Internet Promotion for Beginners

By Helen Fox

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Haiming Jiang

Email

Recommended Resources

- **Web Site Hosting Service**

- **Internet Marketing**

- **Affiliate Program**

Please Read This First

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About Helen Fox

I have a demanding, full-time job and get a reasonable salary.

But, because of the changing employment situation; international competition, lack of job security and increasing demands to raise productivity but with less staff, I decided that the best way to secure a future for myself and my child was to set up a business of my own.

I found the cost of establishing my own 'bricks and mortar' business was more than I could probably afford. But, after researching the opportunities provided by the Internet, I believe that the Internet makes it possible for almost anyone to achieve a goal like this more quickly and at lower cost than ever before, if they just take action and persist.

So, I am building my own Internet business on my own time, when family and other important factors permit.

The goal is to build my part-time business to where it produces sufficient returns that I can reduce the hours of, or perhaps even eliminate, my regular work.

I don't want this venture to interfere with my current job, nor cause any friction with my employer or work colleagues, so I am not using my own name for this book.

But, all the information is real – as accurate as I can make it. I can't offer any guarantees because so many things change so rapidly on the Internet.

Many people get very excited when they see the business opportunities which the Internet makes possible for them. They jump in with commendable enthusiasm, even passion. But, in their excitement, many forget the basics of good business-to-business and business-to-customer communication when they try to promote themselves, their products and services on the Internet.

I hope that readers of this, my first book, will avoid those mistakes and also be able to take best advantage of the many avenues for on-line promotion of their businesses or themselves which I have explained, in broad detail, in "*Internet Promotion for Beginners*".

Nuts and Bolts Included

Some readers may already know how to set up and use <u>all</u> of the things which I cover here. But, my aim is to make this book as useful as possible to *all* beginners, including those who are just learning to use the power of the Web.

I've read some books which give great ideas but have not also supplied the <u>real basic steps</u> which I needed to know about, so that I could use their strategies.

That's an important part of "communicating" information.

When you are using something almost every day, it's very easy to overlook some important steps when you're explaining how you do things to new people.

So, I've added a "Nuts and Bolts" section for those who are not sure how to use Blogs, online Mailing Lists, Autoresponders etc. If you know how to do these things, then you are ahead of the many real beginners who are coming online each day.

But, you may still want to skim that section after reading the main section about "Promoting on the Internet", because there may be some short-cuts and tips which you also might find useful.

I hope that I have done it well enough, so that you and every other reader can get the best possible benefit from these suggestions.

Helen Fox 2006

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Introduction

Promote Your "Better Mousetrap" Online

This book is designed to help <u>three</u> kinds of businesses improve their promotion efforts on the Internet:

1. Those businesses which sell products from 'brick and mortar' premises

2. Those businesses which offer services to individuals and other businesses.

3. Those businesses which only sell digital products on the Internet

I have tried to provide the necessary steps for you to get the best results from this book, whether you and your business have been on the Internet for a while, or you are just starting your Internet venture.

I cannot guarantee that everything in the book will remain the best options or even that all the links to websites, for instance, will work for you. The Web is expanding rapidly, with new technology and businesses being announced almost daily. And, sometimes, businesses are taken over, change focus or close – so you might find that instead of the software company I mention, a particular link takes you to a totally different type of site.

The Internet provides almost every business, from the sole operator to the largest corporation, wherever they are situated, with the chance to put their products and services in front of hundreds, or even thousands, of potential customers more quickly and cheaply than ever before.

Almost any small business can present a professional image in full color, with photos, to rival the offerings of their largest competitors, at minimal cost.

But, if you just set up a website with a few lines about why people should buy your product, with a picture and your contact information, then expanding your customer base will be fairly slow, if it happens at all.

That's because the Internet puts your current and potential customers within reach of many new competitors. Other business people are now able to reach into your area while you are trying to attract more sales from people that live much nearer to them than to you.

The success of your efforts to promote your business requires the same sharp focus and regular review that you give to your off-line advertising. The pace of change on the Internet is even faster than in the 'bricks and mortar' businesses that you are more familiar with.

But, there are new technologies and opportunities, many of them requiring minimal investment, which the popularity of the Internet makes available to you.

And, no, you don't need a degree in computer science or even to employ someone who has one until your business grows very large. When and if that happens, you won't mind, will you?

Some of the suggestions and sections may seem to have less potential for you because you may believe that you don't have a sufficient budget, the needed skills or relevant experience. But, you should read through all the sections because I've included tips, low-cost options and short-cuts wherever possible.

Some methods can be out-sourced to experienced specialists, often at amazingly low cost, and the required skill level to achieve useful, professional-looking results may sometimes be much lower than you think!

Even if you only want to focus on getting more business from people in your local area, you will find that the low cost and time commitment necessary to set up and maintain your own business website well worthwhile - see "Why YOUR Business Needs a Website!"

** <u>Section I – Promote Your Business on the Internet</u> **

Some of the methods and options will be more useful to you than others.

But, I strongly recommend that you read through everything because you could find some things are more useful and easier to add to your promotional arsenal than you might have thought.

There is also value in having at least a broad overview of those other methods for those times when you are on the receiving end. You will be able to use the knowledge which you get here to better appreciate the skill of the person using the technique and the actual value of the offer or information which they offer to you.

The Basics of All Promotion.

Keep it Simple. Put one main call to action in each of your newsletters, web pages or postings to a Forum. If people see three things in a message, they may not do anything about them. A choice of one works best.

Never, ever 'stretch the truth' (what I call, 'lying').

Don't copy anyone else. You can be a good imitator but you already are the best "YOU" on the planet. Build the "you" brand and back it up with exceptional service and absolute reliability.

Always be polite. I once heard, "Whoever shouts first has already lost the argument". If you feel that there's no chance for resolving something amicably, try to get agreement to meet later when everyone may have cooled down and thought things through.

This also applies when you get an email or phone complaint which you know is completely unwarranted. Nothing you say louder than you normally speak will actually help to resolve things

Keep the Goal in Mind. Do some self-editing of what you say and what you write. People are mostly understanding, but few have the time for chit-chat.

Share the Spotlight. If you had significant help from others with a project, try to always give due credit publicly.

Be Prepared to Say, "Sorry, No." Sometimes we cannot do things which others ask of us. Consider your current obligations before taking on extra work or social appointments.

It's best to make your decision and stick to it. If you feel obliged to say, "Yes" and then have to cancel, even just the next day, you may cause unnecessary upset and expense to the other person. You will certainly not help their opinion of your reliability.

Chapter I

Why YOUR Business Needs a Website!

If you are very small business, just starting up or only interested in supplying goods or services to people in your local area, do you need or want a website for your business?

Or, if you have a large 'bricks and mortar' business, you may think that you are already so well known that you only need a site with your business name and contact details on it?

You may not see any great benefits that could make the time, effort and cost of setting up a professional standard website worthwhile.

Here are some reasons why I believe that a business like yours should invest the required time, money and effort in a website:

The cost in time and other resources is probably less than you imagine. A few years ago, you would be looking at a significant minimum spend up front, just for the website without including the computer and other equipment, and fairly noticeable ongoing costs.

The few special software programs which were then available added a bundle of dollars to your starting costs.

Many businesses had to employ an extra person - someone with the required knowledge to set it up for you and, probably, to continue to operate it.

Computers systems and other hardware were costly and very slow by today's standards.

But, the rapid spread of the availability of the Internet is bringing thousands more people on-line each day. They're all buying equipment and programs.

That demand caused more companies and individuals to offer ever-improving products with more features and power, often at prices which we early adopters would never have even dreamed of!

You just need a fairly modern computer – up to 3 or 4 years old, to put everything required to produce and maintain your website on. The faster ways to connect and download from the Internet, like Broadband are preferable but not essential.

There is strong competition between web hosting companies. They all offer a variety of options, starting at a few dollars a month, to host your website.

You can use email to speed up many of your business communications with customers and suppliers, though an email does not usually have the same impact for many people as a posted letter which they can *hold in their hands*.

Modern computer systems and access to the Internet are much faster than just a few years ago and you do not need specialist staff to maintain the equipment or your website unless you have specialized requirements and a large business.

Professional Presentation of Your Business

You can present yourself and your business professionally in full color at low cost on the Internet.

The last time I had some brochures produced, the cost was about 7% higher than my almost identical order just a few months previously.

If I found an error in the printing, for which I was responsible, and had them re-done, then I would have had to pay the same amount over again.

If you have the software and time to produce your website, other expenses are very low. If, despite careful checking before you loaded the pages to your website, there are errors, you can quickly revise your web pages at zero cost!

You can use as many colors and pages as you need or want to. The only restriction on the number of pages you put on your site is the time needed to produce them, whether you have enough material to fill them and the amount of web space which you subscribed for.

If, for instance, you produce a quarterly catalog, you could reproduce the entire catalog in full color on your site and let your potential customers download it as a file which they can print on their printer at their own expense!

Please understand that you will still need to advertise through your usual avenues. But, you may be able to reduce your regular advertising and your potential market is likely to be greatly increased.

Sell Your Products over the Internet

You can set up, through your Bank or other Merchant Account provider, to actually sell your products over the Internet. The cost for this service varies with each provider and different legal requirements apply in different countries, but the possibility is there for you.

Many Banks and business associations have specialist staff that can help you with your first steps on the Internet

When your website is in place, it promotes your business 24/7 and all year round. Many people prefer to send an email inquiry, even late at night, or get the information they need from your website, rather than phone or visit a business because of the anonymity, convenience and time saved.

You will be seen by more people than you could reach without a lot of costly advertising. These people could include potential new suppliers as well as new customers, of course. You could be approached to take on new, cutting edge products or supply your current products to people in other States or even overseas!

I strongly suggest that you put your web site address on all your business stationery, including your business cards and other advertising.

The Best Reason of All!

If you delay setting up your own web site, you will probably find that;

- The domain name (registered website name) which you really wanted for your website will have gone to someone else

- Your competitors will be there before you and you will have to work much harder to catch up because of your late start.

Chapter II

Powerful Promotion on Your Website

To some website owners, promotion means putting large pictures, music or pop-up boxes and flashing signs everywhere. You, like me, may not like some of these things, but the sad truth is that they continue to be used because, many times, they work very well!

Yes, the people that use them say that the data which they collect on their websites proves that many of the sites which use these gee-gaws are getting more profitable!

Remember, it's not your personal view about the pop-up box, or whatever, that is the main consideration. How do you feel that your primary type of customer would react to one of these on your site?

If you see a gimmick on a site which you visit that makes you take notice, don't just click away. Think about whether something similar might be worth trying on your site.

If You Don't Create Your Own Website …

 … this section is still worth your time to read and absorb before you hire someone to create your site. These general tips will help you to understand what your website needs and some terms which the designer uses.

If you don't understand what the designer says, maybe the site they produce may be hard for your customers to understand.

This section will not make you the equal of an experienced designer but there is plenty here to help you put together a professional standard site or, at least, know what to look for in the design which they create for you.

Use this section to help you understand the terms and suggestions from your chosen designer. Or, you could make a checklist from this section and use it

to see how the designer has covered these points in the pages that they create for you.

It's quite possible that the way they do some things may be better for your particular needs than the broad suggestions which I include here.

WebPage Basics

Let's start at the beginning with the name you choose for your website, your "domain name".

The two main types of domain name are;

1. The name of your business or major product, especially if they are established offline brands.

2. A name which includes keywords that your potential customers will look for when searching for your type of product, or for answers to the problems it solves, in the Internet search engines.

Find Keywords for Your Website

Keywords are the words which people who are looking for your kind of product or service (or to find solutions to the problems which they solve) are likely to use when the visit the Internet Search Engines, such as Google and Overture.

You will probably know some of them from your own experience but you can find out the words and phrases which are actually most often used on the Search Engines with software programs and services like these.

Goodkeywords from http://www.goodkeywords.com is a free software program which you can download to your computer. Put in a word which relates to the benefits off your product and you get a list of similar phrases which have been recently used on the major search engines.

Another useful online resource is the free Nichebot service at
http://www.nichebot.com/

These can be helpful when picking out the domain name which you want to register for your website and finding phrases which you can include in the relevant pages of your website.

Use your most important keywords in the first couple of paragraphs on your main web pages and in the headlines and section headers of your pages. These are the main areas that the spiders or bots, which the Search Engines send out to gather information, retrieve and these are what show up in response to the search queries which people put into the Search Engines.

I've put more options and links in the Keywords chapter of Section II Nuts and Bolts.

Colors that Excite or Soothe

You may already have decided to use the colors which decorate your off-line stores or your products for your website.

But, it's worth considering the effect of the colors which you use on all visitors, especially those who are not familiar with your company or products.

For a better understanding of this, consider the colors of the websites which you visit, including the colors which your competitors or suppliers use. How do you feel when you visit a site that has red as the dominant color? According to the experts:

Red is a passionate color, tending to enhance the visitors' mood or attract attention.

Blue is a color that soothes people and is thought to generate a feeling of trust and security. Many websites use some shade of blue for their background or borders between sections of their site.

Green is the dominant color in nature and would be one good choice for sites promoting natural products and related services.

Yellow is a fun color, tending to increase enjoyment but may make people restless if they have to spend some time - reading a lot of text on your page, for instance.

Make it Quick and Easy!

That's for your visitors, of course, which can involve some thought and effort from you to achieve the smooth pathways between your home page and the other parts of your site.

Try to link every part of your site so that no more than 3 mouse-clicks will get your visitor where they want to go.

You may have less than ten seconds to engage the casual visitor to your site before they click away somewhere else, never to return. So keep the large, slow-loading pictures, special effects or music for other pages and tell people that those pages may take a little while to load – if they know in advance, they'll only go to those pages if they're particularly interested (possibly ready to buy).

Know Your Customer! If you have an audience that is focused on the special effects, then they're likely to have the powerful computers to handle it and the previous paragraph won't apply.

<u>**Chapter III**</u>

Getting Results with the Search Engines

The worst way to try to do this is to pay someone who promises to submit your website to "thousands of search engines". They probably do submit your pages to search engines and lots of "Free For All" (FFA) pages as well. The FFA pages are an almost complete waste of time; the chances of attracting serious buyers through them is about zero. The chance of increasing the amount of spam you get if you do submit your site to FFA pages is about 99.9%!

There aren't that many search engines which matter. If you submit your pages manually yourself, or use a service like http://selfpromotion.com and cover Google (of course!), Overture, Yahoo and AskJeeves, plus any regional or specialized search engines which relate to your business area, that's probably enough.

The most important thing is to prepare your pages and your submissions carefully. There are reputable people that spend all their time studying this area and submitting their client's web sites. They charge high fees because there is a lot of research involved and, even then, they don't always get it right!

Good Links and Bad Links.

Links are connections between websites. When you click on a link like [Get a Free book](NOT a real link!) and your browser takes you to a page where (hopefully) you can download that free book, you've used a hyperlink (link for short).

Links are one of the key ingredients in building the rating ('PageRank' on Google) and position of your website.

Good links are ones to sites which carry related information. But it's important that <u>the actual page</u> which you link to has some information which relates to the information on your page on your site where the link appears.

Some people link to the front page (called the home page) of the other site which is probably the one which that site's owner most wants visitors to be sent to.

But, if there is little or none of the relevant information there on that page, then the Search Engine and their bots are sophisticated enough to downgrade the rating they give for that type of link!

You also want to concentrate on getting linked from the big players in your industry. Although a link from a hobbyist whose site focuses on your sort of product or profession is great, there can be a dollar value in getting the major organizations, including associations and directories for your type of business to link to your site. It can be worth signing up as a member just to get that link!

As well as the Search Engines, there are other sites which answer questions which people have about their pet subjects. Look for "Ask the Expert" type sites which cover your area of activity and consider advertising on those sites.

Visit them from time to time, to see the actual questions which their visitors ask. Their questions are likely to be more detailed than the brief three or four words which is all that most people punch into a Search Engine. This is great, cheap market research!

Links from sites which do not contain information relevant to that on your site are worthless and may even help to cause your ranking to be downgraded on some Search Engines.

It's been a common practice for many website owners to create a links page on their site and arrange for other people in their industry to link to them in return for a reciprocal link on the links page.

This can get a lot of links to related material but the Search Engines seem to be downgrading the value of links which are set up this way.

The other sites which you should submit your site to are directories, the big general ones and any which you find that cover your area of business. To find them is easy. Just put your main keyword, then a space and directory into your favorite Search Engine, like this;

keyword directory

These catalog the sites which are submitted to them by subject and other criteria. The most important one is probably the Open Directory Project at http://www.dmoz.com/

That directory, which uses humans to examine the sites which are submitted to it, supplies information to Search Engines, including Google.

Pay Per Click Advertising.

The opinion of many prominent marketers is that Pay Per Click is almost essential in your on-line venture. Some report fabulous results but there are no guarantees.

The most popular PPC's are probably Google http://www.google.com/ads/, Miva http://www.miva.com/ (formerly Findwhat.com) and Yahoo! Search Marketing (formerly Overture.com) at http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com/

To use Pay Per Click, you decide which service(s) you will start with. It's important that you look over the Terms of Service for each service you are considering.

They each offer a lot of information about the benefits of their particular system on their own sites. Significant changes occur from time to time as they tweak their systems and their offers in response to their own research and customer feedback.

These are the basic steps to starting your PPC campaign. The order varies with the different services:

Set up your account.

Write your ad. You must fit the requirements set by each service which you choose. For all of them, you have only a few words for your ad, so you must make every word and phrase 'pay its way'. You want immediate action from the people who see your ad, so try to impart a sense of urgency, or loss, if they ignore your offer.

Review other PPC ads for inspiration, including those of your competitors!

Have your ads link to the specific offers which you are promoting, rather than your website home page.

Select the keywords which you want to bid on. There's little benefit to starting with a lot of keyword bids. Start with just a few and check the results. When you are confident that you are tuned to the type of keywords which will attract more customers to your website, you can ramp up the number of words which you bid on.

Set the amount which you want to spend per day. You can see what others are bidding for various keywords related to your business.

If available, set the region, language preference or other identifiers of the web visitors you want your ads placed in front of. Some services offer some of these options free while some cost. But, if you want to target your offers more tightly, the cost might be worthwhile.

Each service has it own special options. You can have your ads appear on listings in search engines or websites which carry text that relates to your customers' interests.

There is no guarantee that you will get the same results for the same keywords, or the same bids, with the different services.

You must carefully work out what rate of return you need to make your campaign worthwhile and check that the clicks are turning into sales.

If an ad isn't pulling customers to your site, then it's not worthwhile to keep it going. It's not just the click-throughs – it's the sales against the cost of those clicks which you must pay attention to.

You can split-test by running two ads for the same item over the same period, sending those that respond to each of the ads to different pages and compare the results disclosed by your site web statistics, split-testing software or the data provided by the service you use.

Put an offer of a free report or something similar on your sales pages so that you can follow-up with people that click-through but don't buy from your offer.

Chapter IV

Articles

Even if you are a business person (or want to start your own business) who feels that you don't have the experience, time or desire to write articles, please read this section carefully.

The promotional power of articles is so great that you might decide that you, or someone in your business, should produce articles that promote your business and products (in a mostly indirect way).

You don't need to be a skilled writer – you could even pay other people to produce the articles for you at a very reasonable cost.

Put Your Tips and Shortcuts on Your Website.

Many of us spend an appreciable amount of our working time helping customers and colleagues by answering their questions or showing them short-cuts we've developed and how to get higher productivity and the best results from using our products.

Most article writers do that except that they write about the problems which their readers have and set out their answers.

If you wrote all of your advice down, you might find you had your own 'book of knowledge' - with a lot of valuable content that many people might even pay for.

Yes, the information you've been giving away for years probably has considerable value. Even if you don't get paid for your articles, you can use them to promote yourself as a reliable source of information and good products.

That can pay off financially for you even more than the fee which you might get if you just sold the article to a magazine which would then disappear

from the shelves of the paper shop after a few weeks. Put your article on the Net and it could still be producing customers and referrals for you for years!

You can just write out your tips as and when your schedule allows. Then, you put each tip on a separate page on your website along with your contact details and links to the information on your site about the relevant products or services which you offer.

These are like the tip-sheets which hardware stores and other businesses offer anyone that comes to their store, but the web-based version has some advantages;

- **You just make one copy for your website.**

    If a thousand people download that page and print it out for their use, you have a thousand leaflets in the hands of mostly serious prospects at almost no cost!

    And that page on your website is still working for you!

    Compare that to paying for a thousand brochures to be printed. When they're gone, you have to buy another quantity.

- **Smoothly change any errors or prices instantly at no cost.**

    If you want to add more information to a printed brochure or you have a brochure with incorrect information or prices, you either have to have the new information pasted over the old text (which usually looks very unprofessional and obvious) or pay to get new replacement brochures produced.

    It will only take you minutes to change the information on your web page and load it up to your website. That will overwrite the previous version of that page and there will be no visible indication that the page has been changed.

Offer Your Articles to Others

If you distribute your products through other companies, you can offer them your articles to print and/or put on their own web sites.

Article Directories

Provided the articles do not directly promote any of your products or services, you could offer them to article directory sites.

These sites provide articles about a wide range of subjects which visitors to their site can use on their sites and in newsletters which focus on the subject of your article.

You have to keep to the rules and guidelines of the particular directories which you want to put your articles on and some may require you to pay.

You can add a 'resource box' to the bottom of each article which you supply with a few lines about yourself and your contact information or a link to your website.

Be aware that, while most people that use your articles will treat your material fairly, there is always a chance that someone will copy your article, but remove your contact information and put their own name to it.

You can also mention the articles which you have on your website in online forums and chat-rooms where people that might need them gather while blatantly mentioning your products would be completely out of place.

You can also offer them directly to specific ezines (electronic newsletters). I'll give them their own Chapter later in this ebook because they are one of the most targeted and effective promotion methods on the Internet.

If You Provide Services

If you provide services rather than products, there are other possible advantages for you producing and distributing your own articles.

Your articles will improve your profile with people, customers and even competitors, in your industry or profession.

You can put a group of related articles into an electronic booklet (ebook) by converting them to .pdf format and letting people download it from your website.

Send these ebooklets to new customers. They get useful tips which they can read on their computer (Microsoft Windows and Apple's Macintosh system) or print out on their printer at their leisure.

Article Writing for Non-writers

This sort of article writing would probably not be approved by your old English teacher at school – while **grammar** is important, **clarity** is the prime consideration.

You're not aiming to win a literary award; you want to show people how to solve a problem which they have or to do something better than they already can.

That's the best focus for writing an article, or just about anything else. Yes, even above promotion of your business. Most readers will be more responsive to someone that helps them to fill their needs and wants, than they will to someone that is obviously trying to sell something to them.

An easy way to write your article is to write it as a letter to a friend who has the problem or wants the benefit you provide.

Decide the problem or want that you aim to help them satisfy with your article. Keep to one main point or your article will be longer than you expect.

Very few people can write short, sharp and to the point until they've got some experience.

Write a checklist showing everything which you need to mention in your article.

Write several possible titles even if you think you already have worked out the ideal title for it. This should only take a few minutes and, even if you don't find a better title, this may help you to remember one or more points which you didn't put in your checklist.

The other simple description of a promotional article I heard was, "Tell them how bad the problem can get if they don't act and how good they will feel when they follow your advice. Then, give them your advice and finish with a repeat of why it's important that they act now. And, don't forget your resource box."

The traditional newspaper journalist's five questions can also help you to outline your article: Who, What, Why, Where and When.

State the problem you will help them solve (or at least reduce) or benefit which you will help them to gain in the first paragraph. Include some of your most important keywords.

Put a "call to action" in your article. If you just want to inform them, send them an encyclopedia. If you want results for your efforts, give them a little push.

If you are submitting your article to a directory or offering it to other people to use on their sites, then you should put a couple of lines about yourself and your online contact details in a 'resource box' at the end of the article.

Pressure advertising in the resource box will create a poor impression and reduce the number of people that might distribute your article. But you could

offer readers of that article a booklet of similar articles which they can get from your website or from your autoresponder.

Broaden Your Reach

Your articles don't have to focus on problems which are directly solved by using your products or services.

Do what many large organizations do. Be subtle **but don't forget your resource box**.

A group of egg producers might put out a brochure about crafts which parents can use to keep their children occupied and quiet, like decorating eggs making things from egg-trays etc. To use the suggestions, they've got buy some eggs in a tray, right?

Can you tie your business or products to a current newsworthy topic? Maybe there has been a new technology released which will make things easier, cheaper or more profitable for your customers.

Has your business won an award or, better still, a customer achieved record results with the use of your products or advice?

Always give value; what you promise and more, wherever possible. Give them some benefits in the article for the time they put in to read it, don't just say, "You can solve this quickly by getting my product!" Everybody hears that message too many times every day already.

Pay Others to Write Your Articles

You could get an employee to write articles for your company to use. You could write a draft which they add technical information to or prepare for emailing.

You can hire someone outside your business to create original articles for you. There are many writers who earn extra money, or even a very good

living, from "ghosting" articles which they assign all rights for to the person who hired them.

Some of these people are in great demand and charge accordingly. But there are many others whose rates are cheaper, reflecting their lower profile or, sometimes, the lower costs of the region where they live and work.

You can contact some writers-for-hire through sites such as http://www.rentacoder.com/

You need to be very careful about the material supplied as your reputation will attach to it when it appears in your newsletter, even if you don't put your name to it.

You must always check that the material has not just been copied from someone else – this sort of thing happens frequently on the Internet. Put some of the most important parts of the text through the http://www.copyscape.com service, which is free.

You can pay a teacher or senior college student to prepare articles from basic information you supply.

Private Label Articles

You can get articles from writers and other entrepreneurs who offer them with **Private Label Rights**. These articles will not be too closely focused on your business but you may be able to find some with general information that will be useful to your customers.

You will not be the only person who will have the use of these articles. They may be sold to 25, 50 or even hundreds of other people who will get the same rights that you bought!

Every buyer is requested to significantly change all the articles which they use but it's almost inevitable that some will put the articles out with their own name as the author and no significant changes to the text.

So, for them to be of any value to you, make sure that you only use them as the raw material for anything you produce from them, even a few blog entries.

Writing Your Advertisements

Whether or not you write articles as one of your avenues of promotion and subtle advertising, you will need to learn how to write at least some of your own advertisements.

If you produce your own products from your own skills or by paying others, you will have to have advertisements and sales pages for your website and the ezines which you promote your product through.

If you get affiliates or resellers of your products, they will expect that you have quality, order-pulling pages which you let them use to promote your product.

You know the benefits of your product better than anyone else but will have to work to become proficient at getting your message powerful enough to make your prospects buy your products.

One aid which has been used and recommended by all top advertising writers is a Swipe File. That's a collection of advertisements by others which motivate you to buy the product or service or, at least, catch your attention in a positive way.

Start to file such ads so that you can refer to them for inspiration and to learn how to turn the techniques that those writers used to bring more sales from your own ads.

Don't ever copy the other writer's work. Respect their effort and their rights. But you can use the same sort of headlines and other calls to action which worked on you.

Focus on the needs and wants of your readers. They mostly want to know that you can fix their problem or fulfill their desire. This is more powerful than anything else so put it in your headline.

Try to include your keywords in your headlines and the headers above your paragraphs.

They also want to be as sure as possible that your product has done that for people like themselves and, if it doesn't the guarantee which you offer is solid.

Don't use too many colors or fonts. You want them buying your product, not admiring your art-work!

Keep to one main message and call to action with each ad that you prepare.

Ask for the order twice in each ad, except for classifieds where there aren't enough words.

Use bullet points to emphasize the strongest appeals of your product.

Try to impart a sense of urgency – "Order Now!" because your ad has to compete with many thousands of similar offers. Your visitor could easily be persuaded to buy a competing product before they see your newsletter or another of your ads if you don't get action from them this visit.

Even if you don't get their order this time, get them to subscribe to your ezine. Offer them an e-booklet of tips related to their interest as a free download in return for subscribing to your ezine or a special series of related articles from your autoresponder.

Go Viral to Get More Customers.

When you've compiled a booklet of your original reports and tips, add your contact and website information and then 'set it free'.

Tell anybody who downloads your booklet that they can pass it on to anybody they like.

If you've given them quality, original information, then they will and the results will, almost certainly show over time in your bottom line.

You can offer the booklet to any affiliates who sign up to promote your product. They'll become even more enthusiastic boosters of your product if you supply them with copies of the booklet which have their affiliate link for promoting your product instead of your regular contact website address.

This will cost you a few minutes to prepare, but the extra sales will make it time well spent.

Promoting with Ezines.

You can also promote your products and services by advertising and running joint ventures with ezines, including those which you offer your articles to, if you write articles.

This is widely recognized as a very powerful tactic if it is done correctly. But, as with so many other methods, any false steps will slam doors in your face very quickly.

There are ezines that serve just about every interest shared by a group of people. The most popular have many thousands of subscribers and are a great advertising medium.

As you would expect, the owners of ezines with very active, large subscribers are able to charge whatever rate for advertising they want.

They all have their own rules and requirements for any advertising they accept. But, inevitably, many report that they get casual inquiries every week from would-be advertisers that have obviously never seen their ezine or checked the requirements and rules which they have.

You should, at the very least, subscribe to their ezine and study a few issues before even thinking of approaching them about advertising. Look over their site(s) and consider, very seriously, buying one or more of their products. Of course, you do this only where the product will be valuable to you in itself.

Respond to their articles and other material which they supply.

Then, if you believe that their 'typical reader' is a good match for your product, you can make a reasoned decision about whether to advertise in their ezine.

The variety of advertising options in different ezines is wide. The most common are;

- Featured ads, which are prominently placed and highlighted.

- Classified ads, which are bundled all together in a section of the ezine and

- Solo ads, which are either the only ad in that issue or are emailed separately from the regular issue of the ezine.

To emphasize the importance of reviewing some issues of the ezine before considering paid advertising, I'll mention a 'solo ad' which I got yesterday from one ezine.

Immediately below the normal identifying headings and greeting, was a long disclaimer about the entire content being the responsibility of the advertiser. Some sort of disclaimer is essential to protect the ezine owner, of course, but putting that at the beginning – and the blunt wording - made me wonder if they bothered to check the validity of the ad or just grabbed the payment!

Part of the value of advertising in any ezine is that you share a little of the respect which the subscribers give to the ezine owner.

Classified ads, where available, are the cheapest way to start but you need to watch what sort of other ads are appearing there for at least a couple of issues. Are they offers which you would not mind your ad sitting between?

Also, do the same small ads appear regularly or are they constantly changing? Regular ads from the same advertisers probably indicates that they are getting satisfactory results from them and that ezine.

Constantly changing ads may mean that the advertisers are less happy with their results, or inexperienced advertisers that don't realize the value of repeating an ad.

Yes, there is research which indicates that most people need to see an ad more than once before we take action, unless it's a very well written ad.

If the ezine you want to advertise in has rates that are beyond your reach at the moment, then you should consider approaching the ezine owner with 'an offer which they can't (you hope) refuse'.

Ask them to consider a **Joint Venture**:

Joint Venture Basics

This is another powerful tactic which can help a relative new operator to Internet promotion get a helping hand closer to the big time from one, or several, experienced marketers while keeping their costs low.

For this, you need your own product that can be sold over the Internet and you need to set up an **affiliate program** for it. That's where you let other people promote your product to subscribers on their list, or visitors to their site, and pay them a commission for all sales which result from those referrals.

The commission is usually about 50%. With the joint ventures that you seek with prominent marketers, you should offer a higher percentage to make the offer as attractive as possible to them.

Remember that these people get offers every day and your offer needs to be a stand-out in their eyes, but you must also make the offer to their readers something of better than usual value.

The easiest way to set up for an affiliate program is to use Clickbank.com at http://www.clickbank.com/ They have a very easy to follow system and thousands of Members who are interested in becoming affiliates for products which are sold through Clickbank.

They're not the only payment processor which you may operate your affiliate program through, and some others have lower fees and/or set-up charges, but the marketers that you approach will know and possibly use ClickBank themselves.

Before you approach one of your hoped-for JV partners, set up a special link which pays the high commission that you will offer to them. Make it as easy as well as potentially profitable as possible for them.

It's worth going the extra mile when you start this, because the potential benefits to your own future business are possibly greater than you even realize.

Spend time on drafting the email which you send to your potential JV partner.

Be sure to mention that you use their product and give them some positive feedback about it and their ezine.

Ask them to consider making an offer to their list about your product.

Give them a link to download an absolutely free copy of your product. That costs you almost nothing with a digital ebook or software program which you created or paid to have done for you.

They need to be able to review your product so that they are sure of its quality and that the offer has no chance of damaging their own hard-earned reputation.

Give them the affiliate details; the special commission rate and the link you have set up for them.

If you can prepare a special report (combine some of your original articles) or even just a unique article with tips that will be valuable to their readers, then be sure to include that.

Be patient.

Most will let you know of their interest or inability to take up your offer but wait at least a couple of weeks before you follow up.

Good Luck.

Chapter III

Mailing Lists

You probably know already that it is very important to keep in touch with your customers after they have bought from you?

It is equally true that many people need to hear the benefits of a particular product more than once, probably several times, before they take the big step of actually buying it.

That's why you see the same advertisements repeated so often on your television and in magazines and newspapers.

Many businesses have newsletters for their customers and resellers which have been mailed every week or month for years.

There are obvious advantages in sending a newsletter over the Internet;

You save production costs, postage and time

Your readers get their electronic copies in minutes rather than days.

You can store a copy of each issue of your newsletter on a special 'newsletter archive' section of your website. These pages can attract more visitors to your website because the keywords and information will add, over time, to your Search Engine rankings.

Put a link to your archive in every newsletter which you send out. Even if some readers do not find something in the current issue which they want to follow up, they may be interested enough to follow the link to your archive and browse your older issues.

Consider Using an Online Service

Because of the spam (unsolicited commercial email) problem and the increasing risk of getting viruses from emails, new laws are being enacted in

many parts of the world. You should try, as far as possible, to make sure that everything which you email complies with those laws, even if you are a resident in another country.

If you send emails which are considered spam or, sometimes, even if you are just accused of doing so, you may find that your website is closed down or even forfeited! You may be able to get such actions reversed but that can cost you a lot of money and take weeks or longer.

So, you might want to consider paying an on-line service to send your mailings. They are experienced and most will provide advice to help prevent such problems happening to their customers. The mailings go from their web servers, reducing the risk to your site.

Discussion Groups

There are sites which host discussion Groups which, like Forums, are each focused on a particular topic or even a small niche within that topic.

Some, like http://groups.yahoo.com/   are very popular but are advertising powered which makes them useless for businesses to set up, though you might find some related to your business which you could join as a regular member to just build a profile while sharing ideas and advice.

I've been a Member of a couple groups at http://ww.ryze.com/ for a couple of months. Ryze host all kinds of groups. Some don't permit any hint of commerce while others are very hyperactive!

Google, and probably other Search Engines, index the posts from Ryze and some other similar sites, so you may get a trickle of traffic if you post useful information there.

I'm still thinking about whether to sign up for a paid Membership which would let me start a group of my own. Anyway, the site is worth checking out.

Google has their own Groups set-up at http://groups.google.com/ This seems a good option for non-commercial use.

Private Discussion Groups on Your Website.

You could run a moderated mailing list from the Control panel on your website where privacy is an issue.

These can be set up so that only you can post to the subscribers, the subscribers can reply and their replies are broadcast to all the subscribers or they can send their messages just to particular subscribers.

This will not build your public profile or Search Engine rankings but it might be worth considering for a special group of customers or representatives. The

exclusivity would possibly help to improve their connection with you and your business.

Autoresponders

One-shot Autoresponders

Many web hosts provide their customers with "unlimited autoresponders", as well as allowing them to create several email addresses.

Usually, these autoresponders are the simple one-shot type. When someone sends an email to the address associated with that autoresponder, it sends them the file (either text or a web page) which you have set up for it to send and that's it. They're fast, cheap and convenient to use but limited.

These simple autoresponders can save you and your customers a lot of time, but the multi-message type in the next section have advantages that may appeal more to you, even though they usually cost money to set up.

Multi-message Autoresponders

These can be a powerful asset for your promotional activities, far above their low cost and the time and effort you invest to set them up and maintain them.

You do not need any special training to do it either.

These autoresponders can;

- Send one-shot replies just like the simple autoresponders that most web hosts provide.

- Send regular newsletters to your customers, agents and employees.

- Send multi-part courses (which you write or have someone write for you), to increase your customers' knowledge and reinforce their view of the value which you and your products or services provide to them.

- Confirm and accept new subscribers and also delete the addresses of people who send a request to unsubscribe.

- Send you a notification of the subscribes and un-subscribes to whatever email address you specify.

- Allow you to insert special one-off mailings with special offers or breaking news.

- Gather demographic information about the people who subscribe.

Choosing Your Autoresponder

Although there are many autoresponder software programs and some of them are powerful and reasonably priced, the increasing level of government regulation brought on by the spam problem made me decide to invest in a subscription to an online autoresponder service, aWeber.com at

http://www.aweber.com

Another well-regarded service is at http://www.emailaces.com/

There are many programs available and, if you prefer to probably spend a lot more time but save some cash, just type autoresponder software into your favorite search engines

Content for your Autoresponders and Newsletters.

Always be positive and upbeat. Occasionally, you may have to include an alert about some negative development in your industry but, at least, put something positive as the last entry in each email you send. That will help to improve your readers because they'll look forward to the lift which your mailings leave them with.

Material to put in your autoresponders:

Questions which your customers ask. If one customer asks, you can be sure there are others who have the same question(s).

Some customers will even tell you of new ways they've found to use your products or just a tip or shortcut related to their activities where they use your products. Ask them if you may share that with the people who get your newsletter or on your Blog (see next Chapter) or both?

Most people will be a little flattered and probably sign up for the newsletter themselves, or ask for the address of your Blog so that they can visit it.

Check the emails and newsletters from other companies whose products you resell for interesting tips and industry information.

Industry events. Mention any exhibitions or conferences which you'll be attending, as an exhibitor or just a participant. Then, use the newsletters after the event to give some highlights for those who did not attend.

Make sure to mention the people you met; industry leaders, business associates and customers. Make sure that you get their names, titles and company positions accurate!

Don't use shortened versions of their names or nick-names unless that is how they are usually referred to in public and print by everyone around your industry. Some people use nick-names when referring to industry leaders to suggest that they know them very well. But that tactic can annoy other people or even the person referred to, which might result in your next contact being a lot less friendly.

Avoid referring to jokes which might have been a source of fun at the event but would mean little to your readers who did not attend. For the same reason, **don't mention any negative happenings from the conference**

in your mailings. You don't have the space to go into details and your readers may not want to be reminded.

If you write articles as suggested in the earlier Chapter, you can recycle these through your autoresponders. Put together several related articles and you have a mini-course.

As well as offering this at, say, the rate of one email a week from one of your autoresponders, you can combine them into a pdf format ebook and let your customers and site visitors download it from your website.

<u>**Chapter IV**</u>

Blogs

A blog is simply an online diary or "web log". Blogs have become wildly popular in the last couple of years, but they're really a new phenomenon. Many are personal but there are many which the business people who write them find worth the time and effort. They encourage quicker and more straight-forward (blunt) feedback than you will probably get by email or phone.

The important thing with your blog is to add new material frequently. This may be current happenings in your business or industry, new products or tips and excerpts from your articles.

Encourage the customers, agents and others who read your blog to comment right there – all blog software lets them send a reply (comment) which you can check and then post right under the entry you wrote on your blog or on a linked page.

Focusing on what is most useful and important to your readers is critical with a business-related blog.

Why have a Newsletter and a Blog?

You may wonder why, if you already have a newsletter, why you would need a blog?

Blog users may ask, in turn, what possible benefit would I have by setting up a newsletter when feeds from my blog can be read on computers and other devices?

Each has some advantages and they actually complement each other.

Newsletters carry news, some advertising and longer, detailed articles.

Blogs can be less formal, in line with what you believe your customers will be comfortable with. Give them a glimpse of the real people that are behind that email address and order button, but keep any personal stuff for your private blog, if you have one.

Since you can more easily update your blog than prepare and send a newsletter, that's where you put the most current information and news.

But your monthly newsletter reminds your subscribers about the most interesting entries in your blog since the previous newsletter and the blog can announce the most interesting features which people can only read by subscribing to your newsletter.

Your blog entries should be short and any advertising in the text should be kept low-key.

All sorts of businesses use blogs, from donut franchises to lawyers. I saw that some lawyers called their blog a "Blawg". I like a good pun, but believe there should be a law against ones like that!

You can have sections for particular subjects within your blog and make each of your posts appear only in the sections which it most closely relates to. As your blog grows, these different sections become laden with keywords and useful information which can be very appealing to Search Engines and new visitors.

Chapter IV

Forums

Forums are sites where people can meet others with a common interest which may be a hobby, sport, business or other activity to discuss their latest projects, get help and also help other, less experienced visitors with their questions.

There are forums about just on every possible subject and some have thousands of Members. Most are free to join. You can visit most of them without becoming a Member, but you will usually be required to provide basic contact details and sign up as a Member if you want to participate in the discussions.

That's fair, because it gives the operator of the forum basic information about the people who are using it. When you register, you can select which of the information you supply will be viewable by other registered Members of that forum. You can change your information and permissions at any time.

Search for forums that relate to your business or the type of activity where your products or services are used.

Select only a couple of the most promising ones to concentrate on. That way, you will build a higher profile than if you flit between several forums and just post a couple of entries in each every month

Surf the ones you choose for a couple days before joining in any of the discussions. You need to absorb the atmosphere which the Forum owner has allowed to develop. This can also help you when you are setting up your own Forum, discussion group or blog.

Look for people that post fairly regularly and display enthusiasm and knowledge. You may see that some people's posts attract a lot of positive

replies. These are people that you might want to develop a business relationship with some time in the future.

Inevitably, you'll find others whose posts are negative or too theoretical or lacking enough content to help anyone.

Always pay careful attention to the Terms of Use which are usually displayed when you sign up as a Member.

The best effect is enjoyed by the most helpful Members of each Forum. I don't mean those that post suggestions to almost every question that appears but those who give useful advice which can be seen to be reliable because of their experience.

That is great, free but very subtle advertising!

Don't post any advertising in your responses on the forums except if you are permitted to add a link to your website or blog in your signature.

Many forums let you contact other Members by looking at the personal information they posted when they joined (their profile) and using an email or Private Message link if there is one there. Don't abuse this by sending any sort of advertising.

But, you might posts a question such as, "Does anyone know of people that sell "your type of product" in a specific area? I am looking for representatives for my products there" if you are sure that will be acceptable in the particular section of the Forum where you post it.

If you are at all unsure, then send an email or private message to the person who operates the Forum, asking them if your message would be acceptable and wait until they answer.

Forums are not for selling your products or services but you can build respect and relationships which can lead to sales and lucrative business proposals over time.

Your Own Forum?

Your own branded forum can be a good public relations tool. Also, there are free and paid forum software programs which are easy enough for most people to set up.

But, that's just the start!

Unless you are personally enthusiastic about devoting some of your time (or an employee's) every day of the year to;

- posting on your own forum,

- replying as promptly as possible to your Members' questions and complaints

- cleaning away abusive or otherwise offensive posts,

… you should think the matter through before setting one up.

Look around some other forums and you will see that the most popular ones can get hundreds of posts each day. There must be someone available 365/24 to keep them running smoothly and with minimum friction.

If you set up a Forum but then decide, for whatever reason, to close it, that will tend to affect your on-line profile.

Managing Your Forum

While you, or an employee you give the responsibility to, must have full control of the Forum, you can invite regular posters who show the right, helpful attitude and great enthusiasm to become voluntary Moderators.

Moderators sweep the Forum frequently for off-color or other inflammatory posts. They have access to most information about all the Members and can remove or edit posts and even, in some Forums, the Membership privileges of people who consistently break the rules. Your own reputation is at the

mercy of the clicking finger of any Moderator that you appoint to your Forum, so always stay on the side of caution.

Keep the rules to a minimum and enforce them without exception after no more than one warning. Do so behind the scenes. Keep the iron hand ready but show only the velvet glove when you post and also when you respond to any messages which you get from Members.

What you post or email can haunt you for years. Check all your posts and emails very carefully before you send them. If it's possible that some mean person could infer a second or third meaning into it, scrub that one and start again.

Ask for the minimum personal information from people that sign up to become Members of your Forum. Keep everything private. Some software asks for their birthday – it should be set to ask only for the day and the month, not the year!

Some Simpler Options

There are 2 ways to get some of that good PR and test the water before taking the plunge and setting up your own branded forum.

1] Some blog software programs have, either included in the package (Expression Engine) or as an add-in of minimal difficulty or cost, a Forum component.

Some packages, called Customer Management Systems (CMS), have blog features, forums and other useful features.

You can test the value to your and your customers of a Forum this way.

2] Use your blog as an indicator whether the time involved in running your own forum would be a worthwhile investment. As your blog becomes more well-known and more people visit and, hopefully, leave comments about the

information which you post there, you will be better able to judge the value to you and your business of going the extra step and setting up a full forum.

** <u>Section II - Nuts and Bolts</u> **

I've put some information which will help you to set up some of the software programs, etc., which I've mentioned in the "Promotion" part of this ebook.

This is something I've needed myself when I've read a book which gives some tips I want to use but then sends me searching for the basic knowledge in how to set up my computer or website to be able to use the information that I read.

Some General Software Recommendations

Microsoft Office Professional is the default standard for business using Windows on their computers. Because its use is so widespread, you need to be able to create files which Office can use and to be able to use the files from the programs in the Office suite so that it is easy for other businesses to exchange files with you.

Office is the easy, though relatively costly answer. If you want to reduce your costs, try **Open Office** from http://www.openoffice.org/ There are versions for all the major computer operating systems and it's free.

I don't suggest that it will do everything that Office does exactly the same, but it will keep you going while you save up for Microsoft's software flagship.

Another feature of Open Office that is almost indispensable is to be able to create .pdf format files This is the standard format for many types of documents and ebooks like this one.

You can create your .pdf brochures, ebooks etc., in Open Office and be confident that almost any computer user in the world will be able to read and print them.

World Time Clock is a small program (Windows only) which shows the current time in 5 cities which you choose.

Setting Up Your Website

Leave it to an "Expert"

Despite the availability of reasonably priced and even free web page development software, many business people feel their own time is too valuable to do their own sites while there is work they need to finish in other areas of their business.

So, here are a few tips for those readers who are willing to pay someone else to produce their website for them.

- Always ask for references and follow them up. You need to know how well the websites are doing for their previous customers.

- A paper certificate or eye-catching samples do not mean that the developer can produce sites which will get your potential customers to take action – buy your products or even just call you.

- Possibly even more important, you should ask their previous customers how easy was the website developer to work with.

Software Program Options.

You can buy software programs from your local computer store to create and maintain your website. The software you already have and use for your Internet surfing will handle most of your other requirements.

There are many powerful programs which are available for low cost, or even free, legitimately on the Net. You could probably do almost all your Internet activities with low-cost or free software programs.

Some possible choices for you, if you are using a Windows based system, include;

Iceows file transfer program for uploading files to your website and from your site to your computer.

NVU web page software for creating and changing your web pages.

A number of useful, free programs, including **Page Plus SE** - a desktop publishing program, **WebPlus 6.0** - a web page editor and **PhotoPlus 6.0** - a program for editing any pictures which you use on your website, are available, at the time of writing from SERIF

Each of these programs are fairly large – over 19 megabytes – to download. They are older versions of the programs which Serif produces. The company includes information about the current versions of the programs which they sell, with the free programs which they let you download.

You will find many other programs, both paid and free, by checking out sites such as http://www.nonags.com, http://www.snapfiles.com and http://www.download.com. These sites are all certainly worth a visit as they each add new programs of many types at least every week.

Free and Low-cost Website Designs

You can get a variety of website designs (templates) which you can use to make your website pages.

Always check the **Terms of Use** of the templates which you get.

It is a good idea to only use your own pictures for your website.

Free and low-cost quality templates are available from sites such as:

Basic Templates http://www.basictemplates.com

Free Site Templates http://www.freesitetemplates.com

Elated http://www.elated.com/

Warning: You are probably aware that free, but illegal, copies of many programs are available on the Internet. The risks of downloading them include the secret installation of viruses and other destructive scripts on to your computer. Also, there are heavy legal penalties if you are prosecuted for using illegal software. I believe that the first computer virus was released by one of two brothers whose business was selling cheap, illegal copies of expensive business software programs.

Protect Your Computer System

Every computer user that connects to the Internet needs to have up-to-date reliable software which protects their system and the important information on it, from viruses and other destructive or information-stealing scripts like these. Check the offerings of established, reputable suppliers of anti-virus and firewall programs such as;

Norton Anti-virus http://www.symantec.com

Webroot http://webroot.com/

Trend Micro http://www.trendmicro.com/

AVG Software and Firewall http://www.grisoft.com

Powerful Promotion on Your Website

Find Keywords for Your Website

I explained the importance of using good **Keywords** in the first Section. Here are some suggestions for finding the most relevant and popular ones which relate to your products and services.

Good Keywords at http://www.goodkeywords.com/ is a free software program which you can download to your computer. Put in a word which relates to the benefits of your product and you get a list of similar phrases which have been recently used on the major search engines.

The Keyword Suggestion Tool from http://www.digitalpoint.com/tools/suggestion and the Search Engine Keyword Tracker and Keyword Ranking Tool at http://www.digitalpoint.com/tools/keywords are also free. This site has detailed information and instructions, so I won't repeat that here.

Wordtracker is commercial software from http://www.wordtracker.com Their slogan is very true; "**Amateurs guess, professionals know**". I suggest you look through the information on their site and, maybe, download and try the free trail version of the software program.

A free (or low-cost) service for keeping a check about how your website is ranking in the Search Engines is http://www.selfpromote.com You can use their well-regarded basic services for free but a small, voluntary donation gets you access to more tools.

Another significant area for putting keywords is the Meta tags. To see meta-tags, click on View/Source in your web browser and look in the area of text between the <Head> and </Head>.

You can actually get free software which will help you to format your meta tags and ensure that you include all that you want to use; Metty from http://www.clickfire.com/

You can also link to other pages on your site which are about the same subject and use one or more keywords in the links on the page and the area on the other page which the link takes the visitor to.

Don't Make these Keyword Mistakes. Some "clever" people try to trick the Search Engines and people that use them. Even if the tricks work for a while, the Search Engines catch up and often penalize those who continue to use the tricks.

×   Don't use keywords which don't relate to your text. This includes terms that tend to be looked for by a lot of people such as *gambling*, *sex* or *free* etc. Of course, you can use these eye-catching terms if they do relate to what you offer on your site.

×   Don't use anyone else's brand names or slogans as your keywords.

×   Don't use too many keywords on a page (that's "salting" a page like some prospectors used to salt their gold-mines).

×   Don't try to hide extra keywords or any other text by making it the same color as the background of your page.

Chapter III

Online Mailing Lists

The electronic version of your regular mailing list is easy to set up. You will probably find that your web host gives you access to suitable software in the Control Panel of your website and there are also many powerful programs for this task available from computer stores or the software producers' websites.

The power, features provided, and cost of these programs vary widely.

I use a mailing list software (Mailman, a free "open source" program) in my main website's Control Panel for a couple of my personal and hobby mailing lists. This program could probably handle sending your emails to several hundred people at a time.

Online Mailing List Services

There are many websites which will distribute and maintain your on-line mailing lists for a fee.

These include (in no particular order) [Zinester](), [Mail List](), [Yourmailinglistprovider]() and [BraveNet]()

Many of these services have "free" and paid options. The "free" options are usually paid for by the inclusion of other people's advertisements in your mailings! Those are not a good option for any business person to use.

With all services, check around for alternatives and always read carefully those long and boring Terms of Use. It may be too late when you've signed up and paid for the first month!

Mailing List Software Programs

If you want to use a software program which you set up on your own computer, not your website, I suggest you look at World Merge from

coloradosoft.com I know a few business people that use it and are happy with it. I am not connected with the company.

This program is updated about every year and the company, at the time of writing this, offer all customers free lifetime upgrades. This offer may change at any time, so check their current offer if you are interested in the software.

A drawback to the program at this time, is that it does not handle adding new subscribers and does not automatically let people remove themselves from the mailing list by just sending an email. That has to be done manually by yourself or someone you employ.

This may conflict with new laws covering commercial emails which are being introduced in some countries. They require that you give people an easy way to personally remove themselves from your electronic mailing list.

I suggest that you also do a web search for other "mailing list software" and check the boxed programs available from your favorite computer store.

Chapter III

Autoresponders

Set Up and Use a Simple Autoresponder in Cpanel

In the next few paragraphs, I detail the method I use with the version of CPanel (a Free Control Panel program) which <u>my</u> web host provides. The exact steps which you need to use will vary if your host supplies a different type of Control Panel or a different version of CPanel for your website.

If you were promised autoresponders with your website by your host, but cannot find the option or you are unsure how to set it up because it is different to the one I write about here, please contact your web host's support team for the information which you need.

In the Control Panel of your website, click on the Email picture. You will be shown a list of options. Click on "Autoresponders".

The next page lets you create a new autoresponder as well as to modify or delete one which you had set up before.

Write the email address which your customers will send an email to get the information you offered them in the first box. Something like myprices@mysite.com

<u>This is very important</u>. If you want to see the messages which are sent to this autoresponder, you must also set up an email account on your site for the autoresponder address (such as myprices@mysite.com), or set up a forwarder in your Control Panel which will forward the emails to your regular email address after the autoresponder has sent the reply.

If you do not do either of those things, the messages sent to your autoresponder will be discarded and you will not know the email addresses of people who have requested your information.

Fill in the other boxes with:

1. Your name as you want it to appear on the reply which is sent to them

2. The title of your reply, such as "My Price List"

3. The character set used for the text in your reply (just leave this at the one shown unless it is obviously wrong)

4. Check the next box you want to send the reply to in HTML (looking like a web page) and use HTML tags to include pictures and colorful text. Many people have their email programs set to change the HTML messages which are sent to them back to regular text because of security concerns. But, you can get greater impact with HTML messages if you are sure that your customers are happy to get them.

5. Put your message in the large box. If you want to, use the tags which the program provides to include the subject of your reply, your customer's name and their email from which they sent the request for your information.

   These tags will put the information into both HTML and plain text messages.

Save the autoresponder by clicking on the "Create/Modify" button. You use the "Clear" button if you want to erase the message you have written and start it again.

Now, you just distribute the autoresponder's email address to customers and prospects, and then update the message every now and again.

Chapter IV

Blogs

You can have your blog hosted online which reduces the demands on your website's bandwidth allowance and the amount of time required to set up your blog.

The stand-out service is Blogger at http://www.blogger.com which is owned by Google, the Search Engine. Their service and some others, have web page designs which you can use and almost every option (many of them at no cost) which you need to enhance and promote your blog.

But my suggestion is to set up your blog either on your business domain or on a separate domain of its own.

This gives you the most control; you don't have to have any other advertising but your own and are free to write and display whatever you want.

There are many software programs for setting up your own blog. Most of the programs are free. The people that supply the programs include some professional programmers who develop their blog software as a personal interest. But most ask you to donate through a link on their site if you find their product useful, which is only fair.

They don't provide free support for their programs but usually have a Frequently Asked Questions section on their site and many also host a Forum on their site where you can get free help with installation or other problems and even tips on promoting your blog.

The best way to get the best help in these forums is to:

1. Read through the Forum to see if your question has already been answered in detail. Many times, you will find the same questions

repeated which tends to annoy the helpful people that contribute their knowledge and time to help inexperienced people that visit the Forum.

2. Unless something in the instructions looks potentially dangerous to your computer or webpage, don't post a question about the instructions until you have tried to set up the software yourself.

   Sometimes, parts of instructions will only become clear when you are actually going through the steps. Then, be sure to include any error messages or other things you see on your monitor screen that might help the more experienced people at the Forum to work out what caused a problem for you.

3. Be polite.

4. Be very patient.

5. When your question is resolved, don't forget to post a simple 'thank you' to finish off that thread.

Recommended Software and Services

There is a huge range of available programs but the two which I believe have everything you might want are Expression Engine from http://www.pmachine.com/expressionengine and WordPress from http://www.wordpress.org/

Expression Engine is a commercial package with more "Bells and whistles" than many of my readers will need. It is well worth the price.

The company offers a feature-limited, free version called **Expression Engine Core** for personal, **non-commercial** use.

Their previous flagship product, pMachine Pro was a highly regarded CMS product which became free when they released Expression Engine. Sadly, that older product is no longer available though the company is thoughtful

enough to maintain a help forum on their site for the thousands of people that still use pMachine Pro. That is a great example of positive public relations, to me.

WordPress is a free (donation-ware) package that has a lot of features and a very simple install. There are add-ons which can provide many other features for it as well.

If these choices do not suit you, just type blog software into your favorite Search Engine.

Other programs which I have heard good reports about are Pivot from http://www.pivotlog.net and Nucleus from http://www.nucleuscms.org/

An important part of using your blog to promote yourself is providing RSS feeds to your readers and being able to check information from blogs which you visit by getting their RSS Feeds.

These Feeds contain part or all of posts made to the blogs. Most blog software has the facility inbuilt to make available an RSS or similar (Atom) feed very simply. The details vary with the particular program so I'll just say check the install instructions or ask in the appropriate forum.

There are services, such as Feedster at http://www.feedster.com which is like a search engine for feeds. It's an archive of indexed feeds from blogs all over the world. You can search for topics at the Feedster site and subscribe to particularly useful feeds.

This just means copying the feed link (right-click and copy link) then paste it into your aggregator.

You need an aggregator to collect the feeds which you sign up for & a reader to read them. Some options are detailed at http://www.blogspace.com/rss/tools/ Some of the feeds will contain advertising.

Keep At It

That's the motto of all successful business people and applies equally well to Promotion. Success is a journey, not a destination.

You will do well if you just take action.

Good Luck. I look forward to seeing your business rocketing ahead.

Helen Fox - 2006

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