once experienced, a bank manager turned his company

down on the basis of first impressions. “But I am the president,” exclaimed Dan. “You can’t be the president of a company,” said the bank manager, “you’re not wearing a tie!”

Silly as it may seem, the same process exists with websites. The design, appearance, layout and even domain name of your website can create harmful, negative perceptions about your business. We will delve with this issue a little further. But for now, keep in mind that perception is powerful — more powerful than you think, especially online. *So beware or be aware.* It could be hurting your business or impeding its growth. And if so, you simply cannot ignore it.

Nevertheless, you can choose to fight all your life trying to have people see things your way, or you can harness the power of perception and run with it — it’s your call. As a mentor once said to me, “Do you want to be right or do you want to be rich?” He also said to me, “Everything counts, even little things.” The little things — e.g., your color scheme, text, design, grammar, usability and words, even your approach — can become pivotal elements in the way people perceive you and choose to buy from you.

Remember that marketing is a battle for the mind and not for the wallet. While the wallet can only be won over once if ever, that person’s mind is the gate that opens the door to a continuous stream of sales. And that’s repeat and referral sales too. If you can market your company in superior and more impacting ways, you will create continuous cashflow for your business and not just short-term cash.

So let’s stop here. I think you have a pretty good understanding of the *Power Positioning* concept and how important it is to your online business. From now on, let’s discuss how you can apply it specifically in and to your online business.

## Rhymes Move Minds

Online your message has to be effective enough to communicate and create top-of-mind awareness within an extremely short amount of time. With people clicking in and out of sites at lightning speed, your message must therefore “stick” firmly in the mind of the marketplace, and it must do so quickly if not instantly. Uniqueness, clarity and pithiness are exceedingly important online.

While uniqueness is an important factor, there are other elements that can help the anchoring process. To make a company or product name truly memorable it should first be suggestive. In other words, it must convey its main feature or benefit. For example, if I give you the words “Kwik Kopy,” you will naturally think of a company offering quick copies. If I told you “Die Hard,” you will think of an engine (or a battery) that dies hard. If I told you “Band-Aid,” you will think of a bandage that comes to your aid.

But with the words “Kwik Kopy” specifically, another technique is being used: *Mnemonics*.

A mnemonic is a sound, symbol, picture or device that aids the process of recall. Repetition is one of them. It adds mnemonic value by giving words somewhat of a singsong quality. It is easier to remember similar sounds than it is to memorize different ones. The brain prefers repetition. In fact, think of phone numbers: The ones you probably remember the most are those with two or more of the same number within it. It is Mark Twain who once said, “Numbers don’t stick in the mind; pictures do.”

Since the invention of the printing press, memorization became less important — the written word has made it easy for us to remember things. However, beyond the written word some of the things that seem to be indelibly etched in our minds are the nursery rhymes we were told as children. Popular hit songs played over and over again on the radio are often impossible to forget. And in today’s memory management courses, students are often told to use rhymes and word associations to help recall. Why is that?

Simply put, the brain hates complexity. Similar sounding words can thus help a word’s pronunciation, making it easier for the brain to digest and remember. Therefore, domain names with repetitious sounds, such as <http://www.nobrainersblinds.com/>, <http://www.sitesell.com/> and <http://www.hotbot.com/> have that

pleasing, singsong quality to them. But on top of that, rhymes have an additional benefit: According to research, rhyming also tends to increase perceived value, credibility and believability.

It does so because it is pleasing to the ear and easier for the brain to accept. This pleasing effect, at some unconscious level, tends to instill a greater sense of truth due to its linguistic beauty. Dr. Matthew McGlone, a psychologist, researcher and professor at Lafayette College, according to a study he conducted in 1997, found that people surveyed prefer sayings like “woes unite foes” to “woes unite enemies” or “misfortunes unite foes.”<sup>1</sup>

He says that the singsong quality of a rhyme, being a pleasing thing, “can confer a greater sense of truth.” In fact, he calls this the “Keats Heuristic.” (Keats, if you recall, is a poet and the author of “Ode to a Grecian Urn.”) It is the natural tendency people have in attributing rhyme as reason, oftentimes speciously.

But rhymes aside, earlier research conducted by Drs. Hasher, Goldstein and Toppino (1977), and later by Drs. Begg and Armour (1991), have demonstrated that, “Repetition of a questionable statement [“questionable,” meaning either a false statement or one that can not be confirmed] in an experimental context can produce a systematic increase in people’s confidence in the accuracy of the statement.” In other words, with repetition such statements are more likely to be perceived as accurate.

In short, rhymes increase *perceived value*.

## It’s Worth Repeating

However, end rhymes are not alone. Repeating consonants or syllables (often called head rhymes or alliteration) can also provide mnemonic value. For example, “Saran-Wrap,” “Coca-Cola,” “Willy Wonka,” “GI Joe,” “Barbie,” “Hamburger Helper,” “Crispy Crunch” and “Blockbuster” are definitely easier to remember. Did you happen to “See the Softer Side of Sears”?

But more significant however is the fact that strong or “choppy” sounding consonants, particularly at the beginning of words, help to increase recall by adding emphasis (or a verbal “stop”). For example, they are words that start with “D,” “B,” “P,” “K” (or “C,” if it sounds like “K”) and “T.” These mnemonics are called “plosives.” And according to naming consultant Steve Rivkin, “Brand names beginning with plosives have higher recall scores than non-plosive names.” He adds, “Bottom-line, it makes linguistic sense to start a brand name with a strong-sounding consonant or a plosive.”<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, while some names use multiple words in order to rhyme, such as “Blinds of All Kinds,” “Ronald McDonald,” “Prime Time,” “Snack Shack” or “Fun in The Sun,” generally most names consist of a single word. In these cases, single-worded names can also rhyme within themselves, such as “Chumbawamba,” “Toyota” or “Rodeo.” For instance, the word “Amazon.com” has the “a” sound repeated twice, as well as the “ah” sound, as in “zon” and “com.”

If this were not possible, the job would then be conferred unto the tagline. For example, if I said “It takes a licking but keeps on ticking,” you will probably know about which product I’m talking. (Of course, it’s the Timex watch.) This is called a “tagline.” But if the tagline rhymes with the name with which it is associated, such as “Uh, Oh! Better Get Maaco” or “When You Need an Edge, Use Pledge,” the name will stick even more effectively as a result. Even repeating the name itself within a tagline can increase its

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lafayette.edu/mcglonem/rhyme.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.namingnewsletter.com/Plosives.html>

recall, such as Dr. Ken Evoy's popular "Site Sell" website, with the tagline "The Definitive Work on Making any Web Site Sell."<sup>3</sup>

Ultimately, keep in mind that, the easier your name is to pronounce, the easier it will be to remember. And consequently, the easier it is to remember, the easier it will be for your prospects to find, believe in and buy from you. This is especially important with the Internet, as it is loaded with websites and businesses. (We will return to and explore this issue, in the realm of domain names specifically, in chapter 3.)

### ***Be the First, not the Best***

Probably the greatest mnemonic devices there could ever be are those that result from being the first in some particular category. Being the first solidifies your position in the marketplace and eradicates the competition — because, simply stated, the more unique you are the less competition you will have. Therefore, developing a solid USP has more advantages than that to which most people would give credence.

Often, many businesses build their entire marketing strategy around a particular brand and its "better" qualities. Claiming superiority smacks of being untrue and is often very risky. If you claim that you're the best, your statement will be suspect. A mentor once told me, "Implication is more powerful than specification." It is much more effective to imply superiority — to be perceived as being a superior company or one with a superior product — than to simply being (or claiming that one is) superior.

If you're the first in some category, you will likely be considered as the best. People have the natural tendency to attribute superiority to a product that's first in its category — and to gravitate towards the leader of any given category more than any other. Illogical? Maybe. But it's human nature. Having worked with cosmetic surgeons, I've personally experienced this undeniable truth. A particular hair transplant doctor I know is one of the first surgeons of this type. While superiority in this field is a matter of artistic ability and modernized technology, he is still widely recognized as the best surgeon there is — even if he still uses outdated techniques.

So rather than the best, be the first. If you're not the first, you can usually invent your own position by creating it from scratch. This is where developing a solid USP comes in. By being the first in your very own unique category makes it tremendously difficult for competitors to copy you. But even when they do (which eventually they will), their marketing efforts will only help to remind people of you.

However, here's a caveat. If being the first is important, then why do companies like Microsoft, which rarely creates new product categories but rather copies them from others, are reputed as the leaders? The reason is that being the first in the marketplace is not as important as being the first *in the mind* of the marketplace. Microsoft is a master at doing just that. A new product from MS is not really new by any means. But they intelligently deploy their products quickly, at a mass-market level, which creates a leadership position. By being first in the mind, they often become first in the marketplace as well.

Jack Trout and Al Ries, in their brilliant book "The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing," call this "The Law of Leadership." It states that no two bodies can occupy the same space. If you get to a position first in the mind, nobody else can ever take your place. It becomes engrained in the human psyche. Hence, being the first in the mind virtually guarantees your position.

You don't have to be the first with a product or service. You only have to be the first in the consumer's mind. By owning the leading position in the mind people will automatically assume that you're the best. Why? It's because uniqueness separates you from the rest rather than compares you to them. It's immensely more effective than actually being the best. Being unique makes you superior by default.

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<sup>3</sup> For more on Ken's book, visit <http://SuccessDoctor.com/SiteSell/>

In a recent article by Mark Joyner, CEO of <http://www.aesop.com/>, entitled “The Death of Positioning,”<sup>4</sup> he asked, “What are the things you remember the most?” More than likely, you will remember your first kiss, your first dance, your first love, your first car, your first day of school, your first job and your first heartbreak. Can you remember your second kiss let alone your fourth one? In all likelihood, you don’t.

*When it comes to marketing, the same holds true.*

You can be the first to cater to a specific market, the first to offer an alternative to an existing product or service, or the first to cater to a market in a unique way — such as by offering an ordinary product or service but with a unique twist. You can also customize a general product or service for a specific market. For example, you might be a travel agency. You could decide on being the first to sell business trips catering exclusively to financial institutions. You may even become the first travel agency to cater to the “busy financier.” In short, by being the first in the mind in some way, you *stick* in it as well.

Again, manufacturing your position, your USP in other words, is probably the single most important marketing endeavor you will take. What makes you special, unique, better, superior, original, different? Or what can you make special, unique, better, superior, original, different? It’s worth considering.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.iofficedaily.com/archive/00june15.htm>

## CHAPTER THREE

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### Sticks and Stones May Break my Bones

*“If you want to win friends, make it a point to remember them. If you remember my name, you pay me a subtle compliment; you indicate that I have made an impression on you. Remember my name and you add to my feeling of importance.”*

— Dale Carnegie (1888-1955)

This is probably the most important tip in this book — and for good reason. In today’s hypercompetitive, overcommunicated society, we live in a world that is immersed in an ocean of *sameness*. People are constantly inundated with marketing messages every single day. For instance, according to Jack Trout in his book “The New Positioning,” today’s teenager living in the United Kingdom will have experienced well over 140,000 commercials by the time he or she reaches the still young age of eighteen.

The problem doesn’t stop there, however. The lack of effective communication in today’s marketing messages makes things worse. The majority of the information with which we are bombarded these days consists of raw, unstructured or unqualified data. Often, there’s too much information or there’s too much information that doesn’t make any sense. Additionally, in our increasingly fast-paced society people are simply too busy to shop around for the best product from the best company at the best price.

And thirdly, with the sheer fact that there is far too much competition out there, if one copies another company let alone another company’s promotional efforts it only serves as a reminder of that which is being copied — which, in this case, is the competition. Therefore, all of these factors together force marketing communications to be far more productive and efficient. One needs to communicate as effectively and as efficiently as possible to one’s audience. And they must do so more than ever before.

Why? On the Internet, this need is severely intensified. People not only have no more time to shop around for the best product from the best company at the best price, but also they no longer have the time to do so in an ocean of information as vast — and one that communicates it as fast — as the worldwide web.

Therefore, *Power Positioning* requires, as its first and most important ingredient, an irresistibly compelling message that communicates your truly unique advantage — your most marketable, salable and tangible competitive edge: Your position! But it must also do so as quickly and as pithily as possible. Everything on the web is shorter — e.g., product and sales lifecycles, times-to-market, customer experiences, and, of course, attention spans. So your message needs to be communicated in a way that causes it to become indelibly etched in the marketplace’s consciousness exceedingly fast. How does one accomplish this?

## Find Your Edge, to Edge Competitors Out

As stated in the previous chapter, people must know that you are superior and not just told that you are. And the most effective way of doing this is by creating a totally unique position. In other words, people must learn, understand and remember that you are superior *in an instant*. And you must communicate that message so that it does all of those things within a matter of seconds.

So here's what you do: Find out what makes you unique, special or original. In essence, find your USP. What makes your firm, your website, your product or your offering better? Avoid generalities, such as "quality," "speed," "cost-effectiveness," etc. Be as specific as possible. What elements make you truly different, original and superior? Try to pinpoint those things that really make you stand out from the crowd.

If there's nothing that makes you unique, superior, better, special or different, then develop a USP. Create it. Manufacture it. What makes you — or what can you make — different from all others? If there's nothing unique or special about you, your goal will therefore be to manufacture your own unique position. Don't compete. Differentiate! Or as Earl Nightingale once said, "Don't copy, create!"

I am not saying that you must lie, be deceptive or mislead your prospects. But I am however saying that you must be unique to the point of having to change something about you, such as by adding or taking something away, in order to be as original as possible. It may well be the same thing but presented in a new way, something with a unique twist... And that mere twist may be what makes you unique in this case.

Once you've discovered, generated or honed your USP, you must communicate it in every possible way. You must become your USP in all that you are. You must project it in everything you do. You must make it a part of all your marketing endeavors — including your business' day-to-day operations. A USP is more than a creed, a mission statement or a position. It is the reason behind your business' very existence.

Your competitive edge is not how better you are as an alternative to your competition but how *different* you are than them. How many companies have communicated that they're number one or the best in their chosen category? I don't know but I'm sure the number is way up there... *Way, way up there*. And quite simply, this tactic will not work — at least not as effectively as it used to work, especially online.

Again, you can be the first to cater to a specific market, the first to offer an alternative to an existing product or the first to cater to a market in a unique way. In short, you can literally create your competitive edge by simply adding your unique twist to something that's traditional, copied or ordinary. Doing so will solidify your position in the marketplace and, if others ever copy you, competitors will only be considered as second best — they will only remind others of you.

Often, the most effective way to communicate that USP is to create your very own product category. And a product category is usually defined through a name. For example, a desirable quality of a good brand name is its suggestiveness. If your name suggests your unique selling proposition, you'll be able to communicate your USP quickly, develop an entirely new product category and thus position it as first in the mind. In fact, the more different you are, the more the USP-based brand name will become the category itself.

For instance, I'm sure you never heard a doctor say "Take two *acetylsalicylic acid tablets* and call me in the morning." A brand-turned-generic name (like "Aspirin") is one by which all other products of its particular category are known, called or remembered. If you manage to accomplish that, your competition's attempt to copy you will only remind others of you. Your product name becomes the category name.

What do the names "Kleenex," "Band-Aid," "Windex," "Die Hard" and "Kwik Kopy" all have in common? Obviously, these names are not only original but they also instantly communicate the nature or benefit that these products offer. In other words, "Kleenex" suggests cleanliness. "Band-Aid" suggests that it is an aid. "Windex" suggests windows. "Die Hard" suggests that it dies hard. And "Kwik Kopy" suggests speedy copies.

This is why the first step in effectively and efficiently creating instant top-of-mind brand awareness is by choosing a name for your business or product. While your USP solidifies your position, your name inculcates it in the mind. In fact, naming your company or product is probably the single most important decision you will ever make in your business. Unlike a tangible product, a company name is a promise. It reflects the core company (i.e., what it does or gives). But it's also a personality and not just a bunch of letters. You can't taste, touch, smell, see or hear a company like you do a tangible product.

On the Internet, names are more important since you can instill a sense of tangibility into the minds of people in an intangible world — and you can do so in a fraction of a second, without the need to read an entire website. Therefore, the brand name you place on a company is like the packaging you put on a product. It is the cover of your book, so to speak. And remember, people do judge books by their covers.

## Burning Brands Into The Mind

Does your company name intrinsically reflect the nature of your business, especially the result or benefit it offers, and does so instantaneously? For example, if I told you “Jiffy Lube,” you will instantly conclude that it's a garage offering oil changes in a jiffy. On the other hand, if I told you “Duralube” you'll assume that it's a durable brand of motor oil.

Today, it astounds me to see company names that mean absolutely nothing or names that do not reflect the competitive advantage — let alone the nature — of the business. By this I particularly mean those with initials, like “MGF Technologies,” “RCM Limited” or “PSIC Holdings.” (People in my seminars often object with IBM, as an example. But I remind them that IBM is an already established brand. In fact, “International Business Machines” came first and remained so for years, before IBM built enough brand awareness and were able to successfully convert its name to the initials. We'll deal more on this later.)

This also includes self-titled companies, or companies bearing the name of the owners or founders — remember that image-based marketing is very flattering to the ego, which is why many companies resort to this tactic. I was guilty of that too, once. Believe it or not, “Michel Fortin International” was the actual name of my original company (one that undoubtedly failed, mind you). In fact, today people recognize me as “The Success Doctor” and do so more than “Michel Fortin.”

Of course, in the case of initial-based names or self-titled companies, this is far from being an absolute axiom. (As French philosopher Auguste Comte once noted, “The only thing that's absolute in this world is that there is nothing absolute.”) I agree that many companies have successfully grown with odd sounding brand names or names with initials. But I would be quite surprised if they didn't achieve the level of success they have acquired without a substantial investment of time and money.

(It's worth mentioning at this point, however, that initials, used as acronyms, have an advantage. Company names that use multiple or non-suggestive words might want to resort to the use of acronyms. They can become not only great mnemonics by the fact that they're easier to pronounce but also suggestive as well. Take for instance “CAPS,” which stands for the “Canadian Association of Professional Speakers,” “MADD,” which stands for “Mothers Against Drunk Driving,” or “YAHOO,” which stands for “Yet Another Hierarchically Organized Oracle.”)

So choose a name that suggests a benefit or intrinsically reflects the nature of the product or company. If you are a computer network consultant, are you called “David Stevens Consulting” or are you called “Practical Technologies”? What's better: “John's Drycleaners” or “Spotless Cleaners”? Are you called “JSI Brokers, Inc” or “Money Mastery, Inc”? Is your product called “Roxaril Shampoo” or “Revitalize”?

The name you choose should immediately reflect and instantly communicate what you do, what you have to offer and how you are different from your competition. Agreeably, this requires a great deal of creative skill. Suitable names don't come overnight. But while they are the most important, names can sometimes

also be the most difficult part of the business process — which is why it is so often disregarded or considered as a second priority by many entrepreneurs.

So, here's a helpful hint: Try writing down as many names as possible — at least twenty or more — and pass it around among friends, family, acquaintances and clients, even potential clients. Ask them what pulls them the most. Look for the subtle nuances in their voices or facial expressions. Be attentive. More important, test them. Many will tell you what they think looks good on paper — but looks can be deceiving. Ask them a few hours later what stuck in their minds the most (and not just what they remembered as being the ones they liked). Whichever sticks is the one you want.

## Tag, You're it!

Sometimes names need a little push that will help to anchor them more effectively in the minds of people. This is especially true if your company or product name doesn't really communicate its competitive edge or the benefits it offers (or at the very least its nature), or if changing it is not an option for whatever reason. In either case, you should add a tagline to the name.

A tagline is a small sentence that follows a name. It's a phrase, preferably five words or less, that complements a brand name. It often qualifies your business, communicates your position (your USP, if it wasn't communicated in the name itself) and says all that you are in one single swoop. A tagline can complement your domain name, your company name, your product name and even your own name. It's a qualifier or subheadline of sorts.

I'm sure you've heard of: "You deserve a break today," "the real thing," "fights cavities and freshens breath," "kills bugs dead," "roaches check in but they don't check out," "it takes a licking but keeps on ticking" and so on. If you're like me, in all likelihood you can instantly associate them with the companies from which they derive. Taglines are like anchors. They help to "hook" the primary name more firmly into the mind — either that or, more importantly, they help to anchor the company's USP and position.

Why is that? It's because a tagline implies some sort of added value to the brand identification process and, by virtue of mental association, helps to anchor a company name in the mind more effectively. The name "Coca-Cola" tells people that it's a cola. That's fine. But what makes it different is the fact that it is the first cola to ever be conceived, or "The Real Thing." If used well, taglines have the distinct ability to not only emphasize the main benefit your Internet business offers but also help to isolate it, distinguish it from the competition and reinforce it in the mind.

For example, I recently consulted a local communications company whose name was "Communications One." Its main competitor was, interestingly enough, "First Communications." The obvious problem here was that they were often confused with their competition. Clients would often ask, "Aren't you the 'First people'?" Changing the company name was not an appealing option to them either, due to the fact that repositioning such a large company (worth billions) came with a multimillion-dollar price tag.

I therefore told my client to use the tagline technique as a way to anchor the word "one" more profoundly into the mind. As an example, my suggestions included: "Still the one," "go for one," "the one to have," "get smart, get connected, get one" and so on. (By the way, their final choice was "go for one." Even their new jingle sung their tagline to the melody of the popular hit song "You're Still the One.") The primary objective of this tagline was to dispel as much confusion as possible between my client and their main competitor by hooking the word "one" into the mind.

Taglines are particularly beneficial if you happen to not employ a fictitious name. However, I must include that there is a great advantage to branding your company and, if you were to personally ask my opinion, I would always tell you to consider using a fictitious name. This is true even if you are self-employed or a sole proprietor, like I am, and need to file a "doing business as" (or "DBA") statement as a result. For

example, people would remember far more “Pipe Master” or “We turn pipe dreams into reality” than they would “Smith’s Plumbing.”

But if for some reason this is not possible (such as being prohibited from or limited in doing so, or having a very limited marketing budget, or even simply being weary of repositioning your company altogether), then the tagline can certainly help in this case. Nevertheless, while a company name alone may or may not be as suggestive as one would wish it to be, the tagline can do so and create that important top-of-mind awareness.

For instance, John Smith, a self-employed computer technician, uses the tagline “Solutions Made Simple” in all his marketing literature. An interior designer, Gloria Tessman, now markets herself as “Gloria Tessman Equals Glorious Interiors.” A self-employed business etiquette consultant has “Brian Whelan, Where Protocol Meets Profits” on his business cards and promotional materials.

Above all, use words with emotional impact. Since both names and taglines tell the world how different you are as well as how able you are to answer specific needs and concerns, choose ego-driven benefits — benefits that appeal to the visitor’s ego — when developing them. For example, if you are a realtor then your main benefit is to help people find *homes* and not *houses* — selling houses is just a logical feature. In other words, your tagline should focus on homes, not houses (i.e., on the emotion, not the logic). If your competitive edge is to sell listed homes quickly, then the words in your tagline should reflect that too.

Ultimately, think carefully when choosing a name for your website, online business or product. And add a tagline — one that truly communicates all that you are, whether you use a fictitious name or not. And make sure to use it in all your communications, promotional pieces, collateral materials as well as standard stationary — including your email correspondence and signature files (those few lines added the end of each email you send). If you’re unique then shout it from the “desktops” (desktop computers, that is).

## What are you all About?

When developing a tagline for your website, here’s a thing to consider: Before you do, first try to develop what is called an “elevator speech” about your site. An elevator speech is a short, brief introduction about you and your company, and about what you do or offer people. Usually, it’s about thirty words or less — it’s generally very short and straight to the point, and it must be unquestionably clear and focused.

In my hometown of Ottawa for example (the high tech capital of Canada, also affectionately known as “Silicon Valley North”), there is an interesting show being conducted every other month at a local bar. Called “Ideas On Tap” (see <http://www.ideasontap.com/>), young, aspiring ecommerce entrepreneurs are given a soapbox (they stand on empty milk crates, actually), a microphone and a full minute to pitch their ideas to a crowd filled with venture capitalists and investors. (If a pitch happens to pass the sixty-second limit, the microphone is turned off mercilessly.)

As the crowd begins to mingle after the event, you could instantly tell, by looking at where most people are gravitating, who were the most successful in their elevator speeches. Like someone you’ve just met in an elevator, such as a potential client or, like the preceding example, a potential investor, you only have a few short seconds to make an impact until you or the other person leaves the elevator. The important thing to note is that your elevator speech must be good enough and concise enough to capture, in just a few short moments, the attention and interest of the person to whom you’re introducing your company.

In terms of your website however, your elevator speech signals to your visitors the main advantage they receive from your site or at least in browsing further into it. So once you’ve developed your elevator speech, try to cut it down to a single sentence of five words or less. This may not be an easy task. Try to distill your speech to the very core essence of what you offer.

Think carefully. There should be only one important benefit that encompasses all others — something that immediately captures the essence of all that you are. But if you're stuck, look at all the other benefits: Is there a common thread? If not, even the nature of your site or company can be used in this case. At any rate, ask yourself, "What's the single, most important quality, benefit or characteristic of my site?" Here are some examples:

- *Crest Toothpaste* at <http://www.crest.com/> with "Creating Smiles Everyday,"
- *Web Pages That Suck* at <http://www.websitethatsuck.com/> with "Where you Learn Good Web Design by Looking at Bad Web Design,"
- *GoTo* at <http://www.goto.com/> with "Search Made Simple,"
- *MyComputer* at <http://www.mycomputer.com/> with "Tools to Power Your eBusiness"
- And *The Standard* at <http://www.thestandard.com/> with "Intelligence for the Internet Economy."

If you are a professional, or a professional association, you are certainly not excluded. In fact, taglines can be important and more appropriate in these cases. For example, you may be an accountant, a lawyer or a doctor. But like most professionals, your governing body probably prohibits you from claiming superiority. The tagline can therefore imply superiority without the need to state it. Here are some examples:

- *Canadian Blood Services* at <http://www.bloodservices.ca/> with "Blood... It's in you to Give,"
- *PA Medical Group* at <http://www.paihair.com/> with "Great People, Great Skills, Great Looks,"
- *Outaouais Center for Cosmetic Surgery* at <http://www.drdubois.com/> with "The Art and Science of Looking Good,"
- *Ahluwalia Law Office* at <http://www.rajalaw.com/> with "Because Some Things are Worth Fighting for"
- And the *National Association of Black Accountants* at <http://naba.hypermart.net/> with "Lifting as we Climb."

As John Audette, owner and moderator of the numerous discussion lists at <http://www.audette-media.com/>, once said, "Be short, pithy and punchy." That sums it up quite well. Your tagline must be able to qualify your site and its purpose in that one single sentence. It must not leave any room for doubts or questions, in the minds of your visitors, as to what you truly offer and how different you are — which are not products or features but egocentric, customer-focused, interest-generating benefits.

So let me ask you, what are *you* all about?

# CHAPTER FOUR

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## Master Your Domain to Heighten Your Fame

*“I find that a great part of the information I have was acquired by looking up something and finding something else on the way.”*

— **Franklin P. Adams (1881-1960)**

*“It’s far more impressive when others discover your good qualities without your help.”*

— **Judith S. Marin**

On the web, choosing good, benefit-based names has significantly more relevance. For one, in overly misled society with scams and snake oils proportionately growing with the number of online businesses, credibility has become increasingly vital online. And to a prospect encountering your site for the first time, you may have little or no believability because you may well be totally unknown to your prospect.

People will demand more credibility. And if they don’t get it they will let their keyboards or mice — and their wallets — do the talking. One of John Naisbitt’s “Megatrends,” in his book of the same name, is the fact that our society is edging towards what he calls the “high-tech-high-touch.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, the fact that we are advancing technologically and the business process is fast becoming almost entirely automated will parallel the need for a more human approach in the business process.

Today, we see that need being filled more and more through niche marketing, personalization and enhanced customer service (such as live support). Sites are becoming more humanized, especially with the help of new web-based services such as <http://humanclick.com/>, <http://efusion.com/>, <http://netpcs.com/>, <http://liveperson.com/>, <http://www.livehelper.com/>, <http://www.click2talk.com/>, <http://121internetmarketing.com/>, <http://www.eshare.com/> and <http://www.answers.com/>.

I truly believe that, due to the lack of human interaction on the web, building long-term relationships with your prospects will, as time goes on, become an element of greater importance in the success of your online business. (Even interactivity and “stickiness” have become metrics of choice for measuring the success of an ecommerce website — slowly surpassing the ubiquitous “traffic” metric.)

Another is the fact that domain names that do not communicate anything, or those that do not communicate something in the most easily memorable, efficient and understandable way, will cause the online business to be tucked away in the far reaches of cyberspace (or, at best, in a person’s bookmark folder), seldom to be

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.hightechhightouch.com/>

visited if ever again. Benefit-based domain names give something by which to remember them — and consequently, to visit them.

There are many ways to build credibility, namely through the use of testimonials and guarantees. These may be the final steps in convincing your prospects that you are credible — and we will be discussing these further in a later chapter. But the first step is sometimes the most obvious — and that's the image you project, for it is the first thing that is perceived by your prospects and the first step in building relationships with them.

## Tame Your Domain Name

Although your goal may be to automate your business, which it should be, you must remember that you are dealing with real people with real desires. There are many fly-by-night businesses and get-rich-quick schemes on the Internet, so anything new will likely be questionable in the very least. Therefore, your marketing strategy must also include branding your website address, which is just as important as branding your company or product, even your website itself.

But branding alone is not to simply arrive at a catchy name that doesn't communicate anything. It goes beyond that. Keep in mind that, above all, domain names are effective traffic magnets in themselves. Beyond acting as effective branding tools and giving your website a corporate identity, they generate traffic without any need to advertise your business at all — if they say something about you and do so simply, easily and immediately.

Therefore, domain names that are short, easy to pronounce and easy to remember have considerable mnemonic value. But recall aside, if they are also suggestive, generic and, more important, logical to the person's search, these websites will be found more often. In other words, the more mnemonic or generic a domain name is, the more likely it will increase traffic on its own.

An interesting case study is the acquisition of the domain “art.com” by an online lithograph store, originally named “art-u-frame.com,” for a whopping \$450,000 USD. Another is “business.com,” which recently sold for an incredible \$7.5 million. (Note that, at the time of writing this book, “ecommerce.com” was being sold for \$4 million.) And like the new owners of such names know, the more generic the name is, the more valuable — just like a piece a real estate — the name and website become.

However, this is where I must differ with one of my mentors. Al Ries, in his book entitled “The 11 Immutable Laws of Internet Branding,” argues that common names on the web are ineffective. Through law number three, “The Law of the Common Name,” Ries argues that common names such as Art.com or Advertising.com are poor brands. eCommerce consultant Dr. Ralph Wilson of Wilson Internet Services at <http://www.WilsonWeb.com/> once noted, “I'm not so sure I agree [with Ries]. After all, ArtUFrame.com doubled its sales the month after it acquired Art.com.”<sup>6</sup>

While a brand name in the physical world is the name of a company, a website address is a locating tool — and just like a phone number or a postal address, a domain name is the means through which a business is found and contacted, and not just labeled. I agree that an online business (the entity itself and not the website) should not have a generic name. But the domain name brands the website, not the business.

(Some companies, both Internet and non-Internet companies, understand this concept and as a result have branded both their businesses and their websites separately. For example, AskJeeves.com can also be found at Ask.com. Vegetable cleaner Fit, which is located at Fit.com, can also be found at CleanProduce.com. Microsoft is also located at Windows.com.)

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.wilsonweb.com/reviews/11-laws.htm>

Common or generic words, particularly on the Internet, act as mnemonic devices — we all know, recognize and instantly remember common words. But their staggering value is certainly attributed to the increasingly shrinking number of good domain names. As more and more domain names become registered, the more valuable these generically worded ones become. Therefore, registering a potentially good domain name quickly is imminently important. Granted, finding a good domain name may not be an easy task.

That said however, here are three basic guidelines to use when choosing and registering yours. While you will need to brainstorm potential names to find one that meets your specific needs and arrives at the above objectives successfully, follow these rules and your chances of creating instant traffic will be multiplied.

First, choose a suggestive name — one that communicates the main benefit if not at least the nature of your website. Benefit-based domain names particularly have a multitude of advantages beyond ease-of-recall, such as credibility. For example, if you sought a financial planner and were given a bunch of website addresses (i.e., uniform resource locators, or “URLs”) from which to choose (of course, with all things being equal and without any prior knowledge of these firms), would you click on <http://www.ffp1.com/>? Or would you click on <http://www.investright.com/>?

Second, make it easy to pronounce. Don’t forget this simple rule: “If you have to spell, say farewell.” In other words, remember that the moment you need to spell your domain name when telling it to others you have lost a great deal of potential traffic. And third, the shorter it is the better. Here’s an example: Which one would you pick in an instant, remember the most and have the least amount of trouble typing the name into your browser: “Yahoo.com” or “YetAnotherHierarchicallyOrganizedOracle.com”?

## Make it Easy For People to Find You

Ultimately, think of the people trying to find your website. Make it easy for them to do so and avoid anything that impedes either the proper spelling or the memorability of the domain name. For instance, avoid these silent traffic killers: 1) Hyphens (like <http://www.lets-make-a-deal.com/>), 2) numbers or numerals (like <http://www.4you.com/>), 3) difficult-to-pronounce words (like <http://www.akamai.com/> or <http://www.heitml.com/>), and 4) initials (like <http://www.dfps.com/>).

The latter in that list is the most important one to avoid. Making the domain name as short as possible is enticing for most businesses, and often they resort to choosing initials. Unless your company or product is some well-known brand (like IBM, AOL, CNN, BMW, etc), or unless the acronym spells something easy to pronounce and remember like Yahoo, avoid using initials at all costs. They are probably the worst impediments to instant traffic generation.

In short, make the name intuitive and difficult to misspell. Words that are commonly misspelled will impede traffic. Is it “accomodate” or “accommodate”? “Mariage” or “marriage”? “Judgment” or “judgement”? Take these spelling tests available at <http://www.sentex.net/~mmcadams/spelling.html> and <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/16sp.html>. How many words did you misspell? If a domain name contains any such words then realize that the chances of losing potential traffic are significant.

If you already possess a domain name that breaks any of the above rules, register a second domain name and point it to the your website’s Internet protocol address (or “IP,” the computer-based location of your website). Many sites have two, three or even more names pointing to the same IP address in order to increase visibility. Some search engines recognize the words as keywords and, more importantly, people may remember some more than others for whatever reason.

For example, the Coca-Cola Company has: <http://www.coke.com/>, <http://www.coca-cola.com/>, <http://www.cocacola.com/>, <http://www.alwayscoke.com/> (their tagline) and <http://www.obeyyourthirst.com/> (the tagline for Sprite, their lemon and lime soft drink). They all point to the same website — and there are others too. In addition, similar to Coca-Cola try to use

repetition in your domain name if possible — for the same reasons discussed in earlier chapters. (“Coca” and “cola” have both head and foot rhymes, and also use the “K” sound as a plosive.)

In short, make it easy for people to find the site, for the easier it is to find the site the easier it will be to draw traffic to it (and the easier it will be to do so without any form of promotion). And think like your visitors and the keywords under which they will likely find your site. The more keyword-driven and targeted you are in choosing your domain name, the more traffic you will generate as a result.

## How Does Your Domain Look on You?

When I started online some years ago, I began with a free host and a free email account. I didn’t see the need to invest in my own domain, having an already profitable offline business at the time. In fact, my first website was a mere resume. But little did I know, however, that the lack of credibility my site and email projected was to a great extent the reason for many lost sales.

The Internet is surely filled with sites that range from sheer ads to others that are sponsored by them. Everywhere we turn, it seems, we are faced with some form of promotional propaganda. Therefore, a website must stand out among the web’s commercial quagmire. And it must also do so in such a way that it creates not only traffic but also, because of all the confusion, a clear sense of, and need for, what it offers — even before traffic ever hits the site.

In other words, where people used to ask, “why should I buy” or “why should I buy this product or service,” today that question has changed to “why should I visit this site” and “why should I buy this product or service *from* this site.” Simply put, today’s consumer will choose one company over another because the perceived value in their choice is greater. So a site that does not communicate credibility will thus lose visitors quickly.

What I call an “unconscious paralleled assumption,” or “UPA,” is the natural human propensity to unconsciously assume that there is a parallel between one part and another — such as a part of something and its whole, even when the two are totally unrelated. For example, people judge books by their covers, even though the graphic designer that created the book’s jacket and the author who wrote the book are two, entirely separate people with two entirely separate functions. Like it or not, it’s all about perception.

The UPA often associated with free hosting and email services is the lack of professionalism or success. In other words, if you market from a free website or email account, people will, to a degree, unconsciously assume that there is parallel between your choice of service providers and your firm or product. Either people will think your company is just as cheap or that, through the use of free services, you’re not successful enough to afford your own. (And the subsequent UPA is that not a lot of people have placed their trust in you before them, leading to the conclusion that your business must be poor, misleading or unpopular. Therefore, why should they trust you?)

In addition to the fact that free hosts and email accounts are often used by, or associated with, spammers and scamsters, they offer virtually no credibility. Now, I’m not discounting these services here. I actually think that some of them, like Hotmail for example, offer a great service to the public and are superb models of promotion and especially viral marketing (which is what they really are, anyway). But in the way they indirectly promote a business however, it’s a whole different situation.

Look at it this way: Would you take advice from a sick doctor? Would you let a dentist with cavities work on your teeth? Would you let an out-of-shape person become your fitness trainer? Remember that, along with your marketing message, you are also communicating a meta-message (i.e., a message beyond the message). In other words, your message may say one thing about you but your meta-message may say another. It could support, emphasize or even contradict your message — such as the image you project.

In the same way, would you buy from a company, one claiming to be professional and of high quality, whose email is “cheaspskate@freemailaccount.com”? Or would you buy from one whose email is “support@yourname.com”? Remember the old axiom: You never have a second chance to make a good first impression. I would add that you never have a second chance to make not only a good impression but also a credible one. And first impressions are always, good or bad, lasting ones. Therefore, projecting credibility, or the lack thereof, goes a long way.

Another reason to have a professional domain is the fact that top-level domain names, being shorter, have the ability to stick in the mind more effectively. Long or obscure URLs are simply too hard to remember. For example, rather than “<http://www.freehost.com/subdomain/yourname/~subfolder>,” one can easily recall “yourname.com.” (Today, more and more companies are dropping the “http://” and “www” from their domain names for that reason.)

(Incidentally, with the recent deregulation of the domain name industry domain name registrations have become more competitively priced than ever before. Personally, I prefer and refer others to use <http://www.domains.ca/> or <http://www.dotster.com/>. Regardless of price however, domain name registration is probably the single, most important marketing investment an online business can ever make.)

Nevertheless, realize that people usually make a buying decision based on the kind of information that both intrinsically reflects and instantly communicates a specific and implicit added value in making the purchase. To illustrate, let’s take two websites that promote investments. One’s address is “wealthwise.com” while the other is “smith-brokerage.com.” With all things being equal, which site will be the one more likely to be chosen first?

By virtue of its appeal and the message it communicates, your domain name must also pre-qualify your visitors, even before they visit your site. And if people resort to a search engine, their search will be greatly simplified and vastly more efficient if your domain name intrinsically reflects something for which they are looking — be it the benefit you offer if not at least your website’s purpose.

Remember that most searches are conducted by topics or themes and not by names. Therefore, if your site’s most popular keyword or benefit is within the domain name itself, that URL has greater chances of being in the top search engine results and, most importantly, clicked. According to Search Engine Watch, only a handful of search engines recognize keywords in domain names.<sup>7</sup> Still, with a suggestive domain name, descriptions become almost unnecessary. (Who reads or has the time to read all of the site descriptions on a search engine’s result page anyway?)

Play a word association game with your site. Look for the word or group of words that would instantly come to mind when a specific need presents itself — a need that your site likely fills. For instance, <http://www.free-stuff.com/>, <http://allergyrelief.com/>, <http://art.com/>, <http://morebusiness.com/>, <http://fastcar.com/> and even <http://www.marketingtowebmarketers.com/> are great examples of theme-oriented or benefit-based domain names that will effectively create more top-of-mind awareness.

## Domain Names That Drive Traffic

If the name you want is taken, then you can use the name of your product, service, company or tagline (or part of it) as a domain name. Some examples of the latter include: <http://www.cavities.com/> (Crest), <http://www.obeyyourthirst.com/> (Coca-Cola Company), <http://www.cleanproduce.com/> (Fit) and <http://www.start.com/> as well as <http://www.wheredoyouwanttogotoday.com/> (Microsoft).

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<sup>7</sup> <http://searchenginewatch.internet.com/sereport/00/01-domains.html>

But what happens if your fresh out of names? What happens if that name you really want is already taken? And what happens if your company name, tagline or product name are also not available?

With the constantly shrinking pool of names from which to choose, several services can help suggest several alternatives. One of them is called “Nameboy” at <http://www.nameboy.com/>. And another is Register.com at <http://www.register.com/>. (Note that both of these are registrars and domain name resellers — so these free services are also used, brilliantly I might add, as marketing tools for their services.) There are also a few applications that will do this for you, such as Domain Quester at <http://www.internet-soft.com/quester.htm> and Available Domains at <http://www.alphacomsoft.com/avdomains.htm>.

But some of the most useful tools, as simple as they may sound, are the dictionary and Thesaurus. For example, when I consult companies in an attempt to help name their businesses or products, I often resort to <http://www.yourdictionary.com/> (or simply use the good old Merriam-Webster Collegiate version). Synonyms, related words or descriptions found in word definitions may offer some flexibility.

Variations of a name, including adding words like “from,” “the,” “by,” “my” and so on, could also open many new doors. For example, a software company called “TransSoft” could register: “TranSoftWeb,” “TranSoftNow,” “SoftwareByTranSoft,” “SimplicityByTranSoft,” “TranSoftSolutions,” “YourTranSoft,” “TranSoftUniverse,” “TranSoftCenter,” “TranSoftCentral,” “TheWorldOfTranSoft,” “MyTranSoft,” “SoftwarePower,” “SoftwareMadeSimple,” etc.

Speaking of name variations, it is also good practice to register variations of your name, including other top-level domains such as with “dot-net” and “dot-org.” One of the reasons is to prevent these unused domain names from being taken by competitors. If you also have a tagline, register that as well if possible. (Agreeably, registering a domain name with every possible variation would be utterly ridiculous. Just look for the most common ones instead. However, you should also look into negative variations, like governor George W. Bush did with both <http://www.georgebush.com/> and <http://www.georgebushsucks.com/>.)

Beyond protecting your name from would-be competitors, multiple names pointing to a same IP increases visibility. (Incidentally, another registrar using a marketing strategy similar to that of Nameboy, which is Domain Security at <http://www.domainsecurity.com/>, offers domain name registration based on the premise of protecting your “online piece of real estate” with multiple suffixes.) But more importantly, when people attempt to search for your site and enter a variation they will still visit your site as a result.

(In fact, based on the latter, it is important to register variations if your site is commonly misspelled. While having a name that could potentially be misspelled should be avoided altogether, if your current domain name is commonly misspelled in any way then register the misspelled domain name as well — such as “marriage.com” and “mariage.com.”)

Nevertheless, it all boils down to the fact that your domain name is a fundamental marketing system in itself. Be short, simple and memorable, and you’ll see your traffic soar. Ultimately, choose a name that people can remember quickly and effectively so that, when you advertise among a thousand of your competitors, your URL stands out and sticks firmly in the mind.

# CHAPTER FIVE

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## Narrow Your Focus to Broaden Your Sales

*“Less is more.”*  
— Ludwig Van Der Rohe

Very often, newcomers to the business world (and the Internet) wrongfully assume that expanding their portfolio will secure more business — and nothing can be further from the truth. In fact, the single greatest mistake businesses make is in trying to be *all things to all people*. Not only is this next to impossible but, on the web, it can also become seriously counterproductive.

And this error is not limited to small businesses. Some large corporations are committing it too — such as the recent expansion of Amazon into other product lines outside its core niche: *Books*. While expanding the portfolio of an already established brand might provide an infusion of cash in the short-term, it could dilute the firm’s brand equity and erode sales over time. So why should companies, even large corporations, think about narrowing their focus?

Markets are becoming more and more fragmented. Here’s an example: While the 70s offered only twelve TV channels, today that number has skyrocketed. The satellite dish has made it possible for us to choose among hundreds of channels. But what’s more intriguing is that these new channels largely consist of topic-specific or specialty channels. We have the golf channel, the learning channel, the arts and entertainment channel, the sports channel, the comedy channel, the music channel, the history channel, the home and garden channel, the religious channel, ad nauseum.

But on the Internet, fragmentation resonates to a much greater degree. The global web may erase geographical borders but, by being completely user-driven, it re-divides and segments the marketplace by interests and tastes (with, for example, portals, websites, online communities and newsgroups) — and there are a lot more of those than countries. And since themes, industries and product benefits, as well as interests and tastes, do not have physical boundaries like countries do, target markets are becoming harder to fathom than ever before... Or are they?

As the marketplace changes more and more rapidly, businesses will need a sharper marketing aim. Doing so makes market segmentation a far easier task. Even large corporations have stripped their excesses and narrowed their focus on their core competencies, specific product categories or specific market segments as a result.

The narrower a focus is, the easier it is to find, target and grow one’s market. On the other hand, the increasing competitiveness of the Internet will only make those generalized, unfocused firms even more general. In fact, generalization, in such a vast marketplace as the web, will only make firms more vague and less customer-focused. In short, niche marketing is not only on the rise but also becoming a necessity.

For a long time smaller businesses have successfully capitalized on niches. And there is no better place for niche marketing than the web. But often, the Internet can be enticing to the point that a specialty store, limited to a very small geographical region, will be tempted to expand its portfolio into other niches as a means to increase online sales within a seemingly more diverse, global audience.

But the problem is that the web offers a “catch-22.” The Internet may open more doors to a larger audience but keep in mind that a parallel exists: As the audience grows, so does the competition. And the greater the competition becomes, the more a business will need to narrow its focus in order to differentiate itself from its competitors — and target its market effectively online. Conversely, the larger the competition becomes, the more difficult it will be to consistently find, qualify and attract prospective clients.

## Find More With Less

Paradoxically, the more you specialize and narrow your focus to a very specific niche — be it a core benefit, a product category or a market segment — the more business will come to you as a result. For example, an accountant specializing in estate planning will get more business than a general accountant will. A photographer specializing in weddings will receive more solicitations than a regular photographer will. A store specializing in books will sell more books than a typical department store will.

As more and more businesses get started (thus fueling competition), the less time, energy and money people will have to spend in making choices for those with which they will choose to do business. And this increase in competition — all fighting for a similar market — will only but confuse the marketplace in their attempts to make the right choice. (And in today’s marketplace, a “right” choice is often defined as one that meets one’s needs as specifically as possible.)

Specialization therefore is, in itself, a marketing process. When you get down to it, as a consumer you will choose when you have a choice presented to you to go to a business that specializes in a unique area in which you have a need. Especially since you are bombarded with so many marketing messages on the web, when you are presented with a specialist it helps to dispel any confusion in your mind as to which choice is superior. (And remember that superiority is perceived, not real.)

For example, you will automatically assume that such a business will offer better service by virtue of its unique expertise, greater knowledge and, by catering to a highly targeted market, better understanding of your unique needs and concerns. Increased focus invariably heightens the perceived value of your offering.

This is not only related to new and repeat business but also to referral business. For instance, let’s say you have two friends who sell cars and you’re thinking of referring some clients to one of them. One is a typical salesperson working in a typical used car dealership. The other, however, specializes in first time car buyers. She offers special creative financing methods for those new to credit, additional car-specific driver training for new drivers and copies of rate comparisons between insurance companies with the lowest rates for newly licensed drivers. Now, to whom do you think you will refer more people?

Think of a laser. A laser is basically a beam of highly concentrated, amplified light. The smaller and more focused the beam is, the stronger and more powerful it becomes. Therefore, you want to focus like a laser on your niche. And when you do, you will also *burn* your business into your prospects’ minds.

## Be a Niche-Picker

Since the mind hates vagueness and confusion, specialization thus enhances top-of-mind awareness. For instance, with competition storming your market with information and with their very limited attention span, your prospects will retain far more what they perceive in terms of unique solutions to a specific problem. And should they experience that specific problem, more than likely your company will “pop” into their minds almost instantaneously.

As the world becomes more and more competitive, it is becoming quite difficult to fight for large, broad markets, especially for the small-sized entrepreneur. With broadness comes the perception that a customer's unique set of circumstances and concerns are, in the customer's mind, unimportant. And ironically, people today have too many choices. Thus finding a superior product or company has become a more daunting task than ever. Keep this in mind: A superior choice is not a better one (or one made on the basis of quality). It is a more *valuable* one — and that's perceived value.

As stated previously, you need to imply superiority in order to be perceived as superior. Being a company that's targeting a specific niche may not necessarily translate into superiority by itself. But it instantly creates (or enhances) the perception of superiority because: 1) The company finds itself in a much less competitive arena, and 2) the process in and of itself implies greater expertise by virtue of catering to a very specific, precisely defined market segment.

(Think of it this way: If you needed surgery, would you choose a general medical practitioner? Or would you choose a surgeon? If you needed brain surgery specifically, would you go to a vascular surgeon? Or would you go to a neurologist? If you needed a specific type of brain surgery, would you go to a brain surgeon? Or would you choose a neurologist who specializes in that part of the brain with which you needed surgery?)

Simply, find a unique niche and fill it. If that niche is one in which a specific problem exists (one from which a specific market suffers) and you have the ability to solve it, then fill that void and exploit your niche, and you will reap more rewards than if you would have approached it from a generalized perspective.

If you already have a product or solve a specific problem, then start targeting your market as much as possible. To do this, try to discover the demographics as well as the psychographics of your niche. If your niche is not market-oriented (such as a niche focused on a product category or theme), then target your *perfect* market. In other words, segment your market and then try to define your perfect customer in as specific terms as possible.

Demographics are the basic qualities and characteristics of your target market. They include age, gender, culture, employment, industry, income level, marital status, position, religion, sales cycle, location of residence or work, etc. For example, does your product cater uniquely to women? Is it more appealing to a type of industry? Does your product complement another product well? Does your market consist mostly of French Canadians?

In other words, who buys from you specifically? And if you were to say "everyone," then who buys from you the most (or the most often)? Define that person in specific terms. Your answer will be your core demographics. In other words, what you want to do is develop a profile of your perfect customer from an external point of view. Where do they live? What do they do? How old are they?

Your psychographics though consist of the emotional, behavioral and psychological qualities of your target market. They include the emotions, reasoning, psychology, logic, frame of mind and thought processes behind your market's decision to buy your product. For example, they include interests and hobbies that they have, associations to which they belong, trends that they are following, previous purchases that they've made, other related products that your market has consumed, specific tastes and preferences that they possess, and so on.

Stated differently, demographics include the segment of the population that *needs* your product. At first glance, they appear as those people or businesses that are able to enjoy the benefits of your product or service. Psychographics, however, are those people, within your demographics, that not only need your product but also *want* it. Not everyone in your target market who may need your product will be in a position to want it as well.

If you don't know this, you can easily conduct a survey as part of a marketing research campaign among current clients, potential clients and clients of other similar, competing products or companies. But don't underestimate your own clients. (As the adage goes, "Don't ignore the gold that can be found in your own backyard.") Their answers to certain questions may in fact surprise you and be totally different that what you may have anticipated. To give you a primer, here's a list of questions you should ask them:

- Why did your clients buy your product? If not, why not?
- Why did they buy from you or your competitor specifically?
- Why did they not buy from you or the competition?
- Why did they buy from you at that specific point in time?
- Why did they buy right away (on impulse) or took their time?
- If they shopped around, why did they? Where did they go?
- What do they like the most and the least about the product?
- What was the first thing that caught their attention?
- Would they refer you to others? Why? If not, why not?
- What specific benefits do they see in your product?
- In what ways did the product meet their needs specifically?
- What specific benefits do they see in those of competitors?
- What improvements would they like to see in your products?
- What would they like to see in those of competitors?
- Who is your customer (e.g., age, location, work, etc)?
- With who or what is your customer affiliated or associated?
- What other products or services would go well with yours?
- What did your customers buy before your product? In other words, what other kinds of solutions into which they looked or invested before they became knowledgeable of your product?
- What did they like the most and the least about your website?
- What "pulled" them back to it (and to competing websites)?
- If there was one thing — and only one thing — your website needed to provide customers, stripping it of everything else right down to the bare essentials, what would that one, single thing be? The newsletter? Sales letter? Games or quizzes? Product descriptions? Email?
- And so on.

These are immensely important questions that can help you, guide you or even have you change your approach altogether. Never discount marketing research, particularly among your current customer base. You want to know not only who buys from you but also why they do. And remember that "why" is the most powerful word in marketing.

## Target Your Market's Bull's-eye

In order to illustrate the difference between demographics and psychographics, here's a forinstance. When I began my marketing consulting practice, I catered mainly to cosmetic surgeons and my largest clientele consisted of hair transplant doctors. I often use this example because it's a perfect illustration of the clear differences between demographics and psychographics.

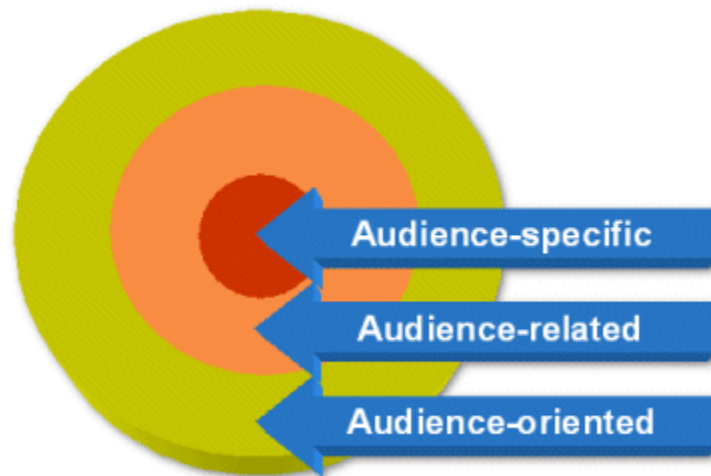
Hair transplant doctors cater to people who have experienced hair loss. In other words, men and bald men specifically are potential patients because, apparently, they may be in need of more hair. However, they may not necessarily *want* more hair. But nevertheless, because of the fact that they appear to be in need they fit into that doctor's set of demographics.

Psychographics on the other hand go a little further. In this example, they are comprised of men who not only need more hair but also want more hair. To them, hair loss is traumatizing. It's a question of personal priorities, just as the type of clothing one chooses to wear or the type of car one chooses to drive. While it

may be a matter of appearance for some, for others it may be a matter of self-confidence, self-image, attraction to the opposite sex, appreciation from an employer or peers, career advancement, etc.

So how do you isolate the psychographics from the rest? You do so by discovering men whose behaviors indicate that they dislike their hair loss and want to do something about it. Therefore, in order to target this market and do so as precisely as possible, doctors must take the psychographic elements into account. They include their patients' lifestyle, the type of industry in which they work (since certain industries are more image-related), men who take pride in their appearance, as well as their previous buying habits (such as men who have already invested in other forms of hair replacement solutions).

Once you've defined your perfect customer, then target that customer as specifically as possible. Find places, especially on the web, where your target market congregates. But what happens if you're fresh out of ideas of locations to target? To help you, follow "The Targeting Model," below. It's basically a guideline when targeting a market or while engaged in any kind of targeting activity (both on and offline). The model appears in the form of three concentric circles, like a bull's-eye. Each circle represents a different level in the targeting process — the center being the first and so on. Like a bull's-eye, the center should be your main aim at all times.



### ***The Center (Bull's-Eye)***

It's what pertains directly to your target market or core product (your core product being the main benefit or result you offer, and not just the product itself). In other words, it's anything that meets your perfect customer profile (and does so immediately and as specifically as possible). They include demographics, psychographics and geographics (e.g., age, income, job, position, trends, marital status, residence, hobbies, product benefits, history, industry, brand names, activities, product descriptions, tastes, popular hangouts, etc).

### ***The Second Tier (Middle Layer)***

It's what pertains indirectly to your target market or core product. Stated differently, it's anything that relates to or logically fits in your perfect customer profile (but is not necessarily connected to it). This includes things such as direct competitors, ancillary or complementary products, additional (yet indirect) benefits (such as other uses for your product), common threads among one or more segments, related industries, associations or organizations to which your market belongs, etc.

### **The Third Tier (Outside Layer)**

It's what does not pertain at all to your target market or core product, but somehow meets any of its various elements in some way. In other words, it's anything totally unrelated to your perfect customer profile but matches or is oriented towards any of its areas. Examples include unrelated industries with which your customer is associated, other businesses patronized by your customer, other types of products your customer has consumed, indirect competitors (i.e., products or product benefits that either replace or supersede your own), unsought benefits your customer might enjoy and benefits of non-competing products.

Here's a real-life example. Let's say you're in the computer sales business and that your perfect customer is a person aged between 20 and 35, earning around \$30,000, living in the eastern part of the United States and working in the information field (e.g., high tech, Internet-oriented industries, software companies, etc).

Your center or bull's-eye would be to target that customer as specifically as possible. Computer-related magazines, TV shows, websites, tradeshow, directories, newsletters and others should be first on your agenda — in essence, wherever your perfect customer is also targeted, based on the characteristics of your product or customer, should be your first goal.

The second tier comprises of areas that are indirectly related to your customer or product. Your goal would then be to target areas whose target markets are similar to your own or that somehow logically fit into your target market as well (including publications, businesses or websites that target your perfect customer). Examples include software magazines, trade publications, online portals, industry associations, non-competing businesses, etc.

The third and final tier consists of totally unrelated areas that target your perfect customer too (or any one characteristic of your perfect customer). Let's say, through some research, you found that a large percentage of your target market also consists of coffee drinkers. Then areas you would seek are, for example, coffee-related websites, specialty coffee magazines, coffee product stores (e.g., companies selling coffee makers, mugs, espresso machines, etc), coffee shops, books on coffee and so on.

Nevertheless, arm yourself with as much information beforehand and your chances of achieving greater success with your product will be virtually guaranteed. While you can't be everything to everyone, you shouldn't be targeting everyone for everything.

## CHAPTER SIX

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### Be Near and Narrow to Go Far and Wide

*“An expert is one who knows more and more about less and less.”*  
— **Nicholas Murray Butler (1862-1947)**

An important aspect of marketing online is the fact that people have the opportunity to effectively achieve targeted, measurable results. Like in the cosmetic surgeon scenario from the previous chapter, people visiting your website are identifying themselves to you as qualified candidates. Too often however, marketers are told again and again by the web establishment that traffic is the solution to online success.

Based on the law of averages, that premise is not too far off the mark. The more people hit your site (or see your offer), the more responses you will naturally receive. Quantity is therefore an important aspect of surviving online. And to accomplish such, people will sprinkle the likes of banners, posts, hyperlinks, ads and search engine submissions all over the Internet.

It is absolutely true that, if you want a lot of hits, you want your site to be accessible — to be in front of as many eyeballs as possible. But what about quality? Would it matter much if your site generates an incredible quantity of uninterested visitors that will simply never buy from you? Hopefully, it does matter.

However, the challenge facing most people is that they feel they must contend with a choice: Either quantity or quality. But it should not be a choice. The ability to achieve both is possible. In fact, one feeds on the other. By catering to a specific market or niche, your market will come out of the woodwork for you. In other words, the narrower your focus is, the more evident the locations in which your market congregates becomes. Targeting your market becomes simpler when you've carved your specific niche.

Look at it another way: If your online business or your website targets everyone, then your marketing message must therefore be painted with broad brushstrokes in order to appeal to everyone. You have no choice. And the challenge with such an approach is the fact that you will lose a greater percentage of visitors — whether you know it or not.

Visitors will either not fall into your target market at all or, if they do, will likely feel left out or become uninterested fast because your message is too vague and does not appeal to their specific needs — it does not directly answer their specific problem. And there are others who will simply choose another company — one that offers greater perceived value since that competitor caters to them a little more than you do.

## Traffic's Nice... But Who's Driving?

In other words, in the competitive marketplace of the new millennium, the demand for specialized products or services will increase. If your site sells everything or to everyone, chances are that your audience will not perceive a value in shopping from you any greater than from anyone else. Remember that price is never an issue — it is the value behind the price that is. If your value is perceived as equal to that of others, naturally the cheapest alternative will win. If you're too similar, only then will price become an issue.

Let me explain. Price is an arbitrary figure that merely represents the value of an offering. Here's an example: You walk to your local home furnishings store. You ask the sales clerk, "How much for that washer," to which he responds, "\$600." "Wow! That's a lot of money," you exclaim. "The price is way too high for me. I just can not afford that." This is a typical knee-jerk response. Moments later, you walk by a car dealership and notice that favorite new car you've been itching to buy for the last month and a half. You walk in. "It's \$25,000," says the salesperson. "Wow, that's great!" *You drive it off the lot that same day.*

If you could not afford the \$600 washer, why could you afford the \$25,000 car? It's because the value of the car, especially its value in relation to its price tag, was higher *in your mind*. In other words, the perceived value matched or surpassed the price. So price alone is never an issue.

Price is only a metric — a symbol, if you will. And it is only used when there's nothing to which one can compare your value. (I agree that price is not the only metric, either.) Nevertheless, if you're too similar to your competition, price will always be an issue. Therefore, if your value is perceived as equal to that of others, the cheaper alternative wins by default.

In short, the more general you are, the less value you have.

Admittedly, being all things to all people is not a bad concept — of course you will likely stumble onto some people who will respond to your offer. What's bad is the fact you must generate a fairly large quantity of hits in order to produce a satisfactory result. But the sales you can generate will increase dramatically if your site is narrowly centered on a specific theme, product category or outcome. And the need to produce a sufficient quantity of website visitors to produce similar results will lessen considerably.

To illustrate, let's say that your best client is the corporate executive earning \$50,000 annually or more, and that your site receives approximately 200,000 hits per month. If your site's message aims for the public at large, you have a problem. There will only be a small percentage of that ideal market (i.e., corporate execs earning \$50,000) that will hit your site.

For the sake of example, let's say that the percentage of website visitors falling into your core market is around 0.1%. That means that, out of 200,000 visitors, only 200 will fit your perfect customer profile (and that's a very optimistic figure too). And since your site is too general or too vague, an even smaller percentage of those 200 executives — let's say about 0.5% — will be truly interested in your offer and eventually buy. In this case, 0.5% would equal to a mere client for an entire month.

Looking at it in reverse it means that, if you wanted to achieve at least one sale per month from this ideal market, your site will thus require at least 200,000 visitors on a monthly basis. And if you wanted to generate at least one sale per day, it means that you will have to generate over 6 million visitors monthly — so based on the law of averages, your promotional efforts will need to multiply exponentially as to create a high enough quantity of traffic in order to yield acceptable results.

Now take the example of another website dedicated exclusively to corporate executives earning over \$50,000. This site, however, receives only 5,000 hits per month — agreeably, it's not a whole lot, especially when compared to the other. But the percentage of those visitors falling into one's target market will be 100% in this case — and that's a 10,000% improvement!

Furthermore, the percentage of interested leads that are in a much better position to buy will be far higher by virtue of the fact that the site centers on their specific needs, goals and concerns. The perceived value of the site, in other words, will be greater in the mind of those prospects. To be conservative, let's say that this percentage is only 5%. It means that out of 5,000 visitors per month, one can achieve 250 sales — that's 250% more sales than the other (and with only a *quarter* of the traffic).

Of course, the above example is when all things considered are equal — there are many variables here. But the spirit of this illustration is clear: It's the fact that, generally, it took an equal if not lesser investment of time, effort and money to achieve 250 sales per month (eight sales per day) than it did to achieve a single sale for an entire month. Therefore, there is much truth to the statement that you will definitely get more with less. By narrowing your market or focus, you are thus broadening your chances of online success.

## The Little Engine That Could

What about search engines? They too are slowly realizing this need to narrow their focus. People are getting tired if not annoyed of searching through mountains of irrelevant search results. We are bombarded with so much information that the Internet, which is supposed to simplify our lives, seems to be doing the converse. Many search engines have therefore refined their methods as to increase relevancy (such as by adding, among others, link popularity to their website indexing algorithms).

Yahoo is the most popular search directory on the web because, being a human-compiled directory, it offers more relevancy than an automated one. But they too recognize the importance of targeting, which is why they offer keyword-based advertisements (i.e., banners that appear on a search results page based on the specific search term used).

Pay-per-click engines are too becoming vastly popular for the same reasons — take for instance GoTo.com, FindWhat.com, RocketLinks.com and so on. Since one has to pay for the traffic generated from these engines, a lot of the irrelevant fat has been excised as a result. (For a list of such engines, visit <http://www.payperclicksearchengines.com/>.)

However, niche-based portals (i.e., vertical portals, or “vortals”) also offer some promise. Search engines and particularly portal sites are probably the ones where niche orientation is most needed. Vortals offer, as Internet marketer Larry Chase would call it, “Funnel vision instead of tunnel vision.” In other words, they offer a chance to look outwardly at the web from a focused starting point, simplifying browsability and providing needed relevancy to surfing the Internet. For the online business however, vortals offer the ability to be visible among a far more qualified and targeted audience.

Some pundits agree that niche-oriented portals are slowly taking over the web. In an article entitled “Beyond the Portal,” writer Mark Bernstein predicts: “Over the long haul and while high-traffic sites will prosper, the overwhelming majority of webpage visits will be made to and from smaller sites.” Bernstein also comments that one of the fastest-growing applications is the highly specialized site.<sup>8</sup> Web usability expert Dr. Jakob Nielsen once noted: “It is better to be a focused site than a bland portal that tries to do everything.”<sup>9</sup>

A horizontal portal is one that caters to everyone or to a wide array of communities, themes or industries—such as Yahoo, GoTo, Disney's Go Network, AOL, Netscape's NetCenter, etc. But vortals are narrower in focus. They cater to a very specific industry, theme or idea. Their communities may be smaller but they are of higher quality and therefore highly targeted. And more often than not, they have very little competition.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.eastgate.com/HypertextNow/archives/Portal.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/insites/dvorak/jd990524.htm>

Within a more focused environment, vortals typically provide information, like articles, news, research data, statistics, discussion boards, chat rooms, online tools, newsletters and many other services, pertaining to a specific niche. These areas are excellent locations if you're targeting a specific niche in the first place. (In fact, until the dawn of web "vortalization" is upon us, probably the best way for the niche marketer to promote effectively online is through specialized newsletters or "ezines," whose subscriberships logically match one's target market — such as by following the targeting model mentioned earlier.)

According to Webopedia.com, "As the web becomes a standard tool for business, vortals will join and maybe replace general portal sites like AOL and Yahoo as common gateways to the Internet." iVillage at <http://www.iVillage.com/> is one such vortal. It offers news and services geared for women — such as, for example, a planning and calendar program for expectant mothers.

Therefore, if your target market consists mainly of women and especially mothers-to-be, iVillage should definitely be a part of your marketing portfolio. There are many other sites and vortals that cater strictly to women let alone expectant mothers — take <http://www.women.com/>, <http://www.oxygen.com/> and <http://www.chatelaine.ca/>, for example. (In fact, for every marketer there is somewhere on the web a site or a vortal that either directly or indirectly caters to its target market.)

Professional City at <http://professionalcity.com/> is another vortal, which is a directory dedicated to professionals of all kinds. It offers numerous links to professionals, professional associations and self-help sites on various professional services — from law and accounting, to information technology and marketing. It also offers many useful tools and links, such as maps, directions, financial calculators, an online library, currency converters, government resources and research assistance.

Nevertheless, the bottom-line is this: Beyond submitting to the major search engines, if you've narrowed your focus you should also look into registering or even advertising on vortals in your industry (or in an industry that targets your perfect customer). A vortal or specialty search engine, which is used by a large percentage of your target market, should be part of your marketing portfolio as well. (And don't forget geographic portals, especially if your website caters to your local market or a specific location.)

## Mastering Narrow Marketing-Mindedness

Beyond search engines, portals and vortals, the savvy Internet marketer knows that she must go beyond these directories to produce good quality traffic. Search engines do help but they are not a cure-all — they're simply a lazy way to do so with results that can often be mediocre at best. Unquestionably, obtaining favorable, highly visible search engine positioning is both an art and a science.

The Internet is replete with businesses that rely on search engines alone for building their traffic or, worse yet, on search engine tactics that amount to meager results. Successful marketing is not a single process or a simple one, for that matter. It is a combination of multiple concepts and tactics that are, either directly or indirectly, focused on three essential elements: 1) Building *traffic*, 2) building *trust* and 3) building *sales*. Every single online marketing activity you perform, including the use of search engines, must revert to, result in or improve upon any if not all of those three.

Top positioning may bring you a lot of traffic. But the question to ask is: Will that traffic be good, targeted and of high quality? The answer really depends under which words or expressions your site was ranked highly and, subsequently, discovered. And therein is the key: Should your website be ranked higher based on a general keyword or phrase? While it may bring you a lot of traffic, the answer is "No." Why? Because it does not reflect all of the three essential elements mentioned earlier.

Remember this rule: The more *generic* the keyword is, the more *generic* the visitor will be. But on the other hand, the more *targeted* the keyword is, the more *targeted* the visitor will be — not always, of course, but enough of the time to warrant your attention.

You should keep that rule in mind as you're analyzing the results of any of your marketing activities and especially when you're about to perform one. This may sound like an overly simplistic guideline but you would be amazed to know how many people have tried to rank higher on the search engines using broad, generic keywords in order to produce an abundant quantity of traffic, which in the end will never be qualified for, or genuinely interested in, what the site offers.

I'm far from being a search engine expert. However, some proponents argue that search engines statistically drive up to 75% of all web traffic. While it may seem to be a realistic number, it is still quite misleading. The web is populated with millions of websites. Therefore, it equals to very little quality traffic when you distribute the total search engine traffic while keeping in mind that only a small handful of results is relevant and that an even smaller number enjoys the majority of this traffic. (How many people have visited your website only to leave a mere second or two later?)

But this statistic indicates that search engines are important nonetheless. However, the majority of people using search engines tend to leave after the first two result pages given. Unless a site is located in those top ten or twenty listings, search engines will never be helpful. Again, the more generic the keyword used in the search is, the more competition you will have in fighting for those coveted top positions. If you search for the word "music" on AltaVista.com for example, at the time of this writing it will render 48,986,443 URLs — that's almost 50 million websites!

Realize that the Pareto Principle applies to search engines too (also called the "80:20 Rule"). Vilfredo Pareto, an Italian economist and sociologist (circa 1848-1923) studied the distribution of wealth in a variety of countries. He discovered a common phenomenon: A predictable and consistent minority (about 20% of the people) control about 80% of the country's wealth. Since then, his rule has been applied to other fields.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, the minority of input produces the majority of results. But in terms of search engines however, it means that 20% of your efforts will yield 80% of your results. And it also means that 80% of your traffic will stem from only a minority of all search engines. Therefore, keep in mind that only a small handful of those major search engines — as well as a small handful of search engine tactics — are worth your consideration.

## The Search Engine Secret

Therefore, the secret to obtaining optimal search engine ranking is through better, more audience-targeted keywords. Above all, your goal is to attract high quality, highly targeted traffic — traffic consisting of people who, the moment they hit your website, are pre-qualified, quick to trust and easily convertible, and not just curious visitors who will never be qualified for or interested in your offering.

Thus, you need to use keywords that are audience-specific, audience-related or audience-oriented (based on the targeting model mentioned in the previous chapter). Using targeted, market-oriented or niche-specific keywords can make a big difference in not only the level of traffic you generate but also the quality of that traffic — which offers another reason why niche marketing is vitally important on the web.

So you sell cars. But let's also say you sell a specific kind of car (such as sports cars). Let's also say your sports car (let's use the Porsche as an illustration) is intended for an audience in which you specialize (let's say "yuppies," like recent graduates from medical, law and now high tech schools). However, unlike the generic word "car," your chances of being in the top ten will be greater with words or phrases like:

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.indwes.edu/tuesday/s\\_paret.htm](http://www.indwes.edu/tuesday/s_paret.htm)

*“Sports cars, Porsche, red cars, racing, GT, Boxter, car parts and accessories, engineering, classics, 911, Coupe, Carrera, Cabriolet, fast engine, horsepower, racetracks, motor, motorsports, driver, spoiler, travel, automobiles, autos, vehicles, recent graduates, University, doctors, lawyers, affluence, prestige, speed, toys, gears, money, ego, new, German, Mission Impossible 2, Tom Cruise, etc.”*

You may have noticed several keywords in the preceding Porsche example that are, unquestionably, totally unrelated to the website, product or firm (such as “Tom Cruise” or “Mission Impossible 2”). If used within META tags (the components of a webpage that tell some search engines what to do), this type of practice could put you in legal hot water. Laws strictly prohibit the use of trademarks inside a site’s META tags as to siphon traffic away from competitor sites.

So how do you circumvent these restrictions? The answer is simple: *Add more content to your site.* Possibly because of the proliferation of automated, irrelevant doorway pages, search engines are relying less on the keyword META tag and more on keywords found in the body text of the document instead. In fact, unlike redirected, keyword-stuffed doorway pages, additional content will act as doorway pages.

By adding more quality content to your website, you not only increase your site’s “stickiness” but also, as a byproduct, increase the number, frequency and relevancy of keywords and key phrases. For instance, if you write articles about your industry or area of expertise, post news about your firm or product, publish articles from other industry experts (even competitors, if they oblige), add press releases (which you should do constantly), include a directory of favorite or related links, and so on, you naturally increase keywords.

You may ask, “So what about the Porsche example?” Recently, Porsche issued a press release regarding their association with Paramount Pictures. If you’ve seen the movie “Mission Impossible 2,” you may have recognized the 911 Carrera Cabriolet driven by Tom Cruise. And of course, the press release was posted online at Porsche.com.<sup>11</sup> Without the need for putting these words directly in the site’s META tags and thus breaking any laws, search engines will likely recognize the words “Tom Cruise” and “Mission Impossible 2” as keywords within the text.

In conclusion, remember that what’s most important is not so much the frequency of your keywords as it is your choice of them — for the more focused you are on your audience, and on who they are and what they want, the more focused your visitors will be on you and your site in return.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://us.porsche.com/english/news/pressreleases/000704.htm>

# CHAPTER SEVEN

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## Does Your Website Have a Ketchup Stain?

*“Judge not the horse by his saddle.”*  
— Chinese Proverb

I teach marketing and ebusiness part-time at a local college. One day, a student made me realize something and did so in a way by driving home his point using the very idea he was illustrating. While his comment was general in nature, I also realized how well his point applied to the Internet. But before I explain it to you, let me put the story in context so that you can understand what I mean.

In one class we were discussing the natural human inclination to illogically and unconsciously assume that there is a parallel between a part and its whole — if you remember, I dub this human propensity as an “unconscious paralleled assumption.” If you visit a website for example, one whose design is poor, unprofessional or hosted on a cheap server, you will naturally assume that the business behind it or the products it sells are just the same.

The psychology behind UPAs is simply based on the fear of making bad decisions. Human nature dictates. We tend to seek the negative in what we are considering as to ensure the decisions we are making are good ones. For instance, when we are about to buy what a site offers, we will more than likely skim the site entirely (or a good portion of it) to make sure it is telling us the truth, that it is trustworthy and that there is no “fine print” somewhere. We will search for anything contradictory in the slightest.

If something appears to be out of place for any reason, even if it’s a little thing like a typo, we will tend to leave the site quickly or in the very least feel uneasy about the purchase. I call this the “ketchup principle.” And if your site or your marketing message has a ketchup stain, you better watch out!

In my seminars, I give my audiences this scenario: Let’s say you’ve just met a salesperson. He is dressed impeccably, gave a compelling spiel, is knowledgeable about his product, appears as being thoroughly interested in your needs and conducts a perfect meeting with you. But all throughout the encounter, you couldn’t stop noticing that he had a little ketchup stain on his tie. Now, if I were to ask you two weeks later what you remember the most about your meeting with this salesperson, more than likely the first thing that would pop into mind is *the ketchup stain*.

But UPAs can also be the result of people not understanding the meaning of what is being communicated on a website. While we can certainly read the text, understand the basic message and learn about the products that the content describes, the question is, do we truly understand the meaning of the message conveyed? Does the message mean anything to us specifically, in other words?

Too many websites merely describe the products they are selling, claim superior qualities or use a language that only the sellers understand. More than likely, buyers in such cases do understand the content but they do not fully grasp what these products can do for them at an intimate level. Why? The mind thinks in relative terms. It processes information by visualizing or comparing the information it has been given to things it does understand. Remember that words are not actual objects. They are only *symbols*.

## Relatively Speaking

OK, let's go back to the student mentioned earlier. At the end of my lecture, he turns to me, pulls out a chair and places it beside a class table. He then asks me, "What's the difference between this chair and this table?" I said, "One is to sit on and the other is to write on." "No!" he shouted. "Not at all."

I figured he was up to something. "Mike, you're thinking in relative terms," he added. "Sitting and writing are descriptions of each individual item. You've just described to me their individual functions, not their differences. The difference between the chair and the table is their *function*." I then paused for a moment, not fully understanding what he was trying to make me realize.

Noticing my puzzling grimace, he continues with another example. He said: "What's the difference between a tennis ball and a soccer ball? Not that one is smaller and the other is bigger, which is what most people will say. The difference is 'size' and not a description of each ball's size." Aha! Now I understood. As he explained so well, the mind thinks in relative terms. And my lack of understanding was the result of the very thing he was trying to explain to me. *He made an excellent point.*

In other words, we *interpret* what we're being told and we do so by relating it to something else. Keep in mind that words are not the message. They only represent the message and attempt to communicate it. A message is codified (into words) by the sender and is subsequently decoded by the receiver. Hopefully, the message will be decoded in the same way it was originally encoded by the sender.

It is therefore important for your website to use comparisons, metaphors, analogies, picture words and so on so that the mind can easily and fully appreciate what is being communicated. I call these "universal picture words or relatable, descriptive sentences" (or "UPWORDS," for short). With the use of upwords people will understand and retain more. And upwords will also persuade visitors more effectively too.

For example, to explain the benefits of using a backup device on your computer, one can use the video machine as an analogy: "This system will save you a lot of frustration if your computer ever malfunctions. It's like watching your favorite movie that you waited so long to rent, when your VCR suddenly destroys the videotape — especially when an important scene in the movie was about to unfold."

Essentially, think of your visitors — does your website copy communicate in *their* language? Do you provide a frequently asked questions and answers page? Does it explain the product you offer — and particularly its benefits — in relative terms the visitor can intimately understand? If not, then the UPA you will create for your visitors will likely be one that will lead to disinterest, misunderstanding or frustration. And people often react with hostility to a site that confuses them.

Since the Internet lacks touch and feel, people cannot inspect your products. Therefore, your web copy has an increased responsibility. So make sure the UPAs your clients make are good ones. Steer clear of ketchup stains. If you want your visitors to assume that your online business has good customer service and has a great product that's easy to use, then make sure your copy communicates the same.

Here's another example. I once took a media communications course. As part of a given lesson, videotape was shown of a televised newscast during which a journalist was about to give a live report on a forest fire that was devastating the mid-west. The news anchor in the television newsroom said: "We now take you to Sally — she's in the station's helicopter flying above the scene of the fire."

He then turned around to face the background screen, which gave a live bird's-eye view of the raging fire, and asked: "Sally, how big is the fire?" In a voice partially drowned by the whizzing sound of helicopter blades, Sally reports: "John, it's so big it's covering well over 140 acres of land — if I'm not mistaken, for you and me that's about 200 football fields back-to-back."

140 acres of land is a logical measurement. You may or may not understand the size. But whether it does or not, your mind may still not grasp its value (unless you're a land surveyor or architect). If you've never seen and visually appreciated an acre of land in the first place, your mind does not have anything with which to compare it. You may ask yourself, "How big is an acre, anyway?"

The long and short of it is this: Is your site confusion-proof? Can your target market relate to the message it is conveying? For example, if your site is trying to sell a newfangled type of fax machine to people who may have never owned or even used one, do you explain it in a way that makes your product (let alone fax machines in general) easy to appreciate by most people?

## Laws of Flaws

Ketchup stains are not limited to website copy. Website design has also been a fascinating area for me — not entirely in the realm of graphics but also of flow, navigation, appearance and layout. I love to surf the web almost exclusively to learn about different feels and flavors. In the process of doing so, it amazes me to see how some sites appear smooth, professional and refined, while others smack of being put together horrendously quick — even when the companies behind them are reputedly of high quality.

But website design is, in itself, a powerful marketing tool. Many people tend to forget that when others visit a website they will unconsciously assume that a parallel exists between the website's design and the business behind it — not to mention the products or services it promotes. If the design is poor, unprofessional or unclear, the UPA will be that the product and company are the same.

The appearance of your site, which is what appears on a person's computer monitor, is the only thing that separates you from your customer and is thus representative of the whole. It is part of your marketing message — the whole message. And more important, your site's meta-message can emphasize, support or contradict it. It can project greater perceived value but it can also lessen it just as well.

Surprisingly, the most important part of good website design has really nothing to do with graphics, fonts, scripts, colors and so on. It is nonetheless true that they all play a big part. Your site should follow some of the unwritten laws of good design: Minimal yet tasteful graphics; plain, readable font; a solid contrast between text and background; and a nice blend of colors based on a uniform color scheme. Together, they all make a website look professional. But why are professional looks so important?

One of the reasons is surely the web's lack of tangibility. An Internet consumer cannot touch, feel, smell or taste a product description or a potential online purchase. But another reason is the lack of familiarity. An online business may be totally unknown and therefore untrustworthy to the new online consumer.

For example, you enter a store that purportedly offers quality products — such as one focused on kitchenware. But as you enter the store you notice that the shelves are unorganized and dusty, and that posters are placed all over its walls (such as one promoting the latest blockbuster movie to hit the theaters, one announcing the latest car widget to hit the market and one marketing the latest political party to run for office). Now, what will be your initial perception?

Even if the store reputedly offers great products and provides excellent customer service, you will have a natural inclination to assume that their products (let alone their customer service) will be just as disorganized, unprofessional and lackluster — and more than likely you will do this simply based on your initial, unsubstantiated perception. Therefore, if you wouldn't buy from such a store then why would you

buy from a website that is totally disorganized, plastered with banners and affiliate programs, and terribly inconsistent from page to page?

The latter of these is that most important part of good website design mentioned earlier: *Consistency*. While branding your site is not limited to your domain name but also includes your color scheme and layout, they must be consistent throughout your entire site. When a visitor hits it, no matter where that person may happen to land, she will know exactly where she is and with which company she's dealing. As she jumps from page to page, your site's consistency will build identity and credibility.

So here's the number one rule in killing potential ketchup stains with your site: Consistency breeds consistency. In other words, consistent looks lead to consistent sales. Project an aura of expertise and professionalism, and do so on your entire site. If you do, you will see a big improvement in your results. In short, make sure your website is consistent — let alone *consistent with your position*.

## Stick it to me

There is no question that ecommerce is growing rapidly. The reason is certainly the fact that more and more people are going online. It was only recently that the number of online users was predicted to reach 250 million by the year 2005. But according to NUA Surveys, the Internet demography people, the latest numbers indicate that we've surpassed that mark, five years ahead of time, with an online population toppling the 300 million mark in June of 2000.<sup>12</sup>

But are we ready? Maybe. But one thing is for sure: Browsing the web one can easily notice that numerous sites have failed to follow some of the most basic principles of website design. Such storefronts may have great content, professional looks and good entertainment value. But if they are not making any sales, then what's the use of having a website in the first place?

Sergio Zyman, the former Marketing Vice President of Coca-Cola and author of the bestseller, "The End Of Marketing As We Know It," states that marketing's goal is simple — so simple in fact that it is so easily ignored. (Online, we see that problem all too often as well.) As Zyman points out, the true goal in marketing is "to sell more stuff to more people more often for more money."

Webmarketing is no different. The goal is to get more people to visit a website (and to visit it more often), and to buy what it offers (and to buy more often). Without a doubt, that is the number one key to marketing success online. But to achieve this, remember that successful marketing is not just built on advertising and sales. It's a carefully orchestrated symphony of disciplines, strategies and tactics.

Simple website strategic planning is probably the most neglected of all of these — not too many online businesses consider strategic planning as a marketing process in itself. Strategically planning a website is not a simple issue either — it deserves a book of its own. But to get you started, here are some basic tips to guide you in creating an objective-centered website.

Storyboarding is a planning technique used by many cartoonists. The object is to divide the movie into chunks. Producers place multiple sketched sheets on a large wall or corkboard. And each sheet depicts a specific scene in the movie — including the characters that appear at that point in the film, what they do and say, and that particular scene's visuals and sounds (such as special effects and music). By looking at the entire storyboard, they can easily decide what exactly a viewer should see, know and feel with each and every scene of the movie.

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how\\_many\\_online/world.html](http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how_many_online/world.html)

Similarly, in web storyboarding designers can create a chart (often called a “site map”), where each chunk represents a specific webpage. But instead of using sheets, they design small boxes, which can be accomplished with most word processing or graphic design programs. Each box describes a specific webpage and contains a summary of its contents, an idea of its layout and, most importantly, a description of its objective — thus giving each page a specific function within the whole site. Then arrows are drawn between boxes in order to trace user trajectories.

The end result looks similar to a flow chart where each box flows into another (or into many others). And arrows are in fact links between pages — some arrows can be filled, dotted or dashed — the choice of which can represent different outcomes, such as primary trajectories, secondary ones, etc. One can strategically plan, with each box in the chart, what the user is supposed to see, understand and do, as well as where he or she should go next.

But some people prefer the larger, more visual approach used by cartoonists with their corkboards. If this applies to you, then take a series of Post-it notes (i.e., those small, yellow pieces of sticky notes), write a brief summary of the page’s content and purpose on each one, and place them on a wall. Once notes are created for every webpage, the webmaster can then rearrange them, change them around, add some more and remove unneeded ones altogether.

Sticky notes can also be used to determine trajectories and user functions by drawing arrows on additional notes that are placed between consecutive notes that represent webpages. Alternatively, some like to stick their notes on a large bristol or dry-erase board and, with a nonpermanent marker, draw the arrows between each note. The possibilities here are numerous and the technique can be adapted to fit one’s style. In fact, let’s take a look at some examples.

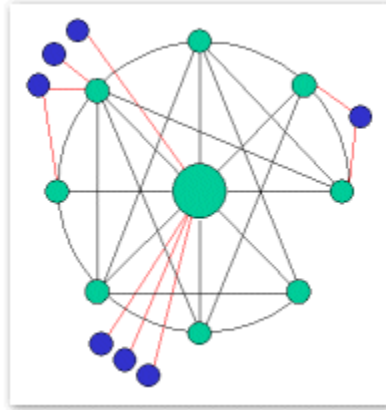
## Going Up, Down or Out?

Generally, there are at least three ways to accomplish storyboarding. The choice relies solely upon your individual preference. One is called the “top-down approach.” A box or note is placed at the very top — usually representing the home page — and others are subsequently placed below it for the rest of the site. In the end, the storyboard looks something like a pyramid; the deeper a user goes into a site, the more pages, content and path choices one will be given (within the larger bottom layers of the pyramid).

The second technique is called the “build-up approach,” which is the reverse of the top-down one. If you already have several ideas for content and outcomes, then you can start with the bottom in this case. You place multiple boxes at the bottom of the storyboard — each one clearly defining a specific idea or purpose (e.g., an order page, its subsequent “thank you” page, an “about us” page, an ezine description page, a product showcase page, a special promotions page, a privacy policy page, an order form and so on).

Boxes are then placed above (even below) them for pages from which some of the others stem or to which others lead. Of course, some parts (or layers) of the storyboard can end up being longer than others, such as those areas that lead to even deeper pages within the site offering more content or choices. But in the end, they all lead to the final page, which in reality is the first or entry page.

The third is the “inside-out approach.” Almost like a star, the center represents the index page while subsequent pages stream outwards. In the illustration below, green dots represent standard pages within the website while the blue ones could represent doorway pages, confirmation pages (after an action has been taken by the visitor) or password-protected pages. Here’s the example:



The method you choose is up to you. But aside from storyboards and website planning, the one thing to keep in mind throughout the whole process is the larger objective around which your entire site must focus. Before designing any site or storyboard, you must first clearly and specifically determine the core objective of the site itself — having it clearly defined from the beginning is *vital*. Afterwards, the key questions you should ask with each and every page in the storyboard are:

- “What do I want my visitors to know here?”
- “What do I want my visitors to do at this point?”
- “What do I want my visitors to feel right now?”
- And “where do I want my visitors to go next?”

Also, you should look at your storyboard from all possible angles and perspectives. If a visitor ever landed on any given page within the site, will that person know where he or she is? Will that person know and can easily choose what she is supposed to do? And more importantly, will that person know where to go from there? Answers to all of the above questions will help not only in planning but also in developing your content, writing your web copy and improving your site’s navigability.

Aside from having an objective in mind and working around it as specifically as possible, you should also plan for contingencies. In other words, you must look at all the possible trajectories, choices and outcomes within the site. If a visitor decides to click into a different part of the site for whatever reason, it must be clear as to what they are supposed to see, learn and do, and where to go next.

Ultimately, you should plan, plan, plan — because, as it is often stated, an online business’ greatest and most feared competitor is not another online company trying to wrestle for the lion’s share of your market, but the potential yet confused shopper who cries out: “What am I supposed to do?”

In short, confusion on any website is one huge ketchup stain. *Be confusion-proof.*

# CHAPTER EIGHT

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## Create Credibility to Compel Customers

*“All credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth come only from the senses.”*  
— Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900)

The catalyst behind the explosive growth of the Internet, as well as the fall of many dotcoms, is not the online business or the web itself. It's people. Since the web is completely end-user driven, no matter where the web goes *people will always be the driving force behind it*. Companies that neglect that very point will be in for a big surprise if they haven't been already.

We need to recognize the individual and do so more than ever before. Since the very beginnings of the web we've been habituated to speak to a computer monitor or to communicate with others within that narrow frame of mind. And we do so all the while forgetting, to some extent, that there's a real, live, breathing human being on the other end.

Sadly, we see a trend growing everyday. Flamers in discussion groups or in email conversations keep telling others to never take their abrasive comments personally. Spammers keep invoking their rights over those of others when in the process of peddling their wares (such as with the infamous “Murkowski Bill”). And online businesses keep justifying their attempt to increasingly automate their operations as a way to “better serve” their customers.

But if such a trend is growing, or just the fact that such activities do occur, it's because there is a reality behind it all. The reality is that we are slowly recognizing these human beings behind these electronic veils — real people with wants, goals and desires. While that level of recognition is not entirely adequate (for if it were the need to justify our actions, as mentioned above, would be nonexistent), it is nonetheless a step in the right direction.

In essence, the human species is a social one — and the web will never change that. Business success has always hinged greatly on the way we treat people. However, the Internet takes away the social experience. Therefore, the more automated and the less human the web becomes, the more this dependence will strengthen over time.

Now, this may all seem like theory (and to some it may seem like rhetoric) that's reserved for larger corporations. But the fact is that, when we put our businesses online, most of us tend to neglect our customers with the belief that the web is an automated robot and thus requires less human interaction. Either that or we design sites that become mere silent billboards in cyberspace that fail to interact with our visitors. We suffer from an all too common disease called “build-it-and-they-will-come.”

In short, we forget that we lack total credibility online and there is no need to develop it. Of course, the “build-it-and-they-will-come” syndrome is bad. But the “build-it-and-they-will-buy” is worse. Compelling sales copy and a truly irresistible offer will surely generate a few sales. But the number one reason websites create endless streams of new, repeat and referral business is because they have created a sense of credibility with their audiences. And in this faceless electronic world, credibility is crucial.

## Guarantee Your Credibility

Since online companies are unknown to most people, the preponderance of scams, schemes and snake oils on the web make guarantees more essential than ever. They can create almost instant credibility with prospects. There is an immense power behind them and there’s no better place than the Internet to use them. While some believe that guarantees are outdated, overused, ineffective or unwarranted, they fail to understand the true nature of guarantees specifically on the web.

Most importantly, these companies fail to grow their businesses to the level they could become. For instance, some businesses actually thrive on guarantees. Take for instance Domino’s Pizza. Tom Monaghan’s once fledgling pizzeria has literally turned into a multimillion-dollar franchise corporation built entirely on the strength of a single guarantee: “Delivered fresh in 30 minutes or it’s free, guaranteed.”

But how do guarantees work on the web?

Guarantees can also be used as positioning tools. For example, Domino’s Pizza is famous more for its augmented product (i.e., its home delivery) than its core product (i.e., its pizza). They do not claim as having the best pizza with the best ingredients and the best price. There are no claims of superiority, here. But they guarantee their augmented product, turning it into a viable and highly profitable position. (I’ll return to this critical point, in much greater detail, in chapter 11.)

With guarantees, companies subtly communicate that they have faith in their product or service. With the lack of a guarantee, the UPA generated among consumers is one with which the company does not have any faith in its product. Just as some companies fail to offer guarantees as to prevent unneeded refunds, consumers fail to buy for the same reasons. They will unconsciously assume that the company is having problems or a lot of returns with their products. If not, then why wouldn’t they offer a guarantee?

Another UPA is that a company failing to provide a guarantee will be regarded as some “fly-by-night” operation. Even if the firm is solidly established, people will still unconsciously assume that, like a snake oil peddler in the 1800s traveling from town to town, the company only wants to sell its defective product, collect the cash, close up shop and skip town quickly thereafter. Just as businesses need to recognize their customers behind their computer monitors, customers too need to recognize that there are companies behind the websites they encounter... But that’s not *their* responsibility.

People not only love guarantees but also will choose, when given the choice, companies that offer the least amount of risk in the decision-making process. They will choose one company over another when there’s an implicit added value in their choice. Guarantees increase a site’s perceived value and will position it higher in the mind. If you place two companies offering the same product, at the same price and in the same way, but where one offers a guarantee while the other does not, the one with the guarantee will be perceived as a superior choice.

The stronger the guarantee is, the more credible you are and the more sales you will create. A 90-day guarantee will outperform a 30-day one. A one-year guarantee will outperform a six-month one. And a guarantee that will offer an additional bonus customers may keep — in appreciation for their time, trouble and consideration — will outperform any money-back guarantee. But that’s not all. A completely risk-reversed guarantee — where the fee or price is paid after the product has been received, tried and reviewed — will always outperform any refund-based guarantee.

If you still feel that you can not offer guarantees, or if your type of work or industry stops you from doing so (as in the case of cosmetic surgeons who are legally prohibited from promising esthetic results), there are three key areas you may want to consider: 1) Does your product or service provide a measurable result? 2) Can it be easily replaced? 3) And do you offer additional products or services outside your core portfolio? If you're not prepared to give a full-money back guarantee, you might want to consider adding or changing something instead, like a bonus for example. Any form of risk reversal is better than none at all.

Let's look at some examples. You're a sales training consultant offering seminars on sales productivity. You might want to offer a guarantee that promises an increase in your client's sales by, say, 25% following your seminar. If this objective has not been reached within a specific amount of time, you could then offer an additional seminar or one-on-one consulting with some of the sales agents for free as part of your guarantee. But don't leave it at that — brand your guarantee just as well.

For example, you're a marketing consultant. You don't really have a guarantee. But you're also a contingency consultant where most if not all of your compensation is based on a percentage of the client's profits. While you or others in your industry may be offering this already, put a name on this service so to make it appear as a guarantee (and to make it stand out), such as the "Profit Maximizer" or "Pay-for-Performance-not-Platitudes" guarantee.

Your prospects will be converted into customers more easily and will be less inclined to return your products because your guarantee implies faith in the product or service by your company. If the prospect perceives that doing business with you has some added value, which in this case is the lessened risk, even if that which you offer is identical to your competition, you will be perceived as a superior choice — and that perception will cause most prospects to think twice before returning your product.

The common belief that offering a guarantee will entice more returns is false. Granted, it has been my experience that returns or refunds will be higher with a guarantee. But the ratio of refunds against sales will be less than if you were *not to offer one*. The stronger the guarantee is, the more sales you will generate and the less returns, per capita, you will receive.

While the greater portion of my career has been in sales and marketing consulting and speaking, I have spent many years in direct marketing and three years on the web. And one of my favorite marketing "gurus" is Dan Kennedy. If there is one lesson that he teaches from which I derive the most profitable results in my direct marketing efforts is the awesome power behind the use of guarantees — something Dan preaches vehemently.

Dan states that, when you offer a guarantee, you reduce the skepticism around the purchase of your product or service. Consumers are understandably cautious when making purchases via the web. For example, if you have a professionally-looking website, an ethical sales approach and even a proven product or service, the lack of a guarantee will still, particularly on the Internet, cause most prospects to perceive your offer as questionable in the very least.

Chris Ayers, an Internet marketer and founder of the newsletter Unlimited Traffic, gives an astonishing real-life example. Writes Ayers, "One of my first direct mail products years ago was a self-study program. When I first offered the program in a magazine, my sales weren't even enough to cover the cost of the ad. I changed my ad and sales letter to include a guarantee. The number of responses to the same ad increased by a factor of 20 and my conversion rate from my sales letter rose from 10% to almost 40%."

The parallel obviously dictates: While people order from the web because of the convenience it offers, an offer that provides a no-hassle return policy (or a risk-free promise) adds to the convenience factor and instills a greater confidence in the buyer's psyche. If you offer a product or service, find ways to offer a guarantee along with it. Rather than taking a risk by removing it from your potential clients' decisions, you will likely be decreasing both your risk and your customers' risk.

## “Tangibilize” to Tantalize

Surveys show that the one great challenge people have found — as both online marketers and consumers — is the lack of tangibility in transacting over the web. In other words, how does one sell let alone buy something that one can not touch, feel, taste, hear or smell (or even see in person)? When one comes to think about it, it’s a great challenge indeed. Some of my students in my ebusiness class have asked me this question over and over.

The benefit of buying from a retail store and in person is surely the ability to inspect products, let alone the ability to meet the people with whom one is doing business. Rapport can be easily developed when meeting clients face-to-face and products can also undergo their close scrutiny. But on the Internet, ecommerce changes all that — those abilities have completely *disappeared*.

So an important task is to market a product online in such a way that people can easily buy with the mere information they receive — which in many cases is not a whole lot, considering the timeframe within which the information must be communicated. More important, that task is multiplied since an online business must also develop a certain level of trust with its customers. Merchant fraud is just as common as consumer fraud. Therefore, building trust online is critical — and any step that helps to increase that trust, in any way, will position your firm more favorably in the mind.

Here’s an example. Used car store iMotors.com supplies with every car they sell a vehicle history report called “CarFax.” In other words, people cannot send used cars to a third party for inspection, so people can receive a detailed history about the vehicle that they are considering buying online. (In fact, since a car online lacks tangibility, including the customary “test” drive, iMotors.com also offers a unique 7-day, 700-mile money back return policy — talk about a credibility builder!)

Similarly, beyond guarantees there are several other elements that can help to add a certain dimension to an often-dimensionless online offering. These elements help to somewhat “tangibilize” the intangible, in other words. And they also help to position the firm in the mind as a superior choice, since they also increase *perceived* value particularly when compared to an intangible online competitor.

Here are some examples of such elements. Whether it’s books, cookware, jewelry or even software, pictures talk. As the saying goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” But pictures alone are not enough. Pictures can also turn your website into a three-dimensional catalogue. For example, add a scan of the product — like Amazon.com does with its books. But in addition, make it look three-dimensional as well — like eBook Cover Art does at <http://www.ebook-cover-art.com/> or eBook Cover Services at <http://ebooksearchengine.com/covers.html>.

If you offer something that’s intangible in the first place (such as a software program, even when it’s downloaded directly from the website and never actually packaged or shipped), then give that “something” some dimension. In other words, give your visitors a three-dimensional shot of your software package, such as Paint Shop Pro at <http://www.paintshoppro.com/> or RingCentral at <http://www.ringcentral.com/>.

If you sell jewelry, publish thumbnail pictures of your necklace line beside its product description. Add pictures from different perspectives too. Some sites use Flash graphics to accomplish this, while others provide digitized video. (A great example of the latter is NoBrainerBlinds.com, a site selling vertical and horizontal blinds. But like their domain name implies, they simplify the ordering process by offering Real Video footage on how to properly measure one’s windows before ordering the blinds.)

If you offer a product or a service that alters or enhances the appearance of something, then provide before-and-after pictures. For example, a construction company offering skylight installations, Sun Star Skylights at <http://www.sybren.net/sunstar/>, shows the changes to a room that this type of lighting offers. A hair transplant surgeon, like Dr. David Seager at <http://www.seagerhairtransplant.com/gallery.html>, gives visitors an idea of how hair transplants look after the hair has grown on his patients.

In short, give something people can visually appreciate. Texts tell but *pictures sell*.

In “Personal Selling” by Ronald Marks, the author states that multimedia sales presentations capture a prospect’s attention and arouse interest more effectively by appealing to all the senses. Marks claims that prospects are will pay 26% more attention, are 43% more likely to be persuaded and retain knowledge 38% better. On the web, the rich and streaming media industry is likely growing for those reasons. But until they become standards, some of the simplest things can help — pictures being one of them.

But what if you sell a service? Graphics can also help. Adding a logo on your site that represents your intangible product and especially its core benefit gives it an element of tangibility. In addition to logos, offering graphs or charts as indicators of the service’s performance can also help because they emphasize the benefits. Take for instance the raging bull logo as well as the graphs that appear on Merrill Lynch’s site at <http://www.merrillynch.com/>.

Can your product or service be sampled somehow? Free trials help consumers to get a taste of what is being sold before they make their decisions to actually buy. Samples sell too, not only because they’re free but also because they help to reassure the client about the value of what is being considered. Virtually all products and services can, in some way, be sampled. Because of their nature, websites may be limiting but also offer a plethora of alternate possibilities. For example:

- A software program can be turned into a time limited shareware download.
- An online media kit can be presented to an interested advertiser.
- A free online consultation (conducted by email, a website form, a discussion board or an online chat) can demonstrate the value of a service provider’s expertise.
- A publisher can offer a few free chapters (or just the table of contents) from its books.
- A real estate agent can offer free property assessments (in the form of an online quiz).
- A website selling exercise equipment can offer a free, downloadable ebook offering tips on how to exercise effectively (both in general and particularly with the equipment).
- A downloadable and printable coupon can provide visitors with a free trial offer.
- A retailer can offer free screen savers, greeting card services or mini-applications.
- And the list goes on and on.

But what if you really have nothing to offer for free? In that case, offer a more economical alternative. In reality, a cheaper alternative is a paid sampling of the more expensive one (often called a “lead generator”). It helps to entice customers into buying the central product or service. Sampling aside, these lead generators also help to isolate qualified prospects from suspects. In fact, it is more effective to market subsequent (and larger) offers to an audience that has identified itself as being more qualified.

## It’s a Question of Credibility

A page offering stock answers to common questions, often called a “frequently asked questions” page (or “FAQ,” for short), is a great sales tool as well. Ask the following three questions:

- “What are the most common questions asked about my product, company or website?”
- “What are the most common misconceptions about my product or service?”
- And “What kinds of objections would I get if I sold my product in the offline world?”

Offering FAQs offers three important benefits. 1) It helps to allay any concerns the customer may have about your product. 2) It may answer questions that a customer may not have at that time, which helps to strengthen the sale and reduce post-purchase remorse (what psychologists call “cognitive dissonance”). And 3) it reduces the greatest killer of sales: *Procrastination*.

In fact, FAQs are also great places to preemptively handle objections a customer may have about your offer, especially those regarding usability, performance, customer service, privacy and security issues

(although privacy and security policies should have their own, respective pages). Such answers should also address the “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “why,” “how” and “how much” that were not answered anywhere else on the site. They can also link to pages in which further details are provided.

Similar to the fact that superiority should never be claimed but implied as to avoid any perception of bias, testimonials can provide much needed believability in the online world. When my friend and respected ecommerce consultant, Dr. Ralph Wilson of <http://www.wilsonweb.com/>, mentioned one of my articles in his popular “Web Marketing Today” newsletter, my traffic soared and my email inbox became flooded with emails from people who respect Dr. Wilson. Of course, the result was instant credibility.

In my early practice, I’ve worked with cosmetic surgeons. And a patient being consulted for surgery typically has concerns about pain. Now, if the doctor claims that the procedure is painless his statement will be somewhat believable. (The fact that he is a doctor does imply a certain level of credibility. However, in the world of elective, fee-based cosmetic surgery doctors can often appear as self-interested salespeople to some patients. Pain is nonetheless a concern for most people, regardless of how credible the doctor is.)

On the other hand, how much more believable will the doctor’s statement be if he provided a written testimonial letter from another patient, one who had the same concern prior to surgery, in which he claimed that the procedure was indeed painless? And better yet, how much more believable will the doctor be if he pulled out several such testimonials? The answer is obvious.

Fully source-identified, verifiable testimonials are enormously effective credibility-building tools. In here I mean testimonials with full names and addresses (e.g., postal or email addresses, URLs or company names). Web URLs are a plus because people can *instantly* verify the testimonial’s author. A bigger plus are testimonials that are quantifiable, devoid of hype, skinny on superlatives and balanced (i.e., they offer both the negatives and the positives). The more balanced the testimonial is, the more believable it will be.

While posting an outright negative testimonial is not a profitable endeavor, if it is among other positive ones or if a testimonial is based on an impartial review of the product or service, such testimonials will carry more weight than those from J.K. of an unknown city in Missouri who wrote, “Wow! You’re the greatest! You’re the best! You’re amazing! You’ve got my firstborn ... Etc.”

Offering visitors the ability to post their reviews online is one such technique — much like Amazon.com does with its books and Download.com does with its software. Another technique is to conduct a survey among clients or to freely offer samples in exchange for reviews or publishable comments. But offering a simple form on your website giving visitors the opportunity to send their comments is the easiest way. If you receive a lot of emailed comments like I do, then testimonials will be fairly easy to compile (with the authors’ permission to reprint the messages, of course).

Merging your FAQ page with your testimonials is also a powerful technique. Like a targeted banner that appears on Yahoo when a certain keyword is searched, testimonials can appear near (or on the same page as) specific answers to commonly asked questions — especially if they support or emphasize the points being made. Testimonials add a certain level of humanness to your FAQ as well.

Here’s an example. Questions your clients commonly have about your product, business or site appear in the form of links. Like a table of contents, they lead to subsequent pages or further down the same page. (To illustrate, see Merriam-Webster’s single-paged FAQ at <http://www.m-w.com/help.htm>, Netscape’s download FAQ at [http://home.netscape.com/download/download\\_faq.html](http://home.netscape.com/download/download_faq.html) or Yahoo’s search FAQ at <http://docs.yahoo.com/docs/info/faq.html>.)

If you can obtain comments from clients who had previous concerns about your product, then a question in your FAQ encompassing such a concern can lead to an answer coupled with brief testimonials from other people who had similar objections. Here’s an example. A question in the FAQ is then linked to the answer, which is accompanied with a testimonial, as follows:

- **Question:** “Why should I buy my vitamins from you?”
- **Answer:** “ABC Vitamins are made with the safest and highest quality ingredients, manufacturing processes and quality control standards. But the greatest benefit people enjoy is the fact that ABC makes ordering simple. You need only register once. ABC Vitamins will then put you on an automated reorder plan so that you don’t have to think about ordering again. Less worry. Less bother. In short, with our unique ‘Vita-Sure’ plan we will always make sure you never run out.”
- **Example:** “I love ABC’s Vita-Sure. As a professional, I don’t have time to keep track and reorder my vitamins. ABC not only makes my life healthier, it also makes it simpler.” (Ima Customer, Massachusetts)

In the end, keep in mind that the buying process in the invisible world of cyberspace can be a hurdle for most customers. But by giving something customers can appreciate, like guarantees, pictures, answers to common questions and testimonials, the hurdle can be removed or, in the very least, lowered to some extent. The more you lower that hurdle, the more credible, believable and palatable your product becomes.

# CHAPTER NINE

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## Pull Them in to See What's in

*“An ounce of emotion is equal to a ton of facts.”*  
— **John Junor**

When you meet people for the first time and introduce yourself, what do you usually say? For example, do you say: “Hi, my name is Michel Fortin, I’m a marketing consultant (or whatever it is you do)”? Remember that this is called an “elevator speech,” like the speech you would give to a person whom you’ve just met in the elevator as a way to introduce yourself, your company or your product. And it’s also one you have to make very quickly — usually within thirty seconds or less.

But if we examine the previous example, which is comparable to what the majority of people say when they meet other people for the first time, you can see how such a speech will be easily forgotten or ignored. Therefore, why do so many websites begin with the words “Welcome to [Company’s] Website,” “Home Page of [Company]” or some other boring, universal headline?

What I call the “primary screen,” it’s the first screen (or screenshot) that appears when browsers download a site’s front page, without any scrolling. It’s also the most important part of any website. This screen must communicate within a very short amount of time the most important benefit people will receive out of browsing further into your site. Your introduction is therefore the catalyst that will influence people to be interested in your site and browse further into it.

Think about it: How often do you forget a name immediately after someone has introduced herself to you? Similarly, how often do people hit your website’s front page only to leave mere seconds later?

Consequently, if you are introducing your site to your visitors that way your statement will be easily forgotten because it will not create any lasting top-of-mind awareness. And more importantly, it will certainly not arouse enough interest to get people to surf deeper into your site. Like a business card that’s tucked away and gathering dust in the Rolodex (or even the “round file”), most people will never return to your site if you didn’t sufficiently capture their attention the first time, even if they *bookmarked* your site.

With newspapers, the front-page headlines can make the difference between mediocre sales and profitable publishing. Like the primary screen, they call this the section “above the fold” (i.e., the uppermost part of the newspaper’s front page). When a newspaper is folded and placed either inside a vending machine or on a newsstand counter, the section above the fold is the first thing people see when they are contemplating buying that day’s issue. Headlines can therefore make or break the paper.

And newspaper editors know this, which is why they work exhaustively in making their newspapers' above-the-fold section as enticing as possible in order to get more people to buy them. So the choice of front page pictures, headlines and stories are crucial. Why would a website's front page be any different?

## Stick Like Glue, not Like a Stain

In the web's fast paced, click-happy, "flash-across-the-screen" environment, your website's primary screen has to be good enough but also brief enough to entice people within an extremely short amount of time — and that's only a matter of a few seconds (perhaps even microseconds). Therefore, the first few words people read must captivate today's leery and undiscerning audience, and it must compel them to read, scroll or surf further into your site. Consequently, your headline is the most important part of your website.

Every single day, your customers are bombarded with a continuous flow of information and marketing messages, and the competition for their attention is exceedingly fierce. For example, if I were to ask you to name the last ten websites you visited, and if they did not communicate anything that benefits you specifically or you did not visit these sites with a purpose in mind, you will likely be stumped.

Niche marketing on the web is particularly important for that reason. If your site is unique, specialized, theme-centered and focused, people will be inclined to surf deeper into your site once they hit the first page. Why? It is because it fills a specific need. It serves a specific purpose. The content will be far more credible and visitors will be more easily led to successful outcomes since visitors are in fact pre-qualified the moment (and even before) they hit your site.

But once they do hit your site, your introduction needs to "take them by the hand." Ask yourself the following key questions: "Why should people buy from me?" "Why should they listen to or read what I have to say?" And better still, "Why should they even remember me at all?" The answer to all of these questions will help you in developing your headline. And the answer is to think in terms of *benefits*.

The word "benefit" has been seriously misinterpreted in the last few decades. Business owners often assume that benefits are in fact features — even apparently "great" features. Either that or they think that the kinds of benefits that will appeal to most people are the same kinds that appeal to the business owner. "But this is a great benefit," one business owner told me. "Yes, it is. But it is not stated in terms that appeal to your visitors' ego," I replied. In short, be *egocentric* (with that I mean your customer's ego). And most importantly, be emotional, not logical.

Famous sales trainer Zig Ziglar once said that people buy on *emotion* but justify their decision with *logic*. He calls it "emotional logic." In terms of a website, one must sell on emotion (including the process of selling visitors on entering the site in the first place) and then back it up with logic. In other words, provide emotional value with your headline and the primary screen's first few words. Then offer product features.

Agreeably, developing benefits and translating them into terms that appeal to one's emotional logic is not an easy task. In a subsequent chapter, you will learn how to effectively develop emotion-packed, egocentric benefits. Until then however, realize that good first impressions are not only meant to persuade but also to position your site as to have the visitors easily remember you, especially in a positive way. When a person does need your product at some point in the future, or if such a need is ever discussed with others, your website will come up instantaneously.

But those unique, first time visitors are the most crucial. According to an AdKnowledge.com study,<sup>13</sup> most people who will buy from you (over sixty percent of them) will do so within the first thirty minutes of

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<sup>13</sup> [http://www.engage.com/adknowledge/oar/oar\\_docs/oar\\_3rdqtr00.pdf](http://www.engage.com/adknowledge/oar/oar_docs/oar_3rdqtr00.pdf)

visiting your site. Therefore, you only have a few precious seconds to get your customer's attention and close the sale — if not, many will leave never to return again, no matter how good your site is.

So don't just give a plain name and title introduction. Use your unique company name, your tagline as well as the benefits you provide — the results you offer and not just the activities you perform or the products you sell — the moment people hit your website. Not only will such an introduction arouse interest but it will also make your name stick in the minds of people.

Here are some examples. Instead of saying, “Welcome to Dr. John Doe's Website, Certified Plastic Surgeon,” say, “Profoundly impact the quality of your life through positive and lasting changes in your appearance with the help of lifestyle enhancement specialist, Dr. John Doe.” Can you see the difference?

Here's another. Let's say you sell an email program with special spam filters. Rather than saying “Welcome to Baxter Software's Website” or “The Home of Productive Email 2.0,” say, “Do you need a better, more feature-rich email program that will cut your time in half and save you tons money that's wasted in handling, tracking or filtering unwanted email? Productive Mail 2.0 offers a new, intelligent, user-friendly interface no email program should ever be without! You can even try it for 30 days, FREE!”

## The Ad for the Ad

Why is the headline so important? Many sites use boring or unappealing headlines as if they were supposed to be mere summaries or descriptions of the sites. And it still surprises me when I encounter websites with headlines that do not communicate precise, immediate and *direct* benefits — a direct benefit is one that directly communicates the reasons why the site should be navigated in the first place.

Like the headline of an ad, a website headline is not meant to advertise the business, product, service, site, sale or event. It's not a summary of the website either. It's meant to advertise the advertisement. It's the ad for the ad. A resume for instance is not meant to land a job but to land an interview. A headline is, in the very same way, meant to land the reader's attention and arouse their curiosity in surfing further. Once you've captured their attention, then and only then interest and desire should be developed.

Additionally and more importantly, keep in mind that, online, people scan. They don't have time — and there is so much information to digest. So they scan until something catches their eye. For example, how many times have you read a website (or even a regular newspaper, for that matter) by jumping from headline to headline until you found something that appeals to you?

You may have heard of the “AIDA formula,” which stands for, in order: 1) Attention, 2) Interest, 3) Desire and 4) Action. Ads must follow this formula in order to be the most effective. Websites are no different. The first part of this simple formula refers to the headline and it is where most sites usually fail. If the headline does not command enough attention, then the rest of the formula, even if the site or the sales copy is really effective, fails. People will likely leave the site at the click of a mouse. To help you, here are three tips on how to increase the attention factor in your front page's headline.

### **The Gapper**

Usually, there is a gap between the prospect's problem and its solution. But the truth is that many prospects do not know that there is in fact a problem or at least, because it is a problem in the first place, try to ignore it. Therefore, a headline that communicates the presence of such a gap or widens it will most likely appeal to those who can immediately relate to it — people who do suffer from such a problem.

In other words, those who are attracted by the headline always had the problem in the back of their minds and were aware there was a gap, possibly at an unconscious level. If they did solve their problem in the past, they wouldn't be qualified for your offering in the first place, no matter how hard you try to sell them.

But for those who are qualified, the gapper headline merely brings the problem back to the top and causes them to read further. Hence, they want to know by reading further how they can *close* that gap.

To use a headline that conveys a problem not only makes the reader aware that there is one but also reinforces it in the mind. The next few words (either in the subheadline or the first few lines of the body text) demonstrate that the solution exists somewhere further in the site. For instance, if your website sells a way to save or make money, your headline must subconsciously tell the reader: “Got money problems? Then come in and I’ll show you how to get rid of them.”

Of course, with the last example one could use a more positive tone and focus on the moneymaking benefit rather than the converse. But gappers are effective because they appeal to stronger motives. Psychologist Abraham Maslow<sup>14</sup> defined the hierarchy of human needs and motives. He states that our need to survive is a human being’s primary motive. The need for safety is next. (The pyramid then climbs all the way up to the need for self-actualization, in order.) Survival and safety therefore are at the core of human motivation.

A principle somewhat related to Maslow’s finding is the pain-pleasure principle. It states that people have a tendency to either avoid pain or strive towards pleasure. In anything we do, we want to solve a problem or gain an advantage. But when given the choice between the two, avoiding pain is the stronger motive. The emotions attached to pain are superior. *Our need to survive and be safe takes over.*

Therefore, a headline that communicates a negative situation or a problem (i.e., a painful situation or a potentially painful one that could arise without the benefits of one’s offering) will have more emotional impact than a pleasurable one. It also instantly communicates to those who associate to its message.

For example, when I work with plastic surgeons I often tell them to place as a headline for their ads, “Are you suffering from wrinkles?” Immediately, patients who can instantly relate to the ad will more than likely be qualified and thus read the ad in its entirety. They do so for two reasons. First, the headline appeals to those who have wrinkles. In other words, they fit the surgeon’s *demographics*. And second, the headline appeals to those suffering from wrinkles — the surgeon’s *psychographics*. In other words, not only do they have wrinkles but they also want to do something about it. (Not everyone actually “suffers” from wrinkles.)

This technique is applicable in almost all cases. Think of a negative situation that is now present, or one that will occur without the benefits of your product or service. For example, if you’re selling insurance the gapper could be: “Due to improper or insufficient insurance coverage, millions of dollars are lost every 8 minutes,” or, “Trying to save \$300 we lost over \$300,000! A true story,” or, “Don’t let a \$50,000 dollar medical bill compound your grief — Yes! It can happen to you.”

## **The Freebie**

Countless studies have shown that a technique in advertising, which can double and sometimes even triple the readership of an ad, is the use of a simple, single, four-letter word: That word is “free.” It’s no different on the Internet. People are and will always be attracted to freebies. Freebies, in an ad or on a website, can generate a lot of response. In a headline however, a freebie can multiply the response rate exponentially.

If your site offers anything for free, and if it is clearly indicated in the front-page headline, your site will be more compelling to surf. Therefore, offer a free sample, product, information package or service of some kind. It could be a free download, a free service, a free screensaver, a free chat room, a free email account, a free ebook, a free newsletter subscription, etc — even a free consultation or trial. Inviting people to obtain their freebie, be it to subscribe to a free newsletter or download a free tool, should therefore appear in the web browser’s primary screen.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.connect.net/georgen/20maslow.htm>

But of all freebies, the free report is my personal favorite. While adding more content does increase the “stickiness” of a site, people love to soak up new information for the same reasons expressed in the gapper. In other words, since learned experience is more cost-effective and much less time-consuming than that which has been learned *from* experience, offering free information, particularly “how to” information, is always a great motivator. Based on the pain-pleasure principle, people love free reports because they don’t want to make mistakes and thus learn how to avoid them.

Let’s say you’re a computer consultant to large offices. Your website headline can state: “Free report! The 10 biggest computer mistakes businesses make.” Or you can use: “Browse this site and learn 8 surefire strategies on how to improve paperflow efficiency by 67% — Free!” Another is: “Are your computers bug-proof? Click here to read my free article on ways to find out if the recent surge in computer viruses can cost you thousands in lost revenue — and how to avoid them!” (The last example contained both gapper and freebie. Obviously, this headline would be more effective.)

Again, top-of-mind awareness is not limited to a name or a brand. It also includes the process of bringing a specific need, desire or problem to the top of a person’s mind. If your site’s front page increases that top-of-mind awareness the moment people hit it, the chances of your site being navigated — as well as the chances of people taking some kind of action — will be far greater.

## **The Director**

Here’s a question to ask yourself: “What exactly do I want my visitors to do?” It may be a simple question but the sheer number of sites that neglect this simple rule would surprise you. An effective website must have a clear objective that will lead to a specific action or outcome. And the “KISS” principle (i.e., “keep it simply straightforward”) is immensely important in accomplishing this.

For instance, is your website meant to be like a resume that only advertises the fact that you are open for business? Or is it to: Generate qualified leads? Sell products or services? Solicit inquiries? Increase memberships? Convert clients of competing websites? Boost downloads? In other words, don’t be vague, for the mind hates confusion. Visitors can only do one thing at a time. If they have to do too many things on the front page, they will do nothing.

Essentially, keep your message as focused as possible. Use one major theme and revolve your message around it. The more focused it is, the easier it will be to direct people’s attention. Your headline must “take readers by the hand” based on this primary objective — it must be just as focused. If your headline tries to announce multiple items it will only distract visitors and compel them to leave.

Often, a director headline begins with a verb that tells readers what to do and what they get from your site. For example, it could begin with the words “learn,” “discover,” “find,” “get,” “read,” “see,” “earn,” “visit,” “surf,” “join,” “sign up” and so on. On the other hand, it can use action words that paint vivid pictures in the mind. Rather than saying, “Poor management leads to financial woes,” use, “Don’t let poor management *suck* money right from your bottom-line.” People can picture the action of “sucking” more than they do “leading.”

The director is probably the most important of all three (and can be used with the other two) since the web is a direct marketing process and not just a medium. And the first element that helps a site to become more interactive with its visitors is a headline that not only compels them but also *propels* them. Don’t let visitors guess what they must do or what they will get from your site. Tell them. For example, a real estate agent’s website has the following director: “List your home with me and start packing!” Here are other examples:

- “**Learn** how to...”
- “**Discover** where is...”
- “**Subscribe** to our...”
- “**Find out** how many...”
- “**Explode** your profits by...”

- “**Increase** your chances through...”
- “**Make way** for...”
- And so on.

## Go Benefits or Go Bust

When you are in the process of buying a book for instance, the one thing that has attracted you is the book’s cover. If the proverb “don’t judge books by their covers” exists, it is because we as human beings have the natural inclination to do so. It’s human nature. Therefore, the front page of your site should be treated like the cover of your book and should entice readers to take action, which is at least to surf further.

So have your primary screen focus on your site’s major benefit, and keep your copy to the point. Use bold, attention-grabbing headlines and subheadlines (even surheadlines, if possible) to emphasize the major theme — the core benefit that your site offers. In fact, list the benefits. Why should a visitor surf your site? What’s in it for her? Communicate to the visitor the reasons why she should browse further.

A great technique is to use a bulleted list of benefits. In copywriting, bullets have a tremendous number of advantages. Again, in a fast paced environment people usually scan webpages they first visit — seldom do they read them. Bullets therefore direct the eye — in fact, along with paragraph headings bullets are often read before the rest of the copy. Bullets also give the reader a visual break. They are more appealing since they are short and to the point. And they are more effective because they are clustered for greater impact.

Additionally, the primary screen is not only your book’s cover but also its table of contents. As a result, bullets can point out the many benefits your site offers right away and can even be hyperlinked to their respective pages. In other words, people can immediately discover, click and learn more about a specific benefit you promised upfront. Usually, they follow the words “with this site you get,” “in this site you will find,” “by visiting this site you will learn” or “here are the reasons why you should browse this site.”

“But what kind of benefits should I use,” you may ask. When Coke saw Pepsi doing their famous taste tests in the mid-80s, they thought that a newer, better-tasting Coke would beat Pepsi — hence, the introduction of the New Coke. But where is the New Coke today? Not only did Coca-Cola have to reintroduce the older version under Classic Coke a mere seventy seven days later, but also, according to Sergio Zyman in his book “The End of Marketing as we Know it,” the New Coke was completely removed from the market.

Pepsi made the same mistake when they launched their clear version, or Pepsi Crystal, in the early 90s. Of course, during the last decade there was a fad with clear consumables. At first, they were selling quite well because the initial perception was that *clearer* meant *healthier*. But once the marketplace realized that there is no healthier benefit in a clear cola over its darker version, the clear cola was dropped quickly.

The only clear consumable that really stood the test of time was the deodorant, because people can’t stand white, powdery residue on their clothes. And it is terribly inconvenient to wait until the deodorant dries in order to avoid a potentially embarrassing situation. While clarity was probably introduced initially as to instill the perception of health (i.e., that clear means less chemicals), manufacturers took advantage of the unsought or secondary benefit (i.e., less residue) by promoting it aggressively thereafter.

In order for your online business to stand the test of time as well, you must market your most marketable competitive edge and do so right from the start on your site’s front page. It might not necessarily be the primary benefit of which you thought. Once you discover what people *really* want from your site, your unique selling proposition should clearly and succinctly state that desire from the onset.

That edge should be your main, core benefit (or benefits) and not your superior qualities. What your product brings to the customer specifically is more important than what it has or does, or even how it is better than the others. These are your *true* benefits. The more focused you are on your customer and their motives, the more your site will compel visitors to surf, read and then buy what it offers.

Here's an example. If out of browsing your site people get helpful information, that's one thing. If they learn a way to invest more skillfully, add spark to their relationships or keep their shrubs healthy, that's another. But if such information helps them to be free from the bondage of debt, become more attractive to the opposite sex or be the talk of the neighborhood with a landscape that would make any gardener jealous, then that is what you want to express. Those are egocentric, visitor-focused benefits.

Look at how Real.com at <http://www.real.com/>, Wilson Internet Services at <http://www.wilsonweb.com/> or InformIT at <http://www.informit.com/> all do it. All of these sites start with a strong headline, an interest capturing statement and then a set of bullets (or mini-paragraphs, with linked headings) that succinctly list what the site holds or what people get from it.

Leave no room for second-guessing.

# CHAPTER TEN

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## May I Have a Word With You?

*“All words are pegs to hang ideas on.”*  
— Reverend Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887)

The greatest challenge for many webmasters, online business owners and Internet marketers is certainly that of ensuring a site communicates effectively to its audience — especially when communication is at the heart of making profitable online sales. Less than a decade ago the need to communicate in a language that the vast majority of people can understand was not necessary — computer jargon was commonplace since programmers (or “geeks,” as they are commonly known) were the early adopters of the Internet.

Today however, things have changed. The population that surf the web and shop online is growing by leaps and bounds. And a good portion of “newbies” consists of, to some extent, the computer-illiterate as well. Many people enticed by the Internet, and all its hype and glory, have bought computers for that express reason — even when they have not yet used, touched or seen one before.

How many people do you personally know that have bought a computer only to “surf the worldwide web”? (I remember buying my last computer at IBM’s Home Computing store, when a lady standing beside me said to the retail clerk, “I don’t know much about computers, but can I get email with it?”)

An interesting statistic proves this fact. According to Jupiter Communications,<sup>15</sup> the “digital divide” is widening. While more and more people are accessing the web, the demography seems to be a two-way street — people with high incomes and people with low incomes. In other words, the web once catered mostly to innovators and early adopters during its introductory stage who were able to afford the computer. But now, with the price of computers decreasing, its growing population consists of segments of the marketplace that would, for one and in large part, have never used computers otherwise.

Consequently, the manner in which your site communicates is important to the degree to which it must be understood by the majority of people that visit it — particularly to those people that fall into one’s target market. And the presumption that people who surf the web are knowledgeable about the Internet let alone computers is erroneous in the least. Communication is important but not as much as *how* it is done.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.jup.com/company/pressrelease.jsp?doc=pr000615>

## You Ought to be in Pictures

People think in relative terms. But more importantly, people are predominantly visual. One of our greatest capacities as human beings is our ability to visualize. Like the earlier example in which the journalist gave a live report on a forest fire that was devastating the mid-west and compared acres of land to football fields, the mind thinks in pictures — not in words and certainly not in numbers (unless it is told to do exactly that).

Remember that the mind is a simple organ and it hates confusion. It will naturally translate words or phrases into some sort of visual equivalent in order to fully appreciate what it is being told. For instance, if I told you to think of a garbage can, you're not going to think of the letters "G," "A," "R," "B," etc. Your mind will automatically visualize some sort of garbage can — and your mind's eye will naturally seek some sort of example as to appreciate the garbage can's color, size and even texture.

Why do you think Microsoft Windows and the MacIntosh computer dominate the marketplace in operating systems? It is because, rather than having to type an elaborate command for your computer to execute, you can simply use your mouse, point to an icon and click. Icons basically represent programs or a string of numerous commands, which are in fact translated into a language (or in this case a code) that the computer can understand and implement once they are clicked.

The mind works in almost the same way a computer does. Like a microprocessor, the brain instantly translates what it is being told to do into something it can easily understand and execute. Some people who know little about computers may have a hard time understanding the various written commands, strings and codes that the computer needs to process. But on the other hand most people can easily identify the icons, appearing on one's desktop, that symbolizes them. The brain is like the mind's microprocessor.

Consequently, use upwords in your web copy. If you recall, "upwords" is an acronym that stands for "universal picture words or relatable, descriptive sentences." Stated differently, upwords are words and phrases that help the majority of people easily interpret and fully understand the messages being conveyed.

For example, upwords include the use of examples, analogies, metaphors, symbols, stories, action words, industry colloquialisms, buzzwords, etc. But more significantly, upwords also include picture words (i.e., words that help the mind to paint vivid pictures). The more vivid the description paints, the easier it will be for the brain to translate the words into the message one wants to have people precisely understand.

For example, a challenge among cosmetic surgeons is the fact that people will call for a quote over the phone when obviously the doctor needs to see the patient beforehand to assess the degree of hair loss. Clearly, cosmetic surgery is an uncommon process. People have a hard time understanding the importance behind a doctor's need to see the patient. To them, hair is hair. (In fact, it is for this very reason that doctors need to talk with patients in person, since most people erroneously assume that hair transplantation will give them back the full head of hair they once had in their younger days — which is false.)

So doctors will use a more common approach, like dentistry for example, as an analogy. Unlike surgery, most people have had their teeth done at some point in their lives. So doctors will say: "Like a dentist, I can not give an estimate over the phone without any X-rays of your teeth let alone the knowledge of how many cavities you actually have." People who call now understand not only the reason but also the importance of seeing the doctor, in person, in order to obtain an accurate estimate. At the very least, they appreciate why quotes cannot be given over the phone.

## It's not What you Said, it's How you Said it

Online marketers are certainly in a similar position. Many tend to communicate in a language that only a mere few will fully understand. For example, if you're a computer programmer trying to sell your services to clients who have recently connected to the web, and your copy is laced with complex technical data in a

language that only veteran surfers would appreciate, you will obviously do very poorly. You must therefore mold your message in a way that your target market can easily understand. Thus, speak *their* language.

If your market consists of artists, use art examples. If it consists of managers, use business analogies. If it consists of florists, use metaphors florists can understand. As an example of the latter, let's say you sell an ecommerce software program dedicated to florists — one that helps them receive customer orders over the web. You're trying to explain the importance of handling orders quickly. You could say: "Orders from your clients are like fresh-cut roses. They need to be handled quickly and efficiently. But if handled improperly, they can also prick you and hurt your business."

Of course, there are many more ways of applying upwords to your web copy. Here are some brief examples of how to mold your online message in order to communicate more effectively to your market. They are based on three important aspects of good copywriting: 1) Repetition, 2) emotion and 3) positivity.

### **Repetitious Words**

As the old adage goes, "Repetition is the parent of learning." Repetition aids comprehension especially of complex, critical or important ideas. However, the key here is not to repeat the same words over and over but to use different examples to illustrate your point. To that end, substitute certain words with synonyms and add new pieces of information each time the idea is repeated. For instance, in order to drive home the message that privacy policies help to increase consumer confidence (and thus sales), it can be repeated with the following:

- "Privacy policies promote purchases,"
- "Privacy statements increase sales,"
- "Confidentiality is a key to online success,"
- And "respecting visitors' privacy is profitable"

### **Emotional Words**

Again, words are not messages in themselves — they are merely symbols. As such, they have different meanings to each of us and therefore the same words can be interpreted differently. Conversely, while many words can be used to communicate a single message, your choice of words can actually alter the emotional impact of your message. For example:

- Instead of saying "cost," say "investment;"
- Instead of saying beautiful "teeth," say beautiful "smiles;"
- Instead of saying "skinny," say "slim" or "slender;"
- Instead of saying "products" or "services," say "solutions;"
- Instead of saying "price," "fee" or "cost," say "investment;"
- And instead of saying "house," say "home."

### **Positive Words**

Avoid using negative words. Say what it is, not what it isn't. Cosmetic surgeon Maxwell Maltz, who wrote the best-selling book "Psycho-Cybernetics," states that the brain is a goal-seeking organ — it needs a goal in order to function. For example, if I told you to try *not* to think of a white carnation you will have hard time since your brain needs a goal — it will naturally picture what it is supposed to avoid. Therefore, telling your brain what it is supposed to avoid is counterproductive.

On the other hand, if I told you to think of a pink carnation, you will naturally think of a pink carnation — I gave your mind a goal. (You will therefore not think of a white carnation, which was the primary goal.) By saying what something isn't, it is still directing the mind albeit in the opposite way. If I told you that dental work is painless for instance, your mind will still focus on the word "pain" in the word "painless." But if I

told you that there is no discomfort with dental work, “discomfort” includes the word “comfort.” Here are some other examples of using positive words:

- Instead of saying “inexpensive,” say “economical;”
- Instead of saying “cost-effective,” say, “return on investment;”
- Instead of saying “less hassle,” say “more convenient;” and,
- Instead of saying “this software is error-free, say “this software is consistent” or “stable.”

Nevertheless, one of the most negative words we often use in the English language is surely the word “but.” “Buts” can turn any message, which in essence may be positive, into a negative. In addition, a statement followed by the word “but” often subtly communicates that what was said up to that point was really a lie and what follows is the truth. Do you remember when a former girlfriend or boyfriend dumped you? They probably said: “You’re a really nice guy and I like going out with you, but...” And then the other shoe fell. It no longer mattered if you actually were told you were a nice person.

Consequently, leave the “but” out — instead, use “and” and focus on the positive. Let’s say you’re a website designer, for example. Then instead of saying “it’s a great website BUT very expensive,” say “it’s an excellent website AND worth every cent.” Instead of saying “it’s a versatile website BUT it’s going to take at least a month to put it together,” say “it’s a versatile website AND it will only take thirty days to get it up and running.”

Keep in mind that the online population is diverse. We all come from different backgrounds — our education, experiences and environments help to condition our thinking over time. Therefore, in order to be understood by your target market, use analogies, metaphors and picture words that will make your message easier to understand by their personal set of circumstances. As Jack Trout once said, “A word is worth a thousand pictures.”

## Shooting Benefit Bullets

If you remember, I mentioned earlier that one of the greatest tools used by top copywriters is the use of bullets within your marketing copy. Bullets give the reader a visual break and are pleasing to the eye. But more importantly, they help to capture the eye’s attention.

For example, in advertising they say that it’s important to use white space. White space acts as a frame around text and helps to direct the eye. Psychologist Dr. Wayne Dyer once said: “It’s not the bars that keep the tiger in its cage but the empty spaces between them.” Similarly, bullets offer that important white space that helps to keep the eye focused. To paraphrase Dr. Dyer, “It’s not the sentences that keep the eye on the page but the silent, empty spaces between them.”

Furthermore, to use bullets in order to list benefits also offers many advantages. By clustering benefits together, they provide greater impact and reinforce the offer in the mind. Consequently, an effective way of using bulleted benefit lists within the heart of your copy is when they follow the words “you get” or “reasons why,” such as “with this product, you get” or “here are the reasons why you should buy.”

Keep in mind the copywriter’s greatest secret: When it comes to sales letters, *long copy always outsells short copy* — even on the web. In fact, some of the most successful sales letters online are long copy webpages. Bullets however, especially in long copy sales letters, help to give the reader a visual break along with strengthening the offer. Since people are always looking for benefits, bullets, by directing the eye, grant the reader the instant ability to know exactly what she will receive from responding to your offer.

Here’s an example. Let’s say you sell an exercise machine called the “Abdominoflex” on your website. It’s an easy to use, easy to assemble, lightweight at-home exercise machine that one can easily tuck under one’s bed and pull out when needed. So in terms of bulleted benefits, you can say:

With your special *Abdominoflex Toning Machine* you get:

- A uniquely designed, new generation toning system providing an easier yet intense workout that will burn off unwanted calories effectively, rapidly and enjoyably;
- A scientifically engineered exercise machine that laser-targets specific areas of the body (such as the abdominals, thighs and buttocks) for a more shapely figure;
- A compact, lightweight, easy-to-assemble, space-saving tool that can be stored under your bed and pulled out when needed (there's no assembly required);
- A free, special, bonus 2-hour videotape, "Abdominoflex in Action" (\$19.95 value), offering workout tips as well as ways to make the best use of your toning machine.
- And so on.

If you list the features, always add to each one its equivalent benefit. A feature from the above example would be the fact that the machine is lightweight and compact. The equivalent benefit would be the fact that you can store it under your bed, pull it out when needed and use it almost instantly, without the hassle or inconvenience often associated with larger toning machines. In other words, ease-of-use may be a feature but the feelings that will stem out of that ease-of-use are the benefits.

Similarly, bullets based on "reasons why" are so important. In essence, you are telling your reader the reasons why she should take advantage of your offer. Better still, you should tell her why she must take advantage of your offer *now*. Thus, "reasons why" bullets help to reinforce not only the benefits but also a sense of urgency. For example: "Here are the reasons why you should buy your Abdominoflex today."

When describing the benefits of your product or service, try to be as simple and as specific as possible. Even with the headline, the copy and the offer, use specific descriptions or words. Give detailed benefits and tell the reader what you want her to do specifically. For instance, use odd, non-rounded numbers instead of generalizations. In my experience, odd, non-rounded numbers are more credible than, and pull a greater response over, even or rounded numbers.

For example, "Amazing new system helped me earn \$3,956.75 in 29 days" is much more credible than simply "4,000 in 1 month." (I believe that was the reason why Ivory soap was promoted as being 99 and 44/100% pure. If Ivory said 100%, it wouldn't have been as believable.) Therefore, if one of your benefits states that your offer helped to improve the results of over 1,000 people when it has actually helped 1,063, then use 1,063 people instead. In short, be as specific as possible.

Finally, with your bulleted benefits, use the words "you," "your" and "yours" rather than "I," "us," "our" or "we." Implicate the reader and infer that he or she has already responded to your offer. Present your benefits as though your prospects are already enjoying them, in other words. This is important not only because it is an effective sales tactic but also because it is the first step in personalizing your website, which will become an element of greater importance as time goes on — in fact, it is so important that personalization is discussed in greater detail later in this book.

## How to Generate Benefits

I may have repeated this many times before in this book but it is so important: The Internet is not a medium — it's much more than that. It's a process. In fact, even the government thinks the same way I do. For

example, Canada's telecommunications watchdog — the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (or CRTC, which is comparable to the American FCC) — officially declared so in early 1999 by stating that it won't regulate the Internet.

In the wake of rumored proposals to regulate the Internet, the CRTC ruled out the possibility by declaring that the Internet is not a broadcasting medium. It based its decision primarily on the fact that the web is dynamic and interactive with its audience — unlike the television, radio and other one-way, static, broadcast media. As a result, regulators concluded that the Internet could therefore police itself.

In the news release<sup>16</sup> issued by the CRTC regarding whether content on the Internet is broadcasting as defined by the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Acts, the CRTC has made the following point: “Material transmitted over the Internet, which is significantly customizable or capable of being uniquely tailored by the individual user, does not involve the transmission of programs for reception by the public and is, therefore, not broadcasting.”

But my point here is not a political one but a marketing-related one. It is based on the premise that many webmasters and online business owners look at online marketing as a mere communications process. Too often, they do so by creating websites that only act as billboard-littered graveyards. And they tend to forget that their electronic stores are (and should be) interactive sales tools as well.

Understandably, a salesperson's enthusiasm for, and belief in, her product are easy to convey in person. That person's unique set of sales skills, product knowledge, personality and expertise is equally advantageous in offline selling. Most of all, her ability to slant presentations in order to meet specific client needs, goals and desires are also easier in the physical realm. But online, these abilities are virtually nonexistent.

Therefore, like a salesperson an online store must communicate those emotions that empower people to buy. It must also direct visitors to take some kind of action because, in actuality, the web is completely user-directed (again, it's “directional” marketing and not just institutional or even direct marketing). It requires the audience's total participation. The responsibility therefore rests almost entirely on the words one chooses. And in the end, *words online make all the difference*.

Consequently, words should appeal to specific buyer motives and compel people to take action. Common wisdom dictates that the first rule in doing so is to stress benefits over features. You may have been told this time and time again. It all sounds so simple, right? But it's not, for if it were the Internet would be literally filled with successful websites and copywriters would be out of jobs. Trying to develop benefits is very frustrating for some people. So in an attempt to provide you with guidance, here's a tool to help you in developing compelling benefits.

In his book, “Personal Selling,” professor Ronald Marks<sup>17</sup> suggests that products usually consist of four principal description levels. They are features, advantages, benefits and motives. Each layer has its own set of attributes and characteristics, which varies depending on the product type and the market to which the product caters. To illustrate, here's a brief description of each layer:

- **Features** are what products *have*. (For example, one feature of an accounting software package is the fact that it has an application that provides statistics quickly and easily.)
- **Advantages** are what those features *do*. (Continuing with the same example above, it's the ability for the application to easily provide instant, real-time, updated mission-critical information to key business managers.)

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.crtc.gc.ca/ENG/NEWS/RELEASES/1999/R990517e.htm>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.uwosh.edu/coba/community/faculty/marks.htm>

- **Benefits** are what the features *mean*. (For instance, one could say: “With needed, on-demand statistical data, your managers are able to keep the finger on your company’s financial pulse at all times.”)
- **Motives** are the motives that these features *satisfy*. (These include elements like cost-savings, control, efficiency, self-esteem, career advancement, productivity, profits, etc.)

Here’s how to apply this technique in your business. Develop what Marks calls a “product analysis worksheet.” (I prefer using index cards.) First, list all of the features of your product or service, including standard, technical and supportive features. Then take a series of index cards and write down a feature on each one. Below it, write down the feature’s relative advantage (i.e., what that feature does). Then on the back of the card, write down the equivalent benefit (i.e., what it brings or means to your specific audience). And finally, below the benefit, write down the motive(s) that such a benefit satisfies.

Once achieved, look at your cards and ask, “Do the descriptions truly reflect, and cater to, the needs, goals and emotions of my target market?” Also, “Is the language easy to understand, especially for that market?” Refer to your cards often. Each time your site discusses a certain feature, find the appropriate card and flip it over. Does it match what’s written on the back? If the benefits don’t fit the context of what is being said, look at the motives. Then mold your benefits in way that communicates how such features satisfy them.

Contrary to popular knowledge, benefits are not vehicles for creating hype or puffery. As illustrated above they are effective means through which customers can fully understand and appreciate a product’s true purpose. Remember that *different words mean different things to different people*. In other words, a complex, technical specification may be easy to understand for the seller — but what does it mean to the customer specifically? So choose your words carefully.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

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## Turning Browsers Into Buyers

*“Advertising is salesmanship. The only purpose of advertising is to make sales.”*  
— **Claude C. Hopkins**

The Internet has been often touted as being one big advertising medium. But advertising alone does not produce results — not in an immediate sense. Even if your website serves as some sort of entertainment tool and your revenue model is based on third party advertisements, you still need to direct your visitors somehow to do something. Directional forms of advertising is what produces results, be it more sales, more subscriptions, more inquiries or more traffic. Website design is certainly no different.

For example, there are four different yet important factors that determine the success or failure of an advertisement. These factors are: Your offer (the benefits you provide), your copy (the words you use), your audience (the people you target) and your layout (the way your ad looks). All of these factors are important to a certain degree. Websites must follow the exact same rules.

However, there's more. While these four elements are all important, by focusing on them in a specific order your “ad” could be far more effective. In order of importance, they are: 1) Audience, 2) offer, 3) copy and 4) layout. Strangely, the last two elements are often considered as being of higher importance when it is far from being the case. (Most advertisers, including web designers, tend to focus on the four in reverse order.)

The number one factor to consider is your audience. Without question, your first goal in advertising should be to target your message by promoting your site in specific publications, websites and areas on the web that cater as much as possible to your market. As a result, your chances of people noticing, reading and clicking your ad are much higher when it is targeted and focused. Your choice of medium therefore should be your primary focus, above and before all other aspects of your advertising campaign.

But what happens when visitors finally hit your site? Obviously, ensuring that your traffic is targeted is important. But what's just as important is to ensure that your site is targeted as well. Ironically, many sites, which successfully drive highly targeted traffic, provide visitors once they arrive with a message that's too vague, untargeted or sloppy. People might say: “I thought this site was about something else” or “why is this site different than what I thought?” (More often than not, they simply leave.)

*Therefore, you must treat your website like you would an advertisement.* Unfortunately, targeting your website's message is often the last or the least important step followed in good website design. While bringing targeted traffic may give you a high hit ratio, a poorly targeted message often leads to a very poor conversion ratio. Why would one spend countless hours and dollars to create quality traffic when the website does not successfully convert those browsers into buyers?

## Site-Seeing Doesn't Make you Money

The second element of the four, or “offer,” is just as important as it relates to the first element to the degree that your site needs to cater to your specific audience. If your site attempts to be all things to all people, and if it offers too many things (in a broad variety or context), you will likely lose your visitors — or at the very least their interest. In fact, the third element, or “copy,” is not limited to the use of palatable, compelling words but also includes the use of targeted words as well. If your message is too general in that it caters to multiple product categories, themes or segments of your market, then your copy must be painted with broad brushstrokes in order to appeal to everyone. In turn, you lose clarity, credibility and *customers*.

To alleviate this problem, it is often best to create another site and have each one completely focused on a product (be it an individual product, product line or product category), theme or audience. Themed or focused websites thrive on the Internet. Take for instance <http://www.babycenter.com/> (an online store dedicated to baby products and targeting parents and expectant mothers), <http://www.giggo.com/> (dedicated to used cars) or <http://www.travelocity.com/> (dedicated to traveling and reservations).

Naturally, people visiting any of these sites will be far more qualified the moment they hit them. Why? It is because: 1) Such sites have a very specific purpose and 2) people visiting such sites equally have a specific purpose in mind. And in addition, once they get there they know exactly what they want or for what to look. Ultimately, the more targeted the site is, the more targeted the visitor will be. And the more targeted the site is, the higher the conversion ratio will be.

So your audience is your number one priority, especially as it relates to the other three elements. But after focusing on your audience, the second factor to consider, in order, is the offer. Your website must provide a compelling enough reason for people to find the desire, motivation and energy to click on the order page and fill out the form, just as they would do so in the offline world by lifting up the phone, mailing a coupon, writing a letter and paying with their hard-earned money.

By following the AIDA formula, your offer must first capture their attention — one with a headline, for example, that will draw people into your site and that will immediately let people know what your site is offering. Then, it must arouse their interest. To do that, you need to focus on benefits right from the start that tell readers exactly what they are getting out of reading further. After that, you must increase their desire with an offer they can't refuse. And finally, you must ask them to take some kind of action.

However, the latter is probably the most neglected element of the AIDA formula. You will not be as successful in compelling visitors to take action if your offer only confuses the reader. Complicated websites only deter visitors. Your site not only needs to catch the eye quickly, but also it must allow the reader to take action quickly. Give them the ability to respond. In other words, don't forget to ask for the order. Include a “call-to-action” by telling people exactly what to do in order to buy from you.

(By the way, your offer, particularly your order form, needs to be easy to find and access. According to copywriter Joe Gregory of <http://WebAim.co.uk/>, 97.7% of all websites his company evaluated showed that a whopping 82.2% lacked a clear objective. For example, sites that encouraged people to call made it hard to find the telephone number, and companies that wanted to sell a product had no online ordering capabilities — some even failed to mention the price.)

Similarly, the next element (or copy) should communicate a clear, distinct and brief message. While your site should be compelling, clarity and especially conciseness are vital. As Jim Rohn once said, “Brevity has a lot of power in it.” If people can't say in an instant what you or your site is all about, then you will lose not only credibility but also the customer. Remember that potential customers often react with hostility to an advertiser who confuses them. (In fact, Gregory's study found that 46.6% of failing sites were aimed at a general audience or used jargon that only experts would understand.)

Finally, there's the layout. While the last element of the four, it is not the least important. Keep in mind that your site's layout is important to the degree that it needs to direct the eye and “tangibilize” the intangible.

Pictures often do that quite well. While it doesn't have to be large or prominent, place an illustration, graphic or photo at the top of your front page (in your primary screen) where it is easy to see. People typically scan websites and pictures are usually the first elements they do scan, even before the headers.

Also, use white space judiciously around your text as well as your graphics and use borders, since both help to frame the message and direct your readers' eyes. In fact, according to an About.com<sup>18</sup> article, borders tend to increase readership. Framing makes the text stand out and easier to read. Look at the way it is done on <http://www.webcompiler.com/>, <http://www.cyberwave.com/> and <http://www.buy.com/>. In addition to white space, the table containing the body text has some kind of border, is less than the size of the screen (usually 600 pixels in width) or contrasts with the overall background colors.

## Selling is a Contact Sport

Harvey Mackay once said: "It's not what you know and it's not who you know that counts. It's what you know *about* who you know." In sales, knowing one's customers as thoroughly as possible grants the salesperson the ability to qualify them appropriately, create rapport, remain in constant contact with them, up-selling them with additional backend offers and networking through them.

Nothing appeals to the customer's ego more than a company or person who knows, wants to know or is perceived as knowing more about her — not in a way to pry into her private life but as a way to become more involved in her decision-making process. For example, Dale Carnegie, in his book "How to Win Friends and Influence People," noted that the sweetest sound to a person's ear is a person's own *name*. As personalization will become an increasingly important factor to online success over time, it starts with the simple gathering of information about your customer, which can be done in many ways.

When you get an order from a customer or at least an inquiry for more information, do you go through an information gathering process? With either one of these situations, on the Internet you have the ability and opportunity to know your customers more — of course, with their consent. Therefore, the first thing to do is to provide easy-to-find contact information (or a link to such) on every page in order for customers to reach you. To this end, offer a phone number, a postal address and an online contact form on your site.

Forms seem to encourage more feedback than email links (such as "<mailto:michel@successdoctor.com>.") A reason could very well be the fact that some people: 1) Surf the web without an email client, 2) browse the web on a third party computer (e.g., library, office or school computer) or 3) use a web-based email client (e.g., Hotmail.com). If the only way people can reach you is through an email "mailto" link, you are probably losing a large percentage of visitors willing to get in touch with you let alone sales.

As a client requires further assistance or while she is making a purchase, offer the option to provide key information as well. You want to collect important information about a prospect or client. Knowing your customers, being concerned about their needs or at least to impart the impression that you do know them can help cement more profitable relationships with your prospect. In short, the more you know about your contact, the stronger the potential relationship can become.

Undeniably, this process can take place over time (one should never ask too much in the beginning). But in essence you want in the very least qualified leads to come forward voluntarily and identify themselves to you. Participating in surveys and subscribing to opt-in lists provide that opportunity in the easiest way. But a more effective method is to offer a free service or information of some kind whereby receiving such forces the visitor to provide at least their contact information in order to obtain access.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://desktoppub.miningco.com/compute/desktoppub/library/weekly/aa062697.htm>

A free download, free access to a private section of the site, free ezine subscriptions or free interactive traffic generators — like discussion forums, online communities, chat rooms, greeting cards or reminder services — can help nudge visitors in giving not only personal information but also important marketing intelligence. For example, at BabyCenter.com visitors are encouraged to use a free pregnancy development tracker. Expectant mothers enter the baby's due birth date and an email address. By starting the process of providing information, it allows that online business to remain in constant contact with their visitors and make special offers along the way (such as for baby items, clothing, toys, diapers, etc).

Nevertheless, the more information you gather about your prospect the more equipped you will be. And this process is not limited to clients or prospective clients. You should also gather information about your affiliates, referral-sources, suppliers, joint venture partners and strategic marketing alliances. Remember that people who are important to you and your business *want to know that they are*.

## Slant Your Site

In fact, as the saying goes: “People don't care about how much you know, they want to know how much you care.” Those who feel appreciated will return the favor. In other words, if you think of them they will think of you. This doesn't mean they will think of you in terms of sales per se. But again, it's all about creating that important top-of-mind awareness. The more they think of you, the more they will return to you and particularly tell others about you.

To accomplish this and in addition to using information about your prospects, your site also needs to communicate and appeal to your audience's personality style. Many sales, behavioral and marketing specialists have categorized buyer personalities and labeled them in many different ways. Basically, they all arrive at the same conclusion, which is to separate these personalities into central buying motives.

Behavioral psychologist and motivational speaker, Dr. Tony Alessandra, calls this “The Platinum Rule,” which is to “treat other people as they want to be treated.” And the first step in doing so is to adequately understand the personality style of your audience, and then to adapt your presentation in a way that meets or appeals to their specific style. (For example, take Tony's simple test at <http://www.platinumrule.com/>.) While knowing your prospects' behavioral style applies to the offline world, it applies to the online world just as well. Your website should also appeal to your target market's predominant personality style.

In my experience, I have found that most buyers generally fall into four major personality categories. Different people label these styles differently. For example, Tony Alessandra labels them as “directors,” “socializers,” “relaters” and “thinkers.” Dan Kennedy, author of “No B.S. Sales Success,” labels them as “analyticals,” “amiabls,” “drivers” and “expressives.” But I prefer the method used by Brian Tracy in “The Psychology of Selling.” Brian labels them as: 1) Impulsives and apathetics, 2) practicals, 3) analyticals, and 4) emotionals.

(Before I go further, keep in mind that all my descriptions here are generalized and do not necessarily reflect these personalities in whole. They are only meant to offer some ideas on how they make decisions.)

Both the impulsive and apathetic are rare. They are extreme cases and are found at opposite sides of the scale. For example, the impulsive is a type of person who will usually buy on the spot without asking any questions or without giving it second thought. On the other hand, the apathetic never buys anything, buys very rarely or takes an exceptionally long time to decide. Also, this person usually asks a large number of questions (from the trivial to the nonsensical).

The other three core personalities are those you will encounter the most. The practical buyer for instance is a person who usually buys based on *results*. Practicals want bottom-lines. They are interested in the “how.” For example, they want to know how long will it take to get your product, how will it benefit them and, of course, how much it costs. They are usually made up of bankers, sales managers, purchasing agents,

businesspeople, executives and so on. They are focused on the outcome more than anything else. They are usually time-constrained, quick to judge and very brief.

Analyticals don't care much about the "how" part. What they want are *details*. They're interested in the "what," "when" and "where," such as what are the specifications of your products, what is its exact size, where and of what is it made, what are the ingredients, what kind of guarantees do you offer with it and what makes it work specifically. Analyticals usually consist of scientists, developers, mathematicians, engineers, computer programmers, doctors and so on. They want specifications. They want information — and a lot of it. And they take a little more time than practicals do when buying.

The third group that you will encounter comprises of the emotionals. Emotional buyers are not interested in results or details but in *feelings*. They are normally those who deal with the public and care mostly about the "why." They want to know for example why they need a particular product, why it is important to them, why it is better than others and why other people have purchased it or favored it over competitors. They are mostly interested in the feelings associated with the purchase, such as the esthetics of your product or the feelings one would receive when acquiring that product (e.g., prestige of ownership). They love small talk and opinions. And contrary to the practical and analytical personalities, they take the longest time. (For example, they love anecdotes, opinions, testimonials, stories and reassurances — the more, the merrier.)

Artists, entertainers, teachers, office workers, blue-collar workers, salespeople, entrepreneurs, home-based business owners and so on are predominantly emotional. Emotionals constitute the largest demography of the population. Keep in mind however that practicals and analyticals are emotional too — in fact, we all are. But depending on your type of industry or product, your prospect may be more emotional than the norm. Ultimately, the style of your message should appeal to any one specific personality style.

So in order to be better understood by your target market and increase your chances of making the sale, ensure that your site appeals to the predominant buying personality of your largest segment of visitors. For instance, don't describe feelings to an analytical or give minute or technical details to a practical. This kind of tactic won't work in your favor. You should discover at what angle from which your prospects are coming, and then slant your website's message to fit that angle and meet them at their level.

## Take it Easy

Unquestionably, the greatest killer in sales is procrastination. When selling on the web, people will never tell you outright that they "have to think about it." So if your sales message did not compel them to take some kind of action the first time (and you only have thirty minutes to do that), and if they click away, the chances of them coming back are slim to none. (This is why it is so important to collect information about your prospect the first time they hit your site. On the very first page, your primary screen must somehow provide an invitation to subscribe to a mailing list or to enroll in some program.)

A technique in getting prospects to avoid procrastinating is one called "takeaway selling." People don't know how much they wanted something until it is about to be taken away from them. Granted, if people are not interested in your offering they will never buy, no matter what. But if they are interested, remember that parting with their hard-earned money is a difficult decision. Money is security — the second foundational need in Maslow's hierarchy. The need to think about a purchase is an understandable reaction.

Remember that people no longer have the time to shop around much less think about a purchase. So the chances of returning to a website, if there's not a good reason to do so, are miniscule — they will tend to: 1) Forget it, 2) fail to find the time to consummate the purchase if they decide to go ahead in the future or 3) be enticed by another offer at some other site in the process. Look at it this way: Procrastination, on the Internet, is the greatest killer of sales.

Therefore, use takeaway selling as to reduce the propensity to procrastinate. Make your offer special and, above all, *scarce*. Scarcity removes or at least reduces procrastination. It could be a special price, an

incentive or an additional bonus. It could be a time-sensitive or a quantity-bound offer. As long as you give a genuine and logical explanation to back up your limitation, you should make your offer limited in some way. For example, offer a special bonus incentive and include a deadline.

If you do place a deadline however, give ample time so that people who may legitimately need to think about their purchase can do so. Aggressive sales tactics could become counterproductive. While you can use the element of scarcity in your offer by adding a deadline, put a reasonable and logical explanation beside it (since a deadline alone can be construed as a mere “scare tactic”).

For instance, say something to the effect of: “This offer is not available in stores,” “this offer will expire on (date)” or “this offer is limited to the first fifty clients.” And then, add: “Here’s why,” such as, “since we only have a limited supply and cannot keep up with the demand” or “because our fiscal year-end is around the corner and our prices traditionally go up.” In essence, be scarce but be sincere too.

What if you offer a freebie in a multistep marketing process as a way to qualify prospects? The element of scarcity can also be applied in this situation by being selective in your choice of prospects and preemptively reducing the number of qualified candidates from the onset. If you’re offering free information or a free consultation as a way to qualify leads, then say something like: “Not everyone is a candidate for this service” (or “this product is not appropriate for everyone”). For example, “Enter to receive our no-obligation free report [or questionnaire, survey, checklist, etc] to find out if this is right for you.”

Takeaway selling is a technique that basically uses the limited supply concept to entice people to act — in short, the lower the supply, the greater the demand. You’ve probably experienced this personally. For example, you may have walked into a clothing store once and were interested in a piece of clothing (sure enough, it had no price tag). You then asked a sales representative for a price. In an almost universally anticipated response, she says: “It’s \$59, but you should take it right away because *it’s the last one.*”

Takeaway selling is not a closing technique per se. It is also not an attempt to persuade a prospect against her will. It is simply a way to create a sense of urgency. Jim Rohn once said that, “Without a sense of urgency, desire loses its value.” If you fail to create a sense of urgency, you will lose a large number of sales — even with the most qualified of prospects. (Remember that, according to Maslow, security needs come before esteem and self-actualization needs. The avoidance of pain supersedes the desire for pleasure.)

If you have positioned your firm or product well, and if you have attracted qualified prospects to your site, you know they are interested in your product or service from the beginning. The need to “sell” is usually not required at this point. The key is not to push them to buy but to push them buy now. As such, you must assume that they will put off the decision since procrastination is a natural and very common human behavior, and making a decision is a scary prospect for most people. They may ask themselves, “Is the pleasure gained (or the pain avoided) by buying *greater* than the pain of parting with my money?”

In fact, takeaway selling also includes your position in the marketplace. When you focus on a niche, you are perceived as being a sought-after expert or having an in-demand product. And when you are perceived as being in demand or selective about those with whom you do business, you will increase the desire for your products or services. Therefore, a sense of urgency — in other words, the perception of urgency and not necessarily urgency in itself — heightens the perceived value of the offer.

When people are given an honest and logical reason behind the need to act fast, they will. For example, if you’re a management consultant don’t try to jump at every opportunity that comes your way. This alone will make you appear as if you’re hungry for business. The UPA will be that your services are not in demand and are therefore not a favored choice among other prospects. Instead, have the prospect respond to an initial questionnaire as to determine if it is worth both your time and attention to consider it further.

While this technique may seem to be more appropriate for services, it can still be applied to products by making your products available exclusively to a certain “club” or membership. In such a case, only paid or approved members, who meet certain criteria, are given the permission to buy from you. (For example, the

Price Club sells exclusively to members. While their online version at <http://www.costco.com/> apparently sells to everyone, the site displays special member pricing as regular prices, coupled with a note that there will be a five percent surcharge to non-members.)

To paraphrase American Express, *scarcity has its privileges*. You may offer some products to the general public but also offer a special program for prospects to enjoy additional incentives — a program in which they must be sponsored by existing clients, approved through an application process or accepted as “preferred clients” by having purchased other products in the past. For example, if you maintain an opt-in list you have the ability to offer backend deals exclusively to your subscribers. In the end, add value to the desire for your products and services by instilling in prospects a sense of urgency.

In other words, if they snooze, they *lose*.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

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### Prodding People With Products

*“If Thomas Edison invented electric light today, Dan Rather would report it on CBS News as ‘candle making industry threatened’.”*  
— **Newt Gingrich**

Earlier, we dealt with company and domain names. But what about products? Do you sell an extraordinary product or do you sell an ordinary one? If your product is not unique, or in other words if it is highly copied or happens to be in a competitive market, you should therefore make it look unique just as well. The quality and appeal of your product’s appearance, package, brand name and description will say spades about the quality of the product itself. (Obviously, online you are limited to the name and description.)

People unconsciously assume that there is a parallel between your product’s name and appearance, and the product itself. It’s illogical, of course. But it is the way people think. While a UPA can be seemingly trivial, it can play a pivotal role in the way a company or its product is favorably perceived by the market. Names can in fact emphasize, support or even contradict the perception of the product’s quality.

For instance, according to a recent seminar I attended the speaker mentioned that a large airline company recently conducted a survey among its passengers in order to perform some marketing research. A question was asked: “If your food trays were dirty, would you assume that the airline also does poor maintenance on its engines?” The answer was “yes” for an overwhelming majority of participants.

*Perception is powerful.* On the Internet this statement should never be ignored, for the only thing that separates you and your customers are computer screens. People cannot touch, see, hear, smell or taste your product. Words make all the difference. And the words you choose to name and describe your product can help to increase or impede its sales. It’s not some big marketing or copywriting secret. It’s common sense.

### The Less you Say it, the More Believable it is

If you recall from a previous chapter, my mentor said: “Implication is more powerful than specification.” Stated in another way, the *perceived quality* of your product will be more effective than if the product were to be *of quality*. You don’t need to emphasize that your product is superior. Trying to do so can sometimes be worse than not saying anything at all — the reason for this is that your apparently self-serving statement makes you appear as if you are bluffing, exaggerating or grossly biased at best.

But on the other hand, if you imply your product’s superiority, such as with a name and description that subtly communicates *how* different or superior it is, you will indirectly cast an aura of exclusivity and

superiority, and do so without utterly flaunting it. The implied notion that your product is superior is far more powerful than a claimed one. Look at it this way: The more you claim superiority, the more self-serving you appear. But the less you do, the more credible (and genuinely superior) you are — especially in the most elusive yet vital of places in all of marketing... Your target market's *mind*.

So names, not claims, are more effective.

Look at “Die Hard,” “Jiffy Lube,” “Duracell,” “Hair Essentials,” “PowerPoint Presentations,” “Coca-Cola,” “Duralube,” “Band-Aid,” “Crispy Crunch,” “AbMaster,” “No Name,” “Energizer,” “Internet Explorer,” “Burger King,” “The Midas Touch” and so on. These names imply what the product does and how different or superior it is — without the need to state it. So follow the same principles and, by turning the ordinary into the extraordinary, you will turn ordinary products into extraordinary results.

Whether the product is indeed new or not, try to brand it in a new way. Some people have made fortunes by simply packaging ordinary products in a unique or different manner. For example, do you remember the “pet rock”? A unique product can be a copy of another but customized in such a way that it appears unique or new. (Remember that Microsoft has made fortunes by copying seemingly unique, proprietary products from other companies.) And in many cases, just the name can make all the difference.

Car manufacturers understand and capitalize on this natural human inclination to associate quality to names. Companies often sell two different brands of the same basic car — cars sold as two different models or makes. Take for instance Pontiac's Sunfire and the Chevrolet Cavalier. They are both the basic cars. The Ford Contour and Mercury's Mystique are similar as well. (Each major car manufacturer uses this tactic. If a person does not like one manufacturer or make, she could buy essentially the same car but from another make or model.)

Of course, it would be fair to mention that there are many other factors at play here in order to appeal to the buyer, such as pricing differences, location of dealership, slight design changes, different options, etc. But similar to the use of different names, these changes are cosmetic in nature — they appeal psychologically to different market segments. For example, Levis sells both “red tab” and “orange tab” jeans. While they are essentially the same, one is sold in the more expensive Levis store (at a much higher price) and the other in the discount-oriented one such as Wal-Mart, among others (for much less).

On an Oprah Winfrey Show, an apple juice taste test was conducted in shopping malls across the United States. If I recall correctly, the program was related to how people could be easily enticed by misleading advertising. But while Oprah was focusing on companies using false advertising, the test did reveal some really interesting facts nonetheless about how the mind works.

She had two bottles of apple juice. One was in a plain, white plastic container with a label donning a picture of an apple. The second was in an intricately shaped glass bottle with a red label carrying the picture of a woman preparing apple juice in her kitchen. When people were asked which apple juice tasted better, the majority said that the juice from the glass bottle did.

Among others, they said: “It tastes really good,” “it's much better than the other one,” “it's sweeter tasting,” “it has more flavor” and “the picture of the lady preparing the juice indicates to me that more care and attention were given into making it.” The surprise came when she announced to her audience that the juices from both bottles were exactly the same — and showed actual video footage of her staff filling up both bottles with juice from the same container, before entering the mall.

Accordingly, always keep in mind that people do judge books by their covers. While packaging can make a big difference in the offline world, on the Internet something as simple as a name can make just as big a difference. And an added benefit is that, through a unique name, your product can also create an entirely new product category. By being the first in its category it becomes the leader (and, in turn, knocks the competition).

When I was a marketing consultant in the hair replacement business, I soon realized that what these companies were really selling were hairpieces. The difference is that they were braided into one's own hair in order to attach them semi-permanently (thus preventing the piece from accidentally falling off). The braiding is rather tedious — the attachment process (and not the hairpiece) is what made it unique.

So they called them hair replacement “systems.” (Another reason is that the word “hairpiece” makes most balding men cringe because of the pictures of poor or mismatched hairpieces that such a word would invoke in the mind. A hairpiece that *looks* like a hairpiece defeats the purpose of wearing one altogether.) It's the same basic product but delivered in a new way — and, of course, branded with a new name that places them in a whole new product category (not many people associate hair systems with hair pieces).

Let's take another example. Your company sells computers online — a highly competitive market right now. But your computers are equipped for the web and bundled with special Internet software. So rather than call it a computer, you call it a “Web Assistant,” a “Desktop Portal” or an “E-xcelerator.” The object in doing so is to place this particular product in an entirely new and different category. The result? There's a lot of computers out there but not a lot of e-xcelerators!

By adding a benefit-based name on your product, it could actually become (or become part of) what is called your “positioning statement.” A positioning statement is one that communicates your specific position (i.e., what places you or your product above your competition in the mind). For example, if your product or service is similar to the competition, then your brand can actually isolate and differentiate your product from the products and services of others. *Your USP, in this case, is your brand.*

## Customize the Customary

Branding a service is particularly important since a service is an invisible promise. It is intangible and perishable. You can't taste, hear, smell, touch or see a service. You can't stock it on some shelf for later use. And you can't reuse a service over and over again. On the Internet, a good is intangible and a service is even more intangible. Therefore, the way your product is branded will be a pivotal element in its marketing and overall success.

Even if the product you provide is customary, traditional or comparable to that which is offered by your competition or in your industry, you should make it appear unique just as well. The rules mentioned earlier therefore apply to services too — and probably even more so. More important however are what the names communicate (i.e., the benefits communicated by the names placed on these services).

For example, you might be a bookkeeper offering an income tax service as part of your portfolio. Most bookkeepers offer pretty much the same service these days. It's customary in the industry. However, to set your service apart from the competition, don't just say that you also offer income tax services. Say: “Ask us about our special Total Tax Tranquility service.”

As a matter of fact, if you're a professional you're probably thinking at this point that this type of strategy doesn't apply to your service. But I believe it is possible even in these circumstances. For example, in my hometown of Ottawa there's a dental office specializing in pain and anxiety management. They use general sedation as to make the process of dental work a more comfortable experience. This is not a unique service by any means. Most dentists in Ottawa offer the same service to their patients. But what makes this office unique is the fact that they label it with two simple words: “Dream Dentistry.”<sup>19</sup>

If you offer a customary service or if your competition offers the same thing you do, then a name on an often-nameless service helps to project an aura of uniqueness and superiority instantaneously by virtue of

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.dreamdentistry.com/>

the fact that it doesn't appear as customary. Not only will the name keep you at the top of your prospects' minds, it will also create curiosity and enhance desire at the same time. By and large, if people had to choose between a general service and one that, through its name, implies a better or more unique kind of service, or even just some kind of value-add, more than likely they will go for the second option.

The perception in a benefit-based name is that there is some kind of added value to the purchase, even if people know, deep down, that it is comparable to all the others. For instance, if you owned an imported car that needed a brake job, where would you go? Would you choose any general mechanic? Or would you choose one marketing its service as: "If your brakes are screaming in a different language, see us for your Quicker-Than-Customs foreign car brake inspection"?

(Naturally, this mechanic also follows the rule of narrowing its focus. Together, niche marketing and benefit-based branding — be it with a company, domain or product name — will magnify results. Not only will it lead to greater, more qualified traffic, but this tactic will also instantly project a stronger level of credibility in the area of expertise to which the name refers, even before visiting the website.)

## From Assume to Assure

Speaking of mechanics, if your car needed some repair work, would you go to a garage that offers free estimates? Most mechanics offer them. Not only is it customary to offer free estimates but also everyone expects them these days. However, if you had to choose a mechanic in a hurry and you specifically wanted a free estimate, would you go to the one you only think that offers one or to the one you know for sure that does?

As simple as it may sound, by communicating that which is usually taken for granted you will be chosen more often. While you need to imply your superiority and not claim it, you must do so by specifying *what* makes you better than anyone else. People may or may not know that you provide a certain service or benefit and, more often than not, they only assume that you do. But with a name in which people are assured that you do offer that particular service or benefit, they will choose you over your competition many times over.

Rather than outright stating that you are superior (e.g., that you're the "best," that you have a product of superior or high quality, that you offer greater service, that you provide better rates, etc), explain specifically *why* you are superior. Again, the most critical word in marketing contains only three letters: "Why." It is much better to communicate why you are original, special or unique, or why you are better, different or superior than competitors, and not the *fact* that you are. The point is that you should imply your superiority by specifying, as much as possible, what exactly makes you better than anyone else. This approach is more powerful and the effect lasts longer.

Using the above example, you might go to a garage whose free estimates are called "Hassle Freedom Formulas," "Free Fee Finders" or "No Greater than Guesstimate Estimates." You might even choose one whose tagline is: "Where Smiles and Estimates are Free!" Putting a name on an assumed service is like turning the assumed into the assured in the minds of clients. And in this day and age where people no longer have the time to shop around, when they'll need the kind of service you provide your name will pop into their minds instantly.

Click-happy shoppers no longer have the time to sit through countless, often irrelevant search engine results to find exactly what they want — in fact, browsers don't really know what they want (or know that you exist), and they often search the web by topics, ideas or end-results. Thus, if you're a mechanic and people were searching for free estimates through a search engine, and free estimates were specified in your marketing efforts and especially on your website, they will likely find your site quickly as a result.

Incidentally, many new business models have emerged based on that simple premise. While a website may offer the same product at the same price as other websites, what makes one site any different is the extra

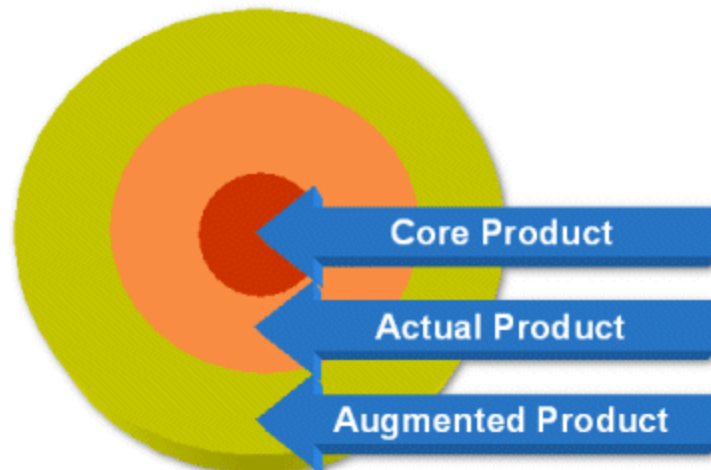
value it adds to the mix. More important however is the fact that this additional (and often perceived) value is communicated in the way the firm names, packages or delivers the product to its visitors.

Yahoo is the most popular free search directory. But there are many other free directories and search engines on the Internet. However, what makes Yahoo special is that one can also obtain a free email account, download free instant messaging software, play online games, etc — each of which has its own name and section. On the other hand, what makes AltaVista unique is its free webpage translation service called “Babelfish.”

You can certainly apply the same principle in your own business. If there’s something that’s a part of what you offer (such as support services like guarantees, free installation, extended warranties, financing, etc), or if you need to manufacture your USP by adding extra features to your product, then put a name on it too.

Then, communicate it clearly — with every promotional breath you take! This is the one area on which most businesses fail to capitalize. Why is that? According to my experience in my consulting practice, it’s because too many people think that a standard, conventional or customary part of their business or product is too simple, unimportant or unnecessary to market. (You would be amazed to know how much such simple items have become the pivotal elements upon which a large number of businesses have prospered.)

Additional or complementary bonuses, features or services are part of what is called the “augmented product” simply because they augment the product’s value. More important is the fact that they should be communicated and have benefit-based names just as well. Remember that a product is more than a bunch of tangible features — it has three levels. In fact, the third level (i.e., the value) is where most competition occurs! To guide you, refer to “The Product Model” below, which indicates the three, distinct levels of a product or service, followed by a description of each level:



- Your **core product** is the core benefit or service — the product’s relative *purpose*. It’s what people are really buying, in other words. If the brand name, packaging or any of the features change, the core product remains the same. It comprises of the benefit (if the product is a good) or solution (if the product is a service) that people seek when they buy your product. As Theodore Levitt once said, “People do not buy quarter-inch drills, they buy quarter-inch holes.”
- The **actual product** consists of product attributes, qualities and characteristics — such as the product’s features, design, model, form, function, style, stock-keeping unit, dimensions, brand, package, label, ingredients, product mix (i.e., the breadth and depth of the product line), etc. The actual product consists of what makes the product or service.

- But the **augmented product** however includes support features, additional benefits and complementary services — including items such as warranties, guarantees, credit, financing, terms, delivery, installation, bulk pricing, inventory cooperatives, management, reports, shipping and handling, after-sale service, etc. On the Internet, they also include reminder services, search capabilities, personalization, customization, information, support help, ezines and so on.

Again, remember that Tom Monaghan's Domino's Pizza is known more for its augmented product (i.e., home delivery) than its actual product (i.e., pizza). In fact, the augmented product is Domino's *position*. And its tagline, "Pizza delivered fresh in 30 minutes or it's free, guaranteed," has become a powerful positioning statement upon which Domino's Pizza has built its multimillion-dollar franchise operation.

Do you offer an augmented product not offered elsewhere? For example, your website sells a particular software program. Do you offer free delivery of the CD-ROM? Do you have a unique reminder service on your website that people can use to remember when to upgrade their purchase? Do you provide a special customer support line? Do you have a unique money-back guarantee? Do you provide a special payment plan? Do you sell an extended warranty for your product? Do you offer a special trade-up program? These augmented products should be named just as well.

Here are some real life examples. The Norton Antivirus program by Symantec.com offers an automated web-based update feature called "LiveUpdate." RadioShack.com offers website visitors a battery model selector called "BatteryFinder." BarnesAndNoble.com provides a birthday reminder service — on its own independent website too — called "Birthday.com." iMotors.com sells used cars online. But with every car they sell, iMotors.com supplies its clients with a vehicle history report called "CarFax." Adaptec is a computer hardware manufacturer with an online, searchable knowledge base called "ASK" (an acronym for "Adaptec Support Knowledgebase").

Don't let people assume that you offer a certain additional benefit or service. If a competitor steps in and assures your market before you do, it might be too late. Turning the *assumed* into the *assured* heightens perceived value and communicates superiority over competitors who may offer the same, nameless services. More important however is the fact that doing so also turns ordinary products or services into effective mnemonics.

People will remember you more.

# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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## Bundling for Dollars

*“When the opponent expand, I contract. When he contracts, I expand. And when there is an opportunity, I do not hit — it hits all by itself.”*  
— Bruce Lee (1940-1973)

Every online store has a “perfect customer.” Every online store has or should have a unique selling proposition. But not every online store caters to the numerous variances that exist in both. For example, a customer that visits a website may be qualified for the store’s offering. But she may choose not to buy for a variety of reasons. From budget constraints to products that do not entirely appeal to her needs at the moment, she may be interested in your product in general but fail to order from you for those reasons.

The easier the buying decision becomes for your prospects, the more sales will result. Often, this kind of ease is accomplished through offering more choices and alternatives to your visitors. While simplifying the buying experience for your customer may improve your sales, this process alone can open many new doors. Greek fabulist Aesop in 500 BCE noted, “Please all, and you will please none.” But while you can’t please all the people all the time, you can certainly please some people enough of the time to make a fortune.

Through niche marketing, you may have narrowed your focus. But those people who fit into your target market are all individuals with different tastes, goals and budgets — even if they are neatly classified as qualified prospects for your offering. By offering alternatives to your core market you will likely cater to the needs and wants of a much higher percentage of people within your niche.

The process of dividing your product or service into multiple offerings enables your online business to cater to various segments of your market — also known as “segmented marketing.” While this type of division expands your portfolio in some way, expansion by division is different than straight line or brand extension because you refrain from going outside your core competency. And there is a great risk involved when extending your company or product line outside your niche or specialization.

As a result, I prefer to call this kind of division as “core expansion.” In other words, line extension (I would also call it “shell expansion”) is what you want to avoid. In fact, line or brand extension is often very attractive for many companies that are looking at ways of increasing their revenues. Arguably, by extending an already well-known brand, short-term sales will result. Buying an obscure brand is risky while buying a new product from a currently well-known brand is an easier decision to make for most people.

But again, this is more of a trap, or a drug, since many companies have lessened their overall profits in the long term through line extension. Jack Trout and Al Ries strongly discommend line extension in their many books — and I wholeheartedly agree. As Jack Trout stated in “The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing,”

“When you try to be all things to all people, you inevitably wind up in trouble.” But core expansion, on the other hand, stays within the core (e.g., the niche, theme or target audience) and does not extend one’s focus.

## Divide And Conquer

For example, if you’re a specialist in your field and you offer only one or a small number of products or services on your website, which you should, you can still expand from within by dividing your product or service into multiple, smaller or more economical alternatives. While you can still offer the larger package, portions can be offered as options or individually packaged as unique products of their own. Through division you can even create separate products that complement each other (e.g., backend products).

Nevertheless, core expansion helps to accomplish three things. First, it doesn’t take your focus away from your uniqueness, niche or product category. Second, it increases your hit ratio when targeting clients, since some might be interested in your entire package while others may be interested in only a portion of it. And third, it increases the aura of expertise you project because you refrain from spreading yourself too thin.

For instance, let’s say you are a computer programmer and you offer consulting work. Your “consulting package” in this case might contain several steps, such as researching, planning, developing, programming, implementing, testing, training, customizing, upgrading and licensing. Obviously, all of these elements may be part of one global package that you offer on your website.

But by dividing them into individual components, you may not have expanded in a direct sense but you have expanded your possibilities (and your market appeal too). Using the previous example, you could develop your own research division, implementation division, training division and so on. The word “division” means exactly what it says — and not extension. And by doing so, you may stumble onto clients who may need the entire package and others who may only need, say, a training specialist.

Recognize that your total package may be separated into different components. Look at what you offer, break it down into various parts (parts that could sell well individually and appeal to separate segments within your market) and include both the entire package as well as its multiple parts on your website. You can also divide certain products into multiple parts, thereby creating alternative products, entirely new and distinct products, or backend products that complement others well that may be sold as additional products to your current customer base.

For instance, if you are distributing a self-help book, you can break the chapters down into independent articles, special reports or support materials for other related products. If you sell a vitamin line, you can divide larger bottles into smaller quantities. These could include small, vacuum-packed envelopes containing single or daily vitamin dosages that may be more appealing to those who travel a lot.

In essence, think of cars and their multifarious options and accessories. Also known in marketing management as “product option pricing,” some options can be bundled with the purchase and reflected in the base price, while others are sold separately, often in addition to the base purchase or at a later date — car dealerships often refer to this as “after-market sales.”

Oftentimes, there is a hidden treasure lying in a current product — one that could actually outsell the package from which it originates. For instance, you sell an extensive sales and marketing course. The entire package includes a large book, audiocassettes, visual aids and videotapes with real life examples. You could easily divide the course into different product types (e.g., books, videotapes and so on). But you could also divide the entire package into topics or step-by-step chapters (or a series of mini-books) so that students buy one chapter at a time, either for choosing those they prefer or for learning at their own pace.

You could also sell the videotapes and audiocassettes separately as backend products, or bundle them with complementary products from other, non-competing businesses whose target market is the same as your

own. And within each tape, references are made to the others (or to the remaining tapes in the series), which also help to indirectly promote the “missing” elements.

Regardless, by expanding from within you will not only multiply your hit ratio but also reinforce your unique specialty as well as the perception of superiority among your target market. Similarly, keep in mind that you should never digress from your niche. Remain focused. If you do, and through core expansion, you could open many new doors that you would have thought did not exist. In essence, look at your product or service to see if you can divide it into several parts that can be sold separately and individually.

## Be Lean, Mean and Themed

Core expansion is not limited to creating divisions but can also include the result of adding new products or services to your portfolio. As long as they stick to your niche and are not the result of extending a current brand or product line, then by offering more options you can also expand your market.

A strong, single theme is more powerful than different products under the same brand name (i.e., brand extension) or multiple products as variations of a same product but with the same brand name (i.e., line extension). An example of line extension is Coke, Diet Coke and Caffeine-free Coke. An example of brand extension is the V8 line of vegetable juices and its recent introduction of the V8 line of fruit juices, called “V8 Splash.” (By the way, “V8” once stood for “8 vegetables.” Go figure.)

Core expansion is the result of adding different products, with different names, that fit into a single theme, niche or product category. Extending a product line or brand rides on the coattails of the original brand’s equity, which is why such a strategy will result in short-term windfalls. But over time, the top-of-mind awareness that was once created will diminish in strength. Again, avoid brand or line extension as doing so will dilute your ability to maintain a solid position in the marketplace.

For example, Amazon.com’s extension into other fields is, in my opinion, weakening its brand. They now sell everything. (And I also believe it’s the reason why they are no longer the ecommerce leaders they once were. The first word that pops into my mind when “Amazon.com” is mentioned — and it’s likely the same with most people — is and will always be the word “books.”)

Instead, if Amazon had expanded only into other products that still catered to the book theme, they would have refrained from diluting their focus. Some examples are audiobooks, books on CD-ROM, book accessories, bookshelves, book lamps, etc. (I’m not saying that Amazon will not succeed in doing what they are doing. But they have weakened their brand along with their chances of maintaining their leading position in the long run, or they will need to invest a considerable amount of money in order to sustain it — and I’m talking about millions of dollars here, which most small businesses don’t have at their disposal.)

If you add new and different products to your core portfolio, try to cater to a same niche or to a single theme. This will highly depend on your specific niche category. Look for other products or services that logically fit into your target market, which may include products, even products from other businesses, that do not compete with your current portfolio, and are not extensions of it, but that still stick to your expertise, niche or audience — and, most importantly, appeal to your target market.

Beyond drycleaning services, many drycleaners now also offer tie cleaning, shoe cleaning, tailoring, clothing restoration and so on. Many banks now sell other types of financial products, such as investments, mutual funds, insurance, debt counseling services and accounting services. In addition to CDs, CDNow.com now offers CD players, CD cases, CD cleaning kits, DVDs and so on.

If you do expand from within, put names on your new products or services that specifically describe them as well as isolate them from other products — yours as well as those of your competitors. Use names that communicate the main benefits they offer and add taglines as well. If you do decide on extending your product line to focus on a different niche altogether, your best bet would be to develop an entirely separate

website for it. Ralph Wilson's site for example, at <http://www.wilsonweb.com/>, focuses primarily on ecommerce for corporations and managers. But Dr. Wilson also developed a separate site geared towards small to medium-sized businesses (i.e., Doctor eBiz at <http://www.doctorebiz.com/>).

If your brand name or theme has a substantial level of equity or top-of-mind awareness, then rather than using the same brand name make the new product a subsidiary brand. "Sub-branding" is often where a different product rides on the credibility of a larger brand name. The Aptiva is a computer system but it is also an IBM. Internet Explorer is a browser but Microsoft makes it. These products are those you will often see accompanied with expressions like "from the makers of" or "distributed by." The important thing to note in sub-branding is that the sub-brand is not an extension at all but an entirely separate brand in itself.

Another thing worth mentioning at this point is that, beyond new products that you can add to your portfolio or those to which you own the rights, you can also develop joint ventures to accomplish the same result. Other companies that cater to your target market and with which you are not competing can become an incredible opportunity for you to bundle or amalgamate products from both companies — and as a result create an entirely new and distinct product or package. (Many business owners, especially if your target market and especially your current customer base are potentially large, or if your niche is quite unique, would love to join forces with you.)

If another non-competing product or service complements yours well or can add to the value of your product, then consider developing some kind of strategic alliance with the supplier of that product. If both companies possess a certain level of equity or awareness, and while you can develop a new name for your "new" bundled product, you can also pool both names from each supplier (called "co-branding") — you can even use both sub- and co-branding together, such as the new name as the sub-brand manufactured, sold or marketed by the two joint suppliers.

I prefer to call these special partnerships "auto-networks" and I will discuss this topic further in the next chapter, entitled "Partnering for Profit." But in either case, what you are literally doing by sub-branding or co-branding is "piggy-backing" on another's brand equity. Many unknown brands have become better known through partnering with more popular brands. Eventually, as the new brand builds enough awareness, the other names could remain, be phased out or dropped altogether. (I prefer the latter.)

## The Olympic Factor

Aside from dividing from within or adding to your portfolio, you could also divide your *clientele* into groups (or segments, also called "market segmentation") in order to cater to a range of people within your own niche. While they may still be part of a same, larger group of people, you have classified them into several categories that will naturally help to increase your hit ratio.

Although this process is similar to division or expansion, it is a little different in that you can divide a product (or group together similar products) that may be more attractive to a specific segment of your market than another. For example, some clients may be interested in some products but may not be able to afford it, or others may like your offering but feel that the product offers more than they can chew. When presented with alternatives however, more prospects might be enticed to go ahead.

You will often find segment classifications in the form of product alternatives, such as different classes of the same product or service, different classes of augmented products or services added to a core product, or different prices to meet various price points. Many are often labeled with words like "bronze," "silver" and "gold." Others are labeled with "basic," "extended" and "premium." It doesn't matter how they are labeled, provided that these types of classifications *clearly communicate* different alternatives.

By classifying parts of your niche it will give you the ability to offer more options and thus, by catering to a larger percentage of people, help you sell more products more often. Research demonstrates that the greatest buying factor among consumers — after value, which happens to be the first — is options. In a

hypercompetitive world, offering options is a great positioning tool as it projects the idea that you accommodate individual needs more specifically.

Moreover, it indirectly promotes and positions other products or services indirectly — as in future upgrades, higher quality alternatives, increased value-adds or higher perceived value, all by virtue of each one’s classification (e.g., a “gold” package indirectly communicates that it is of higher quality or offers more than the “silver” one, and so on). Simply put, each option indirectly *positions* the others as well.

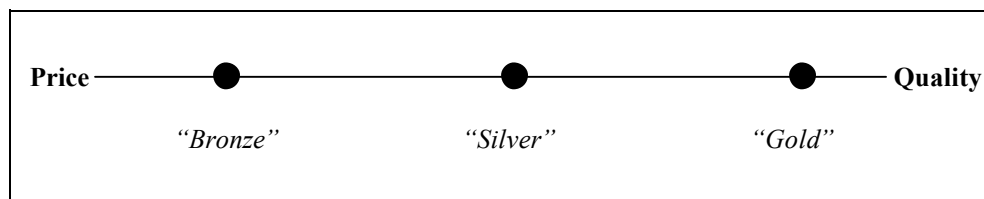
You should therefore look at diversifying your portfolio into options. If you’re able to cater to a range of different needs within a same niche, create product groups that answer to each segment. Also and most importantly, label your classifications individually. By putting a name on each category you are also communicating its benefits, position and individual value. But as mentioned earlier, you are also, as a byproduct, indirectly communicating the specific value and position of other alternatives as well.

When I first began my career in marketing consulting, I specialized in service providers and specifically in cosmetic surgeons. My services were therefore bundled into three distinct packages, labeled as “The Basic,” “The Professional” and “The Entrepreneur.” Some doctors who may be more conservative or enjoying already busy practices may not want the whole package deal. The basic and professional packages were thus more appealing to them. However, those entrepreneurial-minded doctors who wished to truly expand their practices were mostly enticed by my premium package instead.

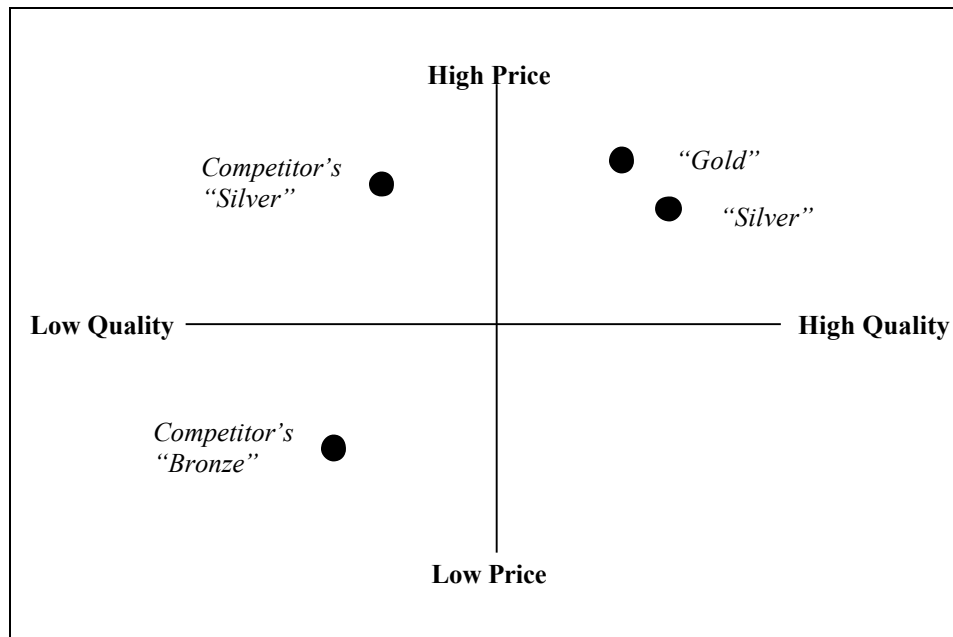
Like core expansion, the beauty of this technique is the fact that a far greater percentage of your market will be enticed to buy. If there is a range from which they can choose many will not only be inclined to buy but also buy the higher class alternative (or upgrade down the road), since people have a natural tendency to want the best. Even if they choose the lower alternative now, your hit ratio will have increased dramatically. In other words, your products will cater to the two ends of the spectrum (depending on the spectrum you choose), such as catering to clients that are more quality-sensitive than others while at the same time catering to those who are more price-sensitive than others.

### ***The Price-Quality Continuum***

More often than not, the spectrum used in positioning is based on the price-quality continuum. At one end of the scale, one alternative appeals to those people who are price-sensitive, while the other end appeals to those who are quality-sensitive. Here’s an example of the price-quality continuum:



But you may want to position your product (or in this case your alternative) against other alternatives as well as products of competitors. In this case, the price-quality continuum is a quadrant — each quadrant representing a mix of different price and quality levels (e.g., high-quality-low-price, low-quality-low-price, etc). (Remember that, while they are the most popular, you are not limited to price and quality. You could use value, features, benefits, services, etc.) Here’s an example of the price-quality positioning quadrant:



For example, let's say that you are an Internet service provider (or "ISP") and host websites. You may offer a "One-Star Site Plan" that includes three email addresses, five megabytes of webspace, limited access, limited file transfers and so on. The "Two-Star Site Plan" is a little more expensive but includes five addresses, ten megabytes, unlimited access, unlimited file transfers and advanced file maintenance.

However, your premium package, the "Three-Star Site Plan," offers, in addition to ten email addresses and twenty-five megabytes of webspace, many other special programs and tools — such as site administration, a shopping cart, traffic analysis software and a mailing list server. While the person who purchased the "One Star Plan" will be inclined to upgrade to the higher alternatives in the future, the one who purchased the "Three Star Plan" will feel that she is getting the best *value* there is.

A friend of mine offers a subscription to a private site. He used to offer a standard monthly, renewable membership. I told him to offer his clients four packages where people were given the choice among a monthly plan, a ninety day plan, a six month plan and an annual plan — each with a certain price incentive over the traditional monthly program (e.g., bulk pricing) as well as several additional bonuses depending on the program classification (i.e., the higher the program is, the more bonuses are offered). The results were very profitable: His sales doubled within the first week of implementing this type of tiered offering.

In essence, classify your target market in two or more categories and then mold your offering so that each classification appeals to each one specifically. By doing so, you are creating your very own competition. Needless to say, you are also positioning your alternatives against a competitor that may offer competing products or alternatives to your product as well. Ultimately, shape your offer to fit different needs, goals and budgets. Since you are still "hitting" a same niche, your hit ratio will likely increase as a result.

# CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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## Partnering for Profit

*“I will have no man work for me who has not the capacity to become a partner.”*  
— James Cash Penney (1875-1971), founder of J.C. Penney chain

There’s a lot of hype lately about the benefits of networking. I personally don’t advocate networking in the traditional sense (i.e., the mere “I’m open for business” kind) because, in my experience, it hasn’t brought me anything substantial in return. While it can be a fantastic marketing tool, the way in which networking is conducted is often the reason why it does not produce any favorable results.

I cannot begin to tell you how much money I have spent on business cards in the years that I’ve been in business. For example, I have attended thousands of events, seminars, conventions, chamber of commerce meetings, rotary club functions and so on (and still do to a great extent). At these events I would pass my cards around, saying something to the effect of: “Here’s my card, call me if you need me” or “call me if you know anyone who might need my services.” And I think that, in all these years, this tactic has provided me with only two or three clients at the most — that’s all.

The point is this: Networking and developing a *networking system* are two entirely separate things. When you’re only networking for instance, too often people will want something in return or else they will lose interest if you don’t take the time to recognize their efforts. And if you don’t, you will paradoxically need to network even more, which defeats the purpose altogether. Instead of networking, make your “net” work. Turn your network of contacts into automated, continuous, self-rewarding streams.

A way to consistently reward your network (or a way of turning your network into a networking system) is through joint venturing or partnering with strategic marketing alliances. If you and your alliance share a same target market, you can effectively cross-promote, send each other leads or share markets with each other — in a continuous, systematized fashion.

(By the way, there’s a caveat: In this chapter, I am referring to postal addresses. Sharing your clients’ contact information does not apply to their email addresses, which are private and should be non-sharable — unless they knew from the onset when they subscribed. Your trust and credibility in the online world is crucial, and I strongly discourage you from sharing opt-in lists. While you and your partner may share the physical addresses or phone numbers of prospects and clients, there are ways to share markets ethically in the online world without actually divulging email addresses. I’ll return to this later in greater detail.)

## Systematized Networking Systems

Essentially, there are as many different forms of systematized networking systems out there as there are businesses — and one should continuously and vigorously seek them out. The added visibility, reach and marketability an unknown, online business can achieve through strategic marketing partners are very often unlimited. But while there are many different forms, I have found that strategic marketing alliances mainly fall into three major categories: What I call the “info-network,” “auto-network” and “intra-network.”

### **Info-network**

An info-network is one in which information is exchanged in some form or another between parties. That information includes qualified leads that you both can share, or information about each party that is promoted to each other’s market, client base or even alliances. As long as your alliance logically shares a same target market with you but without directly competing with your business, it can become a potentially rewarding relationship.

Info-networking is the simplest of the three. For example, you’re an online store selling a specific toy for kids. Since your target market consists primarily of parents, you can seek out other stores that cater to parents as well, such as a website selling educational software programs for children. You can share the postal addresses of your clients, link reciprocally and contribute articles to each other’s newsletters.

### **Auto-network**

Auto-networking goes a little further. It’s the process of creating referral-sources that automatically supply you with good quality leads on a consistent, self-rewarding basis. For example, link and banner exchange programs (such as <http://www.bannerco-op.com/> and <http://bannerexchange.mycomputer.com/>), ezine ad swaps, affiliate programs, referral systems and so on can be developed with other non-competing websites.

While the affiliate program is the most popular form, auto-networking could also include an exchange of unique coupons, customized products or exclusive offers marketed to each other’s clientele. Affiliate programs are where affiliates are paid a commission for leads or clients they send to your website. But special, exclusive offers are easily traceable since they are unique for that particular networking venture.

### **Intra-network**

Finally, intra-networking simply means two or more parts of a whole that are independent but at the same time interdependent. While similar to bartering, in the context of intra-networking it is not an exchange of product for product but an exchange of product for qualified leads, support or endorsements. For example, you are intra-networking if you offer your product for free to a non-competing business that caters to a relatively same target market in exchange for good quality leads — or in exchange for an endorsement, publishable review or positive testimonial.

Whenever I offer a new info-product for example, I send out a bunch of free copies to my network of contacts, which consist of highly respected Internet marketers, programmers, web designers and so on — in return, I ask for a review of the product, an endorsement or a testimonial. In fact, if I am the member of an affiliate program, I usually write an article (as a sort of review or comment on the product the program promotes), and offer it to ezine publishers and webmasters. Also known as “advertorials,” these articles do not appear as blatant ads but more as educational tools.

## I’ll Show You Mine if You Show me Yours...

Nevertheless, the most effective networking system would be one in which all three are comprised — where the info, auto and intra types of networking systems are somehow combined. For instance, if you

were lucky enough to stumble onto another company that offers products or services that complement your products or services well, you can at the same time share costs, products, services, leads, offers, promotional materials, testimonials, links, endorsements as well as clients and prospects.

While these may become profitable joint ventures, they offer at the same time the added leverage of increased visibility and pre-qualified lead generation. The two companies benefit from each other's traffic, market share, brand equity and specific marketing expertise. Most importantly, strategic marketing alliances give you the ability to target a market that is already identified (and qualified) by your alliance, thus saving you the time and money that you would have spent if you had to do it yourself.

For example, a wedding planning consultant offers a package that involves helping couples plan the most important day of their lives. However, when it comes to stationary such as wedding invitations, she uses an online print shop with which a strategic alliance has been established. This printer gives a special price break or incentive offered exclusively to the consultant's clientele as a way to generate more business.

Of course, the printer is glad to help since it knows that by doing so the consultant will constantly send more clients to its business — if not all of them — for their printing needs. On her website, she labels this exclusive price break as "The Complete Invitation Package," which includes the planning, set up and printing of those wedding invitations. This alliance can even go further as to include the co-services of a graphic designer and mailing house (for the mailing and response management of the invitations).

If you sell cookware on your site, you can join forces with an online publisher to add a series of recipe books to the mix, create new (and possibly different) cookware packages and then price them accordingly. Similar to the wedding planner scenario, it could go a little further such as involving a furniture company that would supply ergonomic, easy-to-assemble kitchen cabinets in which to store the cookware.

In essence, the possibilities here are endless. But again, these types of joint ventures are not limited to the amalgamation of products or services. They can also be formed to include the promotional efforts, contacts, suppliers, resellers, alliances or other backend products of the other party.

For example, you can include coupons with your offer for other related products and services from non-competing alliances — coupons offering exclusive offers to the buyers of your product. Essentially, these coupons make your offer more irresistible. Both you and your alliance can cross-market the enhanced offer to each other's market as well. Also, the converse applies as well. You can find an alliance that would be willing to add your coupon to their mix. And if both of you do this simultaneously, not only do you save money (as sponsor fees may apply otherwise) but you also increase each other's perceived value.

Here's a case in point: A drycleaner discovered that the largest clientele of a nearby restaurant was mostly made up of company executives having "power lunches" (i.e., those business lunches the tax people love to hate). The drycleaner, knowing that her greatest clientele is also comprised of company executives who bring their shirts or dresses to have drycleaned, saw an opportunity.

Coupons were made up and handed out by the restaurant's waiters along with their clients' food tabs. They offered a 5% percent discount on drycleaning services and the coupons could be accumulated up to a maximum of 25% (of course, they were valid for a limited time only). In return, the drycleaner handed out coupons (clipped to their clients' garment bags) offering a free appetizer or dessert at that particular restaurant — good for one per person per lunch — with every load of \$30 worth of drycleaning.

But it didn't stop there. They exchanged posters, flyers, coupons and printed materials (such as the restaurant's menu and the drycleaner's brochure, which were both left on each other's counters). They also marketed the campaign under the banner of "Don't let the spot on you shirt from the juiciest roast beef in town at Carmicheal's Restaurant ruin that big deal! Bring it to Sparkling Cleaners, the first drycleaner for the busy executive, because 'Power Lunches Deserve a Clean Image.' With Carmicheal's Restaurant and Sparkling Cleaners, you can take your clients to lunch... And take a bite out of dirt!"

## Experts Have Groupies Too

Speaking of cooperating with other businesses on a promotional level, people today are hungry for helpful information. And many experts have profited from packaging, publishing, selling and distributing their know-how. They sell their “expertise” in other words, such as “how to” information, through books, audiocassettes, videotapes, seminars, training materials and support services.

But one of the greatest benefits of the Internet is the ability to invite people to join a special group of followers who are kept updated on your business, expertise or products, such as by subscribing to a newsletter or a discussion list. In the same vein, you can also create a special association or group based on your type of industry or product category, which can be a wonderful opportunity for creating networking systems as well as for casting that important aura of credibility.

For example, you’re a used car salesperson and you’ve written a book on how to save money buying used cars — an effective lead generator. But you also conduct consumer information seminars to people in the market for cars and moderate an email discussion list based on the same theme, where people can obtain, and ask questions about, information on your type of industry — even when this practice is not used as a promotional tactic in a *direct* sense.

Consequently, you can create a new kind of association or group based on the same concept. You might want to call it the “Better Car Buyer Institute” or the “Society of Ethical Pre-Owned Vehicle Sales Professionals.” There are numerous benefits in creating and maintaining your own unique association or group. You can make it a nonprofit organization and enroll members consisting of other used car dealerships in your area, even competitors.

First of all, keep in mind that the web is still a scary place for some people. Security and privacy remain important issues, although diminishing every single day. According to studies by AT&T Laboratories,<sup>20</sup> privacy policies and “seals of approval” help to instill greater confidence in the online buyer psyche — and increase sales as a result. (Some of the better-known associations are <http://www.truste.org/> for privacy policies, the online Better Business Bureau at <http://www.bbbonline.com/> and the Internet Content Rating Association at <http://www.rsac.org/>, among others.)

Therefore, being accredited by or affiliated with associations helps to convey that message of superiority. People tend to perceive the third party as objective and working in their best interest. Granted, while this type of practice may not always be true it is still an opportunity for online businesses to remain focused on their target market. However, the important thing is that by being the founder, president or chartered member of such an association, it enhances that perception greatly — and almost instantly.

For example, with my experience in the hair transplant industry, I know many doctors who use outdated techniques. But one hair transplant doctor I know formed his own association, whose purpose is to update, educate, certify and train doctors on better surgical methods. Among others, the association publishes a monthly newsletter and the doctor in question performs live surgical workshops once each year.

(In fact, he was elected president of “his” association for the first few years and still remains active on the board of directors. Moreover, his credentials include the fact that he was the founder of such an association. This implied superiority effectively increased his credibility, let alone top-of-mind awareness, in the marketplace. Even though his firm employs several other doctors, many patients still ask for that doctor specifically to perform their surgery — for an additional fee, of course.)

If you create your own association or group, you may want to register it as a nonprofit or not-for-profit organization. Believe it or not, some associations exist for the most trivial matters. There’s even one that

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.research.att.com/projects/privacystudy>

exists for the express purpose of registering and managing other associations. Depending on your industry, however, you should also check with these organizations or the laws in your area in order to ensure that you have the ability to do so. But in most cases, it's easier than you think.

The work involved in maintaining your association may or may not be laborious. It can be as simple as writing a monthly newsletter (members would be encouraged to contribute their own articles, for instance), employing volunteers and chairing monthly meetings, to offering specialized certification courses for members in your industry or niche.

For example, in my business (i.e., the public speaking and marketing consulting industries) there are the National Speakers Association, the Direct Marketing Association and the American Marketing Association, among many others. Most industries have their own association or associations. You should think about joining them if not becoming actively involved in their administration. But what happens if there are none? Or what happens if there are specific issues in your industry that could be addressed by such an association? An opportunity may be there for you to consider.

Here's an example that's specific to the web. Since the Internet is filled with scams and snakeoils, a colleague of mine founded her own association called "I-Cop," which stands for "International Council of Online Professionals," at <http://www.i-cop.org/> — which I also highly recommend, by the way. Being a member in such an association is a great promotional tool. But being the (or one of the) founding members adds almost instant credibility, leverage and visibility to your business.

In the case of the used car salesperson mentioned earlier, membership in such an association would make that person stand out. Most people distrust used car salespeople these days for a variety of reasons. But if they had to choose between a typical salesperson and one who is a member if not president of the "Society of Ethical Pre-Owned Vehicle Sales Professionals," which one would be more credible (at least in your mind)?

While laws vary depending on the type of industry in which you operate, basically associations, councils or special interest groups should not promote any one specific company and, more important, must exist for and work in the best interest of the public. If there's no conflict of interest (where the group's directors are elected, for example), then consider the added credibility and positioning strength of being, and being known as, the founder of your own association.

## **Multiply Your Marketing Punch**

Robert Allen, author of the bestsellers "Nothing Down" and "Creating Wealth," wrote that you can increase your sales through the leverage of network marketing — in most cases, there's no need to maintain a payroll let alone inventory. But online, affiliate programs, which is the most common type of network marketing system, has proliferated.

While multilevel marketing (or "MLM") programs are often considered as unethical for most people, on the Internet affiliate programs in general do not require any commitment, investment or effort. (In general, a pyramid scheme is a multilevel marketing organization in which people make money not by the sale of products but by the recruitment of other members — where for example membership requires a fee or a minimum inventory. These are the illegal kind. In essence, it's one where affiliates have to pay in order to earn money, and the earning potential is mostly centered on recruitment and not sales.)

Online affiliate programs merely require a link to the site being promoted — although one may choose to aggressively promote their affiliate programs as well. But for you, the business owner, there is a tremendous promotional leverage gained in creating an affiliate program to help sell your products. While one of them is the independent contractor relationship you maintain with your affiliates (and therefore resulting in the lack of a payroll to maintain), the greatest advantage is the increased exposure that such a program would help to cover.

Always remember that third parties are perceived as objective — at least more objective than employees selling for you in the first place. Although an affiliate will be just as biased as an employee, the direct relationship being removed thus creates the perception of somewhat greater impartiality. More important is the fact that a third party will always sell you better than you can ever sell yourself.

By multiplying your presence online, associates thus cover larger (and sometimes even remote) areas that would have been unreachable otherwise. For instance, their websites may receive a type of traffic that you would have never been able to produce in the first place. And they can sell to people that would have been difficult if not impossible for you or your website to find.

The idea behind an affiliate program is to let others do the work for you. Affiliates are people who have generally identified themselves from the start as being motivated and willing partners in your business. By paying associates a commission for selling your products, a finder's fee for selling your services or a reward based on a pay-per-click or pay-per-action program (such as a reward for enlisting subscribers to your opt-in list, for example), they may be inclined to promote you more aggressively than you could.

The numbers are virtually unlimited. While you should be very selective in whom you choose as an affiliate, you have the ability to create networks as large as the Internet itself. From your hometown to the far reaches of the planet, your associates can be everywhere or wherever you choose. Just make sure that laws of the area in which your affiliate conducts her business permits such a practice, which may vary depending on your industry. (If in doubt, you should always consult a lawyer.)

Always get your future affiliate to fill out an application before giving her the ability to sell for or link to you. Beyond the perception of selectiveness (i.e., remember that it's a part of takeaway selling), this grants you more control and tracking ability over your network's efforts. Accepting anyone and everyone that comes along could be a risky endeavor — you need to be in control over how they promote for you.

Should you wish to expand your affiliate program, you may want to consider a two or multi-tiered system. Multilevel marketing is highly effective for the reasons expressed earlier. But I prefer limiting an affiliate program to a two-tiered system since any more would require a great deal of time and effort to manage (and the line between "affiliate program" and "pyramid scheme" could be perceived as thinner).

In your affiliate program, you could offer one of four types of programs. They are: 1) Pay-per-impression, 2) pay-per-click, 3) pay-per-action and 4) pay-per-sale. And the one that's right for you, from a merchant's standpoint, will depend on several factors. If you're considering launching your own affiliate program, be sure to give the following some serious thought.

First, the least risky type of affiliate program is referred as a pay-per-sale program — and it's probably the reason it's also the most popular. Basically, you'll only pay your affiliate when a sale is made. There's no risk involved. You could set a flat rate for all your products or individual commission rates for each product you sell. It really all depends on you, your business and the types of products you offer.

In a pay-per-action scenario, you pay your affiliates not just for leads but also for leads that have done something to identify themselves to you as such. Most often, the type of action that's commonly used is subscribing to an opt-in list or newsletter. But it could also involve inquiring for more information, joining a program, or participating in a survey or contest. Also called "pay-per-lead," it's a little riskier than pay-per-sale. There's some work involved, as you generally have to convert these leads into paying customers before it becomes a profitable situation for you.

In the pay-per-click program, essentially you are paying for traffic to your site, no matter what these generated leads do. It's also a little riskier than the previous two as you are paying for visitors and not qualified leads or sales. Therefore, the one thing you will need in order to ensure this type of program becomes worthwhile is that your website does an effective job in selling visitors in the first place.

Finally, the riskiest one of all four is the pay-per-impression program. By tracking how many times your links appear, be it your banners, buttons or classified ads, you pay your affiliates for the number of impressions generated — and this is regardless of the fact that this impression resulted in an actual clickthrough let alone sale. Similar to the previous program, you need to ensure that, not only your site sells effectively but also that your ad sells effectively too — at least enough to generate a clickthrough.

There are many server-side programs available especially on the Internet that can help you in tracking your affiliates' actions, sales or results, even in managing and paying commissions. At any rate, look at it this way: Rather than paying for advertising (and often for very little results), you are paying affiliates to do it for you. The best part is that you can do so only when they are productive — unlike paying for blind forms of advertising that may or may not generate any results at all.

## Become a Virus and Spread Around

If you follow the news, then you probably know that the big talk on the Internet these days is about several new viruses, like the “Melissa” and “I Love You” viruses. And the devious or perhaps even brilliant way they work is that, after opening an email attachment, these viruses send more virus-infected emails to the first few people in one's address book without one's knowledge.

While we are bombarded with anti-virus warnings telling us to never open an attachment from an unknown person, how can we not resist doing so when the email comes from someone we actually do know (since these viruses use their victims' address books to multiply themselves)? In fact, they also use the victim's email merge feature to include recipients' names within the body of the message, making the seemingly personalized and unsuspectingly harmful email to be instantly trusted — and opened.

Through the use of personalization, these viruses prey on the trust already developed between people. And because of that vulnerability that exists, “Melissa,” “I Love You” and their many derivatives and copycat versions have been purported to be the fastest-spreading viruses to ever appear on the web.

Nevertheless, we can certainly learn the way these viruses (and computer viruses in general) work and act — and apply the same processes to our online marketing strategy. Also known as “viral marketing,” and like affiliate programs, the idea is generally to proliferate the knowledge of your existence on the web through other people's efforts.

Online, networking is probably more important if not essential since the web is dimensionless, expansive and still widely unknown. But through viral marketing, however, networking thus grants you the ability to reach areas that would have been simply unreachable otherwise — and to do so much faster. Be it with the help of referral systems, affiliate programs, joint ventures, freeware downloads and so on, it all comes down to the fact that we are more open, trusting and loyal when dealing with people we already know. Trust among people, therefore, is the food upon which viral marketing's feeds itself.

But you may ask, “How do I get my ‘virus’ to take off?” As mentioned previously, networking includes swapping each other's prospect or client lists. While privacy online is becoming an increasingly important issue, it doesn't mean that there has to be an actual sharing of such lists. For example, website owners and ezine publishers have opt-in lists that range from 100 to 100,000 people. Many cross-market to their lists, such as by offering single mailings (or “solo ads”). (If you publish your own ezine or maintain your own opt-in lists, the obvious advantage is that you can swap ads or solo mailings, or even listowner-endorsed exclusive offers, with each other.)

In addition, if you're a software programmer and you have created a program that, say, targets businesspeople, don't just give it away as shareware. Offer it to other sites and ezine publishers that target businesspeople, and let them offer it for you. Conversely, if you know of anyone who offers freeware or shareware programs, you can have the author customize the program (by adding your banner or link

somewhere) and give it away from your site as a free download — these types of applications are what John Audette, the moderator of the many discussion lists at <http://www.audette.com/>, calls “ad-apps.”

While your program may not entirely relate to your alliance’s product, the important thing is the fact that they both appeal to a same market. In addition to the fact that your program could be bundled with your alliance’s product and thus make her offer more palatable, if your “ad-app” is copyright-free you get your software to multiply itself rapidly — especially within a market of much higher quality by virtue of the nature of your alliance’s business. (And the converse is true just as well.)

Ultimately, you can create affiliations, alliances, referral-sources and centers-of-influence that can help propagate the knowledge of your existence on the web and, like a virus, multiply your online marketing punch. Focus on building a successful business using some of these effective strategies and the knowledge of your existence will spread like wildfire.

# CHAPTER FIFTEEN

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## Taking it One Step at a Time

*“The most successful men in the end are those whose success is the result of steady accretion... It is the man who carefully advances step by step, with his mind becoming wider and wider — and progressively better able to grasp any theme or situation — persevering in what he knows to be practical and concentrating his thought upon it, who is bound to succeed in the greatest degree.”*  
— **Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922)**

When marketing, the biggest risk small businesses often take is to imitate larger companies by marketing their company or product as simply being available — without leading the prospect to take some sort of action or to a certain outcome. We see this with websites that merely advertise what a business is, does and offers — a mere electronic brochure, in other words. In essence, their primary goal it seems is to strictly build awareness of their existence and not more business.

While branding is good, *branding alone is not good enough*. In the broadcast world of TV or radio, it is not a bad idea. The object is to instill a certain value about the brand in the mind. But on the directional, user-driven, narrowcast world of the web, mere branding is counterproductive. Why? In my experience, the awareness some stores are attempting to create is coupled with a poor sales message that, in a competitive online marketplace, can be very risky.

Let me explain. In the case of advertising for instance, they try to generate immediate business with ads that simply convey the message “I’m open for business” and do not provide good enough reasons to respond. When using the media, they buy the next thing that comes along without even knowing if the specific audience is appropriate for the message. And when responding to customer queries for more information, they send bulky, spiffy and entertaining brochures that look like shipping crates (or canned emailed responses that only target a broad cross-section of prospects.)

Trying to create immediate results with this kind of bland, untargeted, responseless advertising may result in a lot of traffic but often in little or no business — even no long-term business. In other words, most image-based advertisements tend to generate more curious responses than serious ones. Of course, they may be good for branding purposes. But with branding alone on the Internet, the type of traffic these ads do generate if any is often unqualified, untargeted and uninterested. Therefore, branding should be the byproduct of an effectively implemented direct marketing strategy and not a priority.

Direct-response advertising is a process in which businesses seek immediate results from their marketing efforts — be it sales, subscriptions, inquiries or simple clickthroughs — but as a way to identify, isolate and qualify prospects. Stated differently, in an intangible medium such as the Internet, where people are harder to find and target (and their attention is harder to grasp), and where branding efforts alone are tougher to

control and measure, it has become an important aspect to be able to quantify, track and measure one's results. Anything less would be wasteful or downright expensive.

## Stepping Stones to Superior Sales

Lead generation marketing is a technique through which advertisers seek to identify qualified leads before conducting any type of sales pitch. It helps to increase response while at the same time qualify leads. Also called "multistep marketing," it is a process in which businesses seek an immediate response but use this technique to generate better leads instead of sales — often unbeknownst to the people who respond.

The most common lead generation tactic is through what are often referred as "soft offers" (i.e., requests for freebies or specific inquiries). In essence, the marketing effort is only meant to identify qualified leads. People who respond are not general, curious or unqualified prospects. They are being pre-qualified and, once they have been enticed with that which they requested, be it information or the freebie, become pre-sold — they are more ready to buy than the average, unqualified prospect.

But another type of lead generation tactic consists of low-cost offers that eventually lead to repeat sales or to larger, more profitable ones down the road. The object with this strategy is to gradually isolate, qualify and persuade leads. While the initial sale may appear as an advertiser's primary objective, to the multistep marketer it is just a way to identify those who would be qualified for "the next level" (i.e., people who will likely be more interested in the next, more expensive item).

But in all of these cases, the general idea is to isolate the prospects from the suspects.

As a consultant to cosmetic surgeons, this process is obviously essential if not vital. No one can call a person on the phone and outright ask if that person is bald and wants more hair — at least without knowing if that person is bald in the first place. However, doctors will advertise an offer for a free information kit where those who respond will naturally fit into that specific demographic. Doctors then send a professional brochure explaining the procedure, the possible risks and the potential results — but without any pricing. (It is impossible to determine the cost of a procedure until the doctor personally sees the patient anyway.)

The information package therefore, along with its lack of pricing, causes the prospect to come forward once more, usually by calling the doctor's office to arrange for a personal consultation the surgeon — which may be for free or a fee. However, those candidates who eventually book the consultation are identifying themselves as serious prospects (I call them "expects"). In fact, once they do show up for the consultation, and in most cases, they are practically ready to have surgery.

When using this kind of strategy online, the people who hit your site are, in some way, interested in your offer — a soft offer, in other words. But when they take some kind of extra step, in actuality they are qualifying themselves for you. Then marketing a subsequent offer to that identified audience makes the selling process that much easier — in addition to reducing the cost-per-lead that could have been incurred by mass marketing in the first place.

One online marketer I know sells a *great* product at very little cost. Some people can't even imagine why he's selling it for so cheap. And in his online and offline advertising efforts, the "cheap" product is focused more than any other. But this marketer fully understands the lifetime value of a qualified customer. Once the cheap yet extremely valuable product is purchased, the client has demonstrated, in an indirect way, that she will likely be interested in the larger, more expensive (likely backend) products.

In other words, once they "bite," so to speak, these clients also become highly qualified prospects for more of the same, higher quality or complementary types of products this marketer offers. (I call them "expects" as they expect more or expect to do business.) His expects are far more interested and are more likely to buy the backend products this marketer offers than website visitors who may be totally unqualified and

given a general sales pitch for all the products from the onset. His lead generation efforts therefore provide a greater return on his investment.

## The “Free-way” to Lead Generation

If multistep marketing appeals to you and if you sell a product on your website that caters to a specific target market, find ways to get your market to come forward before trying to sell them anything yet. Soft offers are quite effective and offering something for free is a great enticement. And since we are in the information age, one of the best ways to do this is through the offer of free information.

The free report or free email newsletter type of lead generation is particularly the best in this kind of approach. A free report for example doesn't have to be product-specific. It doesn't even have to relate to what you sell. As long as the report targets and would benefit an audience that somehow logically fits within your target market, you're going to effectively generate better leads.

If you are targeting narrowed niches, then free reports, opt-in lists or email newsletters are wonderful tools for demonstrating to your market that you are an expert in your field or that your company knows its industry. But the idea behind free information is to have people come to you rather than you to them.

Some of the spin-off benefits of such an approach include building credibility with these qualified prospects. Over time, you sell to them (and sell more), generate referrals from them or instill a heightened awareness of your company or website in them. But the greatest advantage is that you no longer generate mere traffic to your website. You are also generating leads — and that's *qualified* leads.

Here's an example. Pianos consist of a row of metal strings similar to a guitar. When a key is pressed, a piece of felted wood (called “fulcrum”) hits a string, which in turn produces a specific note. These strings are held both in place and in tune by a series of tuning pegs screwed into a wooden plank inside the piano. Essentially, the tension applied to a string is what controls the pitch.

Like the guitar, in order to tune a particular note the peg is screwed a little tighter into the wood until the string itself becomes tighter and creates the desired pitch. Over time however, pegs eventually strip the wood and older pianos tend to fall out of tune considerably. Pegs are then replaced with larger ones until, one day, the piano is too old, can not be tuned any more and thus broken beyond repair.

Many unscrupulous salespeople will “dope” pianos so that they remain temporarily in tune until these instruments are sold to unsuspecting buyers. They do this by spraying water onto the wooden planks inside, which causes the wood to expand and thus grip the tuning pegs more firmly. But eventually, the water evaporates as pianos return to their original state. And once buyers become aware of the problem, it's already too late. A piano salesperson I knew ran a small classified ad. It said:

*“Beware parents in the market for a piano!” [That was the ad's headline.]  
 “Many parents buy used pianos for their kids because they don't know if they'll love music and want to minimize the risk of losing their investment. However, many used pianos are internally broken and temporarily — and secretly — doped in order to sell quickly (only to become broken again when it's too late). So before you buy any piano at any price, call for our free, special report, ‘Don't Let Piano Problems Put Your Bank Account Out Of Tune: Six Ways To Find Commonly Hidden Problems With Used Pianos’.”*

His report not only explained hidden faults commonly found in older pianos. But since he was catering to a target market (i.e., parents) it also explained how used pianos fall out of tune quickly causing children to

learn the piano the wrong way and eventually to lose interest — let alone the parents' money. Thus, parents who responded to the advertisement were naturally in the market for a piano for their children.

Of course, what the salesperson really wanted was to get these parents to buy new or at the very least professionally refurbished pianos from him. But the resulting effect was that the report not only brought qualified prospects to his door, which made it easy for him to target and pitch his own pianos to this market, but also instilled in his prospects a greater confidence in the salesperson for supplying such a valuable service — and saving them potential trouble. The report gave the salesperson instant credibility.

In your online business, think of a potential problem that your product or service solves. Without trying to pitch your product directly, offer a free information package that helps to educate your clientele on the specific problem they are experiencing and offer it as a free report. Even if your report is not related to your product, you know that those people who ask for your free report are identifying themselves to you and therefore make your job easier.

Here's another forinstance. Peter Robben, a professional debt negotiator and counselor, offers debt resolution services at <http://www.wesolvedebts.com/>. But Mr. Robben also offers not only a free consultation for small businesses but also a free report on how to identify financial crisis warning signs in one's business and a few tips on how to solve them. To obtain the free report by email, website visitors are encouraged to supply their names and email addresses. Nevertheless, the goal is to get these business owners to request a free consultation and, ultimately, to retain his services.

## Go for the Gusto

There's the true story of a notorious burglar in the 1930s, Willie Sutton, who's famous for his string of armed bank robberies and prison escapes. (Most of his robberies and prison escapes were the result of his many disguises, often as police and prison officers, which earned him the nickname "The Actor.") When Willie was once asked why he robbed banks, he replied, "That's where the money is!"

Likewise, businesses must go where the money is — or in other words where their clients are. While this might sound like an oversimplified statement, the trick to having as many expects come forward is to have your ad noticed and read by a specific group of people as much, as often and as effectively as possible. As the adage goes, one must be not only "in front of as many eyeballs as possible" but also in front of as many *qualified* eyeballs as possible.

General publications are certainly read by a lot of eyeballs. But the cost-per-lead can certainly eat up your profit margins — and there's no guarantee that your ad will actually be read by those eyeballs. Specialized publications on the other hand have the distinction of appealing to a very specific audience. Targeted advertising (or "narrowcasting" instead of broadcasting, if you will) is to go where your clients are.

For example, if only a small percentage of subscribers of an email newsletter with over 100,000 subscribers fit into your demographics, say 5,000 in this case, while the entire readership of another with only 25,000 subscribers does, which one do you think will give you the greatest response?

In addition, unlike a mass-published newsletter or a general website that is read by many but read in its entirety or more intensely by few, a specialized publication will be enjoyed or visited by few but read more intensely in its entirety by many. More than likely, readers will notice and be interested in your offer. If you advertise in a major publication that's too general or vague, your little ad can easily drown in a sea of ads. In a specialized publication however, your ad stands out like a gleaming beacon.

The Internet is filled with specialized publications and sites. They include occupation-specific, industry-specific or special interest publications. There are also email newsletters, trade publications, journals, reports, corporate email, ezines, HTML newsletters, topic-specific newsgroups, specialty websites, online

communities, topic or audience-specific discussion lists, theme-specific chat rooms, vertical portals, niche-oriented search engines, catalogues, discussion boards, and electronic forums.

Publications or websites for highly specialized topics are out there in some form or another. If you visit search engines for example, you will find ezines for home-based businesses, email newsletters exclusively written for corporate executives, newsgroups purely about cigars, newspapers strictly published for policemen and even websites geared for — of all things — gerbil breeders! As long as the audience logically fits into your target market, you are going to be more effective.

More important however is the fact that specialized publications are effective places to advertise your free information offer. Being read by a very specific audience, the readership, which have visited the site or subscribed to the publication and done so for the express purpose of soaking up specific knowledge, will love to get more information that caters uniquely to them. Therefore, your multistep marketing strategy will be far more effective when your ad is targeted.

Often, advertisers tend to purchase ad space in publications that are totally irrelevant to their specific market. Advertising representatives are paid on commission, so their job is to sell space. And they do so without regard to the appropriateness of their publication for an advertiser's message. More often than not, they base their offer on numbers, such as hits, pageviews or unique visitors (like the circulation numbers of an offline publication) — and not on the specific audience or the effectiveness of the publication.

Unfortunately, advertisers tend to blindly jump on the next advertising opportunity that comes along without giving second thought to the appropriateness of the audience for the kind of message they wish to convey. Quite simply, it's "backwards marketing." It is far better to find the audience (or, in this case, the medium that targets them specifically) and then to mold your message to fit that audience — and not the other way around.

The only way to make your advertising results more quantifiable and accountable is to publish your ad where your specific market hangs out. For example, a computer consultant specializing in financial institutions can advertise in finance-related ezines. An accountant specializing in dental practices should advertise on portals targeting dentists, dental association email newsletters or dental equipment manufacturer websites.

In essence, fish where the fish swim. Don't be fooled by a publication's distribution numbers, whether it's a high level of traffic or a large body of subscribers. Don't even limit your choice to the publication's demographics. Find a publication read by your psychographics, such as special interest, topic-specific, theme-oriented or industry-specific publications.

The bottom-line is that you should advertise to those who are not only capable of responding to your offer but also to those who are *willing* to respond. Forget the ocean. Find your pond that's filled with the kind of fish you really want — and fish there! Your ad will no longer be a mere hook in this case. If you also use lead generating, multistep marketing, it will also become the bait, the boat and the sonar — all in one.

## **One, Two, Three Steps... You're in!**

Have you ever been lucky (or unlucky) enough to receive those kind letters from relentless collection agencies? In addition to being persistent on the phone, collection agents are known to be terribly effective when their efforts are combined with a series of letters that seem to be as equally relentless.

First, you get a letter with the typical request to pay your debt and to "govern yourself accordingly." If you don't respond, a second letter appearing in the form of a "reminder" is sent to you a few weeks later. And, if you happen to be as persistent as the agency, you would then get a third letter with that big, red "Final Notice!" stamped in the upper right-hand corner.

Sequential direct mail has been just as profitable an endeavor for entrepreneurs as it has been for collection agencies. And the reason is that a sequence of letters, particularly at least three of them delivered to a same market, not only increases the overall response rate but also multiplies it. Email is certainly not excluded. With autoresponders becoming more intelligent, these programs will not only respond automatically to email inquiries but follow-up with prospects at predetermined intervals.

Even though I've first heard of this technique from direct marketing expert Dan Kennedy at a Toronto convention in 1996,<sup>21</sup> called "Success '96," I still didn't believe in its effectiveness until I actually used it in my own practice. Tested in one of my client's businesses, our first mailing conducted to approximately 7,000 recipients generated a response rate that was about 1%. This is typical for most one-time direct mail campaigns — no big "hurrah" there.

However, the surprise came when the response rate shot up to about 7% following the second mailing and another 3% after the third, which were targeted to the exact same market. With all three mailings totaling 11%, the overall response was a tenfold improvement over what could have been a single mailing.

The first letter presented a special time-sensitive offer and an invitation to enter a draw, which was the focus of the campaign. The second letter, which was mailed out about fifteen days later to the remaining unresponsive recipients, had a "sorry we missed you" and "we're concerned" flavor to it. This second letter also offered several additional incentives in order to help nudge unresponsive recipients into action.

Thirty days after the initial mailing, the third and final letter boldly stated the words "this is your last chance" and "deadline around the corner" at the top (similar to the collection agency's "final warning"). The content reinforced a sense of urgency and, along with another incentive not offered in the previous two mailings, emphasized the negative outcome that would result if the recipient chose to remain idle.

I've used this method many times since then and with similar results. Essentially, what I have found was that three if not at least two mailings to a same target market is often more profitable than a single one. If you want to take a look at the numbers, you will see that, while you may have doubled or tripled your direct mail marketing expenditures, you will likely triple the results of all three separate mailings combined.

By the way, the prize drawn in the previous campaign was for one of the services offered by my clients, which was priced at about \$1,500. Shortly after the draw, we decided on a fourth mailing to all those who did not respond and offered a discount on the very same service drawn. It said "Congratulations! You've won the second prize — a \$250 rebate on [the service drawn]." As a result, the response rate had finally risen to a total of 16% (leading to a final sales figure totaling close to \$2 million).

The power of such a process lies in the fact that people who receive a subsequent mailing tend to conclude, in my estimation, that the offer is more valuable. It is also the reason why sequential email marketing is so effective. On the Internet, where people rarely take anything at face value, subsequent mailings help to reinforce the perceived value of the offer as well as the credibility of the sender. If you send special offers to your email opt-in list for example, you should never stop at a single mailing.

One of my partners sends a "solo" mailing offer to his subscriber-base once every month. They are usually long copy sales messages — what are commonly known as "advertorials" (i.e., editorials that indirectly promote an offer of some kind). Granted, my partner's initial sales letter was quite successful by itself. But when he implemented the three-step sequence by adding several incentives with each step, his response ratio quintupled. (I'll return to sequential email marketing in greater detail in the next chapter.)

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.peterlowe.com/>

If you can, transform your next direct email marketing campaign into a sequence of offers to a same market and you will see a substantial improvement over one-time mailings. Be relentless like a collection agency. Send three messages instead of one in order to get more mileage out of your campaign.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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### There's Gold in Them Thar' Emails!

*"I waited and waited, and when no message came, I knew it must have been from you."*  
— **Ashleigh (Ellwood) Brilliant**

Incidentally, having your own newsletter is also a powerful way to attract prospects. It's powerful in that a newsletter doesn't outright promote your company or your product but your expertise. It implies it. An email newsletter is often more powerful than a brochure or media kit simply because you are demonstrating your expertise rather than just stating it or advertising it.

Again, you want to be perceived as (and not tell others that you are) a specialist or an expert in your specific niche. The newsletter, especially if it's free, is a great way to inform prospective clients what you are all about before they actually make the buying decision. You are in a way giving them a "trial run."

While most ezines are offered for free, you can still charge a nominal cost to pay for the printing and distribution, or you can solicit sponsorships to support it. Similar to targeting prospects, sponsors who would be most inclined to buy advertising space in your newsletter are those also catering to your unique clientele. Therefore, targeting advertisers would be conducted in the same manner (refer to the targeting model in chapter 4).

Conversely, you can buy advertising space in a newsletter written by another firm that caters to your target market. But having your own newsletter opens an even greater opportunity to you since you can both swap ads and create a wonderful advertising partnership without costing you anything. (Incidentally, Troy McDonald offers a free application to keep track of ad swaps with other publishers, called "Ad Swap Tracker Pro," at <http://www.homebasedprofit.com/>.)

But the idea is nonetheless to target a specific audience and have the people who read it want more and come forward to get it. With information being one the major shifts the business world has experienced, the Internet can also help to make your presence known in a better, quicker and cheaper way. In other words, the ezine not only uses the more economical email system (i.e., there's no printing, paper, or postage required), but it also delivers that information to eager subscribers in a matter of seconds.

More importantly, through constant contact it builds relationships with them. By recognizing the lifetime value of a customer, offering a personalized approach with your website will position your company above the competition (and certainly create more referral business as a result). That relationship enables you to be in front of your prospects more often. If they happen to need your services at any given time, or if they come to know someone who does, you are there, in front of them, when the time is right.

## Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Email newsletters have evolved tremendously over the last few years. More online businesses are recognizing their potential. But they are also recognizing the growing need to add a human element to their email marketing efforts, which is why ezines are becoming so popular. Kim McPherson, in a ClickZ.com article entitled “The Art of Being Human,”<sup>22</sup> noted, “Sure, we all know intuitively that those pesky email promotions that arrive in our inboxes originate with humans, but I think we often lose sight of how true prospects view them.”

McPherson continues: “In other words, if you’re trying to connect with me, don’t give me the hard sell. Give me information first. Give me stuff I can use. That’s why newsletters work so well, and why (most likely) longer, info-packed emails can often pull a higher response than their (traditionally much-heralded) shorter counterparts.”

Email also helps prospects to come forward in the privacy and convenience of their own homes or offices. Since more and more people frown upon spamming as their inboxes become deluged, there are more rewards to be reaped when catering to a select group of people who, by subscribing, are giving you by their own volition the permission to mail them — and to promote to them. In other words, as mentioned in the previous chapter these subscribers are identifying themselves to you as interested and qualified candidates.

Publishing a newsletter helps to position your company very effectively too. Whether the subscriber will or not buy from you, it constantly maintains top-of-mind awareness among your target market. As the old cliché “out of sight is out of mind” states, the constant communication between you and your potential clients reinforces your expertise and puts you at the forefront in their minds when subscribers are in the very least thinking about referring you to others.

You should invariably offer visitors the ability to subscribe themselves to your mailing list and they must be able to do so at least on the front page of your site. More important, they should be made aware of your mailing list if not have the ability to subscribe to it, on your website’s primary screen, at the very top. But an important step would obviously be to manage the mailing lists that you compile of these eager subscribers. And in order to properly maintain your lists, you will need a system.

If you’re using a simple email program or address book, they can become bulky and cumbersome after a certain period of time. Of course, there are also many mailing list management programs available for the more technically inclined. These offer webmasters the ability to program and compile their mailing lists directly on their servers. But most Internet marketers are business owners and, if they’re anything like me, more than likely do not have the time or technical savvy to manage their lists.

If this applies to you, a tool you will therefore need is what is called a mailing list server. There are many server-based or web-based list servers (also known as “group list managers”) available on the Internet. With these programs, you can simply mail your message once and it will be distributed to an entire list (even a pre-defined, isolated segment of your list, in some cases) in just one easy step. List servers and email list managers are useful for discussion lists, announcements and particularly ezines.<sup>23</sup>

However, there are several elements that you must include when asking for email addresses:

- A *form* where visitors can enter their email address instead of a mere link, unless the link leads to another page with a form (again, forms have higher response rates over “mailto” links);

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.clickz.com/cgi-bin/gt/article.html?article=1947>

<sup>23</sup> A list of email list managers and other tools are included in the Appendix section.

- A *privacy policy* near or linked near the form, so that subscribers understand that their personal information will remain confidential (this will start the process of building trust with them);
- An *action word or phrase*, especially on or near the submit button, such as “subscribe,” “enter,” “join,” “enroll” and so on (in other words, tell your visitor exactly what to do);
- And simple, clear *removal instructions* (on your website, in your welcome message and in every communication you make) so that recipients can easily unsubscribe from your list at any time, especially by themselves and without your intervention.

If you publish an electronic newsletter on a regular basis or if you plan to make announcements about updates to your site (which you should), a list server will definitely become handy if not necessary. For starters, when a visitor enters his or her email address on your site, then it’s time for you to start the sales process. Keep in mind that direct email marketing is no different than physical direct mail marketing — it also requires carefully crafted messages. If you simply provide information, you would have been better off posting it on your site in the first place.

Your return message to the respondent must include several elements. Of course, you give what they asked. If they simply joined your list, then it’s a welcome message. But more importantly, it must also contain an offer of some kind. Do you have a new product? Are you offering a new service? Do you sell another piece of specialized information that’s somehow related to the content of your return message? Have you recently issued a new press release? Do you offer another freebie? Then, offer it in your welcome message.

By the way, when people request information from you it is always a sound practice to ask them if they also wish to subscribe. As well, setting up a privacy policy page on your website also makes good business sense. Trust is a big issue, not only in business but also and more so on the Internet. Always provide subscribers a guarantee that their email addresses will never be shared or sold to anyone else. (And stick to it. In fact, since privacy online is such an important issue, let’s deal with it a little further.)

## A Word About Spam

One of the things most if not all Internet marketers come across at least once in their lives is spam. Whether they’ve used it, contemplated using it, rallied against it or even received it, the deceptively appealing nature of unsolicited commercial email, as well as the gut-wrenching, mind-numbing, nerve-racking work it takes to manage spam, makes it the most detested form of online marketing. But the question remains: Why is it still being used? There are several reasons.

While driving to a client in my consulting practice, I listened to the audio version of one of my favorite marketing books, “The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing” by Al Ries and Jack Trout. One of their laws struck me in a way it has never struck me before, for I realized, now that I do business online, how much these laws apply to Internet marketing as well.

Law number eleven, which is the “Law of Perspective,” states: “In marketing, the long-term effects are usually the exact opposite of the short-term effects.” Al Ries illustrates this law with sales promotions and the way they work — and work against you. While sales do help to increase business in the short-term, in the long-term the effect wears off and, like a drug, one has to inject more price-based incentives to keep the sales volume at a certain level. Ultimately, a discount-driven company will see its business inevitably decrease since, as Ries notes, “Sales tend to educate consumers over time never to buy at ‘regular’ prices.”

These types of marketing approaches are not limited to sales promotions. This seemingly unstoppable barrage of unwanted commercial email is included in this mix. Spam is effective and profitable since if it weren’t it would have stopped haunting our inboxes long ago. But in addition to the potential infringement of new laws, the negative consequences of spam with regards to long-term profitability (and, of course, to positioning) far outweigh the short-term advantages.

A business' most important asset is its credibility — and more so online, for the Internet lacks the human element. (It is this very lack that often makes spam so attractive if not addictive. As Kim McPherson indicated earlier, some tend to forget that real people receive the mail, not computers.) Nevertheless, credibility in the faceless online world is like oxygen in its offline version: Inescapably essential. So a more profitable, long-term solution is the development of one's own mailing lists or the use of others that are opt-in, responsible and targeted.

Consequently, ezines are growing with astonishing fervor. Beyond the fact that they help build trust and credibility, people want to get to know you. And the level of value they attribute to their purchase from you is, while seemingly unrelated, inextricably tied to the level of trust they place in you.

Arguably, short-term “band-aid” solutions can produce good results. In other words, profits can be made with spam (or without the need for prospects to know you, for that matter). But like drugs, these solutions are only short-lived, which is why they must be continuously repeated in order to remain viable let alone profitable — hence, the reason why *spammers keep spamming*.

Knowing you is the basis of any long-term business success. If you want your online business to remain profitable for a long period of time, then consider the converse — the short-term losses (if any) versus the long-term gains. In other words, don't spam. Find ways to get and stay in contact with eager, interested and consensual prospects. In other words, publish your own ezine, or buy or rent targeted opt-in lists from reputable mailing list brokers. Most importantly, advertise in ezines... It's often your surest and safest bet.

Needless to say, it is commonsensical that, if you sell a product that helps to make life easier for your prospects, don't market your product in a way that negates or even contradicts that very point. Spam is the sure way to defeat your positioning efforts, for the pitfalls will, in the end, cost you much more than some of its more respectable alternatives.

## Turning the Monotone Into the Magnetic

Every single message you send is an opportunity to market — one of which most online marketers fail to take advantage. You can discreetly communicate to others what you do, what you offer and how to get in contact with you — without appearing blatantly commercial.

Your signature file, which is attached to the end of each email message you compose and send, usually consists of a few short lines that indicate your name and contact information. But signature files are not limited to identification only. They can also promote a company, website, product, tagline, newsletter or free offer. (The latter is probably the most effective.) As long as it remains within about five to six lines, your message will seldom be considered as an advertisement. Here's mine, as an example:

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Regards,
Michel Fortin
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Michel Fortin is a speaker, author, professor and marketing
consultant. He is also the editor of the Internet Marketing
Chronicles ezine, delivered weekly to 100,000+ subscribers.
Free articles and subscription at http://SuccessDoctor.com.
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More importantly, it should invite the recipient to cross-promote with you. With cross-promotion, you can be selective and choose on which sites your links can appear, and thus have greater control over them by

knowing about them in advance. This simplifies your tracking since you will know which sites — and if you want to be more specific, which banner ads — are pulling the most visitors for you. In order to invite others to cross-promote with you, include in your signature file the following sentence:

*“Feel free to correspond with us for any cross-promotion ideas that will help us both.”*

A signature file is not limited to email either. It can also be included in newsgroups and discussion list posts. Needless to say, there are places where promotional signature files are inappropriate, such as some moderated discussion groups or non-commercial newsgroups. In these cases, you should use another file that is limited to your identification or any other related information. In the very least, it should include in your website address. It is wise therefore to have several signature files developed as to accommodate different needs.

(However, a safer and often more effective method is to refer to key pages on your site in your discussions — as long as they are relevant to the topics being discussed. For example, I maintain an article archive on my site at <http://SuccessDoctor.com/>. In my discussions I often post links that lead to some of my articles as a way to back up some of my arguments or to offer further information. Not only does this help to keep my posts short and to the point, but it also gets people to visit my site if they wish to obtain more information on the subject matter or if they are at all interested in the topic being discussed.)

According to research conducted by Cognitative, Inc. at <http://www.cognitative.com/>, more and more people are not only buying online but also buying from companies they trusted and with which they have built online relationships. But the study also found some interesting statistics: Consumers discover new websites via word-of-mouth (100%), links (83%), advertising (67%) and magazine articles (61%). On the other hand, business users find new websites via magazine articles (94%), links (88%), advertising (76%) and word-of-mouth (71%).<sup>24</sup> Therefore, publishing an electronic newsletter can become an effective way to build trust and stronger relationships.

Of course, the one thing you will need the most, when starting your ezine, will be to increase your subscribership. Therefore, swapping ads with other publishers that target a same audience is a great way to promote your newsletter and build your subscriber-base. Your ad should therefore promote your publication and provide instructions on how to subscribe within the ad. (Be sure to tag your ads as to track the origin of subscribers and evaluate the effectiveness of your ads.)

Another great way to grow your subscriber-base is by registering your publication with ezine directories. Fortunately, there are many popular search engines, discussion lists and online directories specializing in ezines. There are even websites completely dedicated to them as well, such as <http://www.infojump.com/>, <http://www.ezinedirectory.com/>, <http://www.bestezines.com/> and [www.marketing-seek.com/](http://www.marketing-seek.com/), among others. There are also many that strictly target ezine publishers, writers or editors respectively.

Finally, in addition to the fact that ezines are great marketing tools that can provide you with large amounts of free publicity, they can also become effective for gathering marketing intelligence. Successful direct marketing relies heavily on the ability to compile specific information about the types of products or services for which your clients are looking. Through ezines, you can thus obtain that kind of information very quickly and easily.

For example, surveys can be conducted among subscribers regarding current products, new products, products about to be developed or launched, customer service procedures, promotional campaigns, strategic company goals and so on. But while surveys and polls are the most common methods, hosting other company products in your ezine and then finding out the kind of response they have generated is another potentially great source of information.

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<sup>24</sup> [http://www.cognitative.com/company\\_info/press\\_releases/ci\\_pr\\_04\\_12\\_99.htm](http://www.cognitative.com/company_info/press_releases/ci_pr_04_12_99.htm)

## Be Sequentially Superior

One of the greatest innovations since the introduction of email is the autoresponder. An autoresponder is a program that will automatically reply to an email message sent to you — very much like “fax-on-demand.” A visitor who requests your information will receive a pre-written email response almost within a matter of seconds. Not only is automation less work for you but also people can get a reply 24 hours a day, even while you sleep.

A new form of autoresponder is the automated follow-up system (often called “smart” or “intelligent autoresponder”) that will send not only one but several emails at different predetermined intervals. Again, there is no extra work involved and all the follow-up messages are prewritten. All that’s needed is for you to write the messages and to determine the amount of time between each message. Some also have personalization features where a respondent’s name could be included in your reply.

While email is certainly an important aspect of marketing on the web, as mentioned earlier a single email is never enough — and in fact can be more costly down the road. Like all marketing messages, it takes repetition in order to get people to first absorb the message, understand it and then take action. Naturally, some people will immediately respond while others need to see the message more than once before they even think about responding to the offer.

The reason for this is that each person, with each marketing message and for each different type of product, has a specific responsive behavior. Virtually all markets can be divided into several, graduated segments based on such behaviors. They generally consist of five, which are: 1) Innovators, 2) early adopters, 3) early majority, 4) late majority and 5) laggards.

According to “Principles of Marketing,” a college textbook used at the college where I teach marketing management, Dr. Phillip Kotler notes that innovators are risk-takers and venturesome, and consist of about 2.5% of the whole market. Therefore, these types usually respond to new offers almost immediately and do so without giving them much thought. On the other hand, early adopters respond to new ideas early — taking action soon after the innovators do, albeit carefully. They represent 13.5% of the market.

While the third and fourth groups (which are comprised of the early majority and late majority, also known as the “middle majority”) constitute the largest segment of all, people in the early majority typically respond to new ideas before the average person does. They represent 34% of any given market. People in the late majority, which consist of another 34%, are skeptical, careful and slow. They take their time, usually shop around and need to see offers more than a few times before giving any consideration. The laggards, being the final segment, take action only after some time has elapsed — usually after everyone else has done so. They consist of the remaining 16% of the entire market pie.

Ultimately, the important thing to note from Dr. Kotler’s observation is that the middle majority, being the largest segment of the population, consists of a whopping 68%. A marketer’s goal is therefore to effectively reach, persuade and incite this larger segment, which is often difficult to do with a single mailing. Repeating your marketing message — and sometimes doing so more than once — is essential with this group. In the end, you will not only increase the response but also multiply it.

Nevertheless, Tom Kulzer, of smart autoresponder provider AWeber Systems at <http://www.aweber.com/>, claims that statistics prove the bulk of most sales occur in the follow-up process. However, following up with your prospects is more than just a process — it’s an art. You need to do so in a timely, consistent and compelling manner. As Jim Rohn once said, “Without a sense of urgency desire loses its value.” Like a blacksmith you must “hit the iron while it’s hot,” in other words.

Remember that the power of such a process lies in the fact that subsequent mailings tend to make the offer more valuable. When an offer is repeated, people have the natural tendency to assume that the offer is important and not a “fly-by-night” spiel. In fact, repetition not only helps to emphasize the importance of an offer but also aids comprehension and reinforces its urgency.

With the help of the Internet, campaigns can also be entirely automated with follow-up or intelligent autoresponders. After someone has responded to your offer or asked for more information from your company, autobots can automatically deliver your series of prewritten follow-up email messages at preset intervals. This strategy can become quite effective, provided that users are properly notified — specifically, that they are subscribing to a series of messages — and given the ability to stop the flow at any time.

Another great strategy is to deliver a series of informative articles over a period of time, which can be offered freely or even marketed as entirely separate, stand-alone products — such as a course or a reminder service. One of my colleagues, Paul Myers of TalkBiz at <http://www.talkbiz.com/>, offers an email marketing course completely delivered by autoresponder. After requesting the course by email, respondents receive seven courses delivered once a week over a period of two months.

Nevertheless, remember that a little nudge can budge. By creating a sense of urgency with your email marketing campaign (such as by making your offer time-sensitive), and by adding an extra incentive with each mailing, your offer becomes more valuable and more difficult to ignore. And since information is the currency of the Internet, these additional bonuses could simply be comprised of special reports, articles, ebooks, freeware, reviews or, as mentioned earlier, even courses delivered incrementally.

Remember that, if some prospects have not yet responded by the end of your campaign, you could still send an additional email message in order to gather some useful information. For example, your final follow-up message could simply ask why your prospects did not order from you. You could turn your final message into a survey to which people can respond and offer one of your free bonuses as a way to thank them for their valuable time.

Feedback in your online business is precious. Therefore, your sequential email marketing campaign could become an effective tool to help you to modify your offer or refine your follow-up messages so that prospects will indeed order from you next time. Incomplete sales and poor results should never be regarded as failures but as wonderful opportunities to grow and learn.

# CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

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## “Word-of-Mouse” Marketing

*“A rumor is one thing that gets thicker instead of thinner as it is spreads.”*  
— **Richard Willard Armour (1906-1989)**

*“Rumor is not always wrong (from Life of Agricola)”*  
— **Publius Cornelius Tacitus (55?-120? CE)**

With viral marketing, your visibility spreads almost like a virus throughout a network of people who refer your business to each other. Unlike ads, which stop once they reach their destination, viral marketing continues to spread almost effortlessly since the people who refer you to others know each other. Also, those who get to know you or about you through third party referrals grant you a higher level of confidence, credibility and loyalty. While word-of-mouth advertising is crucial in the offline world, online it is vital — and for different reasons.

The key to marketing success in the offline world is often touted as being “location, location, location.” The Internet is certainly *no different*. In other words, your marketing success depends highly on the number of locations you appear — places on which your site, link, company or product name exist.

Being in as many places on the Internet as possible, talked about by as many people as possible and seen by as many eyeballs as possible — in short, having a certain kind of *omnipresence* online — is the goal most websites should seek. But there’s more to it than location alone. If you tell people that you’re the best or that you’re the leader in your field, your self-serving message makes it all suspect. But if someone other than you says to another that you are indeed the best or that you do have the solution to their problems, how much more believable will that person’s statement be?

Accordingly, referrals and networking systems are not only important because they create an awareness of your business (let alone create traffic), but also important to the degree to which third party marketing implies credibility, superiority and greater perceived value of the products or services you offer.

In “The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding,” Al Ries stresses the importance of leadership and how that leadership is communicated. According to Ries, people never really buy the best — they only think that they do. They usually buy the leader or leaders in a particular product category (or what they perceive as being the best). And that perception is often molded by what they are told or by what others do, and not by what is fact or by what is being advertised.

Coke, for example, outsells Pepsi. But according to Ries, taste tests from both camps reveal that Pepsi is the better tasting brand (which was, if you recall, the factor that led to the rise — and demise — of the New

Coke). So why does Coke still beat Pepsi in sales? It is not because it is the leader in the marketplace or it promoted itself as such, but because, quite simply, it is *known* as the leader in the cola category.

Coke was the first cola “in the mind” of the marketplace and thus the one most talked about, even to this day. In fact, when a person is introduced to cola for the first time, she is often told to try Coke. People in restaurants still refer to the word “coke” as the generic name for colas, even when in some restaurants Pepsi is the only one served. (I’ve personally been guilty of this many times over — even though I prefer Pepsi.)

## What’s “New” About you?

Ideally, in order to be first in the mind you need to get others to talk about you. And one the easiest and most profitable ways to generate word-of-mouth advertising there is — and one that is often overlooked too — is publicity. And free publicity specifically is still, by far, underutilized by many web businesses. All it takes is information that can get others to talk about you — information that can arouse curiosity, pique interest and, most importantly, get passed around easily and effortlessly.

A news release is simply a document sent to the media to notify them of something new. A newsworthy item can be an event, announcement or human interest story. All too often however, business owners view news releases as a form of advertising. But the media are not in the business to provide free advertising — if you’re guilty of this, they’ll most likely tell you that you should have called the advertising department instead (or they’ll simply ignore you altogether).

The media are in business to report stories that are of interest to their readers or viewers. It is also important to remember that they have a particular interest in reporting on stories that help to enhance the audience of, and sponsorship interest in, the medium they represent. Above all, keep in mind that they are always looking for newsworthy items on which to report — that’s their job. But in my experience, especially in the newspaper industry, they prefer stories that relate to a current event or one with emotional appeal.

Reporters also like stories that appeal to a wide audience, which is particularly true for larger media. Targeted or specialized media on the other hand love to report on stories that appeal to their specific market. If your story will exclusively interest the readership of a specific, topic-centered publication, your chances of being reported or published will be much greater.

Like third party referrals, media coverage often tends to be a more effective form of promotion than advertising since it is coming from an objective third party. While there are many ways that new releases may be used, in essence it could be anything new. In fact, an effective technique that can help spark interest in your news release is to be the first in some category. If you can support the fact that you or your event is the largest or first for example, you can and should use that information in your news release.

A company claiming to be the best is never a news item. But a company claiming to be the first, in some category or in some way, is. Capitalize on it when approaching the media. Look for ways to sell your story differently, possibly with a new angle or twist. For example, think of the times you have seen a story about someone who opened a new online business. While that may sound trivial (and too often, it is), it isn’t if that person is a celebrity, is a recovering alcoholic, has ten children or suffers from a disability.

In other words, bring your own unique angle or experience into your news release. A person I knew lost his leg in a car accident. He is also an online entrepreneur. His product is a backpack with special straps that made carrying it a little more comfortable. I told him to use his lack of one leg in his release as being the inspiration behind the creation of his backpack. I suggested, as a headline: “One-legged man’s ordeal helps lighten hikers’ loads,” “A backpack so easy to carry, even on a single leg” or “Backpack maker has a leg up on the competition... Literally.”

Online, however, using viral forms of publicity can also become tremendously effective — the news can spread very quickly and easily. If your online business is unique, focuses on a niche or is the first in some

category, the knowledge of your existence will spread almost naturally. But using the Internet as a way to automate, leverage and increase the spread of that message can help to multiply your marketing — almost exponentially. Also called “word-of-mouse,” viral marketing can help in spreading your existence online with results that are more far-reaching than any other form of word-of-mouth advertising.

Here’s a case in point. Nearly half a million people a day were calling a New Jersey investment firm’s voice mail just to hear the sound of a duck quacking. Their automated reception, which began with those typical corporate prompts, such as “To request a new account kit, press two,” included as its last option: “If you would like to hear a duck quack, press seven.”

The brokerage firm, which has a mallard as its mascot, decided to throw in the sound of a duck quacking as an option on their toll-free line — as a joke at first. But according to an article published in Canada’s National Post newspaper, writer Robert Thompson reported that each day nearly 500,000 people called the line to hear the sound of the duck, tying up the company’s phone system in the process.<sup>25</sup>

At the end of the first week, only eight people listened to the quack. But word spread quickly — so quickly in fact that, with the phone number circulating throughout the Internet and particularly by email, more than 270,000 people called the number by the end of the first month. “We didn’t do anything,” said the brokerage firm’s CEO. “We just left it on our voice mail — the Internet took care of the rest.”

Nevertheless, one way to leverage word-of-mouse is by using tools that can help the viral process. Automated online networking systems can, in the same way, multiply one’s visibility quite rapidly. They are often called “referral traffic generators.” Unlike the more traditional traffic generators such as banners and search engines, or networking systems such as strategic marketing alliances and affiliate programs, these specific tools can be used to stimulate both curiosity and third party referrals.

For example, one tactic is to offer something for free on your website (something digital that can easily be downloaded, copied and passed around) — but it shouldn’t stop there. You should also to let others offer it to their friends. If they’re web business owners, webmasters or publishers, let them offer it to their clients, visitors and subscribers (possibly as gifts, bonuses or traffic generators). In essence, let others freely and liberally distribute your freebie. It also works well when used in conjunction with contests, polls and giveaways.

And most importantly, online tools (like <http://www.recommendit.com/> <http://www.letemknow.com/> or <http://www.bravenet.com/samples/announcer.php>) can help to propel the distribution of your freebie. For the same reasons online forms stimulate greater responses over mere email links, these referral tools can help to propagate your freebie all over the Internet — and increase traffic to your site at the same time.

## If You’re an Expert, Shout it From the Desktops

One of the greatest benefits of the Internet is the fact that information is in very high demand. Therefore, contributing articles that relate to your unique expertise is an effective and economical way to advertise online. In other words, since an informative article is not overtly promotional, its educational value is an effective tool in promoting your expertise and knowledge, and online publications and especially specialized publications are always in need of contributing writers.

While many do not compensate their writers, most publishers will include an “about the author” byline at the end of the article with the author’s contact information. As an author (and not an advertiser), you get a high-profile platform to demonstrate your knowledge on a subject in which prospects are interested. And

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<sup>25</sup> Related article at <http://www.newsbytes.com/news/00/157697.html>

since it is not an utter advertisement, it will be more effective and credible than regular advertising — in addition to the fact that it costs little to nothing.

With the plethora of online publications and ezines that exist, articles are always in demand. (I speak from personal experience as an editor of an ezine with over 125,000 subscribers.) However, where one article is an effective strategy, a continuing series of articles — maybe even a column, for example — is an even better one. Oftentimes, people who read your column will become good, long-term, loyal readers. As a result, they will come to expect the regular information you provide.

Many publishers appreciate that approach since, while readers may be interested in ideas presented in one article, they will be enticed to subscribe in order to keep up with your column — it's truly a win-win approach. You will thus develop a loyal group of readers — and particularly publishers — who will be expecting your articles on a regular basis.

For example, one of my regular columnists is search engine expert Robert Massa from <http://www.magic-city.net/>. Bob is known as one of the leading experts in search engine positioning. He not only has a loyal following among my subscribers, but also his question-and-answer format stimulates such an abundance of questions each week that sometimes he can't even keep up with the responses.

To start your own column, simply prepare a synopsis of the series and send it out in a news release format. Think for the publishers. Add a “hook” that will communicate how your articles will increase subscriptions, readership or sponsorship interest. For example, you could highlight the response rate your article achieved in other publications through your own tracking efforts. In fact, you could show how your column is a perfect fit for their publication and will appeal to their audience. Look at it from their perspective and the response will most likely be positive.

Not only should you write a column but also call it a special name, especially a name that communicates the nature of your company, expertise or theme. A very simple example is a political analyst named Mark Byrd whose column is appropriately titled “Byrd's Eye View.” If you sell recipe books that specialize in cooking for executives, such as dishes that are easy and quick to prepare, and appealing to those who are constantly on the run, then a name for your column could be “Quickly Corporate Cooking.”

After writing a series of published articles, you can put them together in a book format and sell the book as an additional product on your site, add it as a free bonus item to an existing product or sell it as a backend product to your current customer-base. In return, publications in which your column appeared would likely be open to promoting your book for free since it promotes them as well.

Many information-oriented websites strive to keep their content fresh — they need a consistent stream of new ideas and information. And if they happen to cater to your target market, many would appreciate having you as a contributor and especially as a guest-columnist on an ongoing basis. Beyond ezines and websites, there are also online article archives, topical discussion groups and specialized search engines that exist for the sole purpose of syndicating (or distributing) content. (And like the referral tools mentioned earlier, there are also syndication tools as well — such as <http://www.mastersyndicator.com/>.)

Finally, realize that writing articles can become not only effective viral marketing tools but also effective traffic generators. In fact, many successful online businesses have become profitable solely by marketing their businesses through the reprinting of their content. In addition to making a site sticky, posting articles on one's website and especially offering visitors the ability to reprint them can help increase one's link popularity and keyword density — needed items in achieving top search engine positioning these days.

## Written Words Help Walk Your Talk

Beyond articles, one can also post content from other authors or businesses, with their permission — content that indirectly promotes the business and puts the company, website or product in a positive light.

Therefore, since people are leery of any statement made online, you should let others promote you as an expert in your particular field as well. Thus, if other people say it, ask them to put it down in writing.

Remember that people are predominantly visual. Similarly, the power of the written word has been proven to be of immense proportions. Roger Dawson, in his book “The Secrets of Power Negotiating: How to Get Anything You Want,” emphasized a universal principle: “People will believe more what they see in writing than what they don’t see in writing.”

So when positioning your firm in the mind of the marketplace, your efforts will be more effective if they are also done through the written words of others. On top of client testimonials, they include reviews of your products or services, endorsements or even snippets of media publicity. These are great marketing tools — probably more so than to what most would care to give credence.

As mentioned in chapter 8, I can never emphasize enough that the written word, especially the words of others, make you appear as being more objective, credible and, above all, *legitimate*. Like my respected colleague Jim Daniels at <http://www.bizweb2000.com/> once noted, do you tell visitors who’s behind that website of yours? Do people know you (I mean, do they *really* know you)?

Therefore, post articles, press releases and product reviews on your website. If a favorable article was written about you, your product or your business, get the permission from the author to post a copy of it too. In essence, let other people tell other people about you. As Roger Dawson noted: “If it is said, then it could be true; but if it is written, then it must be true.” More importantly, to that I would add...

“If it is written by others, then it is *unquestionable*.”

How do get others to talk about you? While you should offer free trials of your products in exchange for reviews, comments and testimonials, you should also get out and about — especially online. In other words, be knowledgeable but also be known as being knowledgeable. Write articles. Speak at luncheons. Give talks. Teach classes. Conduct seminars. Offer your free report to key businesses and people. Send news releases on a regular basis. Contribute articles in your industry. Participate in topical newsgroups visited by your target market. Even moderate your own discussion board or boards.

Essentially, let other people know that you are who you say you are — a qualified expert in your specific field or product category. If your information is newsworthy, helpful or educational, spread it around and spread it often — and you’ll soon realize that it will also spread by itself. Free publicity is easier to find when the promotional element has been removed or reduced, and the news or educational element enhanced. Therefore, the more newsworthy or informative the action, the more free publicity you’ll find.

## Because of the Cause

Speaking of free publicity, contributing to charitable organizations has long been an effective way to create top-of-mind awareness. In addition to the publicity it generates, it makes one look good in the eyes of new customers while at the same time helping a worthy cause. But the byproducts in terms of the credibility that it builds along with the publicity that it generates can also be tremendous.

Known as “cause marketing,” many successful companies support charities as a way to promote their businesses. By helping a non-profit, not-for-profit or charitable organization, they obtain exposure that may have not been possible otherwise. In fact, many charities and worthy projects rely on let alone thrive on corporate contributions.

Charitable organizations with websites have the added advantage of linking to your site as a result. But it is often more effective to work with an organization that somehow relates or appeals to your target market. And note that charities are better equipped (and more susceptible to be successful) in working with sponsors and the media. If you’re having a tough time getting your news releases noticed, this is an avenue

you may want to consider. However, never discount the smaller or younger organizations. Many of them will love the business acumen and experience you bring to the table in dealing with the public.

An effective approach in working with charities is to create a special sales event where you offer a small percentage of your sales to them. Such events can be easily promoted at almost no cost since the charitable organization will do most of it for you. For example, non-profit groups will be more than willing to include your name in their advertising and marketing campaigns for such a generous act.

In order to help promote your event, provide the organization with materials they can use in their marketing efforts, like your company logo, and especially a website button or banner. Also, help them out in person by making yourself available to join charity representatives on talk shows, media interviews, press conferences, Internet chats, strategic meetings and the like. (Obviously, online press conferences, interviews and chats can all be done from your own office — no traveling is required.)

When you're perceived as a credible expert in your field, this includes the quality of the service you provide to your community as well as the image you project. Today, more and more people look up to companies that are responsible, be it in regards to social, environmental, cultural, ethical or legal issues (also called "societal marketing"). While you may not want to take a stand in those that are divisive or contentious, many issues are generally accepted as worthwhile.

Charitable work helps your business to not only get noticed but also respected by those who may have otherwise not known anything about you — including other companies, publics and suppliers as well as clients. And the people you meet in the course of your charitable duties can also help you form a valuable network of contacts, which may lead to potentially rewarding alliances in the future.

However, be most careful in not being overtly promotional. Many charitable organizations frown upon cause marketing for that very reason. Essentially, keep in mind that as your business stays discreetly in the background you will paradoxically generate more publicity and credibility as a result. But if you don't, you may destroy the image and position you were attempting to project in the first place.

Cause marketing is certainly an ideal way to build credibility, awareness and respect. But since the media love human interest stories, then if there's a cause in which you strongly believe or a charity that is close to your heart for one reason or another, then explain that to the charity and in your publicity generating efforts as well. People will appreciate the *humanness* behind the business — and, above all, its charitable efforts.

# CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

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## May I Direct Your Attention, Please

*“If you cry ‘Forward!’ you must without fail make plain in what direction to go. Don’t you see that if, without doing so, you call out the word to both a monk and a revolutionary, they will go in directions precisely opposite?”*

— **Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904)**

*“In America you can go on the air and kid the politicians, and the politicians can go on the air and kid the people. Personal relations are the important thing for ever and ever and not this outer life of telegrams and anger.”*

— **Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970)**

A recent article from eMarketer.com revealed that the number of online orders would double, from 12% of all transactions in 1998 to 30% in 2000, among direct marketers. Commissioned by ActivMedia and the Direct Marketing Association, the study assessed how well direct marketers are doing online. It concluded that traditional, offline direct marketers are expected to see a 150% growth in their overall businesses because of the Internet.<sup>26</sup>

In the final analysis, institutional marketing may very well have its place offline. And it may also work online for some. But aside from the considerable advertising dollars it requires to become effective and profitable, and the fact that it is totally immersed in an ocean of information on the web, this kind of marketing is in the very least quite risky — especially for small business owners.

With the Internet comes the ability to gain the attention, consent and response of a click-happy audience — at least in some way (whether or not one succeeds is a whole different issue). But nevertheless, netizens are more intimately involved with the product or company they encounter on the web, which is why direct marketing online makes all the more sense.

While there is debate over whether the web is all about direct marketing or branding, the fact remains that regardless of which end you want to be you probably still want to elicit some kind of response from your visitor — and your website or online marketing must reflect that somehow. You need to take your visitor “by the hand.” In other words, you still need to direct their attention, focus and actions in some way.

The bottom-line is that the Internet marketer, web designer or ebusiness owner must understand how to make effective sales presentations aimed at getting the surfer to take some kind of immediate action — be

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<sup>26</sup> [http://www.emarketer.com/estats/080999\\_activ.html](http://www.emarketer.com/estats/080999_activ.html)

it clicking on a link, joining a mailing list, downloading a file, ordering a product or jumping to another webpage. Beyond the obvious need for good marketing copy, there are many other aspects that a web marketer must take into consideration that can help.

## Applying Directional Marketing

From ease of navigation to ecommerce, there are many preeminent components of a successful online business. In the end, they all help to lead visitors to specific outcomes and, concurrently, to provide them with the necessary support in such outcomes. Therefore, ebusiness owners have a lot to learn (and gain) from direct marketers. Their visitors should — no, make that *must* — do something. But all too often, however, this is what most sites unfortunately lack: A very specific, clearly defined *objective*.

“What exactly do you want your visitors to do” is the ultimate question to ask. Not only must online business owners and web designers work around the answer as specifically as possible, but in order to take full advantage of the potential presented by the web they must also think like direct marketers too.

Without a response-oriented, user-driven objective, your website will only leave your visitors clueless. And strangely enough, your worst enemy is not your competition but in fact your visitor that cries out: “What do I do next?” Ultimately, it is safe to conclude that your website is more than a mere brochure with some retail capability. It is an intimate medium and, more importantly, a response mechanism.

Advertising alone can be a risky endeavor if you lack specific information or systems that can tell you if your directional efforts are truly working and profitable. In other words, you need to know not only if your marketing is working but also *how* it is working. As the cliché often goes, “It is better to work smart and not hard.” Well, working smart is where the “how” comes into play.

Most people wrongfully tend to make assumptions by looking strictly at the end results (in other words, sales). They fail to also look at the pipeline results, which go beyond tracking the obvious. You need to know the number of leads a specific ad or marketing effort produced, the conversion ratio of those leads into customers, the cost of each lead and the value of each and every visitor, whether they buy or not.

Armed with this information, you will obtain at least three specific insights into the results of your marketing endeavors. First, you will know if your ad copy is pulling the numbers you originally anticipated. Second, you will know if your website copy is successfully converting curious browsers into serious buyers. And third but most importantly, you will know where your ads are pulling the most leads — and good quality leads too.

Consequently, if you’re going to invest in any form of paid advertising, you will need to know from where your traffic originates. Tracking is imperative to your online business’ health. However, the problem in many cases is that most advertisers have the tendency to place their dollars on what looks good or what makes them look good, and not on what offers the best potential results — which, if used in conjunction with institutional advertising, makes it almost impossible to track.

Direct response marketing is the kind that invites people, directly in the ad, to do something. Whether it’s to click on a banner or call for more information, the ad should lead the viewer to a very specific, clear and favorable outcome. Thus, your advertising must contain a command, such as “click here,” “buy now,” “act today,” “subscribe me” or “call for more info.” This way, your efforts become quantifiable and measurable.

Next, you should set goals on what amounts of traffic you wish to achieve out of a specific marketing effort. While you should be conservative, your goals must still be good enough so that you have a fair benchmark against which to compare your results. That way, if your ad is not producing the quantity of traffic you originally projected you will be able to take corrective action along the way — rather than knowing about it when it’s too late.

If your ad is not pulling the number of visitors anticipated, you know then that something's wrong with either the quality of your visitors or the quality of your ad. For instance, if your ad produced the expected level of traffic on one site but the same ad did poorly on another, then you know that the problem has to do with the latter (i.e., the site on which you advertised). But if your ad is not pulling at all, then you know that it may have something to do with the quality of your copy.

Either way, it all starts with tracking and compiling the results. Needless to say, like it or not advertising of any kind is a risk. But tracking your results and then working around them is to take calculated risks. The more information you gather, the better equipped you will be to make more profitable marketing decisions.

## The New Breed of Website Visitor

There are a lot of misconceptions regarding website traffic tracking. Tracking visitors is often done with many different yardsticks, which vary tremendously from website to website and marketing effort to marketing effort. However, these differences can often be quite misleading. And there is far more involved in the process than that to which most would tend to give credence.

The web is evolving fast along with the way we measure it. First, it is not enough to know how many hits, clickthroughs or unique visitors a site receives. For instance, banner ads that draw a lot of clicks are no longer considered important — at least not as important as those from which these clicks are translatable into sales. What's important is the quality of those clickthroughs — or the number of qualified “interactive visitors” a site receives — and directs. Let me explain.

An article in Business 2.0 magazine, titled “Web Metrics,”<sup>27</sup> writer Steven Vonder Haar provides some eye-opening insights into the erroneous perceptions of Internet traffic. For example, he points out that the most common one is the fact that hits were (and still are) considered as the measurement of choice among webmasters and web business owners. But with the growing population and competition on the Internet, traffic measurement has significantly evolved — hits alone are more misleading than ever.

In essence, visitors should no longer be measured by their quantity but by their *quality*. Although traffic has been long touted as the key to Internet marketing success, today that's no longer true. Nowadays, what's more important is the ratio — specifically, the ratio of qualified visitors to unqualified ones, as well as the ratio of visitors that do something to visitors that do nothing.

In the end, you must focus more on the percentage of curious browsers that turn into serious, long-term buyers instead of the mere traffic your site produces. Consequently, if you base your traffic on mere hits, you are using a “hit-and-miss” approach. Once users click, you want to know where they go, what they do and in what they're interested. That's what really needs to be measured.

Hits, pageviews and clickthroughs were and still are the popular measure of website activity. But today the tracking process is shifting to include audience activity and behavior. In other words, online businesses are slowly realizing the importance of isolating the more important interested prospect, one looking at developing a relationship with the site, from the typical, curious surfer.

Simply put, all clickthroughs are not created equal. As direct marketing becomes an element of greater importance the necessity in tracking a visitor's level of interest, loyalty and activity is too becoming increasingly important. For example, if one site is a business-to-business computer consulting firm (or a “B2B” website) and has 1,000 visitors, that number can comprise of teenagers looking for the latest software game. Since the site focuses on prospective business clients requesting consulting estimates for developing their ecommerce infrastructure, the goal is therefore to reach those would-be clients.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.business2.com/content/magazine/marketing/1999/06/01/16965>

It is no longer important to advertise anywhere and everywhere but to advertise in specific places where targeted, qualified prospects are. Therefore, if you're only counting the number of hits your site receives as well as the number of eyeballs in front of which your site or ad appears, and not the quality of the people behind them, you're losing out on precious information that could make leaps of improvement in your online sales. More importantly, if you've narrowed your focus to a concentrated niche, then targeting, qualifying and converting website visitors has become vitally essential to the tracking process.

Hits are pieces of data (or files) requested from your server. However, this primitive measurement includes every file that makes a pageview possible — such as graphics, plug-ins, scripts, text files, style sheets and so on. A single webpage can easily translate into multiple hits, in other words. Similar to hits, pageviews are limited to the webpages themselves (i.e., the actual HTML files). While more concrete, pageviews still do not give information about how many actual visitors you received or their specific behavior.

Clickthroughs are the number of clicks (or visitors) a site receives. While a better measurement than the previous two, clickthroughs do not provide enough information regarding the quality, the subsequent activity as well as the level of interest of the people responding. On the other hand, unique visitors are tracked not according to the files they have requested but by their unique IP addresses. Not only does this process fail to include specific data about visitors but it can also be very misleading (such as with Internet service providers providing dynamic network protocols with which IP addresses vary all the time).

On the other hand, interactive visitors are measured in different ways as to determine their quality and not just their quantity, which at the same time helps to measure the quality of one's marketing efforts. Elements such as length of stay, conversation rates, registrations, subscribers, repeat visits, referrals made and so on (i.e., "stickiness") are now part of the tracking process. These visitors give better clues to their demographic data as well as a site's return on investment. Items tracked include loyalty, behavior and online registrations (such as with ezine subscriptions, survey responses and contest entries).

Bottom-line, for your online sales to become successful, you must not only direct your visitors but also measure how well you are directing them. You must enter into a relationship with your visitors. At the very least, you must start thinking in terms of being interactive with your visitors instead of merely being a silent billboard. This is such an important aspect that the rest of this chapter will be devoted to this paradigm.

## Personalize or Perish

I recently read two really interesting books. One of them is called "Weaving the Web: The Original Design and Ultimate Destiny of the World Wide Web" by Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the web. While in the first half of the book Berners-Lee gives a brief history of how his invention came to be, the second half provides some fascinating insights on where it's heading.

As the growth of this network of interconnected networks we call the "Internet" grows, so too will the need for computers to communicate with each other. But more important, the need to also to work more efficiently in concert with each other will grow as well. In one example, Berners-Lee mentions the efficient pooling of more powerful resources between computers, which go beyond information or applications. His vision includes the process of combining the greatest of all human endowments: Creativity.

But an underlying requirement for accomplishing such is the need to increase the level of interactivity between computers — and the people behind them. As the Internet becomes more and more automated, I believe that the need for a more human approach will grow. My assumption, based on John Naisbitt's "high-tech-high-touch" megatrend, is that the web will become a more social, personalized environment over time.

If this wasn't the case, look at the growth of human interaction tools on the Internet. In addition to sites offering more sophisticated forms of customer relationship management (or "CRM") technology, like <http://www.newchannel.com/> and <http://www.broadvision.com/>, new web-based customer service tools like

<http://www.livehelper.com/>, <http://www.humanclick.com/> and <http://www.instant-service.com/> are transforming the way we facilitate the customer's online experience.

Today's online consumer is more Internet savvy and has greater expectations. We must also keep in mind that humans are social animals. Therefore, we need to interact with them and do so more than ever before — in fact, many businesses use the web primarily to increase the level of interaction with their customers. Ultimately, personalization will provide consumers with greater flexibility and choice, a more personalized online experience and greater leverage when it comes to buying products on the web.

## Become the “CRM de la CRM”

In a ClickZ.com article, Cliff Allen of <http://www.GuestTrack.com/> states that, regardless of the technique or technology used to recognize returning visitors, the main thing is to “treat each individual in a special way that recognizes the relationship.”<sup>28</sup> From shaping site content according to user preferences to including their names and interests in their email messages, the heart of personalization is the growing need to offer quality customer service. As time-consuming, costly or “anti web-like” this may appear, it will be nonetheless become harder to ignore as time goes on.

Since the Internet is completely user-driven, and when compared to other types of interruption-based, broadcast media, it is no wonder that the demand for personalization is growing. Internet marketers must therefore realize that the web is not just a communications medium but also a direct marketing tool.

A site that interacts with its visitors, that personalizes their experience and that provides an atmosphere that can be completely customized by the user will reap greater rewards down the road. Whether that atmosphere is commercialized to some extent or not, it is still more powerful than the TV, radio or telephone. Quite simply, people will demand for a more humanized approach over time.

It is true that the second of the two books mentioned earlier, Seth Godin's “Permission Marketing,” discusses a completely different issue — i.e., the benefits of focused, permission-based marketing versus broad, interruption-based marketing. However, there is a parallel. As time goes on, more and more marketers will rely heavily on not only getting visitors to give them the permission to market to them, but also sustaining that permission and do so over longer periods of time.

With the help of the Internet, one cannot only grant permission but also customize that permission to some degree. Imagine calling your cable company to tell them not only what shows you want to watch but also what commercials you want them to air, how and when to air them, and the level of interaction you wish they would provide you. This is all possible with the Internet right now.

In the end, we must recognize that there is a growing need for more personalization, dynamic content and interactivity online. Keep in mind that maintaining a simple website is fine. However, online entrepreneurs could be shunning away from the enormous potential of the web if they fail to make their sites more interactive with their visitors. In essence, long gone are the days of the “one-size-fits-all,” passive website (or email message, for that matter).

People need to be with other people. They need the human touch. And, as time goes on, they will seek it even more vigorously as our society becomes more automated, web-based and techno-driven. In fact, in my estimation, offline stores are not immune to this trend — non-people retail stores (i.e., stores that do not provide a certain human interaction) will also die a slow death.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.clickz.com/cgi-bin/gt/article.html?article=1377>

(Take, for instance, the now bankrupt Consumer's Distributing retail chain — a catalogue showroom that merely stocks and fulfills orders, and provides little human interaction. Of course, the arrival of the Internet didn't help the matter.)

We see this “humanization” trend growing offline just as much as we see it online. For example, more and more retail stores are becoming conspicuously bigger and more specialized (i.e., called “category killers,” such as goliaths Barnes and Noble, Toys-R-Us, Cineplex Odeon Theaters and so on). And like websites, they too are becoming “sticky” in that stores are becoming like “hangouts.” In other words, retailers are focusing more and more on the “experience” rather than their products.

For example, you'll find a Starbucks Coffee inside a Barnes and Noble or Chapters bookstore. There is a McDonald's Restaurant inside every Wal-Mart store. There are arcade games as well as restaurants inside large theatre complexes. Even McDonald's offers playgrounds for kids.

Online, where there is an obvious lack of touch and feel, CRM technology makes it possible to become dynamic, to provide a certain interactivity and to maintain a certain relationship with visitors. It is also the reason why “stickiness” has been introduced as a whole new metric in the measurement process of a website's success.

Content personalization is one CRM method, if not the most popular. It is made possible with a technology that allows people to “log in” a website and have it maintain records of a person's name, interests, activities, history (such as buying history) and contact information. Armed with this information, the website can then personalize the content to fit a person's specific profile. (Some examples include MyYahoo, Excite, AOL, iVillage, MyLycos, Amazon, eCommerce.com, Women.com, etc.)

For example, when people visit the home page, it starts with that typical salutation, “Welcome Back, Michel!” Some provide local information (such as weather, stock quotes, news, etc) and even a list of what's new since that person's last visit — which is generated for, and unique to, every visitor. (More on web tailoring can be found at <http://www.personalization.com/> and <http://www.accelerating.com/>.)

Some technologies use server-side includes and database-driven scripts to make personalization possible, while others simply utilize client-side cookies to personalize the experience. However, CRM is not limited to either one of these two processes. I agree that some of these can be seen as “gimmicks,” for nothing will ever replace genuine CRM: Good, old fashioned, *one-on-one human interaction*. But this is an area that's also becoming increasingly popular. We see this in two significant trends: The growth in live support and of online communities.

Live customer online chats, including the use of voice over IP technology, enables a certain interaction with a live person while visiting a website. For example, Altrec at <http://www.altrec.com/> is a sporting goods retailer that offers live customer service (see “live help” at the top of their webpage). It's the same with NAIS, which is an Internet service provider offering live tech support at <http://nais.com/techsupport/>.

Not only visiting but also inviting visitors to become “members” of a website makes the site more humanized as well as sticky. I agree that most small businesses cannot afford such sophisticated technology. But the fact remains that CRM, at its simplest level of application, could involve tactics — even little ones — most web marketers often take for granted.

For example, you can offer freebies (such as downloads, free software and ebooks), with access to which is achieved through a password-protected section of your site — people must register to obtain their gift. There are also web-specific tools (such as message boards, web-based email accounts, chat rooms, online communities, greeting cards, web-based calculators and calendars, reminder services, etc). But the simplest (and most popular) among these are discussion lists, ezine subscriptions and contact forms.

It goes without saying that adding your contact information on your site and on every page if possible — a physical address or at least a way to get in contact with you — is the first step in adding the human

element. Like my colleague and IMC co-contributor Jim Daniels of <http://www.bizweb2000.com/> once noted, people want to know that there's a living, breathing, caring human being behind that electronic veil of yours.

Similar to live human interaction, online communities provide that sense of belonging about which Maslow preached in his work. They provide a forum to create and maintain a continuous dialogue with customers — such as for getting instant feedback to improve many areas of the business. And beyond the traditional email newsletter and opt-in list, it's one of the easiest ways to remain in contact and interact with visitors. (For more information, visit <http://www.communitystart.com/> — they offer content, promotion tips and even income-generating ideas with communities — and <http://communitybuilding.com/>.)

Nevertheless, here's the bottom-line: Whether you use CRM or not, knowing your customers, being concerned about their needs or at least showing that you are concerned about them (which is what a form or community can do) can cement more profitable relationships. The more you stay in contact with visitors, the stronger the potential relationship can become with them.

## Customer Service is Contagious

Beyond all of the above, realize that customer relationship management includes, at its core, simple yet good customer service. Since the web is becoming more humanized, customer service is therefore an element of extraordinary importance — and will become even more so over time. In Internet marketing, where both credibility and word-of-mouth are key to online success, customer service should be regarded as a fundamental marketing system in itself (which is far from being true in many cases, unfortunately).

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the long-term effects usually become the opposite of the short-term ones — crime, sex and drugs being typical examples. Poor customer service and the lack of integrity online may not seem as important to some. But in actuality the underlying and oftentimes inconspicuous negativity that it may cause could come back and “bite you.” On the Internet, bites (or bytes, in this case) can indeed be worse than the barks — words online carry far more weight. Why? There are three reasons:

- If you recall, the written word is more believable than the spoken word (i.e., “If it said, it could be true. If it is written, it must be true. But if it is written by others, then it is unquestionable.”)
- Due to its ease of communication and its global reach, like good publicity the Internet can propagate negative publicity faster and broader than any other medium in existence.
- And words on the web, being easy to copy, post and archive, stay around for a lot longer — including the fact that their flow is virtually impossible to stop.

While implying superiority is more powerful than stating it, the negative aspect applies just as well. In other words, if you offer poor service or a product of lesser value than what you claim (even if it's not apparent in the short-term or if it's a rare occurrence), the implied notion that you are a poor company could kill you in the long run. The UPA is that a *one-time* poor product or service demonstrates the overall quality of the business — when it may not be true. Of course, first impressions are not permanent ones. But they are lasting ones that are difficult (and sometimes expensive) to change.

If prospects don't fully recognize the value of what you offer and, more important, don't receive it, they may not only choose to never buy from you or never buy again if they do, but also talk negatively about you. Based on the pain-pleasure principle, when a person is satisfied with a product or service she will tell only a few other people about it. But when that person is dissatisfied, the number of people that will receive an earful multiplies.

But online however, those numbers breed at an exponential rate. It is far easier to vent one's frustration electronically, and do so only once and then pass along that information to as many people as one would

wish, than it is to do so verbally in the offline world. More significantly, remember that, since online businesses are faced with a plethora of competitors and service-related issues (such as the lack of tangibility, among others), losing a customer online is much easier too.

While legal teams can work incessantly to stop the spread of negative publicity, recent cases have proved that, online, it can be a more arduous task than what most would tend to believe. One example is a disgruntled AOL client, who created <http://www.aolsucks.com/> and was plagued with a series of court challenges. The site, recently featured in a Boston Globe article appropriately entitled “Bad news travels fast,” prevailed in the end.<sup>29</sup>

In the very least, if people don't know you exist, you simply don't. But if you offer poor customer service or fail to deliver as promised, you will be avoided — *like a virus*.

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.aolwatrch.org/>

# CHAPTER NINETEEN

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## Power Positioning Case Study

*“We do everything we can to make it easy for the users [and] encourage the creation of communities to support themselves that we are an active member of but merely a co-equal amongst peers [...]. Instead of doing a bunch of expensive banner advertisements to try to financially support a few chosen websites, we let the users themselves decide what websites are the best for distributing their creations. Those websites, in turn indirectly create awareness of the products and services we offer and everyone succeeds. Users end up with a vibrant community that isn’t being interfered with by some corporation. And as that community of users prospers, so do we.”*

— **Stardock CEO Brad Wardell in “The Dot-Com Reckoning”**

As you have read in this book, *Power Positioning* does not consist of one or two strategies. It is the result of many. However, they are all based on four major concepts — or pillars. These pillars are: 1) Focusing (niche marketing), 2) targeting (attracting and qualifying prospects), 3) multiplying (self-propagating types of marketing) and 4) selling (directing customers). Ultimately, the goal is to position a firm in the marketplace so that it stands out and is chosen above all other possible choices.

*Power Positioning* an online business cares not about the brand as much as about the marketing activities that create and solidify it. A brand is never as important as the meaning and value behind it. And that meaning stems, more than anything else, from any marketing activity performed that ultimately focuses on the most important aspect of survival and success online: *The customer*.

My goal as a business enhancement consultant has always been to help my clients increase their marketability. From an attractive image to persuasive, action-driven website copy, a business is never a business until it is “the” business — and not just “in” business. With the growth the Internet and online consumers becoming increasingly more difficult to fathom, businesses can no longer rely on marketing tactics that help generate instant cash or even instant approval.

*Power Positioning* goes beyond that. And to illustrate this point, let’s look at one company in particular, an effectively “power positioned” company, that will undoubtedly emerge as a perfect model and grow in the years to come. This video game and Window enhancement application provider, Stardock Corporation, is currently defining the way the web works — such as by successfully instituting the web-based subscription methodology (earning them the now popular label “application service provider,” or “ASP”), and having done so long before Microsoft unveiled similar plans with its Microsoft.net platform.

## Stardock Corporation

For the longest time, I've been a big fan of "skins." "Skins" is a term referring to graphical user interfaces (or "GUI"), which in essence create the look and feel of a computer's desktop or application. Skinning is becoming very popular. I, like many PC owners out there, easily get bored with that same old Microsoft Windows look and feel. (Mac users are surely not excluded from the mix.)

I use an application package called Object Desktop by the folks at Stardock. (Their website is <http://www.Stardock.com/>). This package comprises of multiple desktop enhancement applications, from folder manipulation to computer scanning tools. Its GUI replacement application specifically is called WindowBlinds, which was recently featured on both CNN and ZDNet.

The advent of Linux, the new open source movement and Microsoft's many legal challenges notwithstanding, it's no wonder that GUI replacement is becoming very popular. Today, almost every major, newly launched application offers users the possibility to skin the application the way one likes. Many popular programs such as WinAmp, ICQ Plus, RealJukeBox and many others are now featured on the increasingly popular skins portal <http://www.skinz.org/>.

Even large companies, like Microsoft and AOL, have jumped on the bandwagon. Microsoft did so by releasing its new, skinnable Media Player 7.0 and AOL with Netscape 6.0 version. (A primer on skinning is at <http://www.Stardock.net/media/skinprimer.html>.)

According to Stardock's Brad Wardell, in his excellent article "The GUI Revolution,"<sup>30</sup> Brad says: "[Microsoft] designed the Windows GUI [as] an interface that was simple to learn and easy to use. The only problem then is that as with any one size fits all, people who use computers day in and day out begin to feel limited by some of the choices that were made to make it easier for new users to use Windows. This demand has begun to be filled by programs that give the user the ability to change the look and feel, to match their tastes and their usage."

As Internet marketers and online businesses owners, we do work on computers more than the norm. Many of us feel a growing need for some kind of flexibility in terms of how we interact with our computers. But the interesting thing in all of this is the fact that Stardock provides an excellent model for Internet marketing too. They not only follow some of the basic rules in successful online marketing but also go the extra mile in many cases on some of the things we Internet marketers take for granted.

## Community

Stardock has its own news (or "NNTP") server. Personally, I participate regularly in their forums and I can tell you that their support staff has been nothing short of exceptional. If I wanted to read about the latest update, trend, skin, bug fix or industry gossip, I scanned the groups. If I had a question about something I did not understand, I posted my question to which instant replies were given. Granted, not all online businesses have the capacity to host their own news servers. But the success of this model dictates:

*Start your own online community.*

Like Stardock, developing and maintaining your own community is strong website glue — from a simple, single remotely hosted discussion board to multiple boards managed in a private (or even password-protected) and controllable environment. But that's not all. Stardock also offers a chat room, a newsletter subscription, an IRC channel, support email addresses and numerous FAQ pages.

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<sup>30</sup> [http://pooh.stardock.com/article\\_guirev.html](http://pooh.stardock.com/article_guirev.html)

Their primary software manager (called “Component Manager”) is a subscription-based application that updates registered users immediately, while connected to the web, on any upgrades, news or program releases. Of course, they also have a very strong privacy policy. Nevertheless, is there a lesson in there for us Internet marketers? You bet: Stay in touch with your customers.

## Usability

Stardock’s website is nothing over which to do cartwheels. But its power lies in its usability and user-friendliness — not only in terms of design but also of content. If a person knew nothing about how GUIs work let alone skins in general, everything one needs to know is right there at the click of a mouse. But there are at least three things I’ve noticed that they do, which to me are impressive. Let’s take a look at each one:

### Pictures

Texts tell but pictures sell. In the cold world of cyberspace, the lack of touch and feel imposes upon us the necessity to give something visitors can appreciate to a degree. Beyond good copy, graphics do that quite well. Stardock’s website is replete with screenshots — you instantly get a sense of what you’re buying and, ultimately, what you’re getting. There’s no guessing.

If you’re selling a tangible product on your site, it is best to provide a picture of how it looks like — thumbnailed of course for quicker downloads. If it’s intangible, use a logo or an image that communicates the core benefit of the service. As my friend Dr. Ralph Wilson once noted in a recent issue of *Web Commerce Today*, “I don’t really care what purists say... Photos sell products and color sells better than black and white.”

Granted, Stardock’s GUI replacement application relies heavily on looks as the program itself modifies the look of one’s operating system. Providing a visual element to the purchasing decision of this type of application is vitally essential. However, the extra advantage is that, with every single website they own and manage (and there are many), Stardock offers screenshots of most if not all of their applications — and a respective logo on each site.

### News

Like most software and developer sites, Stardock offers a news section on their front pages that informs visitors about what’s going on in their business or with their products at all times. (I say “software and developer sites” because, if you visit sites like <http://www.customize.org/>, <http://www.desktopian.org/> or <http://www.betanews.com/>, you’ll notice that their home pages look like virtual news desks — you always know what’s going on.)

This kind of transparency is often attributed to the open source movement. But I believe that implementing such a process on any website, the ecommerce kind especially, cannot only make a site stickier but also provide a great level of visitor interactivity. Obviously, the issue here is credibility. If people learn about a website, that’s fine. But if they can learn about the people and the events behind it, credibility is instantaneous. In short, *humanize*.

You must tell people that there’s a living, breathing human being behind that electronic veil of yours. In fact, the funniest thing is that sites like those mentioned above are aimed at developers, engineers, programmers and the like. While it may appear somewhat prejudicial, most people know that they are probably the “geekiest,” most techno-driven and analytical (and perhaps antisocial) people online. But their sites are proof positive of the contrary — that they are also the ones that make the web the most human.

(For many, this may seem paradoxical. However, these types of sites rely heavily on other people for developing their software. For example, they need other people to download and test their products. Or they need to maintain in constant contact with other developers — like Stardock’s many skin authors, for

example. But more important, they rely heavily on constant feedback. The reality, however, is that most non-technical, commercial sites are primarily focused on their products and not their customers.)

## **FAQs**

Stardock knows full well that the largest part of their customer base does not consist of programmers and skinners. Their website as a result carries an extensive series of FAQs and instructions. In the FAQs you'll find anything you need to know about their products — from installing to uninstalling WindowBlinds. Above all, the language used is not exclusive to the more techno-driven programmer. Everyone can easily follow. In short, Stardock is an excellent example of outstanding, online customer support.

The owners behind Stardock truly understand the primary objective of an ecommerce website (or of a business, for that matter). It's to *sell products*. Period. And they do so by first accommodating their target market as best they can — repeat and referral sales are their bread and butter. They are completely focused on their customers — so much that their support staff would make some online customer service departments look like prison officers.

Sadly however, this analogy is not too far off the mark. Too many sites these days are designed with the web designer or business owner in mind, often communicating in a language that only they understand. But FAQs, let alone FAQs that are easy-to-understand and follow, provide the necessary leverage a customer needs in making a choice about buying what a website offers.

But that's not all. Stardock also publishes press releases, numerous articles and an email newsletter, which they post on their sites and to which they link on their front pages — such as articles they have written in their area expertise and on skinning in general. Like all successful businesses, writing articles about one's industry or product, submitting them to the media or other publishers (or at least posting them on one's site), and publishing an ezine are excellent ways for maintaining constant contact with the people that matter most: Customers.

In the end, while skinning software is not an online marketing activity per se (more than anything else, it's mere eye candy), the companies, programmers and websites behind them deserved a mention because their exploding popularity offers a number of powerful insights on *Power Positioning* and successful marketing from which we all can learn. As the face of the web changes, we too must look at how we can change our practices and particularly our websites to accommodate — and develop stronger relationships with — our customers as best we can.

In fact, marketers may also be in need of a new, shall we say, “skin”?

# CHAPTER TWENTY

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## The Real Beginning

*“Do what you love and the business will follow.”*  
— Michel Fortin, the “Success Doctor”

If there is something about which I am pretty adamant, it’s the concept of attracting clients that are pre-qualified and willing to do business with you. And this involves many different things. However, this fundamental magnetism is not only based on pure marketing practices or strategies. *Power Positioning* also involves something at a much deeper level that is far more effective than any other marketing tool or process described in this book. This “thing” to which I am referring is, I believe, the most important marketing secret that I can ever teach you — and it’s far from being a secret at all.

It is nonetheless considered as one to a certain degree simply because it is often neglected or ignored by many businesspeople. What is this secret that’s so elusive? Before I divulge it to you, I must first admit that it upsets me terribly to see when people tend to scoff their most valuable marketing assets. I’m not referring to salespeople or promotional activities here. I’m not even referring to prospects or clients either.

*I’m referring to dreams and passions.*

If people perceive that doing business with you has an implicit added value, especially when compared to your competitors that are fiercely fighting for your market’s attention, you will often end up with their confidence (and their repeat and referral business) as a result.

Of course, there are numerous ways that value can be added to your business. But the most effective way to communicate this added value is through the genuine, sincere and passionate zest you have for what you do. People have a tendency to gravitate toward other people who love what they do — their enthusiasm, charisma and authentic desire to serve others are instantly communicated through their actions and particularly their marketing efforts. Sadly, however, the marketplace is filled with so many people who jump into business for one sole purpose: Money.

They work for a pension instead of a passion. They are so profit-minded that they fail to enjoy the process. The great anthropologist, Joseph Campbell, said it best when he said that old cliché, “Follow your bliss,” a few decades ago. Actually, that saying is older than you think. Chinese sage Confucius, in 500 B.C., said: “Do what you love and you’ll never have to work a day in your life.” Author Marsha Sinetar wrote a book, entitled: “Do what you love and the money will follow.” Peter McWilliams, author of “Life 101,” claimed: “Do what you love and the necessary resources will follow.” Now, it’s my turn. I say...

**“Do what you love and the business will follow.”**

There you have it. That's the greatest marketing secret of all time. It's to do what you love or to love what you do. And if you don't love what you do, then find it. In fact, if this is the case, then make finding it your bliss. As Jim Rohn once said, "If you don't like where you are, then change it! You're not a tree."

Doing what one loves is a fundamental marketing process. For example, when you deal with two people competing for your business, and if one of them has the "fire burning in their belly" (i.e., a genuine passion for what that person does), then how much more willing will you be to do business with that person than the other? How much more believable and credible will that person be compared to the other? And most important, how much more value will that person bring to the table than the other? The answer is obvious.

People, who love what they do, generate far more word-of-mouth advertising. In subtle ways, they communicate that they are experts, that they are interested more in your needs than your money, and that they will go out of their way to please you. And they certainly develop far more enriching and superior customer relationships — let's not forget rewarding relationships with referral-sources and alliances.

The hypercompetitive nature of the marketplace will in turn increase the demand for more uniqueness, more competitive value and greater customer service. However, if you love what you do, your passion will intrinsically communicate all of those things combined.

Just as people choose to work in jobs they hate, many will choose a business or an endeavor that gives them absolutely no sense of *purpose*. They attempt to earn a living and do so with retirement in mind (or with the thought of pending financial independence), anxiously awaiting those golden years when they will finally start to *really* enjoy their lives. (The funny part is that the future is guaranteed to no one. So the key is to enjoy it now — you don't know, "later" may never come.)

Needless to say, if you do what you love (or focus on a business you enjoy instead of the money you want to earn from it), you will not only make money as a natural byproduct but also enjoy much happiness, satisfaction, joy, inner peace and, of all things, security.

How many millionaires out there have reached phenomenal levels of success but failed in other areas? According to Bob Proctor, in his book "Born to be Rich," the list is endless. To make it short, he mentions numerous wealthy and famous Wall Street magnates in the past century alone that have ended up going insane, getting divorced (and divorced multiple times), going broke, suffering from heart attacks, committing murder or even killing themselves.

Ultimately, if you do what you love or love what you do, you will naturally attract more business by the sheer fact that your passion is also communicating to others that you are offering the best solution to their problems. Why? You are offering them the best. *And the best is "you."*

In conclusion, remember that in effectively implementing *Power Positioning* in your business, what matters most is focus. Focus on doing what you love. Focus on your customers. Focus on your niche. Focus on how your site is treating your customers. Focus on how you are attracting visitors to your site. And focus on converting those visitors into long-term, residual business. "Focus" must become your mantra — whether you're a corporate middle manager for a rising IPO or the owner of a small town dotcom. In fact, the more you focus on your customers, the more they will focus on you.

If there's one step you will need to accomplish before anything else you've learned in this book, it's to develop an effective plan of action to implement *Power Positioning* in your business. Do you have goals? I'm sure you do. Having a solid game plan is the key to success. But remember that, very often, goals by themselves are also the reasons for failure, because setting and achieving goals requires more than simply putting them down on paper and then dreaming that, one day, they will be achieved.

People often abandon their goals after realizing that their ambitions may be too lofty. Others merely set them and stop at that point. A goal is a purpose and a purpose is a guide, not an end. Whether it's a large

goal or a small one, it needs to be turned into a beacon that will guide you to its fulfillment. In other words, you need to be consciously purposeful at all times.

So instead of goals, set *guides*. Look at your goal not as an end but as a process. And believe me, *Power Positioning* is a process. As business management expert Peter Drucker once said, “What is the major problem? It is fundamentally the confusion between doing the right things and doing things right. There is surely nothing quite so useless as doing with great efficiency what should not be done at all.”

Remember the above at all times.

Here’s one final tip, which is probably the most needed one in all of *Power Positioning*. First, I hope that the strategies you have read in this book will help you to increase your business. But as you know, positioning does require a good dose of creativity and effort. The fact is, however, that you’re not on your own. There are many companies and professionals out there that can offer you assistance. I sincerely encourage you to seek them, listen to what they have to say, take their advice and apply it.

Keep learning. Become a perpetual positioning student. I can never stress enough that, if you wish to grow your business and are willing to learn from the experiences of others, people who have proven track records, you should therefore take advantage of the many that offer you a helping hand. Join their communities. Buy their books. Subscribe to their ezines. Participate in their conferences. Position yourself as a student and the expert in you will rise to the top... *Of other people’s minds!*

Above all, marketing is not your main job. It’s definitely a fundamental part of the business process but only a part nonetheless. For example, if you are a consultant then your place is in front of clients doing what you do best, which is consulting. If you sell a specific product, then your job is to fill orders. In short, your main job is not to market but to do what you do best. So don’t be afraid to look and ask for help.

The biggest problem among small to medium-sized businesses is the fact that many of them attempt to mimic their larger competitors. Don’t let this be you. Don’t copy. Don’t be a bland supplier or service provider. Be different. And if you do, you will position yourself against your competition and stand out.

To win the unforgiving battle of the marketplace, you must be prepared to take a few hits and to learn from them. I certainly have in mine. But if you’re willing to not only work hard but also learn, the rewards will far exceed the cost of time, effort and money. Stated differently, after reading this book you may have come to the conclusion that you will need to reposition your business in order to achieve greater success. And sometimes, that can be a daunting let alone frustrating task — I can certainly relate to that. But follow these tips and use the techniques described in this book, and you will probably gain far more as a result.

Fortunately, due to the massive changes the marketplace has undergone and with the help of the Internet, entrepreneurs now come in many different colors. From the medical doctor to the vitamin distributor, from the criminal lawyer to the car sales professional, and from the chartered accountant to the home-based business owner, a new breed of entrepreneurs are slowly reshaping the business world — and the web too, for that matter. I salute them all. Above all, I salute you.

Be what it is you do. Do what you do best. Don’t be a marketer. Be an expert who markets. Transform every single fragment of your business activities into a living, breathing marketing system. Turn the normal, daily operations of your online business as components of your entire marketing machine. You should therefore transform what it is you do into a marketing system in itself. You have to live, sleep, eat and breathe your position — *your power position*. You have to turn your business into a magnet that draws clients to you, for the more you do the less you will need to promote your business.

I wish you the very best. May your online business grow as large as the Internet.

# APPENDICES

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## Links, Credits and Partial Bibliography

- <http://www.troutandpartners.com/> and <http://www.ries.com/> — Jack Trout and Al Ries are my teachers, mentors and guides, and their many works were the inspiration behind the creation of this book. I strongly recommend their book, “The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing.”
- <http://www.dankennedy.com/> — While Trout and Ries extol the virtues of “positioning,” the other side of *Power Positioning* (i.e., direct marketing) has been Dan Kennedy’s *raison-d’être*. Author, copywriter and brilliant marketer, Dan is another mentor whose works have greatly inspired me.
- <http://ecominfocenter.com/infosources/websites/statistics.html> — The eCommerce Information Center is a site offering ecommerce statistics, analysis and market research. For example, do you need to get a handle on how many Internet users there are? How many web sites are out there? How much online business activity there is? This site provides the answers... And much more.
- <http://ecomresourcecenter.com/> — The eComm Resource Center offers numerous resources — specifically, it provides a basic look at how to plan, build, manage and promote a online store.
- <http://www.wilsonweb.com/> — Dr. Ralph Wilson provides an incredible information-packed resource site on ecommerce and web marketing. Among others, his eCommerce Research Room is a must-visit. His ecommerce discussion forums are also quite helpful.
- <http://www.useit.com/> — Jakob Nielsen is the web’s greatest pundit on web usability and navigation, which is an important component of successful web businesses. It’s a plain site (he practices what he preaches) but packed with very “usable” tips and information.
- <http://www.ecommercetimes.com/> — Find out what’s happening in the world of ecommerce with the eCommerce Times. Subscribe to their free weekly ezine — it’s always filled with the latest trends, news, interviews and issues that affect this dynamic environment.
- <http://ecommerce.internet.com/> — The eCommerce Guide is part of Internet.com’s growing library of useful Internet information. While Internet.com is itself a must-bookmark, the guide provides everything you need to know about ecommerce, with a special section on online marketing — see <http://internet.com/sections/marketing.html>.
- <http://cism.bus.utexas.edu/> — The Center for Research in Electronic Commerce is packed with publications, news, links and resources. It was put together by the people at the University of Texas at Austin — a leading research institution in electronic commerce.
- <http://www.servtech.com/~baller/vlib/> — It’s a simple site but the Electronic Commerce Page is loaded with neat links to ecommerce-oriented sites, resources and information. A must-bookmark!

- <http://www.anacom.com/articles/> — The folks at Anacom (a transaction processing company) have written a number of white papers about doing business on the web, like “The ABC’s of eCommerce.”
- <http://sellitontheweb.com/> — Need a merchant account? Looking for a good web host? Searching for a fulfillment company? eCommerce 101 offers tons of information selling online.
- <http://e-comm.webopedia.com/> — What in the world do SSL, SET, VPN or ERP mean? Visit the eCommerce Web Encyclopedia (or “Webopedia”) to find out about ecommerce-specific phrases, terminologies, words and acronyms — from digital wallets to “clicks-and-mortar.”
- <http://www.planetit.com/techcenters/e-commerce/> — TechWeb News (<http://www.techweb.com/>) is probably the most insightful and comprehensive Internet news site. Its ebusiness section, called “Planet IT,” is packed with specific information, articles and statistics on electronic business.
- <http://www.ecommerceadvisor.com/> — Joan Sotkin’s the eCommerce Advisor ezine is always a super-read. It gives ebusiness webmasters the do’s and dont’s of online business and ecommerce.
- <http://www.e-land.com/> — Want Internet or ecommerce stats? You got ‘em! eReports from eMarketer offers a plethora of online statistics. For the most comprehensive research information on ecommerce, as well as the latest news in the online world, eLand is it.
- <http://www.knowthis.com/> — On top of ebusiness implementation and ecommerce, I also teach marketing management. And the “Know This” virtual library has been a great academic resource for all these courses — a wealth of information for understanding the in’s and out’s of ecommerce, from writing a business plan to selling.
- <http://www.clickz.com/> — I love this site. An online magazine, ClickZ provides an insightful inside — and oftentimes unabashed — look at web advertising, electronic media and marketing.

## Marketing-centered Discussion Forums

- <http://www.bizweb2000.com/wwwboard/>
- <http://www.williecrawford.com/cgi-bin/index.cgi>
- <http://www.profitalk.com/>
- <http://loska.com/successconnection/discussion/>
- <http://www.communities.com/successdoctor/>
- <http://www.wilsonweb.com/forum/>
- <http://www.ablake.net/forum/>
- <http://www.profitinfo.com/discuss/marketing/>
- <http://futurecity.com/communities/discussion/cgi/Ultimate.cgi>
- <http://www.the-illuminati.com/board/>
- <http://www.ezineseek.com/forum/index.cgi>
- <http://forums.list-universe.com/>
- <http://talk.businessbug.com/>
- <http://www.profitlines.com/ipub/index.html>
- <http://rwm.net/internetmarketing/index.htm>
- <http://webwizards.net/AssociatePrograms/discus/>
- <http://www.free-publicity.com/cgi-bin/talk.cgi>
- [http://www.citiescommerce.com/WWC2\\_toc.htm](http://www.citiescommerce.com/WWC2_toc.htm)
- <http://cuttingedgeconcepts.com/bbs/index.sht>
- <http://www.netagency.com/forumlinks/marketing.html>
- <http://www.mcpromotions.com/discussi.htm>

## Simple and Smart Autoresponders

- <http://www.freeautoresponders.net/>
- <http://www.aweber.com/>
- <http://www.getresponse.com/>
- <http://www.autobots.net/>
- <http://www.autoresponders.com/>
- <http://www.myreply.com/>
- <http://www.autocontacter.com/>
- <http://www.mailtrail.com/>
- <http://www.automailer.com/>
- <http://www.fastfacts.net/>
- <http://www.databack.com/>
- <http://www.silverquick.net/>
- <http://www.sendfree.com/>
- <http://www.smartbotpro.net/>
- <http://www.sendthis.com/>
- <http://www.prosperity2u.com/>
- <http://www.reply.nu/>
- <http://www.followupexpress.com/>
- <http://www.ultimateresponse.com/>
- <http://www.ipsarion.com/>
- <http://www.mailboost.com/>
- <http://www.responders.com/>
- <http://www.myautobot.com/>

## Script and Applet Sites

- <http://www.cgi-resources.com/>
- <http://www.webmaster-resources.com/>
- <http://www.thescripts.com/>
- <http://cgi.elitehost.com/>
- <http://www.cgi-scripts.com/>
- <http://www.freescrpts.com/>
- <http://www.asphole.com/>
- <http://www.aspin.com/>
- <http://www.aspemail.com/>
- <http://www.scriptsearch.com/>
- <http://www.webmaster-resources.com/>
- <http://www.webmasterarchives.com/>
- <http://www.solutionscripts.com/>
- <http://www.freecode.com/>
- <http://www.freewareweb.com/>
- <http://www.webaddesign.net/shop/scripts/>
- <http://www.lakeweb.com/scripts/begin.html>
- <http://www.utirc.utoronto.ca/CGI/cgi1.html>
- <http://www.webthing.com/tutorials/cgi1faq.html>
- <http://www.perl.org/CPAN/doc/FAQs/cgi/idiots-guide.html>
- <http://www.boutell.com/faq/cgi1prob.htm>
- <http://www.extropia.com/>
- <http://www.speakeasy.org/~cgires/cgi-tips.html>

- <http://www.halcyon.com/sanford/cgi/cgi-tips.html>
- <http://www.worldwidemart.com/scripts/>
- <http://www.mcp.com/que/et/se CGI>
- <http://javascript.internet.com>
- <http://www.javaboutique.com>
- <http://www.javascript.com>
- <http://www.javapowered.com>

## Web-based Mailing List Management Sites

- eGroups at <http://www.egroups.com>
- ListBot at <http://www.Listbot.com>
- OneList at <http://www.onelist.com>
- Web Site Post Office at <http://www.WebSitePostOffice.com>
- Topica at <http://www.topica.com>
- Greenspun at <http://www.greenspun.com/spam>
- MakeList at <http://www.makelist.com>
- SparkList at <http://www.sparklist.com>
- Mailing List Manager at <http://www.interlyn.com/mlm>
- Optimizer at <http://www.elementalmarketing.com/optimizer.htm>
- ListTool at <http://www.listtool.com>
- Lyris at <http://lists.lyris.net>
- Liszt at <http://www.liszt.com>
- Listserv at <http://www.listserv.net>
- Majordomo at <http://www.greatcircle.com/majordomo>
- EuroFreebies at <http://www.eurofreebies.com/maillist>
- CoolList at <http://www.coolist.com>
- Online Magazine at <http://www.online-magazine.com/listsrv.htm>
- Mail-List at <http://www.mail-list.com>
- List-Archives.com at <http://www.list-archives.com>
- World Merge at <http://www.coloradosoft.com/worldmrg>
- Esosoft at <http://www.iList.net>
- WebValence at <http://www.webvalence.com>
- OakNet at <http://oaknetpub.com>
- List Host at <http://listhost.net>
- List Resources at <http://list-resources.com>
- RevNet at <http://revnet.com>
- ICQ at <http://www.icq.com/icqlist>
- Exactis at <http://exactis.com>
- Bravenet at <http://www.bravenet.com>

## General and Topic-specific Forums

- Delphi Forums at <http://www.delphi.com>
- Talk City at <http://www.talkcity.com>
- BeSeen at <http://beseen.com>
- Reference.com at <http://www.reference.com>
- Town Talk at <http://www.dynapolis.com/towntalk>
- Parsimony at <http://us.parsimony.net>
- Annapolis at <http://avmcyber.com/forum>
- MindSpring at <http://www.pipeline.net>

- America Online at <http://www.aol.com>
- Yahoo! Chat at <http://chat.yahoo.com>
- Starting Point at <http://www.stpt.com>
- Directory of E-Conferences at <http://n2h2.com/KOVACS>
- NeoSoft at <http://www.NeoSoft.com>
- The Globe at <http://www.theglobe.com>
- Forum One at <http://www.forumone.com>
- Inside The Web at <http://www.InsideTheWeb.com>
- Dejanews at <http://www.dejanews.com>
- Pathfinder at <http://www.pathfinder.com>
- People Talk at <http://www.people-talk.com>
- Suite 101 Discussions at <http://www.suite101.com>
- Cyberforums at <http://www.cyberforums.com>
- Community Chat at <http://communitychat.com>
- iVillage at <http://www.ivillage.com>
- ThirdAge at <http://www.thirdage.com>
- ZDNet Forums at <http://www.zdnet.com/cc/forums.htm>
- RemarQ at <http://remarq.com>
- CyberTown at <http://www.cybertown.com/clubs/forum.html>

## Advertising-oriented Usenet Newsgroups

Please keep in mind that these groups often change and no longer allow certain kinds of posts. It is important that you always check with the group's charter or FAQ before posting, or lurk for a while to see what is being posted by others (and how others react) to get a flavor for what is allowed.

- [news:alt.free.money](mailto:news:alt.free.money)
- [news:alt.make.money](mailto:news:alt.make.money)
- [news:alt.make.money.fast](mailto:news:alt.make.money.fast)
- [news:alt.makemoney](mailto:news:alt.makemoney)
- [news:alt.make.fast.cash](mailto:news:alt.make.fast.cash)
- [news:alt.make.money.fast](mailto:news:alt.make.money.fast)
- [news:alt.make.your.own.spam](mailto:news:alt.make.your.own.spam)
- [news:alt.biz](mailto:news:alt.biz)
- [news:alt.ads](mailto:news:alt.ads)
- [news:alt.commerce.misc-ads](mailto:news:alt.commerce.misc-ads)
- [news:alt.business.ads](mailto:news:alt.business.ads)
- [news:alt.market.misc](mailto:news:alt.market.misc)
- [news:alt.marketing](mailto:news:alt.marketing)
- [news:alt.www.marketing](mailto:news:alt.www.marketing)
- [news:alt.www.marketing.adverts](mailto:news:alt.www.marketing.adverts)
- [news:alt.business](mailto:news:alt.business)
- [news:alt.business.consulting](mailto:news:alt.business.consulting)
- [news:alt.business.home](mailto:news:alt.business.home)
- [news:alt.business.home.pc](mailto:news:alt.business.home.pc)
- [news:alt.business.misc](mailto:news:alt.business.misc)
- [news:alt.business.misc.entrepreneurs](mailto:news:alt.business.misc.entrepreneurs)
- [news:alt.business.multi-level.com](mailto:news:alt.business.multi-level.com)
- [news:alt.business.multi-level.exceltel](mailto:news:alt.business.multi-level.exceltel)
- [news:alt.business.multi-level.finl](mailto:news:alt.business.multi-level.finl)
- [news:alt.business.multi-level](mailto:news:alt.business.multi-level)
- [news:alt.business.multilevel](mailto:news:alt.business.multilevel)

- [news:alt.business.seminars](mailto:news:alt.business.seminars)
- [news:alt.business.services](mailto:news:alt.business.services)
- [news:alt.education.business](mailto:news:alt.education.business)
- [news:alt.mlm](mailto:news:alt.mlm)
- [news:alt.entrepreneurs](mailto:news:alt.entrepreneurs)
- [news:alt.internet.commerce](mailto:news:alt.internet.commerce)
- [news:market.internet.free](mailto:news:market.internet.free)
- [news:misc.business.marketing](mailto:news:misc.business.marketing)
- [news:misc.business](mailto:news:misc.business)
- [news:misc.entrepreneurs](mailto:news:misc.entrepreneurs)
- [news:misc.entrepreneurs](mailto:news:misc.entrepreneurs)
- [news:alt.biz.misc](mailto:news:alt.biz.misc)
- [news:alt.business.home.pcalt](mailto:news:alt.business.home.pcalt)
- [news:alt.business.home.pcmisc](mailto:news:alt.business.home.pcmisc)
- [news:alt.business.home.pcmisc.entrepreneurs](mailto:news:alt.business.home.pcmisc.entrepreneurs)
- [news:alt.business.marketplace](mailto:news:alt.business.marketplace)
- [news:biz.comp.misc](mailto:news:biz.comp.misc)
- [news:biz.general.biz.newgroup](mailto:news:biz.general.biz.newgroup)
- [news:biz.newgroup](mailto:news:biz.newgroup)
- [news:biz.next.newprod](mailto:news:biz.next.newprod)

## Ezine Databases and Directories

- <http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/scout/new-list>
- <http://site-city.com/members/e-zine-master>
- <http://www.top-business-ezines.com>
- <http://www.newsletter-library.com/ven.htm>
- <http://www.infojump.com>
- <http://list-a-day.com>
- <http://list-promote.com>
- <http://list-business.com/list-service-providers>
- <http://www.arl.org/scomm/edir/template.html>
- <http://www.edoc.com/jrl-bin/wilma>
- <http://gort.ucsd.edu/newjour/submit.html>
- <http://www.yotta.com/magazine/addfree.htm>
- <http://www.dominis.com/Zines/publishers>
- <http://www.etext.org/services.shtml>
- <http://www.disobey.com/low/addere.shtml>
- <http://inkpot.com/submit>
- <http://www.catalog.com/vivian>
- <http://www.oblivion.net/zineworld/add.html>
- <http://www.coalliance.org>
- <http://www.lifestylespub.com>
- <http://www.neosoft.com/internet/paml>
- <http://www.zinerack.com/search/enterurl.html>
- <http://www.netspace.org/cgi-bin/lwgate>
- <http://www.ezinez.com>
- <http://www.bestezines.com>
- <http://www.meer.net/~johnl/e-zine-list>
- <http://tile.net/lists>
- <http://list-universe.com>
- <http://www.liszt.com>

- <http://www.owt.com/dircon/mediajum.htm>
- <http://homeincome.com/search-it/ezine>
- [http://netterweb.com/lp/ed\\_ezinedirectory.htm](http://netterweb.com/lp/ed_ezinedirectory.htm)
- <http://www.ait.ac.th/clair/ez.html>
- <http://www.ezinefactory.co.za>
- [http://empowerline.com/ezine\\_directory.html](http://empowerline.com/ezine_directory.html)
- <http://www.foxcities.com/ims/e-zine.htm>
- <http://www.ezineseek.com>
- <http://www.onlinepromoter.com/home.htm>
- <http://www.coopmark.com/ezines/goto.htm>
- <http://www.ariadesigns.com/ezines.html>
- <http://www.netsupermall.com>
- <http://www.infobot.net/content.html>
- <http://ezinewebring.hypermart.net>
- <http://chosenetworking.com>
- <http://www.zinezone.com>

## Press Release Sites

- <http://www.canadaone.com/promote/pressrelease.html>
- <http://www.netrageousresults.com/PR/pressrelease.html>
- <http://www.bizine.com/biznews9.htm>
- <http://www.fodreams.com/pr3.html>
- <http://www.gebbieinc.com>
- <http://www.news bureau.com>
- <http://www.medialink.com>
- <http://www.profnet.org/press.html>
- <http://www.owt.com/dircon>
- <http://www.imediafax.com>
- <http://www.gapent.com/pr/index.htm>
- <http://www.mediapost.com>
- <http://www.prweb.com>
- <http://www.ping.at/gugerell/media/index.htm>
- <http://www.frugalfun.com/press.html>

## eBook Creation Software Sites

- NeoBook at <http://www.neosoftware.com/>
- HTMLDOCS at <http://www.easysw.com/>
- InfoCourier at <http://www.smartcode.com/>
- WebCompiler at <http://www.webcompiler.com/>
- Hyper Maker HTML at <http://www.bersoft.com/>
- eBook Pro at <http://www.ebookpro.com/>
- E-Ditorial at <http://www.e-ditorial.com/>
- Web-Source at <http://www.web-source.net/>
- BookLocker at <http://www.booklocker.com/>
- eBook Gold at <http://www.ebookgold.com/>
- KeeBoo at <http://www.keeboo.com/>

## Search Engines and META Tags

- <http://www.searchenginewatch.com/>
- <http://www.searchengines.com/>
- <http://www.searchengineguide.com/>
- <http://www.searchengineworld.com/>
- <http://www.payperclicksearchengines.com/>
- <http://www.metasearchengines.com/>
- <http://websitegarage.netscape.com/>
- <http://www.netmechanic.com/>
- <http://www.gldev.com/tools/meta.cgi>
- <http://www.submitcorner.com/Tools/Metascan/>
- <http://www.scrubtheweb.com/abs/meta-check.html>
- <http://www.gldev.com/tools/metag.cgi>
- <http://www.scrubtheweb.com/abs/builder.html>
- <http://www.metatagbuilder.com/>
- <http://www.eons.com/metabuilder.htm>
- [http://webtimetools.com/Site\\_Promotion/site\\_promotion.shtml](http://webtimetools.com/Site_Promotion/site_promotion.shtml)
- <http://www.techdevelopers.com/submit/metamaker.html>
- <http://www.submitcorner.com/Tools/Meta/>
- <http://members.aol.com/Some1KOOL/meta.html>
- <http://www.websitepromote.com/resources/meta/>
- <http://vancouver-webpages.com/META/mk-metas.html>
- <http://up4u.net/tools/metatag.shtml>
- <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/mineralogie/freeof.html>
- [http://www.drmeta.com/meta\\_generator.htm](http://www.drmeta.com/meta_generator.htm)
- <http://www.1netcentral.com/meta-tags.html>
- <http://www.submitexpress.com/metatags.html>

## Customer Relationship Management Sites

- <http://www.humanclick.com/>
- <http://www.livehelper.com/>
- <http://www.eshare.com/>
- <http://www.facetime.com/>
- <http://www.instant-service.com/>
- <http://www.netcall.co.uk/>
- <http://www.realcall.com/>
- <http://www.guesttrack.com/>
- <http://www.crmguru.com/>
- <http://www.1to1.com/>
- <http://www.crmassist.com/>
- <http://www.personalization.com/>
- <http://www.accelerating.com/>
- <http://www.multiactive.com/>
- <http://www.CRMDaily.com/>
- <http://www.loyalty.com/>
- <http://www.yodlee.com/>
- <http://www.crm-devel.org/>
- <http://www.allen.com/>
- <http://www.portalbar.com/>

- <http://www.loyaltyco.com/crm.htm>
- <http://www.cognitiative.com/>
- <http://www.personalize.com/>
- <http://www.crm-expo.com/>
- <http://www.crmcommunity.com/>
- <http://www.appiancorp.com/>
- <http://www.crm-forum.com/>
- <http://www.teleteams.com/>
- <http://www.crmpeople.com/>
- <http://www.clarify.com/>
- <http://www.andromedia.com/>
- <http://www.broadvision.com/>
- <http://www.netperceptions.com/>
- <http://www.liveperson.com/>
- <http://www.newchannel.com/>
- <http://www.arialsoftware.com/>

## Online Community Sites

- <http://www.intranets.com/>
- <http://www.anexa.com/>
- <http://www.everyone.net/>
- <http://www.communityzero.com/>
- <http://www.myevents.com/>
- <http://clubs.yahoo.com/>
- <http://www.egroups.com/>
- <http://www.icq.com/>
- <http://www.delphi.com/>
- <http://www.ecircles.com/>
- <http://www.minds.com/>
- <http://www.our-life.net/>
- <http://www.sixdegrees.com/>
- <http://www.peoplespot.com/communities/>
- <http://www.talkcity.com/>
- <http://www.bibliotech.net/>
- <http://www.partnerships.org.uk/>
- <http://www.angelcities.com/>
- <http://www.communities.org.uk/>
- <http://www.communityonline.com/>
- <http://www.participate.com/default.asp>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Born with a minor disability, Michel was abused by an alcoholic father who could not accept the fact that he “failed.” His father may now be institutionalized for his sickness (an alcoholism-related mental illness called “Korsakov’s Syndrome”) but for many years he labeled his son as a “failure,” which led Michel to live a very secluded childhood. Quite simply, Michel believed his father. But desperate for a way to overcome his overwhelming fear of rejection, a quote from Henry David Thoreau inspired him:

*“Do what you fear and the death of that fear is certain.”*

So at the tender age of 16, he decided to plunge into sales in order to fight his fears head-on. What better way is there to fight the fear of rejection than selling? However, he surely was no overnight success. In fact, Michel filed for bankruptcy at the still young age of 21. His debilitating fear being the source, Michel concluded that there had to be a way of avoiding rejection — a way of getting clients to come to him and not the other way around. And after several years of research and more failures, he finally discovered the key to success.

By changing his approach, he became the top sales producer in Canada for a large, multinational company. In the last decade alone, he helped generate over \$20 million for numerous clients and employers — some even tripled their revenues after applying his ideas.

Today, Michel Fortin teaches his know-how to other sales professionals, marketers and business owners. He is the author of four books, a professional speaker and an internationally acclaimed marketer. Michel is the owner of the *Success Doctor*,™ a sales, marketing and Internet marketing consultancy based in Ottawa, Canada that specializes in business development.

Michel’s client portfolio includes an incredibly diverse range of businesses and industries, from individuals to multinationals. Many of his client firms have operations of an international caliber while some individuals are recognized as leading authorities in their respective fields (e.g., surgeons, lawyers, marketers, etc).

Michel currently teaches at Algonquin College (as a part-time professor). His classes include Professional Selling, Information Technology Marketing and Introduction to Marketing Management, as well as courses on eCommerce, eBusiness and Internet Marketing. He often lectures at business schools, trade shows, universities and community colleges.

A prolific writer, Michel’s books include *The 10 Commandments of Power Positioning*, *101 Power Positioning Tips*, *Drop Your Goals and Manage Your Life!* and *Power Positioning Dot Com*. His articles have appeared in well over 300 different publications, such as Home Business Magazine, Web Promote, Internet.com, Office.com, Sales and Marketing Management Magazine, Money Makers Monthly, Marketing Power!, Business Consultant Weekly, Advanced Marketing Techniques and Wealth Building Magazine. He is also the editor-in-chief of the popular Internet Marketing Chronicles — a free email newsletter delivered weekly to well over 125,000 subscribers.

For more on Michel Fortin and the *Success Doctor*,™ or to find out how you can hire Michel to speak at your next business meeting or to consult your business, visit <http://SuccessDoctor.com/> today. You can obtain a free quote or subscribe to his free weekly newsletter, mentioned above, on his site.