

Marketing Your “Witchy” Business

For Pagan, New Age, Metaphysical Businesses On and Offline line

Marketing is the art of making someone want something you have.

In these days of greater self-sufficiency, companies are selling goods and services which further their programs as well as bring in revenue. The art of doing that successfully involves marketing. Their indirect marketing is alternatively known as image-building, friend-raising, membership development, community relations, political activities, or citizen education. It's all marketing. I find that the concept is hard for most pagans to wrap around; they have a tendency to feel “if we build it they will come”. I am here to tell you it takes elbow grease, shoe leather, and persistence

Much of this information can be easily found on the internet for free doing hours and hours of research. Some is general in nature and goes for both mundane and magickal businesses. The information here is on how to market, not start a business nor is it a magick pill to make your business instantly take off. What it is, is a manual on how to market your “witchy” business. I think these *conventional & unconventional* ideas should get you thinking differently about the way you promote your website.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prologue.....	5
The questions you must answer	
Chapter 1 Getting Started.....	8
What Type of Company?	8
Choosing A Business Name.....	8
Define your USP (unique selling point).....	10
Define your target market.	10
Create a Business Plan	11
Create and follow a Marketing Plan	
When Banks Say No!	
Purchasing your Domain name	15
Chapter 2 Your Website	17
Review your website for effectiveness	
Designing Your Site	
Optimize your website for the search engines	
Creating a Sitemap	
Search Engines vs Directories	
Get listed in online directories	
Search Engine Marketing	
Pay Per Click	
Link Exchange	
Chapter 3 Affiliate Program & Referrals	
Create an Affiliate Program	
Why Join Affiliate Programs?	
Chapter 4 Email Strategies	
Your Email	
Spam	

Joining Egroups etc

Autoresponder

Chapter 5 eZine/Newsletter

Creating an eZine/Newsletter

Create a nice “thank you” gift

Send out regular issues

Outline of the ezine

Reduce Remove Request Emails

Finding Articles

Gaining Subscribers

Chapter 6 Article Marketing

What Article Writing Does for You

The benefits of submitting & writing articles

Steps to Writing an Article

Where to Submit Your Articles

Chapter 7 Blogging

Why Blog?

Start a blog

Syndicate your blog using RSS Feeds

Get listed in blog directories

Chapter 8 Video

Importance of Videos for your webpage

Create a Promotional Video

Create a Instructional Video

How to Produce a Video

Where to Promote your Video

15 ways to promote your video online

Chapter 9 Audio

What is podcasting?

Steps to a Successful Podcasts
How to Conduct a Podcast Interview
Podcast Directories
Where to get interviewed

Chapter 10 Social Networks

Social Networking How To's
Top Five Mistakes to Avoid
Social Networks
Create your own social network
Social Bookmarking
Is Twitter for me?
Joint Ventures
Personal Thoughts

Chapter 11 Local / Offline Marketing

Make Local Connections
Volunteer your Company
Some of the Wall Tips
Some More Local Ideas
Press & Media

Chapter 12 Selling and Hosting Events

How to Sell at Fairs
Helpful Resources
Other Resources
Hosting Your Own Event

Chapter 13 Miscellaneous Thoughts

Using Auctions
Diversification
Banner Exchanges
Web Rings
Hold Contests

Reviews & Reviewing
Holiday & Gift Ideas

Appendix

Business Descriptions

Sample Marketing Plan

Sample Business Plan

Meta Tag Sample

Key Word Sample

List of Domain Registration Service

Free Business Ebooks

Free Pagan Ebooks

Free Programs

In Conclusion

Prologue

The questions you must answer

The average business plan will obtain finance for less than 3% of start-up businesses, if you follow these guidelines and include the answers to these questions your chances will increase to just under 60%.

In addition you will increase your chances of survival by about 20 times. This underlines the importance of business plan analysis in start up assessment.

You should be able to answer yes to every question, if you think it does not apply, you must be certain that any financier will agree with you and that one day you will not look back and say “that is where I went wrong”

1. Have you clearly demonstrated that you can pay any financier back?
2. Have you clearly stated how long this business will last before you exit – and what that exit will be? Financiers do not believe that you will run this business forever, most businesses fail; show them that you have a definite ultimate goal.
3. Does the plan contain a summary of the key points of the plan, including objectives, and key activities during the period of the plan?
4. Does the plan contain details of current borrowing, share-holding structure?
5. Does the plan contain the biographies of key personnel - skills, experience, and previous involvement in other ventures?
6. Is there evidence of a low level of previous business failure associated with key personnel (less than 1 failure per key employee)?
7. Do any of the key personnel have experience of business start-ups? Does not have to be you or any employee but ensure you mention a friend, a professional or interested observer who meets these criteria.
8. Are key personnel fully committed both financially and in hours worked to the success of the company?
9. Is the structure of the company clearly laid out, with well-defined reporting systems?

10. Are details of the pay levels of all staff provided?
11. Has the company identified, and demonstrated clear knowledge of, the crucial factors for success in the development of the business?
12. Is your market growing at more than 3% in real terms? The overall market may not be, therefore avoid being in the overall market and specialise. Do not set out to start a new business by bucking the trend, even if you believe it, no one else will.
13. Does the plan contain details of proposed product/service range? Is it sensible, remember any financier will not understand why certain items are in your product range so make sure that you do.
14. Is the product or service clearly focused on a specific customer group? Do not try and sell anything to anyone, no successful business does this and a lot of successful businesses have changed into failing businesses by trying.
15. Is the product or service limited to a clearly defined and limited range? You own a store, if the customer wants it, you will get it – If this is you stop now! – You will fail. Defined products, defined service, defined business.
16. Does the product or service have clearly defined relative advantage over existing competition? If it is you, say so, and say why, and how.
17. Is the product or service clearly compatible with existing products or services (can it be easily integrated into existing operational/delivery systems)?
18. Is the product or service simple to use?
19. Does the product or service have a guarantee?
20. Can the advantages of the product or service be easily communicated?
21. Do the top 5 major competitors make up less than 40 per cent of the relevant market? (Within your sector)
22. Do the top 5 major customers make up less than 40 per cent of the relevant market? (Within your sector)
23. Does your product or service have clearly defined price advantages over similar existing products and services? Not always cheaper, look at add-ons, service, and advice – how much do you do for nothing?
24. Has the product or service been tested prior the introduction?
25. Does the peak sales month contribute less than 15 per cent of annual sales? Christmas? If your business is dominated by one or two months then work on the other ten or eleven.
26. Are the main elements of legislation relevant to the implementation of the plan listed?
27. Are the main competitors listed together with their strengths and weaknesses?
28. Does the plan contain a clear statement of how the company builds and maintains competitive advantage? Why will *their* customers come to you and why will *your* customers come back
29. Does the plan contain details of the most recent market research? Use other people's market research and other people's opinions; they will carry a lot of weight with financiers.
30. Does the plan list the main customers and their product/service requirements?

31. Does the plan contain details of proposed promotional investments?
32. Does the plan contain details of proposed sales tactics?
33. Have the key customers for sales expansion been identified?
34. Does the plan contain general business goals/vision statement?
35. Does the plan include a detailed SWOT analysis?
36. Does the company maintain an accounting system? You need to ensure you include details of it, a financier will always ask.
37. Is there evidence that a standard management meeting/control system exists with regular monitoring activity? Financiers do not like dictators, and you should not be one.
38. Is there a clearly defined method of collecting and integrating long term planning information?
39. Will the information system report monthly using financial ratios?
40. Will the information system report monthly on how many people saw your product, your ads, in short how many leads did you generate?
41. Will the information system report monthly on how many people expressed an interest in buying your product, whether they did or not?
42. Will the information system report monthly on how many people bought your product and why those that expressed an interest did not?
43. Will the information system report monthly on new product development?
- 44.51. Have all the necessary product/service regulatory clearances been achieved?
45. Is the importance of quality standardization certification (ISO 9000) limited in the sector?
46. Does the company have established quality control systems?
47. Does the company have established training programs leading to formal qualifications for the majority of its staff and spending at least 5 per cent of turnover on training?
48. Is the importance of environmental standardization (ISO 14000) limited in the sector?
49. Does the company have formal agreements with its larger suppliers?
50. Does the plan include an assessment of logistics (physical distribution, warehousing, order processing)?
51. Does the company have formal terms of sale and contract terms?
52. Is the technology for the production of the product/service tried and tested?
53. Are there a large number of equipment suppliers present in the market?
54. Does the plan include three years cash flow forecasts?
55. Does the plan include three years profit and loss forecasts?
56. Does the plan include three years balance sheet forecasts?
57. Do they balance?
58. Is there an assessment of the risks involved in the main areas of the plan?
59. Are responsibilities for the completion of key issues in the plan clearly allocated?

60. Is a time scale of actions and method of measurement of task achievement by month provided, and included in the monthly reporting system?
61. Does the plan provide a detailed description of the uses of internally generated funds and external investment?
62. Are appendices included of relevant sales literature, market research? Make your plan clear and as short as possible. Make your additional literature as comprehensive as possible and pile it high. Include magazines, books, web sites, anything you can think of, but keep it off the plan.

Chapter 1 Getting Started

What Type of Company?

There are a lot of books on this subject already, so we are only going to hit the highlights. When beginning a business, you must decide what form of business entity to establish. Your form of business determines which income tax return form you have to file. The most common forms of business are the sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, and S corporation. A Limited Liability Company (LLC) is a relatively new business structure allowed by state statute. Legal and tax considerations enter into selecting a business structure. (*See Appendix A1*)

Our one recommendation is to have an accountant help you set it up.

Your Business Name

Careful consideration should be made when choosing a name for your company. Studies of mergers and acquisitions claim that as much as 70 percent of the value lies in the trade or brand names.

All across the country, new and recently launched ventures like Digital Express, Techno Communications, and Quasar! That's right, just Quasar! Explanation mark included, but no starship.

Now, to be honest, I invented these names. As far as I know, they are not the monikers of actual companies. But I'm confident you'll agree they sound a lot like the real thing. (If your company's name is on the preceding list, forgive me. The coincidence is unintended).

I'll bet all of us have encountered companies with similar names. You can't tell what business they are in. And you wonder how many prospective customers pass them by, never realizing that Quasar! is a very efficient service bureau that outputs film to SWOP specifications for ad agencies or that Digital Express prints high-quality short-run color in small formats for retailers and travel companies.

Identify Yourself. IBM and Apple work well as names that tell us nothing about their products and services, but both began life with identifiers in their names: International Business Machines and Apple Computer. Few companies are being started with names like New City Press or Walden Printing. What's more, it's not only new companies but also long-established printing firms, service bureaus and trade shops that are adopting names that rely on digital jargon. Words like printing, press, lithography, separator, engraving and type are replaced by high-tech-sounding terms.

Behind the naming frenzy lie a variety of intentions. Sometimes, companies seek to convey a progressive identity by using a high-tech name. When this is merely inflated rhetoric, the name does little to help the company. The name may even hurt the firm by creating mistrust among customers; misguided by the new name, the customers bring in work the company cannot do efficiently.

In some instances, important new capabilities are not conveyed by terms like press or separator. A name change may be required, but the existing name has lots of value associated with it. Abandoning it would be foolish. Trade names, like established brand names, carry valuable good will. Companies are careful about tampering with the name, the packaging and the contents of successful products. The issues are much the same when it comes to trade names. Studies of mergers and acquisitions claim that as much as 70 percent of the value lies in the trade or brand names. This strikes me as a high figure, but at even half the percentage, it illustrates the point.

Out with the Old. Let's take New City Press as an example. Formally a general commercial printer, the company developed two areas of specialization. It now produces short-run documentation (black-and-white text, two-color covers) for after-market, auto kit manufacturers, and reports and large-format full-color presentation graphics for consulting engineers and for law firms specializing in litigation.

The CEO believed the old name misrepresented the company because New City had developed a broad range of digital capabilities including file management, prepress and reproduction that provided all of the firm's recent growth. Only 54 percent of New City revenues are now attributable to press work, down from 83 percent five years ago and 71 percent two years ago.

New City is on-line with several major customers and receives multiple jobs per day from them--each accompanied by an electronic purchase order. It provides file management, distribution and fulfillment for many of these jobs. The CEO expects that fully digital electrostatic reproduction and a range of additional digital capabilities--including other media such as CD-ROM and services such as fulfillment--will grow while offset lithography will decline. New City plans to take its expanded capabilities to customers in industries not previously served.

The CEO convened a committee to work with an outside marketing specialist to provide a new name for the company. After much careful consideration including the conduct of focus groups, a name change was proposed: New City - A Printing & Digital Communications Company.

Although it's a mouthful, the change identifies a new direction while preserving the company's established identity and continuing to emphasize printing. The CEO believes that eventually printing may be dropped altogether. The choice avoids a premature decision while preserving the option.

New Name, New Direction. New City's committee understood that the company had considerable equity in its name and realized that a departure from its well-established identity would have entailed unnecessary expense for uncertain purposes. The company would have to support a long, costly campaign to convince customers that the company with the new name was still New City.

While this brief and disguised description of an actual instance can't provide a comprehensive guide to naming, or renaming, a company, there are a few tips here that might be helpful to those of you who are about to choose a name.

The fundamental message is simple. As the technology continues to change, a company's previously most profitable processes may be less in demand. New capabilities originally acquired to support printing; the core production process and the primary revenue producer sometimes create unanticipated opportunities. This places a company making a transition in a quandary. How does it transform itself without abandoning what has been the heart of its business and what will remain its primary day-to-day focus for some years to come?

Back now to my friends at Quasar! The owners of soon-to-be-launched ventures may well pause for a moment to reconsider their strategy. Names that rely entirely on allusive images and high-tech associations, without conveying product or service, require costly marketing materials; the more ambiguous the name, the more expensive the campaign. XYZ Printing & Lithography may now seem a stodgy choice, retained for too long, but in its day half a century ago, the company's owners supported their transition from letterpress to offset litho with an effective name change.

USP Defined (unique selling point)

A unique selling point (USP) defines your competitive advantage. You must identify what makes you different from your competitors and emphasize these advantages in your marketing. The basis for your strong USP is your customer value proposition. Have you created a new product or service? Ask yourself why. What customer value have you created? Was it to offer something radically new to the market, or to fulfill needs customers were voicing? Make a list of key features and unique benefits to the customers.

As many products are identical in offering the main benefit, you must identify the main advantage your product offers over the competition. In order to make your marketing message attractive, you must find an important benefit unique to your product or service in one of three ways

1. Product feature. This USP may be based on product features associated with the product, ranging from what it does to the quality of your support services.
2. Emotion. The USP may be based of an emotional appeal, such as love, humor, or fear.
3. Association. The USP may be communicated by association with a well-known personality.

Define Your Target Market

As you have purchased this Guide we can assume your target market is of the Alternative Religion persuasion. What do you know about them? Lots of times prospective customers don't know about your company, or can't tell the difference between your company and others. It is your job, once you know who

your best customers are, to 'target' the group that you've identified – even if you have competition. And you will have competition.

- Lifestyle: leftwing, exciting, trendy, economical
- Social class: lower, middle, upper
- Opinion: easily led or opinionated
- Activities and interests: sports, physical fitness, shopping, books
- Attitudes and beliefs: environmentalist, security conscious.
- Where are there favorite sites?

Doing your own market research isn't difficult, although it does tend to be time consuming. If you own a small business, you're probably researching your markets continually informally. Every time you talk to a customer about what he or she wants, or chat with a supplier or sales rep, you're conducting market research.

Market Research Grid

	customer	competition	environment
secondary			
primary			

Where to do market research?

There are many places, Witchvox.com, Wicca.com to name a few that have 100's of thousands of visitor's everyday. Also yahoo egroups, there are literally thousands of pagan, new age metaphysical egroups. Before you do any polls on the above sites, email the site owner, board moderators, or egroup admin for permission. Create a list of questions, and realize that why they maybe 5000 members. Approximately 5% or less will actually respond.

Make sure that it's focused specifically on the information you need to know, and that you haven't included any questions that may offend anyone. Many people are put off by questions that ask them how much money they earn, for instance. If you offend or confuse them, they won't bother to fill out your market research survey

What would entice you to buy from an online supplier instead of a brick and Mortar shop, even in these tough times? Is it the shipping/handling, buy one get one free, variety, price, quantity, quality? If all are equal, why would someone consider buying online from you?

Developing a well-designed market survey questionnaire will ensure that you get the information you need about your target market. These surveys can be conducted in writing, in person, via e-mail or over the phone.

1. Develop a standard set of questions. Ask potential customers what they like/dislike about your product or service. Ask them if they would buy the product or service. Ask them about their buying habits.
2. Create a simple form. Use multiple-choice or yes/no questions. Have respondents answer the questions in the same order.
3. Make your written survey easy to read. Double- or triple-space the text. Use broad, white margins on the top, bottom and sides of the document. Keep it simple by sticking with black ink on white paper.

4. Identify who should fill out your survey. Figure out the demographic you want to target. You can buy mailing lists from market-research companies.
5. Give your respondents time to answer. Don't rush them or answer questions for them.
6. Offer them a discount, or free gift to respond.

Listed below are some sample questions:

I don't like to go shopping.

I buy less ritual items because of rising prices.

I make purchases only when there is a need, not on impulse.

I often go shopping online to get ideas even though I have no intention of buying.

I prefer to shop in stores that offer a wide variety of selections

I like to shop in many different stores

Create A Business Plan

One of the most common mistakes is not creating a business plan. Every business needs a business plan, whether or not it will be borrowing money or seeking investors. Writing a business plan not only helps you determine whether your business idea is feasible, it also establishes a map for your company's future.

Without it, your business is likely to drift along without direction or parameters for measuring progress.

(See Appendix IV for a Business Plan Blueprint)

1. Defining a new business venture
2. Determining whether your business will make a profit
3. Providing an estimate of your startup costs
4. Devising an effective marketing strategy
5. Helping you compete in the marketplace
6. Measuring your business performance and tracking your growth

Create and Follow a Marketing Plan

Put yourself in the shoes of your customers. Do you know why they buy your products or services? Is your pricing appropriate? Do you simply knock off 20% to 30% whenever clients turn scarce or inventory creeps up? Have you set any marketing targets or sales goals for the next 12 months or so?

You don't need elaborate charts or high-priced consultants to develop effective marketing. But you do need a plan. A marketing plan gives you a roadmap that can drive action and point the way. A marketing plan can help you:

1. Identify which customers are your best prospects.

2. Evaluate company data against your industry or market
3. Track results so you learn what works.

Without a plan, you may be moving fast, but you may not be moving in the right direction. (*Appendix V for Marketing Plan template*)

When the Bank Says "no"

Your company is growing, entering new markets, developing and supporting new products. Cash is tight. As the owner, you have to face a truth you have been avoiding: your company needs money. Where do you go to find it?

While there are numerous financing choices for small and medium sized owner-managed businesses ranging from asset based financing to factoring most company owners will visit a local bank first.

For most business people, a visit with their banker is in the same category as a trip to the dentist; necessary, but not something you look forward to. Even though you have exactly the kind of company the bank advertises it supports a successful, locally owned small business you are wary and unsure of the bank's commitment to your company. Banks still possess a foreboding mystique that can intimidate even the most experienced business person.

Your meeting with Mr. or Ms. Banker seems to go well. Three days later you get a call from the bank. The loan committee has denied your request. What do you do? Turn immediately to another source of funds? Shrug it off and figure that you will find a way to grow without outside money? No. Go back to a bank a different bank this time and go *prepared*.

You can try your original bank again, but first impressions are hard to overcome (you never get a second chance to make a first impression). The loan committee will be placed in the awkward position of overturning their initial decision. Better to make a fresh start unless you have compelling reasons to stay with your original bank. By turning you down, the bank has made a pretty strong statement. Listen to it. They don't particularly want your business.

Bankers turn down thousands of company owner every business day. Unfortunately, it's a case of what can best be described as "professional" lender meets "amateur borrower. You probably see a banker a few times a year, if that; your banker meets with potential borrowers every day of his or her career. That does not exactly make for a level playing field. Your meeting is a mismatch from the start.

There are specific steps you can take to dramatically increase your chances for success in dealing with banks and other lenders. This may sound like an oxymoron, but you have to get your banker "excited" about your company (an excited banker?).

Only if he or she is truly excited and committed to your loan proposal can he or she sell it to the loan committee. And it is a rare bank today that doesn't require committee approval on a business loan. Now, excitement for bankers is not your usual jumping-up-and-down-for-joy excitement. It's something much more subtle.

Bankers are always on the lookout for solid companies to which they can loan money. That's their job.

Bankers get excited about companies that stand out from the ordinary. You have to sell your banker on you and your company. Look at selling the bank as similar to the process used in selling your products. You don't expect potential customers to automatically recognize the benefits of your products without some education. Treat your banker the same way. Don't expect the banker to automatically see the gold hidden in the vision of your company's future.

Most loan proposals that come across bankers' desks have a uniform similarity that reeks of lack of preparation and shouts "Reject me, reject me! Reject me for lack of documented financial information. Reject me for lack of a specific plan to pay you back. Reject me for not demonstrating how use of the bank's money can actually help my business earn additional profit."

The biggest reason most otherwise successful business people fail in their dealings with banks is that they are just not speaking in a language the banks understand. Lenders speak a language that is foreign to the average business owner. This language is based on numbers and it uses these numbers to tell a story.

You can have the greatest story in the world, but if you are telling it to me in German and I speak only English, I am just not going to get it, much less be excited about it. Talk to the banker in the language they understand and, most importantly, recognizes and respects.

When you put your financial information together the first time, what kind of story did it tell? You or your accountant probably rounded up the companies past few years' annual financial statements along with an interim statement and submitted these to the bank. Unless you are in an exceptionally strong financial position (and if you are, you most likely would not be applying for the loan), the information you gave the bank is probably not enough to tip the scales in your favor as far as the loan committee is concerned.

Have you ever thought of why you were never given a second chance to meet with the loan committee? It's not because they are too busy. It's because the bank doesn't want non-financial issues like people and personalities to cloud anybody's judgment. Your financial information has to stand alone. You are judged on your financial performance as you have given it to the bank. Period.

You can legitimately make the story you tell the bank substantially stronger by doing two things. The first is "recasting" your previous years' earnings. The second is including pro formals in your loan submittal package.

Recasting earnings is simply redoing your financial statements to show what your business could have earned its maximum earning power in any given year. As a private business you try to minimize taxes. Taxes are based on income, so it's only natural that you tried to keep your income reasonably low. Great. But low income is not exactly what your lender wants to see.

Adjust your income statement to show what your profit could have been if the company hadn't paid for your car and insurance. Adjust for the money you spent to sponsor your son's little league team. Adjust for the money you contributed to your spouse's favorite charity that benefited a good cause *and* helped maintain harmony at home. Adjust for the bonuses you paid to your key managers that were not required to be paid. In other words, adjust for everything that was not an absolutely necessary business expense. Look for expenses that could be eliminated, even though you might not choose to eliminate them, and which still allow you to successfully run your company.

In particular, look very carefully at your own salary and the salary of any relatives on your payroll. As the owner you can take as much cash as you want out of the company. But if what you are taking in salary and bonuses exceeds normal standards for your industry, your company is showing less profit than it is actually making. This may make sense from a personal standpoint but, again, this is not what you want to show your banker.

No matter what bankers may say, the first thing bankers look at is the annual profit shown on your financial statements. This is the benchmark of your success in their mind. Nice profit equals smart business person; low profit equals dumb business person. No amount of explaining can undo the damage a poor profit figure does to your image as a successful company builder. Get your profit as high as you can before you meet with the bank.

For example, you are taking home a salary of \$125,000 when \$75,000 is more in line with what other owners of similar size companies in your industry are making. More power to you. But if you add this \$50,000 of "excess" compensation back into profits, your bottom line is going to look much better.

If all this sounds suspiciously keeping two sets of books relax; it's perfectly legal since all your income is being reported. You are just showing what happens if you move income and expenses around on paper. As for the work involved, all that is usually required is a few adjustments on the expense side of the ledger.

After you have recast your earnings to put your historical financials in the best possible light, it's time to look to the future. What are you giving your banker that shows them what is going to happen to the company's finances over the next three to five years? What are you giving the bank to show how you are going to use their money other than vague references to "the need for working capital?" Probably nothing if you are like the majority of business owners.

This is a big mistake. Bankers want to know specifically what you are going to do with additional funds. Here you have another opportunity to set yourself apart from the competition (and you are *literally* competing with other borrowers for the bank's funds) by showing the bank exactly how you are going to use their money. You are going to use their money to make more money. All bankers are capitalists or they would not be in banking. They want to see their capital grow and make more capital. Show the bank why your use of their money makes good business sense.

In order to do this, you need to develop a pro forma that projects your financial statements out over the next three to five years, depending on the term of the loan you are requesting. Lenders want to see a documented, believable future that puts their money to good use and shows them how they are going to be paid back. Show the banker how you are going to use their money to increase profits by opening up new global markets where there is a demand for your product. Whatever it is be specific.

Bankers like to loan money when they are convinced that your use of their cash will generate more cash for you. Unless you can demonstrate that these borrowed funds will ultimately sow the seeds of additional funds in the form of company profit, don't bother your banker with a loan request. He or she will want to save the bank's money for their customers who can put it to best use. And best use is always money making more money.

Pro formals use income, balance, and cash flow statements to demonstrate your future financial performance. By tying all these numbers together, you can build a future that shows the bank that you are in command of your business.

The bank probably has no doubt about your skill in making your particular product or providing your particular service. What they are concerned about is your financial skills. All that they know about you in this area of your life is what you show them in your loan application. By presenting a professional package that answers their questions before they have a chance to ask them, you clearly demonstrate that you know what you are doing. You are speaking their language. You have told your story in the best possible way. If a bank still refuses to bite, only then should you consider other sources of funding.

Purchasing Your Domain Name

There are a lot of benefits to have your own domain name, and the choosing the right is as important to your success as a choosing your product line.

1. Domains names do not have to reflect the name of your company, they can be key word driven, reflecting your target market. In other words, Earth Spirit Emporium's domain name was paganshopping.com
2. Having your own domain name allows you to promote your website with every email, instead of info@aol.com it is info@paganshopping.com This way you are marketing yourself, instead of AOL
3. You're likely to have more traffic to your website with your own domain name because more people will be returning as they can remember your address and because many search directories such as Yahoo only index websites with their own domain name.
4. Another advantage of having your own domain name is that you can use custom error pages to prevent people from leaving your site because of broken links and other errors.
5. In the case of domain names the smaller the better. Of course short domain names are harder to find but if you can find one it has a number of advantages such as, it's easier to brand, easier to remember and it's harder to misspell.
6. You should always aim for the .com version of a name, that's what most people will go to after doing a search or after typing something directly into their address bar, if you register .tv or .net or any of the other available extensions and your competition has the .com version then you've just lost a potential customer.
7. Always use an independent Domain Registration Service. If you decide to change hosting services in can be a real pain if they are also where you registered the domain

<http://paganwebmaster.com>

<http://www.register.com/>

<http://www.godaddy.com/>

<http://www.networksolutions.com/>

8. Domain names are so cheap nowadays that there's no excuse for not having one.

Chapter 2 Your Website

Review your website for effectiveness:

Does it load quickly? This comes from your hosting service; it is one of the most important things you will do, choosing the right hosting service. Remember you pay for what you get. In order to get your Web page on the Internet, you need a hosting service provider. They range from free services with few options up to expensive business hosting and even hosting you run yourself. Which option you choose depends upon how you plan to use your Web site, how much you want to spend, and how much time you want to spend maintaining the servers that make up the Web site.

1. Cost – Free sites means someone else's URL,
2. Ease of Use – Do they have FTP, easy tool loaders?
3. Space – 500 sounds like a lot, but with graphics for online stores it fills up quick

4. Tools – Does it come with shopping carts, forums, blogs?
5. Access - Easy to login to, up time over 99%
6. Transfer Limits - After so many visitors, do they charge you more?

Designing Your Site

1. Is the eye immediately drawn to products/services? What is the first thing they see when your customer opens your index page? Tons of graphics, animated witches flying across the page, those cute little wands that serve as the cursors? Or do they find a well written Welcome, along with a great description and small amount of product descriptions and pictures (remember graphic heavy pages load slower)
2. Is it easy to navigate? How long do they have to search the page to find what they looking for? Do they have to surf the site to find the site map? The Main index page will be or should be designed for your customer and the Search Engines, having a enter page is never a issues, however your enter page should lead directly to your sitemap.
3. Are your policies clear and easy to find? Are they located on the Site map page? Or are they made difficult to find? Should include Refund Policy, Shipping Policy, and Product Disclaimers. Refund policies that turn customers off. No refund, exchanges only, re-stocking fees. Actually these should have links on every page in either the footer or the Navigation bars.
4. Are product pictures clear and of adequate size? If you are making your own site, use thumbnails in the catalog and full sized pictures in the product page. Do not let the picture cause the page to reformat its size. If the product is size related, take a picture of it next to a measuring ruler so they can see the actually size.
5. Do product/services descriptions sell the benefits? Great descriptions (and pictures) sell products. If it is pewter is it lead free? Is it one of kind? What is the size? Is there a choice in color, material, size?
6. Is your shopping cart working properly? Once a week, the cart needs to be checked. All pictures showing up? Do the discontinued products still show up? Does out of stock show up?
7. Valid contact information including address. Nothing is worse for your business than hiding your company email and address. DO NOT have your email where it looks like this *info at Mysite dot com* and you make your customers have to do work to email you. Spam is all part of being online, but that is your issue not your customers. Also have an address even if it a PO Box. Phone number is also good, 800 even better. It is ok if you put down the times to call. Also any IM's (instant messengers)
8. Professional logo and design. Nothing turns customers off quicker that a logo that looks like your two year old designed it.
9. Complete pages, no missing content or “coming soon” areas. If you are going to have a coming soon page, put your newsletter sign up box on that page, at least if it interests them that much you have their email to let them know when it has arrived.
10. Believable testimonials. DO NOT make up your own testimonials, have the email of whoever wrote it available.
11. Link To Us Page. Add a “Link to Us” page to your website that provides link code and banners for others to link to you easily. Create a reciprocal link page, “Add me and I will add you.”

12. Offer different payment methods and options so your customers can choose what they prefer. Consider offering layway or similar payment programs. Accept more payment methods (checks, money orders, phone orders, credit cards, PayPal, etc).
13. Add an informative FAQ page to your website that answers the questions your customers ask, and the ones you wish they would.
14. Add a "Tell a Friend" script to your website. If the shopping cart does not already have one, we provide you with a simple java script. (*See our appendix TOOLS for a simple Java Script*)
15. Giveaway something valuable to your visitors like a pattern, tipsheet, worksheet, etc. branded with your business name and URL. Paganwebmaster.com co-brands 3 ebooks for a small fee, FAQ on Wicca, The Sabbat's and Article On Shamanism.
16. Proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. Either pay someone, (free products) or have a friend check it for you. If you have spelling errors, odds are you will not catch them your self.

Optimize your website for the search engines

Getting listed in Google, MSN and Yahoo and the other popular search engines is one of the most effective ways of directing free, targeted traffic to your web site. Before you try to add your site to the search engines, you should understand what they look for when they decide how to rank your site. Just because you're listed doesn't mean you'll get traffic. You have to make sure your site is search engine ready.

That means Meta Tags (see appendix 6) and SEO (Search Engine Optimization) Remember SEO comes before SES (Search Engine Submission),

SEO is the active practice of optimizing a web site by improving internal and external aspects in order to increase the traffic the site receives from search engines. Optimizing a web site for search engines requires many unique elements. See SEO Tutorial Guide located at <http://paganwebmaster.com/pdf/seoguide.pdf>

Top 10 SEO Mistakes

1 Targeting the wrong keywords

Choosing the right keywords can make or break your SEO campaign. Even if you are very resourceful, you can't think on your own of all the great keywords but a good keyword suggestion tool, for instance, the Website Keyword Suggestion tool will help you find keywords that are good for your site. Check out the Key Word tool at <http://paganwebmasters.com> (see our appendix 7 for a list of Pagan related keywords)

2 Ignoring the Title tag

Leaving the <title> tag empty is also very common. This is one of the most important places to have a keyword, because not only does it help you in optimization but the text in your <title> tag shows in the search results as your page title.

3 A Flash website without a html alternative

Flash might be attractive but not to search engines and users. If you really insist that your site is Flash-based and you want search engines to love it, provide an html version. Here are some more tips for optimizing Flash sites. Search engines don't like Flash sites for a reason – a spider can't read Flash content and therefore can't index it.

4 JavaScript Menus

Using JavaScript for navigation is not bad as long as you understand that search engines do not read JavaScript and build your web pages accordingly. So if you have JavaScript menus you can't do without, you should consider build a sitemap (or putting the links in a noscript tag) so that all your links will be crawl able.

5 Lack of consistency and maintenance

If you want to be successful, you need to permanently optimize your site, keep an eye on the competition and – changes in the ranking algorithms of search engines.

6 Concentrating too much on meta tags

A lot of people seem to think SEO is about getting your meta keywords and description correct! In fact, meta tags are becoming (if not already) a thing of the past. You can create your meta keywords and descriptions but don't expect to rank well only because of this.

7 Using only Images for Headings

Many people think that an image looks better than text for headings and menus. Yes, an image can make your site look more distinctive but in terms of SEO images for headings and menus are a big mistake because h2, h2, etc. tags and menu links are important SEO items. If you are afraid that your h1 h2, etc. tags look horrible, try modifying them in a stylesheet.

8 Ignoring URLs

Many people underestimate how important a good URL is. Dynamic page names are still very frequent and no keywords in the URL is more a rule than an exception. Yes, it is possible to rank high even without keywords in the URL but all being equal, if you have keywords in the URL (the domain itself, or file names, which are part of the URL), this gives you additional advantage over your competitors. Keywords in URLs are more important for MSN and Yahoo! but even with Google their relative weight is high, so there is no excuse for having key wordless URLs.

9 Backlink spamming

It is a common delusion that it more backlinks are ALWAYS better and because of this web masters resort to link farms, forum/newgroup spam etc., which ultimately could lead to getting their site banned. In fact, what you need are quality backlinks

10 Lack of keywords in the content

Once you focus on your keywords, modify your content and put the keywords wherever it makes sense. It is

even better to make them bold or highlight them

Creating a Sitemap

In general, there are two types of sitemaps. The first type of sitemap is a HTML page listing the pages of your site - often by section - and is meant to help users find the information they need. While this type of sitemap can help both visitors and search engines navigate your site, it's different from an XML Sitemap that can be submitted to Google using Webmaster Tools.

XML Sitemaps - usually called Sitemaps, with a capital S - are a way for you to give Google information about your site.

Using an RSS / Atom feed as a Sitemap

Google accepts RSS (Real Simple Syndication) 2.0 and Atom 1.0 feeds. If you have a blog with an RSS or Atom feed, you submit the feed's URL as a Sitemap. Most blog software creates your feed for you. If your site doesn't have a feed, you can use Feedburner to create and publish one. Note that the feed may only provide information on recent URLs.

Creating a Sitemap based on a text file

A Sitemap should contain a list of your site's URLs—up to 50,000 of them. If you have a large site with more than 50,000 URLs, you should create multiple Sitemaps and submit a Sitemap index file.

You can provide Google with a simple text file that contains one URL per line. For example:

```
http://www.example.com/file1.html
```

```
http://www.example.com/file2.html
```

For best results, follow these guidelines:

1. You must fully specify URLs as Google attempts to crawl them exactly as provided.
2. Each text file can contain a maximum of 50,000 URLs. If you site includes more than 50,000 URLs, you can separate the list into multiple text files and add each one separately.
3. The text file must use UTF-8 encoding. You can specify this when you save the file (for instance, in Notepad, this is listed in the Encoding menu of the Save As dialog box).
4. The text file should contain no information other than the list of URLs.
5. The text file should contain no header or footer information.

6. You can name the text file anything you wish. Google recommends giving the file a .txt extension to identify it as a text file (for instance, sitemap.txt).

You should upload the text file to your server. Once you've created this file, you can submit it as a Sitemap. This process, while manual, is the simplest and is probably best if you're not familiar with scripting or managing your web server.

If you have multiple websites, you can simplify the process of creating and submitting Sitemaps by creating one or more Sitemaps that includes URLs for all your verified sites, and saving the Sitemap(s) to a single location. All sites must be verified in Webmaster Tools

To create a Sitemap based on the Sitemap protocol:

1. Create a text file and save it with a .xml extension.
2. Add the following to the top of the file:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
```

```
<urlset xmlns="http://www.yoursite.com/schemas/sitemap/0.9">
```

3. Add the following to the bottom of the file:

```
</urlset>
```

4. Create an entry for each URL. The <loc> tag is required; the others are optional.

```
<url>  
  <loc>http://www.example.com/</loc>  
  <lastmod>2005-01-01</lastmod>  
  <changefreq>monthly</changefreq>  
  <priority>0.8</priority>  
</url>
```

5. Upload your Sitemap to your site. Then submit it to Google using Webmaster Tools.

Search Engines vs Directories

Most people think a search engine is the same as a directory. They are not. In fact, they are quite different.

A directory is a compiled lists of websites, that are categorized and organized by topic. Each website is usually listed within the directory under just a few relevant topics. Each directory listing contains short, descriptive information about the website. Directories are compiled by human editors who review, approve and categorize the listings. These website listings are usually organized into hierarchical "trees" that a directory user will browse to find the information for which they are looking. Yahoo is the most well know directory on the web.

In most case, you will need to submit your site, to a directory, for review and inclusion.

A search engine is a server or a collection of servers dedicated to finding and indexing information on the internet, storing the results within their database and returning links to those pages of information which match a particular query asked by a user of the search engine. Google is the most widely used search engine on the web today.

Indexing the internet is performed by small applications, called robots or bots. The job of the bots is to crawl the internet by following links from web page to web page and website to website. The information on the pages and documents that they find will be indexed and stored in a database on their servers waiting to be served by a query or search of their database.

With a search engine, it is usually not necessary to submit your site. Their "Search Bots" will find your site and automatically index it. This is one of the reasons you should obtain links to your site, so you can be found by these bots.

Get listed in online directories

Get listed in geo-targeted directories - The internet holds Global appeal, Hence World Wide Web. However the use of internet marketing is now being used to help businesses provide pin pointed marketing based on their Geographic location. This is Geo Targeted Marketing. Once more this also relates to Keywords, and locating local search directories. This marketing method is a very effective tool for Brick and Mortar stores. (see our appendix for a list of geo-targeted directories)

Get listed in niche/issue focused directories - A niche directories are more focus on regional/local area, their target portion are market sector that narrowly defined which have specific group of potential customers. These type of directories usually require that you hand submit to them. (see our appendix for a list of niche/issue focused directories)

Search Engine Marketing

If you want more people to visit your website, you need to know how to make your website search engine friendly, and then submit your URL to all the major search engines.

Manual submission works, but a good automated search engine submission tool saves you time and lets you concentrate your efforts on directory submissions and search engine optimization. The manual submission process works, but it involves many steps and can take a long time. Look at what's involved:

1. Research search engines and identify those you want to submit to.
2. Locate the "Add URL" link on the first search engine.
3. Enter the URL of your site, your name, and other information the search engine requires.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 for each of the remaining sites.

With so many search engine submission companies out there it can be difficult -- if not impossible -- to figure out which submission services are worth using. Ironically, many of the best search engine submission services are not provided by search engine submission companies at all but rather by successful online companies and websites that use search engine optimization and submission to grow their own online presence. (see our appendix for reliable list of Search engine submission services)

Pay Per Click

When people search on Google or Yahoo using one of your keywords, your ad may appear next to the search results. Now you're advertising to an audience that's already interested in you.

The whole point with pay-per-click is this: if the average visitor to your site generates 20 cents of profit for you (after counting all your costs!), and you can get the visitor for less than 20 cents, then you make money. So it's crucial that you be able to track your visitors and determine how much they are worth to you.

But in order to do this, you must be careful and monitor your clickthrough conversions more closely. Both Yahoo and Google provide tools that help you do this. You may also wish to consider using a visitor tracking system (to learn not only how they get to your site, but what they do when they get there).

Link Exchange

A links page is great for driving traffic to your store. Visit some New Age, Metaphysical, Wiccan and Pagan sites and ask them if they would like to exchange links with you. If they do, just add their link to your links page and they will do the same for you. This is an easy and free way to advertise your business!

Sample email for link exchange requests

Reciprocal Link Request

Dear Webmaster,

As an ongoing process to increase the link popularity of my site, I am looking for some good Quality sites to exchange links with my site. I would like to offer you a Link Exchange with my site.

You can add your site for free to three of ours for placing just one of my sites (<http://mysite.com>) on yours.

ADD YOUR SITE(S) HERE:

<http://www.mysitelinks.com>

MY WEBSITE DETAILS ARE:

MY Online Store

<http://www.mysite.com>

COPY PASTE THE BELOW HTML CODE :

<p><a href=<http://www.mysite.com>>My Site - Pagan, Celtic, Gothic, GLBT & Wiccan
Supplies and Gifts</p>

Thanks & Regards

My Name

My Store

PO Box 1010101

My Town MI 48000 USA

info@mysite.com

800-000-0000

<http://www.mysite.com>

Chapter 3 Affiliate Program & Referrals

Create an Affiliate Program

Affiliate programs are an important tool for drawing visitors to a web site. Basically, an affiliate program pays other web sites to advertise for you based on their performance. Your affiliates are paid out based on clickthroughs, leads or sales.

Some shopping carts come with built in affiliate programs or they have add-ons that you can implement. Other program such as JROX.com have a very nice affiliate program that can be integrated with most shopping carts, they have free version that you can use for your first 50 affiliates.

A successful affiliate marketing program takes time to build, but with a bit of effort it has the ability to increase your Internet sales noticeably. It's worth the effort and it can become one of the best time and financial investments in your marketing plan.

1. Claim a niche market. Don't try to sell everything to everyone. This is the quickest way to fail in your adventure.
2. Locate niche partners. Once you've claimed your niche market research and find web sites that have viewers interested in your niche market. You will want to find partners that have already built traffic and

would benefit from your affiliate offer. Your offer should be a win-win for both you and your affiliate partners.

3. It's a good idea to create a web page that lays out your rules and policies. This can also be an email you send to new members. The member has to approve the policy page before they can go on to the sign-up form.

4. Provide your affiliate partners with creative and promotional material. You want to make their job of marketing your products or services as easy as possible. The less work they have to do and the more conversions they see the more likely they are to promote your products or services.

5. Continually be on the look out for new affiliate partners. Don't rest on your laurels just because you have a few good partners, you never know when they may decide to jump ship. Protect yourself by actively recruiting new partners. You can find new partners by advertising your affiliate program on your web site, listing or advertising in affiliate directories, or by contacting potential affiliates directly.

6. Communicate with them by welcoming them to your affiliate program send out updates on product additions or changes. Give them tips and advise on how to be successful in marketing your products. Set up a newsletter just for them

7. Take care of your partners. Always pay them on time.

Why Join Affiliate Programs?

First and foremost, the advantage of the affiliate programs is that you do not have to sell a product or service actually. An affiliate has to just market or advertise a product or service on its website, leaving the worry of shipment and payment aspects entirely to the advertising website. You do not have to form a company/corporation to join an affiliate program either. It is the cheapest, simplest way to start a business online. Affiliate programs ad extra income to information based sites, if your site is retail, add only complementary affiliate programs. Things to Be Considered:

1. Choose Quality
2. Select Good Commissions
3. Choose Programs That Complement Your Site
4. Check the cookie length

What not to do:

1. Do not join affiliate programs that sell the same products you do.
2. Do not choose an affiliate program that promotes an e-mail course. Nothing is worse than becoming

an affiliate to a site that's first goal is to capture e-mail addresses, and then tries to make the sale second. As an affiliate marketer, you need to capture e-mail addresses, then to convert that prospect into a sale. Stick with affiliate programs that aren't focused on capturing leads because it's simply not in your best interest. Build your own list, not someone else's.

3. You do not ever have to pay for the right to join and affiliate program, NO MATTER what they promise in return.
4. Do not join and affiliate program that pays with store credits or gift cards.

Chapter 4 Email Strategies

E-mail -- the Internet's most powerful application -- is now a dominant application for interactive marketing. E-mail changed communications. It sells, promotes, brands, informs, reminds, and creates buzz. It's one of the most cost-effective of all marketing media.

If you are someone who is looking to expand your business and make more money online, starting up an email marketing campaign is one of the useful tools that you can use to achieve this. The use of email marketing has exploded in recent years and most internet marketers have seen the benefits and the exceptional return on their investment that email marketing offers. Email campaigns prove to be a very useful tool to generate more profits for a company. Here are some of the facts that you need to know about the advantages and benefits that an email marketing can give to your business.

Advantage

One advantage that email marketing can give your company is a mailing list. A mailing list provides the ability to distribute information to a wide range of specific, potential customers at a relatively low cost. Compared to other media investments such as direct mail or printed newsletters, email is less expensive. With this particular technique, the price of internet marketing has become significantly lower. Due to this primarily cost effective benefit, this campaign has been known to be a great help for small scale business owners. Moreover, these campaigns are known to generate immediate response for advertisers and are also relatively easy to track the performance of.

Advantage Continued

Another advantage is that the delivery time for an email message is short as compared to a mailed advertisement and an advertiser is able to push the message to its audience as opposed to web-based advertising, which relies solely on a customer to visit the website. Besides these two advantages, an advertiser using this campaign correctly and properly can take entrepreneurial achievements far beyond their competitors.

Your Email

Experts say one of the best ways to advertise a web site is by email (we are NOT talking SPAM here; do NOT send unsolicited or bulk email!). Email can be very effective in promoting your business -- just describe your store briefly and include the URL or web address of your shop in the signature file, then every time you send an email to someone your store description and URL will automatically be seen at the bottom of each email you send.

Having your own domain name email allows you to promote your website with every email, instead of info@aol.com it is info@mysite.com This way you are marketing yourself, instead of AOL

Thanks & Regards

My Name

My Store

PO Box 1010101

My Town MI 48000 USA

info@mysite.com

800-000-0000

<http://www.mysite.com>

Spam

Spam is flooding the Internet with many copies of the same message, in an attempt to force the message on people who would not otherwise choose to receive it. Most spam is commercial advertising, often for dubious products, get-rich-quick schemes, or quasi-legal services. Spam costs the sender very little to send -- most of the costs are paid for by the recipient or the carriers rather than by the sender.

Joining Egroups etc

Joining niche related Google or Yahoo egroups is a great way to promote via email, some groups have a designated sales day where online stores etc are allowed to post their products and services.

Autoresponder

If you are looking to increase the flow of traffic to your website, there is nothing better than an autoresponder. These nifty little programs save you lots of time by answering the bulk of your emails automatically. They can be used to answer customer support questions, product related questions, and provide information about the type of services you provide. If you are thinking about owning an online business or already have a business, an autoresponder is a necessary investment.

The scope of what an autoresponder can do is endless. They are one of the best tools that you can purchase for your online business. They are used by the biggest and best of the online businesses and for a very good reason. They make dealing with your customers easier by simplifying your life and your business. This will give you lots more time to spend on other things.

Proper Use of an Autoresponder

If you plan to submit your website to search engines such as Google or Yahoo, you need to know that most of these search engines also use responders. If you need to contact a search engine, never use an autoresponder. You will only get an autoresponder message that your autoresponder answers. This will lead to a flood of reply emails that will fill up both your mailboxes and lead to no answer to your question.

You must also, under no circumstances, use your autoresponder when you subscribe to forums or other discussion type subscriptions. Most of the time, administrators from these discussion groups will send updates and notifications to your email address. If you use an autoresponder address when you join, your autoresponder will send a reply email each and every time. This gets old real quickly, and chances are you will end up being unsubscribed from the forum. Administrators of these forums have a difficult time tracking down the person who is using an autoresponder so they will not be very happy when they do find the culprit. To make your life easier, and their life easier, never use an autoresponder with any subscription.

Your Company Image and Autoresponder

As with anything, if there is a way to take advantage of an autoresponder, there will be companies that find a way. They use their autoresponder to respond to an automated message which then automatically subscribes the “from” address into their mailing list. This is not a good business practice and the wrong way to use an autoresponder. Those who do use these methods send out a negative message. Instead of creating a positive image about you, your company and your product, people will become annoyed and will not purchase any of your goods and services. They will also use word of mouth to black ball your company. These tactics should be avoided at all costs.

An autoresponder takes the place of personal contact. Your messages should always present yourself and your company in a positive light. These messages are designed to help your company grow and spread the word about your products and services. Standing out from the crowd by sending out creative and interesting messages will help gain the trust of your customers. Your customers know when the message they receive is an autoresponder message. Taking the time to create a message that least looks like an autoresponder message will be worth the effort.

Chapter 5 eZine/Newsletter

Creating an eZine/Newsletter

An ezine is defined as an electronic magazine. It also is known as an online newsletter. It has gained in popularity recently as more and more businesses go online. Publishing an e-zine will help you to strengthen your status as an expert in your field and convert more of your visitors into customers.

Offering up an ezine on your Web Site is one of the most powerful marketing techniques on the Web today. If you have a Web Site and aren't putting out a complimentary ezine, you're missing out on a great way to keep in touch with your visitors to your site.

When people sign up for your newsletter that is called "opt in" marketing. It is not Spam since they are requesting this Free information from you. They are Freely giving you their Email address in exchange for helpful or useful information you will provide to them in the form of an ezine.

The majority of people who visit your site won't buy from you the first time, but by offering them a chance to sign up for your ezine you get a chance to extend your communication with them, establish a "relationship," and possibly turn them into a customer sometime down the road.

Right about now you're scratching your head saying to yourself "but I don't know the first thing about publishing a newsletter; where do I start?" That's where I come in. I'm going to lead you down the primrose path and show you exactly what you need to do and just how to do it.

Step #1) The first step is to decide on a title for your new ezine. You may want to incorporate your business name into it or choose something related to its theme. For example, if your company name was "Bob's Spells" you may choose something like "Bob's Spells Press". Speaking of themes, your ezine's theme needs to relate to your site. If your site is a healing supply store then your ezine should be on herb care and tips. If your site sells your services as an online pyshic consultant, your ezine should center hosoracopes and how to's.

Step #2) So now you have an ezine name and you know what the theme is, you need to decide where your newsletter will live. This is often referred to as list management and your best bet is to source it out or check with your web host and see if they supply this service as part of your account. Don't think for a minute you can manage an ezine with just your email program. A list can grow to a substantial size and you need to prepare in advance for this from the very beginning.

If you're trying to save money, I'd highly recommend you sign up with one of the many free list host services that are available. They work great, and make it easy for people to subscribe and unsubscribe at will. The only trade off to using a free service is the advertising they will place at the very top of your ezine for the privilege of your free account. But remember, they are hosting your list for free so they've got to get something in return, too.

Here are some list hosts you may want to try:

Yahoo Groups: <http://groups.yahoo.com>

My personal favorite and the one I use for managing all three of my ezines. I've been with them since the old days when they were called Egroups (before Yahoo bought them out). The service works great and is free in exchange for a banner ad they place at the top of each issue. You can also have the ad removed for a nominal fee. Make sure you set your list up as "moderated." This keeps outsiders from posting to your list, which is something you'd only want if you were setting it up for two-way discussion.

Cool List: <http://www.CoolList.com>

Another free mailing service similar in functionality to Yahoo Groups mentioned above.

Topica: <http://www.Topica.com>

Another online leader when it comes to list hosting, it is free to set up. Easy step by step instructions and they have excellent customer service.

Group Mail Software: <http://www.Infacta.com/>

If you are daring enough to want to download some free software to manage your list you won't find anything better than Group Mail. It's an excellent tool for handling and mailing to large groups of people. There are also some free handy plug ins you can download that will increase its versatility.

OK, so now that you have an ezine name, a theme and a place for your list to live, what's next? Getting subscribers; you need to make sure you add a subscriber sign up box on every page of your site to encourage sign ups. Some people resort to adding a pop up box, but I wouldn't as most people say they find them very annoying. If you do decide to go the pop up route, create one that only pops up when the visitor exits your site.

Publishing an ezine is an essential step in any online marketing campaign.

9 Tips For A Successful Newsletter

1. Use original photos and artwork whenever possible. Clip art and stock photos are easy to spot, and they give the publication a canned feel.
2. Readers love interviews. Do a quick Q&A with a model employee, an old relative, or a professional in your field.
3. Use numbers in article titles, such as "Five Steps To A Love Spell."
4. Include regular sections such as classified ads, a calendar, and employee of the month.
5. If you aim to create a for-profit newsletter, you must include information people are willing to pay for: trade secrets, sales leads, product reviews, or insider gossip.
6. Have a sense of humor. Include a cartoon, a joke, or an amusing anecdote in each issue.
7. If you run a successful business with a solid customer base, consider a free newsletter with paid advertisements from related vendors.

8. Two words: Spell check.
9. Never sell the list of email addresses you collect and make sure you state next to your subscription form on your site that "email addresses are held in complete privacy". Spam is bad, and you want to make sure the guests to your Web site feel secure about signing up for your newsletter.

Create a nice “thank you” gift

Create a nice “thank you” gift for new subscribers and be sure your newsletter is setup to automatically deliver it once a subscriber confirms. Using the autoresponsor that is set up on “most” of the newsletters program, either provide your readers with a coupon or a free gift. Pagan Webmasters has over 20 pagan and pagan related ebooks that you can send as a free gift, or you can purchase a co-branded ebook as a free gift.

Send out regular issues

As far as how often you should publish, you want to shoot for two to four weeks. If you go longer than one month between issues, your subscribers will forget who you are and if you publish weekly it may become overkill. But whatever you do, pick a publishing schedule and stick with it. Consistency is key. If you say your ezine will be published on the 7th and 23rd, then you need to do your best to get your ezine out on those promised dates.

Outline of the ezine

Heading:

- 1) Company Logo – gives increased personalization
- 2) Title of Ezine - yes, you need a title
- 3) Name of my business
- 4) Issue # -(this is important so you can keep track of your writing project)
- 5) Date

I. Welcome and thanks to your readers

II. About Your Ezine – state your mission and what your readers will learn.

III. Subscription Instructions.

a. Let your readers know you got their address by their subscribing. Let them also know how to unsubscribe. This will be important for both you and your readers. It protects you and lets your readers know they are not being spammed.

IV. First Section offering insight into a special area. I share some healthy substitutions in this section.

V. Second Section offering specialized knowledge. This is the section where I featured a different recipe(s) each issue.

VI. Issue's Article on a particular subject. I wrote a new article each issue.

VII. Tidbits of Knowledge. Bites of useful information my readers could use.

1) A section where I shared my readers' recommendations and suggestions.

VIII. Tidbits of Humor (to provide my readers with chuckles)

VIII. Disclaimer – an important section

1) A properly prepared disclaimer section will protect you. Your readers may take your advice, improperly, and harm themselves. A properly prepared disclaimer statement will cover yourself from liability.

IX. Copyright Information.

1) State the year of your copyright, if any. Also, state name of your entity obtaining the copyright. For instance, Copyright 2006 by XYX Company.

The outline is a section itself.

Each section mentioned in the ezine outline will be covered in detail throughout the ezine and/or newsletter. (Kind of like writing a paper.)

Each section of the ezine is separated via a line, stars, etc. Whatever you like to use as a separator of text is fine. This provides a more friendly and easy to read ezine.

Begin writing your own ezine newsletter. It is easier than you think. Soon you will have developed a reputable subscription base to be proud of. Keep with it.

Reduce Remove Request Emails

There are two methods to reducing the number of remove email requests from your subscribers:

1. Include a removal notice at the top and bottom of the email.
2. Place the bottom removal request at the very bottom of the email, rather than a few paragraphs from the bottom.

Finding Articles

If you search the Web long enough you will find plenty of sites that offer Free articles on all kinds of subjects, yours for the taking. If you post to a few good discussion lists you'll have so much content you won't know where to put it all.

Here are a few sites where you will find Free articles.

<http://ezinearticles.com/>

<http://witchvox.com/>

<http://www.newagearticles.com/>

<http://www.paganarticles.com/>

<http://www.articlesbase.com/article-tags/pagan>

Another tremendous idea that really works is to contact other ezine owners who may have articles you can publish, or who may want to exchange ads with you. Or post of various forums and egroups requesting "authors wanted".

Gaining Subscribers

The next part is to gain subscribers you do this by posting the information about your newsletter/ezine to various directories that exist for just this purpose. Make it a point to visit them and register your newsletter. Some will send you more subscribers than others, but you should sign up with as many as possible since every little bit helps. A few of the better ones are:

Pagans of the World

<http://pagansoftheworld.com>

Witch Vox

<http://witchvox.com>

John Labovitz's Ezine

<http://www.meer.net/~johnl/e-zine-list>

600 Plus Ezines

<http://www.site-city.com/members/e-zine-master/>

<http://www.dominis.com/zines/add-howto.shtml>

Todd Kuiper's Email zine List

<http://propagandist.com/tkemzl>

LinkFinder Ezines

<http://www.linkfinder.com/submit.html>

Posting to the appropriate newsgroups can grow your list in leaps and bounds. Send email to group owner or moderator before posting

Gaining subscribers is an everyday job. You must promote a little bit everyday, every chance you get. Once your subscriber base grows large enough then you can charge for advertising space.

Chapter 6 Article Marketing

Writing articles and using them to promote your product or service online, is a very cost effective and simple way to get more exposure, and traffic to your website, business, product or service. The problem for many people is that they feel they have some insurmountable obstacles in their way that keeps them from getting started. In a survey of over 200 people, over 75% of them said the thing that kept them from writing articles is they either didn't know how to write an article, they didn't have the time, or they didn't know what to write about.

What Article Writing Does for You

Boosts Your Personal and Business Credibility: Publishing your own article boosts your credibility and begins the trust cycle with your readership.

Builds Brand Equity & The Brand Called You: Having your articles featured on your website builds brand equity for you, your business, and your expertise. It begins or reinforces in your customers' and prospects' minds what you can do for them.

1. Web Optimized Article Titles

The best way to get your articles found and read is to find out what people are looking for and giving it to them. By simply doing a search using Google's keyword tool or any other keyword research tool, you can find phrases which people are looking for. Use that as your title and give excellent information in the articles.

2. Good Content Is Important

If the content in your article is crap, well then, don't expect the reader to stick around for too long. Many people make the mistake of trying to "stuff" their titles with a lot of keywords but that makes it uncomfortable for people to read and the search engines pick up on little tricks like that - and can easily punish you for it.

The content in your article is really important because it is meant to give information and value to the reader. Do not try to sell upfront and immediately in the article - you want to give value first to the reader and only ask them to get more information from you at the resource box.

3. Don't Be Shy About The Call To Action

A really common mistake I've seen by many aspiring entrepreneurs who want to create a home based business is the mistake of not asking for the sale. They don't even dare to ask people to buy stuff from

them!

You cannot be shy about what you are trying to sell - you have to be confident. The only people who may forgive you for that is friends and relatives but the open market isn't that forgiving - so if you have a shyness issues, you'd better get over it quickly!

Use the resource box at the end of the article to get readers to visit your site. If they read your article and are pleased with it, it is likely that they will want to find out more. Never assume that people will bookmark your article to read it later.

The benefits of submitting & writing articles:

1. Free advertising: Your author bio box is your tool to promote your own website and personal brand that can be used to gain unlimited visitors to your website. Remember, the people who read your article will want to read more about the same topic that you have written about, so be sure to send them to more content on the same topic.
2. Viral marketing: RSS can be a gold mine. RSS feeds are so popular today that you can gain an amazing amount of traffic by simply submitting just one article in a directory. You publish one article to a directory and that same article can begin appearing on countless other websites. This technology is called RSS (Really Simple Syndication). The power of RSS is simply amazing and there are many big websites that can post your article on their website resulting in a flood of site visitors.
3. Boost your personal and business credibility: Publishing your articles boosts your credibility and begins the trust cycle with your readership. For many authors, being listed with is an excellent way to get started, especially if you are hoping to be a published author.
4. Bring traffic to your site: The distribution of your article can result in anyone reading it. This alone gives you an opportunity to pick up business that you couldn't even begin to market for. Imagine if your article about technology was posted on a business website or business article directory. Now the potential for business executives to be swayed by your writing ability and buy your product for their company to use is unlimited.
5. Generate sales and leads without having a site: Even if you do not own a website, having an article online can act as your website. Just make sure your article is well written and doesn't sound too commercial. Your article can be an example of your business and can include contact information like your email address to allow potential clients to reach you. Again, make sure you have completed your bio to let people know who you are.

Steps to Writing an Article

So when you are drafting your articles, it is very important that you include a compelling link within your bio so that people can visit your site or register onto your squeeze page. You need to get into the habit of writing informative articles about the topic of your site. It is important that you offer valuable information in your articles because then your potential customer will be able to evaluate the quality of your material.

So how do you write a good, quality article?

1 - Choose a topic. This must be related to your website, so if you have a website that gives information on mobile phones, then it is important that your article looks at some aspect of the mobile phone industry. A typical topic might be how to choose the right mobile phone, the best brand for your needs or choosing the best rates for your personal requirements. Just choose a topic people ask questions about quite regularly.

2 - Writing the article. Choose a title and write the article. Once you have a title for the article, it is

very, very important that the content of your article matches the title of the article. The reader has clicked your article because they found the title of the article enticing. They want to learn more.

3 - Write quality content - It is important that your article is organized. You want your article to flow naturally. Your article would be more effective if you included a list in the general body of your article, as this makes reading the article easier. So highlight five or six key points about your mobile phone, and then complete the article with a conclusion.

4 - When you are writing your article, use friendly, easy-to-read language. Do not include complicated and difficult-to-understand words. Imagine you are drinking a cup of coffee with a friend outside a coffee shop on a sunny day. Your articles should be between 350 and 450 words in length, as this is the number that most reputable directories will accept.

5 - Add a biography. This biography is very important because this is where your reader has the opportunity to click and visit your website for more information

Where to Submit Your Articles

Why submit articles? Many of us will write high quality articles, but we don't have many site visitors to read our work. You can submit an article and have literally thousands of readers worldwide as your article is syndicated around the globe. Many people visit the following sites and ezines to gather free articles and display them on their websites.

<http://pagansoftheworld.com>

<http://ezinearticles.com/>

<http://witchvox.com/>

<http://www.paganarticles.com/>

<http://www.articlesbase.com/article-tags/pagan>

<http://www.newagearticles.com/>

<http://www.ecauldron.net/>

<http://www.broomstix.com/>

http://www.geocities.com/silver_birdy36/newsletter.html

<http://www.spiritualcoachwillowhawk.com/>

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/the_sacred_glen/

<http://alternativeapproaches.com/pnuke1/index.php>

<http://motorcitypagans.net>

<http://www.celticwhispersezone.com/>

<http://www.copper-moon.com/>

Chapter 7 Blogging

The word blog is a conflation of two words: Web and log. It contains in its four letters a concise and accurate self-description: it is a log of thoughts and writing posted publicly on the World Wide Web. In the monosyllabic vernacular of the Internet, Web log soon became the word blog.

Why Blog?

From a business perspective there are several potential reasons to blog. But, as always, it depends on what you want. Blogs are no different from channels like video, print, audio, presentations and so on. They all deliver results - but of varying kind. The kind you can expect from blogs is mainly about stronger relations with important target groups.

Become the Expert

Position yourself and your company as the thought leader of your business.

Customer Relationships

In a forum where your main objective not is to sell, you'll have a more personal relationship between you and your customers. Blogs are a fast way to join the customers' discussions, provide tips and insights or receive feedback.

Media Relations

It's every PR-consultants dream to create a channel where media regularly check what you have to say, instead of media just being passive - sometimes indifferent - recipients of press releases.

Internal Collaboration

Use blogs as a workspace where project members keep each other updated without wasting time writing reports or searching the Outlook inbox.

Knowledge Management

Blogs works in two ways. First of all, they're an easy way for the readers to find information and resources they want or need. That's obvious and could be used internally in many organizations. Second, blogs are a kind of "university light" for the blogger. Blogging is on-the-job learning.

Recruitment

If you establish your company as a thought leader, people in your business will pay attention. They'll read and discuss what you have to say. Chances are good they will see you as an attractive employer.

Test ideas or products

A blog is informal. It's part of a conversation where people (often) can comment, and the blog can provide you with a measure of value. Publish an idea and see if it generates interest. Does anyone link to you? What do they say?

Rank high in search engines

Well, this has nothing to do with relations. But Google and other search engines rewards sites that are updated often, that link to other sites and most importantly, that has many inbound links. Start a blog at your regular site and your ranking will boost.

Start a blog

1. Find a decent blogging provider that appeals to you. Some may include MuseCrafters.com, Livejournal.com, JournalHome.com, www.blogger.com, ChoseIt, WordPress.com, TheDiary.org, Mindsay.com, Blog.ir, Blogagotchi.com, Diaryland.com, Blogdrive.com, weebly.com or Xanga.com. Most of these sites are pre-made with templates and push-button publishing that don't require much technical know-how. Many webhosting services have various blogs as part of their tool package.

2. Once you sign up, you'll have a gallery of ready-made templates to choose from. With these, you can pick a color scheme and layout for your blog.

* Most sites come with a set of predefined layouts and schemes that you can choose from. Select one and personalize it. Then add your name, interests, images, etc.

* If you want to, get a more unique template, there are some sites up that have many of these that might make it look better. For example, PimpMyProfile.com or Pызam.com.

3. Add blogging freebies like buttons, images, blog chinks, imoods, tagboards (for example, myshoutbox.com), guest maps, guestbooks, comment boxes for readers' input, etc.

4. Explore other blog sites that offer more features for a small fee, such as Typepad.com and ChoseIt.

5. Decide on whether or not you want your blog to be private or public: do you want any Internet visitor to be able to read your blog, or do you just want your friends and family to be able to read it? Most blog sites offer the ability to password-protect your published posts so only those who you approve of can view what you've written.

6. After you've set up your blog, write a few posts to test it out, and make any adjustments to the layout or style that you see fit. Like if you just got a new template, you'd check your blog to see if you like it, right? At first, it will seem tough to figure out what to write, but once you get into a routine of daily blogging, you will find it addictive. Write about your day, your thoughts, events, ideas, fears, pleasures, the news, current affairs, art, or anything you are interested in!

7. Visit other blogs to build a blogging circle. When you leave comments, add your blogging address so they can visit you too. (Note: This will not work if your blog is private)

8. Publish your blog by sending the URL to your friends or publish the URL on your website. Add the URL to posts you make on other blogs.

Syndicate your blog using RSS Feeds

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds make it possible for subscribers to be automatically notified of changes. Using RSS feeds on a blog means that anyone who's subscribed to your feed will be sent notification when you add a new post. To set up your blog for feed readers to track it, follow these steps.

For bloggers, a RSS feed is mainly a content delivery and syndication system that allows readers to have access to your content without visiting your website.

While a blog feed's malleability and search engine friendly structure leads to additional site visibility and traffic, it also has the effect of seducing readers away from your website.

This limits your website's full monetization potential because a portion of your visitors will connect with your website in their feed reader and thus avoid the arsenal of contextual or impression-based ads you've carefully optimized alongside your content.

Some Solutions to the Problem

Feed advertising is a way of monetizing the community of readers who primarily follow your content through RSS feeds. In my opinion, there are three main ways to monetize your feed.

1. Manually include affiliate text or image links - Easiest way to get started. High likelihood for conversions if implemented contextually.

2. Private Ad Deals - Negotiate personally with advertisers and sell ad spots in your feed.

3. Advertising Programs for Feeds - Hassle-free method that ensures ad-rotation and uniqueness. A moderate number of subscribers is usually a publisher requirement.

Get listed in blog directories:

Pagans of the World <http://pagansoftheworld.com>

WordWeaver <http://www.webweaver.sapphiremoon.info/blogdir.php>

The Pagan Blogger's Network http://betweenthetics.blogspot.com/2008/04/pagan-bloggers-network_08.html

Witch Vox http://www.witchvox.com/lx/lx_blogs.html

Meta Pagan <http://metapagan.blogspot.com/>

Hearth and Home Witchery <http://hearthnhomewitchery.tripod.com/paganblogs.html>

Blog of Two Witches Blogroll <http://purplemoongarden.wordpress.com/pagan-blogroll/>

The Heathen blog directory <http://heathenblog.wordpress.com/hbdp/>

Pagan Theologies <http://pagantheologies.pbworks.com/Blogs+A+to+F>

The Other Side <http://theotherside.wordpress.com/2009/01/24/national-pagan-directory/>

Neo Pagan <http://neopagan.net/blog/?tag=pagan>

LS Blogs <http://www.lsblogs.com/religion/neo-paganism>

Also

<http://www.blogcatalog.com>

<http://www.bloghub.com>

<http://www.blogflux.com>

The above listings are a glimpse inside the large and vast world of blog directories and the valuable inbound links that you can build for your blog and your business.

There are countless more directories at your disposal, which are always just a Google, Yahoo, Live or Ask.com search away.

Chapter 8 Video

A lot of people are currently using video syndication as a tool to promote their websites. Because of this, it is important for video sharing websites to attain a high PR in order to attract these marketers. Video syndication can be compared with article marketing. Rather than submitting articles though, you are submitting videos. If you have tried article marketing at its peak, you have seen how effective the tactic was. Video syndication is the next big thing and it has the ability to reach a large number of highly targeted audiences. If a video sharing site attains a higher Page Rank, the benefits from it will likewise increase

Importance of Videos for your webpage

Internet was meant for exchanging information [text information] around the net but today using latest technology you can use images, audio, video and all forms of multimedia on your website so that you can present exact and more accurate information in more professional way which can be digested by your visitor very easily. Thus webmaster have started providing you with most convenient form of media ‘VIDEO‘ so that they can present their concept in more accurate and easy to understand format. If you have video demonstration on your site for some technical process then it will surely help your website visitor and they will bookmark your site, thus you have confirmed returning visitor for your site. Video presentation plays an important role for attracting traffic thus can guarantee good revenue.

When you should plan to put video on your site

It's not necessary to have video on every site, it depends on niche or market you are targeting for getting traffic also it depends on what you want to try to explain to your visitors. If text can do your work then there is no need for having a video for it. If you are trying to explain certain topic/procedure which can be explained in very professional way using video then you should put it into video form. Also try to explain such procedure along with video in text form. This will clear all doubts which may your visitor may have for your topic. Usually it's better to have a video explaining some technical installation for certain product or hardware, this will give more confidence for all user who are using your product or service. Videos can be used in any field, if you are trying to have a recipe site where you are planning to present your delicious dishes and want to get popularity for yourself and your site then you can just shoot video for the procedure and just embed it into your site. This will attract more visitors for your site and thus you will have excellent traffic for your site.

You need to have a hosting package from some reliable webhosting service provider who will allow you to host videos on your site, make sure you have sufficient disk space and bandwidth and good server configuration with your hosting package / video streaming server. If you have hundreds of full length high quality videos then you will have to consider higher hosting plans such as VPS or a dedicated server, as shared hosting package won't be sufficient for your video hosting requirements.

Create a promotional video

Promotional web videos are an exciting internet marketing tool for businesses large and small. Like a

traditional TV commercial, a promotional web video will advertise your business's advantages to potential customers. Unlike traditional TV commercials, promotional web videos can be broadcast directly to your target audience for free through email, search engine marketing and video sharing sites such as YouTube.

Producing a promotional web video doesn't have to be complex or expensive. With a little bit of planning, you can produce a promotional web video that becomes a priceless marketing tool for your business.

Create an instructional video

The Internet has made instructional videos more popular than ever. People not only want to watch funny or strange homemade videos online for entertainment, but they're also seeking instruction for projects around the house or procedures to accomplish personal business tasks.

Ideas for Instructional Videos are:

Spell Work

How to Make Oils

How to Grow Herbs

Using Stones in Magic

How to Read Tarot Cards

How to Use a Pendulum

You get the idea, keep them short, make them downloadable and make sure your URL is seen at the bottom of every frame. Also record short informational clips about the products and services you offer and add them to your sales pages.

How to Produce a Video

1. Start with planning. Design a storyboard using drawings or photos of what you want to videotape. Write down the procedures to go along with the pictures or prepare a script.
2. Use any type of video camera to record as long as you have software and a microphone to go with it. Find that even web cams come with software and a sound recording device and some of them even come with limited editing capabilities. Know you can purchase a web cam for well under \$50 and it typically comes with limited software.
3. Go over your storyboard and written procedures or script before shooting. Set up your props and equipment needed. Do a walk-through before you actually make an instructional video—rehearse first. Check your lighting; shoot some preliminary footage to double check your lighting and sound.
4. Begin recording your instructional video. Get a volunteer or hire a camera person if you need the camera to be mobile or you need two cameras (from different angles) on you while you go through

the procedures to make an instructional video. Watch out for background noises and visual disruptions as well as other interruptions.

5. Make sure your steps are clear, precise and understandable for instruction, and viewers can hear and see the procedures and step activities well. Refrain from recording too hot or loud; you can always adjust the sound after recording, but don't record too low either. Have some sound to work with when you complete your video.

6. Record in scenes or segments if you make an instructional video that is relatively long. Shoot on a schedule if your video is long and can't be completed in an hour or two. Edit your video if necessary if you have editing software. Add effects, scene change graphics and other enhancements to your video with editing software.

Where to Promote your Video

So, you've uploaded your video, you're proud of it and you want people to see it. What should you do? Obviously, you want to get it out there, so send it to your mates, put it on your blog or MySpace, and join forums or creative communities that let you show off your videos.

<http://youtube.com>

<http://www.expertvillage.com/>

<http://myspace.com>

<http://facebook.com>

<http://www.viewdo.com>

<http://video.google.com>

<http://www.viddler.com/>

<http://www.veoh.com/>

<http://www.blip.tv/>

<http://www.wikihow.com/video>

Here a shortlist of sites and services that allow you to upload your videos to multiple video sharing sites at once:

1. TubeMogul <http://www.tubemogul.com/>
2. HeySpread! <http://heyspread.com/>
3. VideoPostRobot <http://www.videopostrobot.com/>
4. VideoUploadPro <http://www.videouploadpro.com/>
5. VidMetrix <http://www.vidmetrix.com/>
6. VidMirror <http://www.vidmirror.com/>
7. Video Traffic Assistant <http://videotrafficassistant.com/>

8. TrafficGeyser <http://www.trafficgeyser.com//>

15 ways to promote your video online

1. Promote VideoSubmit to social video bookmarking sites. Digg.com, Video Bomb, Flurl, StumbleVideo - all these sites have the potential to send a lot of viewers if enough people vote for your video.
2. Email video blogs and websites to tell them about your video. Email blogs which post interesting online videos. Use Google and Delicious to find such blogs.
3. Email blogs that talk about your videos topic. If your video is about an Tarot Cards then email tarot Card blogs, if your video is about making oils then email oil recipe blogs.
4. Submit to regular social bookmarking sites Don't forget the regular social bookmarking sites like Delicious, Reddit, BlinkList etc. These sites will link to videos and if enough people vote for it you can get a lot of visitors
5. Submit your video (or a teaser video) to the busiest video sharing sites. YouTube is busier, but so is Daily Motion, MetaCafe, and many others. Check out a huge list of video sharing sites here. If it's a teaser video or you want people to visit your website write your website in the description and also show it within the video.
6. Post your video in relevant discussion boards and forums. Read their rules first and don't spam. Make sure what you post is relevant to the forum and choose the busiest forums to post in.
7. Tag and describe your videos It is important to put the keywords that describe your video in the associated tags and description so search engines know what your video is about.
8. Read the SEO guide for video. The video search engine Blinkx published a guide on optimizing your video for search engine traffic.
9. Send out a press release. If your video is especially news worthy you may want to send out an online Press Release.
10. Make videos regularly and create your own website and MySpace A one-off video may get popular but if you make videos regularly and place them on your own website AND MySpace you can build up a large following.
11. Enter competitions. There are plenty of video competitions out there so look around and enter any you can for more exposure. For example the Network2 contest, BrioBox contest, Acceptable.tv etc.
12. Get help from your friends. Get your friends to help by adding you to their MySpace, bookmarking your video on social bookmarking sites, adding your video as a favorite on YouTube, posting about your video on their site etc.
13. Choose the right thumbnail. When ever you decide to watch a video it is heavily influenced by the thumbnail (the little picture of the video clip) that you see first. If you can choose the thumbnail do so and make it sharp, clear, eye catching and relevant to your video.
14. A catchy title is just as important as a catchy thumbnail to encourage people to click that link to watch your video.
15. File Sharing This is often forgotten but if you are giving away your video for free why not distribute a copy for free over file sharing networks. Depending on the niche of your video this can

work well. Don't forget to include the name of your website in your video.

Chapter 9 Audio

What is podcasting?

Podcasting makes an audio file, typically an MP3 file, available online for downloading via an automatic "feed." You can then hear the podcast whenever you want from your computer or a portable media player.

Podcasting is simply distributing audio content using RSS. The process is surprisingly simple, and by making audio content available using RSS, podcasters give listeners more control over what they listen to and when. Also, many podcasts are available for syndication, which increases a broadcaster's exposure.

Generally podcasting is helpful for:

1. Music - (demo's)
2. Training (instructional materials)
3. Self Guided Walking Tours
4. Talk Shows (discussions, commentaries)

Podcasting gives small business a tremendous ability to reach the niche markets that it may rely on for business. Brand advertising is not the only purpose for a small-business to podcast, but informative podcasts about your business field or products can also help generate much needed traffic to your website. Informative and knowledge-sharing podcasts will not only spread your message, but will also give potential customers the satisfaction of knowing that your business is both knowledgeable and expert in its field.

It's not important that a business podcasts on a frequent basis, but you should try to keep content fresh. Monthly podcasts are a great option, and with only twelve podcasts a year, you don't risk going through any sort of "subject" burnout.

Steps to a Successful Podcast

1. Plan. How do you know which path to follow if you have no plan? This part is the answer to identifying the purpose and goal of your podcast.

2. Produce. Producing a podcast file is not as hard as you might think it was. In fact, you can get started using simple equipment and free software.

3. Publish. The publish step is here to make a difference with traditional media publishing. Podcasting involves a custom publishing procedure to make it podcast compatible. It could be made easy and automated too.

4. Promote. There are no use of a podcast without an audience. This step will get your creation to as much end users as possible.

So here you are: You have developed a great podcast, with excellent content for a very tight niche. And you are prepared to podcast on this topic with top-notch content for a long time to come.

Now what?

Now you have to get your podcast out into the world to be heard. Many broadcasters to simply podcast for personal interest or to get their opinions out into the world, don't bother to market their podcast. And perhaps, if you have a small and faithful following that might be all you're interested in. For example, maybe you are pastor at a church and it doesn't matter to you other people outside of your congregation hear your podcasts, as long as they are available for your parishioners. That's fine.

But there are many people, especially business podcasters, who need to be heard. Perhaps you need to be heard because of the importance of your sell your product and put food on the table, whatever the reason is, you need to do your podcast out there.

The first in you want to do is submit your podcast to the podcast hosting sites mentioned in a previous chapter. If you haven't done that already, take time to be that right away. Don't just submit to one, submit to all of them.

The next thing you need to do is to make sure that your marketing material (if you are a business) contains the web site on which your podcast is hosted. For example, if your company has a web site, make sure it's on your marketing material. Then go on to your company's web site and make sure that the podcast is easy to see. Lots of companies have very busy web sites which makes it difficult to notice if there are new items on the page. You might also want to put on your marketing material something along the lines that of "subscribe to our podcast."

Just plunking down your podcast on your web site and a web address on your marketing material will not get you very many subscribers. It could get some calm and that's great, but just like any other product that you sell you need to give people a reason to subscribe to your podcast.

If you haven't noticed, this chapter talks about content and niche marketing but the underlying secret of both of those is value. When you offer a value, people will come to you. If your product solves a problem, they will buy it from you. If your service benefits someone, they will buy it from you. If your podcast helps them in some way, they will subscribe to it... or even buy it from you.

So how do you make your podcast provide value? This chapter, and previous chapters, give lots of ideas to help provide value: people are looking for interesting and engaging entertainment, information, and instruction to listen to at their convenience. That's what podcasting is all about. Those three things:

1. Interest and engagement. (Is the format varied and easy to listen to?)
2. Entertainment, information, instruction. (Is the content of high quality?)

3. Convenience. (Is it an appropriate length and updated with appropriate frequency?)

That is the best test to ensure that your podcast provides value. If it does not fulfill all three things than you'll find your subscribership will diminish over time.

Here is another exercise that will help you determine your value to your subscribers. If you have spent any time in sales or as an entrepreneur you'll probably already be familiar with this, but it is a good exercise to do nonetheless, since it is often overlooked in the podcasting industry.

Features and Benefits of your podcast

1. On one side of a piece of paper, list the features of your podcast. Leave plenty of lines under each feature. What are features? The topic is a feature, the length is a feature, the frequency you update it is a feature, it's a feature if two people host the show, the format can be a feature, and your variety and quality of content is a feature.

2. On the other side of the paper, list the benefits: what it is about those features that subscribers will find helpful.

3. Determine if there is one or two of those benefits that set you apart from other podcasts in a similar category.

4. Now promote those benefits!

This is a classic feature/benefits exercise from sales training 101. It is often overlooked in podcasting because podcasting is such a personal medium and it's brand-new so people are pushing the boundaries in spite of the lack of benefits to their listeners.

Pushing the boundaries is okay if that's what you want to do, but if your interest is in gaining subscribers or in making money from podcasting, then you'll want to discover the benefits of your podcast and promote them.

If you can drive people to your web site, you might be able to post a couple benefits beside your podcast link. Or, if your marketing material has enough room, you can put those benefits right under your heading "subscribe to our podcast".

You might also find that, although they may appreciate the benefits and value that you provide, they may be scared off by how "technologically advanced" it seems to them. Rather than calling it a podcast, you may want to call it an online audio program or an Internet radio show. It may not be exactly

accurate, but it's a lot easier than telling people that it's a podcast and spending half an hour explaining it to them and telling them why they don't need an iPod to hear you.

You may also want to pay other people to host affiliate advertising to send an end to your site if you are creating a podcast for people to pay to listen to. These concepts are covered in a little greater detail in the next chapter, but it is appropriate to mention them here as something else to think about in marketing your podcast.

The best form of advertising for any kind of business is word of mouth advertising. If he can get your search drivers to be your biggest supporters and talk about you all the time to their friends, you won't have any problem getting subscribers. How do you do that? (You should be able to answer this in your sleep by now: content, niche markets, benefits). It is still very early in the industry, but it won't be long before you see referral marketing programs that give subscribers some kind of discount or freebie for getting other people to subscribe to a podcast. With a little creativity, you may be able to start doing this right now.

Getting subscribers is all about providing value. If people see the value, they will subscribe. Tell them about your program, tell them what the value is to them, and tell them how to subscribe, and tell them to get their friends to subscribe, and you should not have any problem building up a big list of subscribers.

And with this audience, you'll be able to get your views heard and maybe even make some money!

Content Creation

There are two reasons people listen to Podcasts, to learn or to be entertained. Podcasting is not the time to use your best sales pitch. Over selling your topic to people in your Podcast is a sure-fire way to send their business elsewhere. People are looking for fun, entertaining, and informative information - for free. If people are visiting your website to listen to your Podcasts you have already accomplished one step in the selling process, building relationships with the public. Once they have listened to your Podcasts they will likely go to your website to check out your products or services because they feel connected to a familiar voice that represents your company persona.

Regularly Scheduled Episodes

Your listeners will expect a regular schedule for when they can 'tune-in' to your Podcasts. Depending on your business and how much content you can create you may want to Podcast anywhere from daily to once per week. Make sure you can deliver when you say you can. You might have other responsibilities in your organization so keep a realistic time line. When you hire a voice over actor for your Podcast you will ensure regular episodes are done on-time, on budget, and with no interruption in your personal or work schedule.

Spread the Word

Once you have your Podcast recorded and uploaded to your website it's time to get the word out. If you already have a customer base registered to your website consider emailing them about your websites new feature. There are numerous directories to submit your Podcasts to. Try podcast411.com for a list of directories. You may also want to use social networking sites such as Facebook, Digg, and Stumble Upon to promote your Podcast and grow your listener base. You can also write and distribute articles and press releases about your Podcast to help you spread the word.

RSS Feeds

Make sure you include an RSS Feed and an 'Email to a Friend' option for your Podcasts. The RSS Feed allows you to syndicate your Podcasts making it easy for your audience to listen with automatic delivery to their portable media devices or personal computers. Adding the 'Email to a Friend' option allows your current audience to spread the word to others who they feel might be interested in your topic, ultimately growing your listener base.

How to Conduct a Podcast Interview

Conducting a successful podcast interview can be a tricky proposition for a podcaster starting out. Once you have determined individuals that will appeal to your target audience contact potential interviewees and arrange a time to conduct the interview. Following this guide will insure that the interview goes off without a hitch.

1. Prepare Questions in Advance

Prepare a list of questions prior to the interview, contemplate possible follow-up questions based on the expected responses. Create a list of notes along with the questions that are accessible during the interview and will help you direct the conversation.

2. Research Interview Subject

Do your homework about the individual or individuals you are interviewing. A little due diligence will go a long way. Search newsgroups and Google for the interviewees name, product, or company, and build a background. The research will help predict the interviewees responses to your questions. Listen to previous interviews in which the interviewee participated, read their blog and articles to get a feel for the interviewees position on issues.

3. Confirm Pronunciation

Confirm how the pronunciation of the interviewee's name prior to beginning the interview! It will save

you from any potential embarrassment if the name is incorrectly pronounced.

4. Scope

Explain the scope of the interview to the person you are interviewing. It is important they are aware of the expectations, agenda, time and format of the podcast show. Create a stock email to send to interviewees that explains the format and tweak the email for any special cases.

5. Hardware and Software

Be sure to inform guests of any required hardware or software that they must install prior to the interview. The more advance notice you provide the easier it will be for your guests to be prepared.

6. Test!

Test equipment prior to beginning the interview. Check sound quality, and volume levels to make sure that the settings are correct.

7. Relax

In order to relax your guest spend a few minutes chatting before the interview begins this will put them at ease and relieve some of the guests interviewer's nerves.

8. Avoid Yes or No

Ask your questions in a logical sequence. When framing your questions, avoid questions that will result in "yes" or "no" answers. Questions should be open ended and you should encourage your guests to elaborate on their responses.

9. Provide Guests Tips

Make suggestions to your guest prior to the interview. Encourage the interviewees to talk slow, articulate their words, and to remain a consistent distance from the microphone throughout the interview.

10. Stay in Control

Keep in mind that YOU are the interviewer and you should be directing and controlling the conversation. Occasionally that means you might need to interrupt your guest or bring them back to the topic at hand. There are ways to effectively do this without being rude, practice language that you might use, or better yet watch television interviewers when involved in a conflict and take a cue from the language and techniques that they use.

11. Time Cues

Let your interviewer know that you will provide time warnings and involve, use statements like: "one

more question", or "let's wrap this up, can you quickly tell me" to cue your guest that time is almost up.

12. Give Thanks

Thank your guest on and off air. Provide them a copy or link to the interview. Encourage your guest to link to the show, this could potentially bring your show some additional publicity for your show.

Podcast Directories

http://www.witchvox.com/lx/lx_podcasts.html

<http://www.paganpodcasting.org/>

<http://paganpodcastindex.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.paganheartinmaine.com/paganpodcasts.htm>

<http://www.podcastdirectory.com/>

<http://www.podanza.com/>

<http://www.youloud.com/>

<http://www.podcastblaster.com/>

<http://itunestracks.co.uk/podcasts/>

<http://www.mirpod.com/>

<http://replay-video.com/guide/>

<http://www.vicasting.com/>

<http://www.podomatic.com/>

Getting Interviewed

Contact podcasts that reach your target market and let them know you're available for interviews. There are 79 Podcasts currently listed on Witchvox.

http://www.witchvox.com/lx/lx_podcasts.html You will need to inform them 1) that you are available for Interview, 2) Why they need to interview you

Chapter 10 Social Networking

Social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace have become the party lines of this young century. They are inviting and intriguing and a powerful communication tool. Learning how to use them wisely for marketing can increase your business profile.

Social networks have increased What's Niche Networking. A niche is a specialized group of something larger. So niche networking sites are specialized groups of social networking sites.

To sum it briefly, you should define your audience, locate your potential customers, build a social relationship with them and promote your brand and website. What you choose to do on these sites depends on what your business needs.

Social Networking How To's

In most communities it is recommended to not start out by promoting your brand or website. If you start out by “spamming” you are likely to get kicked out of that social community.

Social Media Marketing creates opportunities to:

- * Adds a human element (you) to your business or product
- * Engage with customers directly but informally while hanging out online
- * It is fun and simple to do once you know how
- * Get traffic to your website
- * Create buzz around your website, product or service or brand
- * Create inbound links to your website for the search engine ranking benefit
- * Creates loyalty and trust

Maximize Your Social Network:

Not only is Social Network a tool for your business, but it can be fun to connect with old friends, family and coworkers. There is something about sharing an old grade school photo that can create an instant bond with those from your past. Even personal connections have the potential to become new business opportunities.

Create a Powerful Profile

There is no cost to create a profile on a Social Network and based on site policies, it must be tied to a human name, not a business name. Use the “About Me” section to describe your business and what you do. In the “Information” box on your main profile page, you can feature links to your website, blog and other business resources. Be sure to include your photo so that others can recognize you online.

Build Your Contact List

Social Networks are based on the concept of connecting with friends. You can send and receive friend requests and once accepted, your friend can view your profile and you can view theirs. To begin connecting with people that you know, you can either import your contact database or you can search your Social Network for individual people, or by religion> Myspace, do searches on Pagans, wiccans etc.

Communicate with Wall Posts

Each Social Network member has a “wall” where friends can post messages. This is a great place to post a quick note to those in your friends list. In the business networking world, this is the online equivalent of picking up the phone to say hello.

Update Your Status

At the top of your Social Network home page is a status box. When you post a status update, everyone in your friends list can see your update on their home page. Those using Social Network for business purposes, this is a place to share tips, promote events and even boost sales.

Participate in Groups

Online groups allow you to network virtually with potential clients and peers. To access groups, start from your Social Network home page, view the list of applications and click on “Groups.” You can browse through thousands of themed groups with topics ranging from business to politics and everything in between.

If you really want to maximize the potential with groups, consider starting one of your own. Once again, there is no cost to do this and the visibility can be great. For example, if you are a business in Dallas, you could start a group for Dallas business owners. You do not need to promote your business

at every turn. Instead, make it known that you're a broker, but provide value for members by sharing interesting tips and engaging with them in the online forum.

Build Your Friends List

For business purposes, the one with the most friends on Social Network wins. Okay, not exactly, but the point is to connect with as many potential clients as possible.

Create Fan Pages

Because Social Networks requires that a profile be designated to a human, not a business, they have instead provided the ability to create fan pages. You can create a fan page for a business, product, book, author, speaker, celebrity or just about anything you want.

Pages function a lot like profiles so you can add links, events, discussion boards and other features that make them interactive. Facebook will also post updates from your fan pages back on to your profile so others know about them. And instead of sending friend requests out, you can invite others to become a "fan" of your page. You will also have the ability to send messages to all of your fans, allowing you to cultivate a community online.

Manage Your Time

The biggest complaint most have about social networking is that it takes a lot time to manage. I recommend designating time in your day for Social Network activities. You can login once or twice a day to view messages and manage your connections. Just be careful not to let time get away from you (it's easy to do!). Also, remember that the more time you spend on Facebook, the more ways you will find to use it to your advantage. Be creative, show your personality and have some fun. That will all be reflected in your success.

Top Five Mistakes to Avoid

1. Jumping right into "let's do business" mode: Give people time to get to know you before you start suggesting partnerships.
2. Heavy sales pitches: Focus first on adding value, gaining credibility and building trust. People will cycle their way into your marketing funnel if you take the slow and steady approach and attract customers. It's attraction marketing, not push marketing. You want to lay out information that draws people closer. You want people to follow the breadcrumb trail to move closer to you.
3. Forgetting that what goes on the web stays on the web: What you post stays out there for a long time – possibly forever. Watch your personal opinions, rants and raves, and sarcastic remarks. They can come back to haunt you. Reputation management is essential.
4. Inconsistency: You're building a brand through social networking, so be consistent. Be the same person on each site. Be consistent with your name, branding, expertise. Make sure your profiles are similar – expertise, occupation, photo. Don't have such wildly different profiles on various sites that people wonder if it's really you.

5. Not building value: People sometimes think social networking should be all about business, or they go to the other extreme and think it's all about their personal lives. They get caught up in how many followers they have or how many friends they are connected to on the site. Focus on building value through the posts you make and the things you do. When you lead with value, you build a reputation and build a following.

There's really no secret. It's sound marketing, just using different technology. Focus on your audience, your customers, and adding value to their lives. You'll attract followers. They will in turn become fans. Once they're fans of you, they know about you and like and trust you. They may then become leads.

It's not about pushing your message out there. It's about putting forward a positive image consistently, building trust and value, and attracting the right clients to you like a magnet.

Anyone can learn how to use a tool like a social networking site. But what's your strategy? How will you use this long term? How will you gain credibility and build trust? That is what I help my clients do, to focus on long-term strategy.

Top Pagan Social Networks

<http://witchvox.com>

<http://naughtypagans.com>

<http://covenspace.com>

<http://paganspace.net>

<http://wiccantgether.com>

<http://www.ourgrove.net/>

<http://moonlightmagic.ning.com/>

Top Non-Pagan Social Networking Sites

<http://facebook.com>

<http://myspace.com>

<http://linkedin.com/>

<http://Worlds.com>

<http://hi5.com/>

<http://43things.com/>

<http://home.spaces.live.com>

<http://gather.com/>

<http://livemocha.com>

<http://stickam.com/>

Create your own social network

Social networking is one of the key concepts that is driving Web 2.0 these days. With the opportunities social networks offer for collaboration and communication.

Perhaps though, more importantly it's worth thinking about some of the issues, and pros and cons surrounding the use of social networks.

Some advantages of creating your own network.

- * Control over the content

You can make sure nobody posts anything inappropriate or irrelevant.

- * Control of who joins and the ability to block or ban people

You can protect your members, ban anyone who doesn't behave or just limit membership to people you want to invite.

- * Increased reach

You can increase the reach of your F2F activities and get more people involved in the collaborative / collective development of your project.

- * Good for your personal / career development

You can learn a lot through being an administrator and develop some useful skills and knowledge.

Things to consider before you launch your network

- * Closed (just people you invite) or Open (anyone who wants to join)

I would advise starting off with just people you invite first to see how things take off. Deciding to make the network open could take a lot of consideration and demand much more 'policing' moderation from you.

- * Do you have the time to manage the network?

Keeping the network active and up to date is going to take time. If you don't have the time / resources to put into it, best not to start.

- * Do you have or can you find content to input to the network?

Content is still the main motivation for people to get involved, even if it's just as stimulation for communication / collaborative work, you need to have something to offer and your members are going to need to 'get something' from visiting your network, or they won't be coming back.

- * How / Will you be able to nurture collaboration between the members?

- * What functionality (groups, forums, video and photo sharing) do you want to make available?
- * Will you want to include advertising or ask it to be removed?
- * What information will you want members to add when joining?

You can decide what information members need to submit when they join and decide who sees the information. You find out a lot about them this way, but people can be put off by having to give away their information, so it could be best just to let them decide.

- * How long will you want to keep the network live? (limited period or indefinitely)

If you only intend to use the network for a specific time limited project it might be good to make this clear to your members, so they keep records of anything they develop within the network. Then when the project ends you can delete it with a clear conscience and keep the web tidy.

Looking at other networks

Before you start your own social network it's a good idea to have a look round at what others are doing. You might get some good ideas, see some potential pitfalls you want to avoid, or even decide someone already has your area covered and just decide to join them instead of recreating the wheel.

1. Ning

Ning is a popular online platform for users to create their own social websites and social networks quickly and free:

2. SocialGO

SocialGO lets you easily create and run a feature-filled social networking website. You choose who can join, what they can do and how it looks and the best part is it's free to get going.

3. Elgg

With Elgg you can create your own social network, quickly and easily. Elgg allows you to take full advantage of the power of social technology with elegant, flexible solutions for organizations, groups and individuals.

4. WackWall

WackWall is another social network builder tool. Your network can have custom design, photo/video sharing, forums, blogs, events, and such - all easy, fast, and FREE!

Evaluation criteria

Deciding whether you want to join or recommend a network can be a tricky process, but as I've been looking around for ones I want to be part of I've built up a list of criteria that I find quite useful to have in the back of my mind.

- * What features / functionality does the network offer? (Groups forums etc.)

If there's no interaction, is it worth being a part of this network?

- * Are the groups / forums active with a number of members exchanging information?

Just because it has them doesn't mean they are being used. Have a look and make sure there is something there to learn and somebody there to learn with.

- * Are these features being used? (If the network offers the use of photo or video sharing is this being used?)

This is a good place to look to see what members are really sharing. Is there original content or is it all grabbed from YouTube / Flickr?

- * Can you find out when the network was last active?

Some networks are still online, but have died. Either the members or creator has lost interest. No point joining an inactive network.

- * How many members does it have?

Open networks that only have a small number of members, may be less worthwhile. Most networks need a critical mass to keep them moving, unless the members are very committed.

- * Are any of the members' photographs inappropriate?

Many people join networks to pull traffic to their / unsuitable sites. A quick look at their avatar image could well give you a clue to which these are.

- * Check out some of the member profiles. Does the profile disclose the member's email address or other personal info that you wouldn't want to share?

Make sure that the network isn't forcing you to disclose more information than you would feel happy with.

- * Are there any 'Google Ads' on the site? Are these suitable or potentially offensive?

Especially when recommending networks to others, it's good to check this first.

- * Is there any interesting content on the site?

Again, I still believe that content is king. Content + collaboration = learning! No content, don't join.

- * Who is behind the network?

Always wise to know who you are dealing with and sharing your information / knowledge with. Is it a group of like minded individuals, or a faceless company with dubious motivations?

Social Bookmarking:

Social Bookmarking sites is a bit like your "favorites list" on your web browser. But, instead of keeping this list on your computer for just you to see, it is stored on a website where your list can be "tagged" with your specific keywords and crawled by the search engines.

Optimizing web pages for Google and other search engines is not enough. A successful concept for your online marketing has to be regarded in a more comprehensive way and must include the community. Web 2.0 is part of the community and vice versa. Social bookmarking is part of it, too.

Social Bookmarking Sites

<http://digg.com>

<http://Yahoo! Buzz>

<http://StumbleUpon.com>

<http://reddit.com>

<http://Technorati.com>

<http://del.icio.us>

<http://kaboodle.com>

<http://mixx.com>

<http://Propeller.com>

<http://newsvine.com>

<http://Fark.com>

<http://Slashdot.org>

<http://twine.com>

<http://clipmarks.com>

<http://dzone.com>

<http://faves.com>

<http://blinklist.com>

<http://diigo.com>

<http://simpy.com>

<http://BlogMarks.net>

If you have been thinking about promoting your websites, blogs or affiliate marketing programs through social bookmarking sites, this guide will help you get started.

How to Use Social Bookmarking Sites

To make the most of social bookmarking, you need to make sure that there are other users besides yourself who will be interested in your website content. Different social bookmarking sites have different types of users. Finding a site that works with your niche rather than against it is a must.

Finally, pay special attention to the blogs, websites, and articles that are bookmarked the most and ranked the highest. This will give you an idea of what people like to see. Knowing your audience is essential, particularly if you are promoting affiliate marketing programs or niche-specific blogs.

How Not to Use Social Bookmarking Sites

Nobody likes a spammer. Social bookmarking users are no exception. If you want to promote your affiliate marketing programs, it is best to do it in a round-about way. Sales copy will only make it so far up the ranking.

The blogs and websites that do best in the social bookmarking arena are those that offer entertainment, worthy news, or some sort of draw. In other words, don't submit content with a title like "Check Out These Affiliate Marketing Programs".

When submitting content to social bookmarking sites, it is essential that you stick to submitting quality content. Once you get traffic flowing into your websites and blogs, the sales will follow naturally, especially if you focus on conversion optimization on your site or blog.

More Social Bookmarking Tips

A few other things you will want to keep in mind when promoting affiliate marketing programs and blogs through social bookmarking:

- * Timing is everything. Articles that get at least 25 votes within the first 15 minutes will rise through the social bookmarking ranks faster than articles that get 25 votes in two days' time.

- * Opening several accounts on one social bookmarking site so that you can vote for yourself should be avoided. This will only damage your reputation if you are promoting your own blogs and affiliate marketing programs.

- * Get your friends to help. This is the easiest and best way to promote your blogs and affiliate marketing programs through social bookmarking.

When done properly, social bookmarking can be an efficient and cost-effective PR tool to get traffic to your website and promote your small business.

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a Miniature Blog. Micro-blogging is defined as a quick update usually containing a very limited number of characters. It is a popular feature of social networks like Facebook where you can update your status, but it has become best known because of Twitter.

In essence, micro-blogging is for people who want a blog but don't want to blog. A personal blog can keep people informed on what is going on in your life, but not everyone wants to spend an hour crafting a beautiful post about the vibrant colors seen on a butterfly spotted in the front time. Sometimes, you just want to say "went shopping for a new car but didn't find anything" or "watched Dancing With the Stars and Warren Sapp sure can dance."

That's where Twitter comes into the picture. It's a great place for keeping people informed on what you are up to without the need to spend a lot of time crafting an entire post on the subject. You just say what's up and leave it at that.

Twitter is Social Messaging

While Twitter may have started as a micro-blogging service, it is grown into much more than simply a tool to type in quick status updates. I often describe Twitter as a cross between blogging and instant messaging, but even that doesn't do it justice.

Twitter is social messaging. With the ability to follow people and have followers, and the ability to have interact with Twitter on your cell phone, Twitter has become the perfect social messaging tool. Whether you are out on the town and want to coordinate with a group of people as to what hot spot to hit next, or keeping people informed of developments at a company-sponsored event, Twitter is a great tool for quickly communicating a message to a group of people.

Twitter is News Reporting

Twitter is Social Media Marketing

Twitter has become a favorite target for social media marketing.

With utilities like Twitterfeed, it is easy to convert an RSS feed into Twitter updates. This makes it easy to use Twitter as a form of social media marketing.

What is Twitter?

This brings us back to the original question. What is Twitter? It is many different things to many different people. It can be used by a family to keep in touch, or a company to coordinate business, or the media to keep people informed or a writer to build up a fan base.

Twitter is micro-blogging. It is social messaging. It is an event coordinator, a business tool, a news reporting service and a marketing utility.

Plurk Promotion

Plurk is another network similar to Twitter in the sense that you have to communicate your message via short, 140 character phrases. The difference? You can also share Youtube videos and images that will show up in your plurks (instead of just links).

Consider the time you do your promotions. Try during peak hours, which is generally business hours Monday through Friday. Considering some people have thousands of friends, a status update when the most people are active is best, because a status update Sunday evening will be lost once everything on Monday comes in.

Build a large community on each network you join, because without any fans/friends/followers, there will be no one to promote to.

Be active, because more people notice someone whose name pops up on a daily basis in their interactions.

Help others, which goes along with being active, but specifically, be sure to provide some sort of benefit to your online friends, as opposed to just tooting your own horn. Helping can be as large as sending tips on how to re-design a website, or as small as sending a little “get well soon” comment when someone’s status update shows they feeling under the weather.

Joint Ventures

Cooperative Advertising

A system by which ad costs are divided between two or more parties. Usually, such programs are offered by manufacturers to their wholesalers or retailers, as a means of encouraging those parties to advertise the product. Also Known As: Co-op Advertising, Co-op Program

It is a classic win-win. For you, the small-business owner, co-op funds offer a variety of possible benefits:

- They allow you to reduce the cost of your current advertising, or advertise more.
- They permit you to create bigger or more colorful ads.
- Because co-op funds can usually be used in any medium (television, radio, print, online, phone directories and so on), they make it possible to extend your brand into areas where you may not have had much reach previously.

By the same token, suppliers, manufacturers, distributors and wholesalers also benefit from co-op advertising programs:

- Co-op ads increase overall awareness of their brand.
- They increase their sales.
- They increase their market share.

Are there downsides to co-op advertising? Yes, but not many. The main one is that the supplier will surely have restrictions on how the ad must look and how their product will be displayed. No big deal there.

However that may not always work well with pagan businesses. What will work and is more cost effective is Joint Ventures. A joint venture (often abbreviated JV) is an entity formed between two or more parties to undertake economic activity together. The parties agree to create a new entity by both contributing equity, and they then share in the revenues, expenses, and control of the enterprise

1. Creating a site that host banners for Pagan Sites
2. Creating a webzine used by everyone
3. Placing adverts in your packaging for the co-op members
4. Creating and Online Fair
5. Sharing hosting services

Why Should I engage in a Joint venture?

Cost of advertising, cost of business place. cost web hosting etc.

Ideas for Co-op partners.

Online stores.

Healers

Massage Therapists

Authors

Specialty shops

Established Pagan Co-ops

A Pagan Pack is a wonderful way to help reach areas that you would normally not have access to. If

you own a pagan/wiccan based business or are pagan/wiccan friendly we would be delighted to have you become a part of our ever growing and prospering community.

Pagan Packs are simply little packages we put together with our fellow pagan business owners information in them. We then distribute these Pagan Packs in our communities and with our outgoing orders. Each little package contains a myriad of samples, discounts, sales flyers and other information about pagan owned businesses.

Pagan Packs are not to be sold from any other site other than this site Pagan Packs, if you come across another site that does offer these please use the contact page found on the left column and contact the owner. The price for packs is only used to cover mailing supplies and postage, nothing is kept for personal profit.

<http://paganpacks.com/>

Chapter 11 Local / Offline Marketing

Make Local Connections

1. Join the Chamber of Commerce. Search for a local Chamber of Commerce serving your community. <http://www.chamberofcommerce.com>
2. Find local business organizations. Your local chamber of commerce can help you. Those local business organizations are more for brick and mortar
3. Look for other local ways to reach out. Attend networking events or volunteer your time and local shelters, for animals and humans, make sure it is your company that is listed as a volunteer.
4. Create a Meetup. Meetup is the world's largest network of local groups. Meetup makes it easy for anyone to organize a local group or find one of the thousands already meeting up face-to-face. More than 2,000 groups get together in local communities each day, each one with the goal of improving themselves or their communities. <http://www.meetup.com/>
5. Participate in a business card swap.
6. Work out discounts or commission based deals with tourist shops, museums, locally owned bookstores and other businesses or organizations in your local area.

Volunteer your Company

1. Donate a book to a library with an inscription of “Donated by...”
3. Look for opportunities for charitable donations to local groups such as schools, fire departments, etc.
3. Host a charity event. See our ebook How to Host a Pagan Event <http://paganwebmaster.com>

Community Services work includes initiatives such as liaising with government departments and other spiritual organizations to gain recognition for, and acceptance of Paganism as a valid spiritual path, or working with and for Pagans requiring ministry and support whilst in hospital or prison...

Community Services currently consists of the following:

1. Community Services
2. Prison Ministry
3. Hospital Visiting
4. Interfaith Committees

Some off the Wall Tips

1. T-shirt Marketing. Get a T-shirt made with your website's logo and URL on it. Offer the T-shirt as a prize in a competition. If the T-shirt looks decent the winner will wear it and act as a walking billboard for your blog. (You can get a T-shirt made at CustomInk.com, though there are plenty of websites that do this).
2. Bumper stickers for all. Mail out bumper stickers for your website to readers who want one. The price of an envelope is not much to pay for some advertising on busy roads. (You can get custom stickers made up at Kinko's or your local equivalent).
3. Leave fliers for your website at niche hot-spots. For example: leave fliers for a personal finance website outside the economics faculty of your local university, or fliers for a book review website outside a library.
4. Take out an ad in your local newspaper. They're often pretty cheap and local papers can have a circulation of thousands.

Other tips are:

Decorate your car. Put your URL on a bumper sticker or get a car magnet with your business logo/details.

Put your business cards in outgoing mail.

Write your URL on the outside of outgoing mail.

. Leave a business card when you leave a tip.

. Add a (short!) promotional message to your answering machine.

Post an ad on Craigslist.org.

Some More Local Ideas

1. Write letters to the editor on topics you care about.
2. Get any events you're involved in listed on the community calendar page of your local paper.
3. Look for papers in your area that offer free classifieds.
4. Call into local radio shows.
5. Consider sponsoring or making a product/service donation to a local college or school newspaper in exchange for advertising.

Public Speaking

1. Join Toastmasters or a similar group to improve your public speaking skills.
2. Develop your signature speech.
3. Offer to speak free to a local civic/business group in exchange for permission to video or record the

speech for future use. You can make it available as a free video on YouTube, or convert it into a product for sale.

Press Release

What is a press release?

A press release is pseudo-news story, written in third person, that seeks to demonstrate to an editor or reporter the newsworthiness of a particular person, event, service or product.

How is a press release used?

Press releases are often sent alone, by e-mail, fax or snail mail. They can also be part of a full press kit, or may be accompanied by a pitch letter.

What is the proper press release format?

- Issue press releases for your website. No matter the field, a well written press release can not only improve your marketing strategy and gain a few inbound links and link bait from other websites, but can lead to journalists that will cite your company in their offline/online magazine as well as in online news websites like Google News and Yahoo! News.
- If you have local conferences or shows, that relate to your industry attend to them. Go yourself, or send an employee. Make business connections, friends, discuss daily issues, socialize. You wouldn't imagine how much that will help you on the long run.
- If you sell products or services on your website, regularly offer discounts or promotional coupons. That will not only increase sales and visibility but will attract links and stories, especially if you are a well known company. Issue a press release each and every time you offer that discount. Journalists and news search engines like Google News usually pick up the press release if it's written correctly.
- Your customers are always right!

How to Write a Press Release

So, how to write a press release? That's a million dollar question. If done right, it can indeed bring you a million dollars in revenue. Let's get started by answering what a press release is.

"A press release is simply a statement prepared for distribution to the news media announcing something claimed as having news value with the intent of gaining media coverage."

A press release consists of following elements:

1. **Headline** - The headline is the first single line of text in the press release and tells what the press

release is about. It can be a very effective tool to grab the attention of the journalists, so writing it from a journalists perspective is very important. All that the journalists care about is readers. Think what headlines catch your eyes in the newspaper. Identify a unique feature about your product or service and then write how it is going to revolutionize the world.

2. Dateline - The dateline contains the release date of the press release and usually also the originating city of the press release.

3. Summary - The summary let's your build up your chance to sell your press release to the journalist. It is generally a requirement of online press release services and it can be of the size of a small paragraph.

4. Introduction - The introduction is where the press release body starts. It is the first paragraph in a press release, that generally gives basic answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and why.

5. Body - The body comes after the introduction. It gives further explanation, statistics, background, or other details relevant to the news and also serves to back up whatever claims were made in the introductory paragraph.

6. About - The about section is also called the "boilerplate" as it used over and over again. It is generally a short section providing background information on the press release issuing company, organization or individual.

7. Media Contact Information - This section contains the name, phone number, email address, mailing address, or other contact information for the media relations contact person.

General Tips - It is very useful to look at other people's press releases. Feel free to take a look at the most viewed press releases on this site, as it usually gives a lot of insight into how to write a press release.

Finally, spend a sentence or two describing your company and what you do:

If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with John Smith, please call Pat Brown at 555/555-2222 or e-mail Pat at pr@mysite.com

Some Key Things to Remember

1. Stay away from hype-bloated phrases like "breakthrough", "unique", "state-of-the-art", etc.
2. Always write it from a journalist's perspective. Never use "I" or "we" unless it's in a quote.
3. Read lots of good newspaper writing, such as the New York Times or the Washington Post to get a feel for the style.
4. Shorter is better. If you can say it in two pages, great. If you can say it in one page, even better.

Where to Submit your Press Release

<http://pagansoftheworld.com>

<http://witchvox.com>

<http://www.free-press-release.com/>

<http://www.prlog.org/>

<http://www.google.com/press/>

<http://www.24-7pressrelease.com/>

<http://www.openpr.com/news/submit.html>

Chapter 12 Selling and Hosting Events

How to Sell at Fairs

Think selling your work at shows and fairs might be for you? Follow these 10 road-tested tips to success:

1. Walk the show. First, attend a few shows to see if your stuff is good enough to pass muster. Some shows are juried, which means that judges review your work and select you; others are open to everyone.

It's also important to find the right venue for your work. While an indoor art show may be beyond your grasp, a craft show or Renaissance fair may fit the bill just right. You can find out a lot of information about the shows by talking to artists and craftsmen you meet there. "The best way is to ask other vendors where the best shows are."

2. Do your homework. Find out who typically attends the show, what kind of turnout you can expect and how much it will cost to exhibit there. You need to factor in travel costs, shipping costs and the cost of a table, banner and the booth itself. And don't forget the materials costs; for jewelry or sculptures made of precious metals, those costs can add up. And depending on the city or state the show is in, you may also need a license or permit to sell there. It's best to figure out your breakeven point--that is, how many items you need to sell in order to make a profit--before you decide to pack up and go.

3. Start small. Most established artists and craftspeople sell to repeat customers who frequent the same shows every year and often collect their pieces. While you're establishing your reputation and building a following, keep your expenses to a minimum. Speer suggests renting or borrowing a booth from another artist instead of buying your own. Another option is to share a booth with another artist or craftsperson. "Don't invest a lot of money until you're sure it's going to work," he says.

4. Price it right. While cheaper work is easier to sell, you've got to sell a lot more items to cover your costs and make a profit.

5. Bring your credit card machine. Credit cards are the common currency of shows and fairs, and if you don't accept them, you're going to lose sales to vendors who do. You also face the risks of dealing with bounced checks from strangers who may be hard to track down after the show. Especially if you're selling work priced in the hundreds of dollars, credit cards are a must. To find out more about obtaining merchant credit, see our "Appendix" section.

6. Don't go it alone. While shows can be exciting and profitable, they can also be physically and emotionally exhausting. That's why it's important to bring along someone to help you work the booth and deal with customers. This will also give you a chance to get up and go to the bathroom and grab a hotdog or something to drink without losing sales.

7. Pack your stuff. Make sure you bring enough products to sell but not so much that you'll have to carry most of it back. Besides your products, you'll also need to pack your booth, several chairs, a small table, a calculator, a credit card machine, bags for customers to carry your products home in and any brochures or marketing materials you might have.

8. Put your best foot forward.

9. Build a mailing list. Shows are a great way to develop your customer database. Try putting a fishbowl on your table and offering people a chance to win a product in return for giving you their contact information or business cards. Giving away promotional items with your company's name and logo works, too. This way, you can send out postcards inviting prospects to your next show. Don't forget to collect e-mail addresses, too! It's a lot cheaper to send out 100 e-mail messages than it is to pay for paper and postage.

10. Count your money. Before you move on to the next show, sit down and figure out how much you made on the last one. For example, if you spend \$500 on this show, did you make \$500 back? Remember, we're talking about profits, not sales! Don't forget to include the cost of your materials, the booth space, travel, shipping and cleanup. This kind of breakeven analysis will help you figure out if you should exhibit at the same show next year.

Don't be disappointed if you don't make a fortune your first time out--or ever. Some people live off these shows; other people use it to market their business

Helpful Resources

Do a Google search on the following add you State, County or City "Psychic Fairs in Michigan". Also go to <http://witchvox.com> and look under your State than Events.

Psychic Fairs

Renaissance Fairs

Witches' Balls

Pagan Pride

Pagan Events

Wiccan Events

Drum Circles

New Age Healing Events...

You get the idea

Other Resources

1. Festival Network Online. <http://festivalnet.com> This searchable database of 17,000-plus festivals, arts and crafts shows and other events also offers information on products, services and resources for artists and other vendors. Membership starts at \$49 a year. Free demo available.
2. Art and Craft Shows. <http://www.sunshineartist.com/shows> Browse this searchable database of 2,000-plus open-entry craft shows and art festivals by date, city, state and region.
3. The Crafts Fair Online. <http://www.craftsfaironline.com> This website offers links to thousands of crafters' websites plus listings of craft shows and information about suppliers, publications, newsgroups, classes, software and more.

Hosting Your Own Event

Where do I find sponsors? How do I market my event? These questions and more are answered here. Anyone can create an event. It's a quick and easy way to get other people involved in the things you care about. To get started, scroll down. There is a great ebook at <http://paganwebmaster.com> called How to Host a Pagan Event

The Idea

So you want to host an event. Now what? What kind of event? Do you want an event with kids, no kids, vendors, readers, classes, ritual, no ritual, music, dancing, indoor, outdoor, all of the above?

First, and most important, is what type of event do you want everything else flows from that and the nature of your event will drive the strategies needed to be successful.

In determining the nature of your event is necessary to be realistic. What is already in place in my area/state? What do people really want? What are you really able to provide? What is already in place in my area/state?

The Price

Rule #1 Get bids on what you need, do not take the first price, barter, swap services, offer free ads etc.

Forming Your Event

First Pick a name. This should reflect your event, or if you planning on hosting more than one event a year should reflect your intent. Michigan Pagan Productions, or if just the one event Michigan Witches' Ball. Either way it should tell who you are upon first glance. You can be a corporation or an unincorporated association.

Marketing

Pagan events derive half of their income from the sale of services, a third from sponsors programs, and the rest from donations. The markets for pagan events are small. Successful events pay careful attention to the way they position themselves in multiple markets, to public perception of their purpose and quality, to the way they package and present services to a variety of clients and donors, to their position in various marketing arrangements, to pricing, etc.

How can I find sponsors for an event?

Corporate sponsors seem to be everywhere in today's world. Take the Olympics, for example. Hard to imagine what the skating rink would look like without those ubiquitous banners touting fast-food restaurants and telephone companies. It's not just the big events that draw sponsors, either. Small, local events- neighborhood festivals-usually have a slew of corporate logos in the accompanying literature.

Your Committee

More groups have fallen by the wayside and great ideas have never gotten off the ground do to a poorly formed group. Your committee members all need to have the ability to check their ego at the door.

Type of Events to Host

Psychic Fairs

Renaissance Fairs

Witches' Balls

Pagan Pride

Pagan Events

Wiccan Events

Drum Circles

New Age Healing Event

Chapter 13 Miscellaneous Thoughts

Using Auctions

There are thousands of online auctions on the internet. People love them because they can usually find great bargains. If you have an online business, you can use them to increase traffic to your web site.

Use auctions to gauge new products. If you are considering adding a new product to your business, auctions are a great way to see what kind of demand there might be for it. Do an experiment -- put one of the products up for auction and see how many people bid on it (you might even be able to track how many people look at the auction without making a bid). If you have good response from the auction, it can be a good indication that you should add the product to your inventory.

Use auctions to determine prices. Put your item on auction and see how much people are willing to bid on it. Don't just look at the high bid -- remember that there are some "insane bidders" out there -- rather, look at the maximum bids from all bidders to get an idea of what customers are willing to pay for your product.

Link your auction to your business. Now, before you go any further, read your auction service's policies CAREFULLY -- many services will not allow you to put a direct link to your web site in your auction description.

Even if you can't put a link directly in your auction, you might still be able to promote your business. For instance, many services will have an "about me" page where you can put a link to your business. Also, there is nothing keeping you from linking the sites in the other direction -- putting a link to your auctions on your web site, for instance.

Strengths of the business model

The strategic advantages of this business model include:

1. No time constraints. Bids can be placed at any time (24/7). Items are listed for a number of days (usually between 1 and 10, at the discretion of the seller), giving purchasers time to search, decide, and bid. This convenience increases the number of bidders.
2. No geographical constraints. Sellers and bidders can participate from anywhere that has internet access. This makes them more accessible and reduces the cost of "attending" an auction. This increases the number of listed items (ie.: number of sellers) and the number of bids for each item (ie.: number of bidders). The items do not need to be shipped to a central location, reducing costs, and reducing the seller's minimum acceptable price.

3. Intensity of social interactions. The social interactions involved in the bidding process are very similar to gambling. The bidders wait in anticipation hoping they will "win." Much like gambling addiction, some bidders may bid primarily to "play the game" rather than to obtain products or services. This creates a highly loyal customer segment.

4. Large number of bidders. Because of the potential for a relatively low price, the broad scope of products and services available, the ease of access, and the social benefits of the auction process, there are a large numbers of bidders.

5. Large number of sellers. Because of the large number of bidders, the potential for a relatively high price, reduced selling costs, and ease of access, there are a large number of sellers.

6. Network economies. The large number of bidders will encourage more sellers, which, in turn, will encourage more bidders, which will encourage more sellers, etc., in a virtuous circle. The more the circle operates, the larger the system becomes, and the more valuable the business model becomes for all participants.

7. Captures consumers' surplus. Auctions are a form of first degree price discrimination. As such, they attempt to convert part of the consumers' surplus (defined as the area above the market price line but below the firm's demand curve) into producers' surplus.

List of Auctions

http://www.witchvox.com/lx/lx_auctions.html has 103 pagan auction sites listed

<http://ebay.com>

<http://ebid.com>

<http://Etsy.com>

Have you ever considered starting a business holding online auctions? For just a moment, try to comprehend the power of the Internet. Every day, there are millions of people from around the globe "surfing the web." People run their business from the Internet, search for love, research succulent recipes, plan vacations, and best of all – they SHOP! Online auctions are a huge market - one where savvy marketers can indeed make a very good living from the comfort of their own home.

Start Small

The best way to start any business online is to start small. The biggest mistake people make when trying to build a business is that they want to do everything right now and try to copy their successful predecessors.

Do you think eBay became that big overnight? No. They started off small and then once they had their base customers they grew into what they are now.

If you want to build a successful auction web site, I would suggest that you begin by creating your site on a specific, well-defined niche and starting a small auction that caters only to that niche. Then once

your site becomes successful, you can expand into other areas.

The reason is it will be easier to draw in traffic from the search engines because you won't have as much competition. Go to Google.com now and do a search for "auction site" (without quotes).

So you would be competing with millions and millions of sites with a topic that broad. Try narrowing it down and focusing your auction site on one theme at first and then work on expanding.

How to Create Your Auction Site

As you may know, the first step to creating any site is to register a domain (dot com) name. There's information on how to do that here. Then once you have selected your name, you'll need a web host to host your site.

Since you are going to be creating an auction site, you'll want to have a lot of web space (at least 5000 megabytes to start).

Next, you'll need to find a script for the auction itself. This will be the backbone of your auction and will tell it how to operate. There are several sites out there that provide these scripts for free.

Keep in mind, you will be responsible for setting the auction script up yourself and may need to learn a bit about programming to get it working properly. Be sure to consult the documentation that comes with the script you decide to download for complete details on how to set it up.

The CGI Resource Index has a list of several scripts for you to choose from.

Promoting Your Auction Site

Start off with the search engines. Most search engine traffic is still free and it's one of the best ways to bring targeted traffic to your site without breaking the bank.

For details on getting your site listed with the major search engines, click here.

Then once your auction site has become successful at that level, you can start offering other categories and expand your site. It's important to keep in mind that you must start small and only target a specific niche. It will be much easier to get traffic when you're starting out.

Diversification

How many times have you heard someone say, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket"? When it comes to business, that's very good advice.

The two principal objectives of diversification are

1. Improving core process execution, and/or
2. Enhancing a business unit's structural position.

The fundamental role of diversification is for companies to create value is created through integration of a new business into the existing one thereby increasing its competitive advantage.

Diversification typically takes one of three forms:

1. Vertical integration – along your value chain
2. Horizontal diversification – moving into new industry
3. Geographical diversification – open up new markets

Means of achieving diversification include internal development, acquisitions, strategic alliances, and joint ventures. As each route has its own set of issues, benefits, and limitations, various forms and means of diversification can be mixed and matched to create a range of options. Value is created through integration of a new business into the existing one thereby increasing its competitive advantage.

Vertical integration - integrating business along your value chain, both upstream and downstream, so that one efficiently feeds the other.

Related Businesses that a Pagan Business can easily diversify into without losing their current customer base.

Online Retailer

Auction Houses

WebZine Publishing

Ebook Publishing

Pagan Personal or Social Sites

Podcasts

Video Production

Schools/Courses

Wholesale
Counseling
General Healing
Reiki / Massage
Search Engines
Web Graphics
Web Design
Web Hosting

Banner Exchanges

What is a Banner Exchange?

A Banner Exchange is a great way to get traffic to your site. In return for showing other banners on your site, you earn the right to show your banner on another site in the exchange. For each time you show another banner on your site, you earn credits, which are redeemed for exposure on another site in the exchange.

How does a Banner Exchange work?

When you show other sites banners on your site, you earn credits. Credits are automatically redeemed for exposures on another site in the exchange.

Banner exchange has always been a great way of increasing traffic. Now that traffic becomes the most valuable commodity on the internet, banner exchange plays even more important role than ever before. To put it simple - sites which do not exchange traffic are losing it. It is well known how hard it to generate traffic on a site, so why lose it?

Internet banner advertising has been declared dead by people "in the know". So why are major news services and mega companies online still using banner ads and making money from them?

This argument has been raging for awhile. In the early days of cyberspace, internet banner advertising was a hot commodity, then it moved into the not so effective stage, followed by being labeled a relic of the past, and now it has been declared dead by people "in the know". Apparently some of the major news services and mega companies online did not get the memo because they still use banner ads; and quite profitably.

A web site banner is an advertisement in the form of image and text. Though you will see banner ads

placed in a variety of different areas, they are commonly used at the top of a webpage. This technique maybe considered a holdover from when internet banner advertising was in its glory days but it really serves a more practical purpose. The top of the page is where you are most likely to attract the attention of your visitors.

A web site banner (like any form of advertisement) can do a nice job of promoting your products or services, when used effectively. Use one or a combination of these tips to get you started.

1. Land of the Free

This word does something to all of us. Mainly it gets us to explore further. Advertise a free giveaway on your web site banner related to your target market. Offer a free ebook or helpful video that gets people curious to find out more. When they click the ad banner, you can lead them to signup page, with an opt in email form. If your initial free offer is enticing enough, then people will not mind giving you their contact information

2. Free Banner Exchange

The folks over at marketingterms.com have come up with the simplest and best definition of a banner exchange program: "I will show your ads on my site in exchange for getting to show my ads on your site." This is a very cost effective way to get your banner on hundreds if not thousands of other websites. Many banner exchanges will work hard to match your ad banner to a relevant website. Keep in mind this is not always feasible so you may get stuck putting banner ads on your site outside of your niche.

3. Paid Banner Ads

As the name implies you are paying for your banner to be advertised on other websites. The key to ensuring this method yields some good return on your investment is to make sure the website you are advertising on delivers the web traffic they promise. You also want your web site banner to be placed in an area that's clearly visible and not on the same page as ten or twenty other banner ads.

4. Free Traffic Exchange

This too has been labeled passé and ineffective but it works and banner ads are perfect for traffic exchanges. You know of course that for every site you surf you accumulate some type of credit. You can then exchange however many credits you choose for banner impressions (your web site banner displayed on another site within the exchange). Why is this so effective? On average, click thru rates of traffic exchange banners are greater than banner only exchanges. This is one of the great secrets of traffic exchanges that can boost your internet business considerably.

Web banner advertising is not extinct. Like anything else you must go about using it correctly. Offer something for free, do your homework when it comes to free exchanges and paid ads while utilizing the hidden goldmine of traffic exchanges. In the end you will find that web banner advertising, far from being a relic of the past, is still very much alive and profitable.

Banner Exchange Sites:

http://www.witchvox.com/lx/lx_banner.html

There are presently 29 Pagan Banner Exchange Sites listed.

Exchange Script

Banner Exchange script Enables you to run extensive banner exchange network site. Visitors exchange banner displays with each other and you can earn heavily by selling surplus banner impressions that site automatically generates. For advertisers, it provides real time stats about their banner display which enables them to know what is working and what is not.

<http://www.hotscripts.com/category/php/scripts-programs/exchanges/banner-exchange/>

Banners Creators

Addesigner <http://www.addesigner.com/>

Service that lets you design and download professional-quality, animated banner ads quickly and easily. In seconds, you can create top-quality, optimized banner ads that are perfect for your favorite banner ad exchange, a paid advertising campaign, or anywhere else.

Banner Creator <http://www.bannercreator.nu/>

Create custom bannners instantly

Banner Generator <http://www.coder.com/creations/banner/>

The title says everything

Banner Exchanges Create a Page and title it Banner_Exchange.html Use this page as the page when you sign up for the services

WebRing

A webring is a group of sites that all have a chunk of HTML code that interlinks them (see what it looks like below). Somebody interested in Pagan Sites can simply keep clicking "Next" in the Ring graphic to be taken on a tour of Pagan Sites Sites.

Search WebRing Communities from the search box located near the top of every page.

Search WebRing by using the Directory on the home page using the following steps:

1. Select your category from the home page.
2. Select your sub-category if available.
3. Select your Webring Community.
4. Select a web site from the WebRing Community.

WebRing is a unique platform that enables you to link your website to other similar sites. The navigation code we provide connects your website with other similar sites. As a result, your traffic increases by association.

Because search engines more easily locate larger aggregated sites, the visibility of a WebRing community is greater than that of an individual site. In linking your site to a WebRing community, the entire community gains visibility — your site included! Greater visibility means more traffic to your site, with no downside other than giving up a small piece of real estate for the navigation code on your landing page.

<http://www.webring.com/>

Web Ring Home Pages:

There are presently 18 Pagan Web Ring Home Pages listed.

http://www.witchvox.com/lx/lx_rings.html

As with Banner Exchanges Create a Page and title it Web_Rings.html Use this page as the page when you sign up for the services

Hold Contests

Online sweepstakes have been among our primary tools for promotion, and have been very successful in driving traffic to our site. More importantly, many of these visitors have turned into buying

customers.

1. Great linking opportunities. There are well over 100 sites out there that will link to any site offering contests, and many of these are very high hit sites.
2. Repeat traffic. Become a regular bookmark much more quickly than through any other method--and when these people are ready to purchase, you will be known and remembered.
3. Referral visitors This is absolutely invaluable: the best source of leads, and also the least amount of work. When you can get the Internet community to promote for you, it is wonderful.
4. The collection of information via entry forms has proven invaluable in developing a mailing list

4 Characteristics of a Good Web Contest

It seems like this is the season for contests. And there's good reason. In this worsening economy, contests provide websites with a cost-effective way to generate traffic, build a mailing list, and gain inbound links. And for the visitor, he gets the chance to win something for nothing (or for very little work).

But there is a skill to creating a good contest. So before you go out and create something that doesn't work, pay attention to these tips. Otherwise, you might find that your contest doesn't help you boost traffic at all.

1. Entrant Requirements Should Not Be Hard To Meet.

Entrant requirements are the set of criteria which determine whether someone can enter your contest. In most cases, contests or giveaways simply require someone to sign up for a mailing list or newsletter. Sometimes, entrants will have to submit something which is used to judge them against the other entrants. But whatever is required, make sure that it easily allows visitors to enter.

2. The Prize Needs To Be Worth The Effort.

Have you ever seen those contests which require you to complete several tasks to become eligible for a prize which is worth very little? This is a bad contest, because few people will enter.

It is important to remember that a contest does not give an entrant a guarantee. So if a prize is small,

there is very little motivation to complete any required tasks.

3. It Needs To Be Well Publicized.

One of the biggest reasons for creating a contest is for the traffic. In order to get this traffic, your contest needs to be well publicized. Some ways to get the word out include:

- * creating a blog entry about the contest and syndicating it
- * distributing a press release
- * publicizing the contest on forums or social networking websites
- * inviting any contest sponsors to promote the contest
- * giving advantages to entrants that refer friends or write about the contest on their websites or blogs

4. The Contest Should Run for a Reasonable Length of Time.

We all like instant gratification. So the longer a contest runs, the less likely that it will appeal to many people. So we suggest that your contest not exceed 1-2 months. In some rare cases, contests may run longer, but there should be regular milestones and status reports so that contestants do not lose interest.

Reviews & Reviewing

Send testimonials and reviews to other business owners whose products you've purchased and loved.

Create an account at Amazon and review books.

Add reviews to other sites like Epinions.

Review websites you like on Alexa.com.

Reviewing Products

Everyone loves free stuff, and PR agencies give out free stuff for better exposure and as a marketing technique.

After you write the review you get to keep the product. And no, you don't have to write a good review in order to keep it. You should be honest in all of your reviews.

Just make sure you review products that are somehow related to your blog and its purpose.

Have you ever wondered how bloggers get products to review on their blogs? Sometimes they simply go out and buy stuff and review it. But in many cases, companies provide bloggers with free products in exchange for a review. This allows bloggers to give an objective, first-hand account of the product's benefits, as well as any areas that may need improvement.

Does getting free products in exchange for your opinion sound good to you? You don't have to be best friends with company presidents to get them. The average blogger can do it too.

- * Email
- * Send to Phone
- * Print Article
- * Add to Favorites
- * Flag Article
- * Bookmark and Share

1. Create one or more niche blogs. Make them about things you enjoy and are knowledgeable about.
2. Fill your blogs with original and informative content. This will attract readers and pique the interest of companies who might be interested in having you review their products.
3. Use search engine optimization to get more traffic to your site. This involves utilizing keywords effectively and gaining outside links to your blog. Doing so will increase your traffic and make your blog even more attractive to potential product providers.
4. Write reviews of relevant items that you own or have experience with. Writing unsolicited reviews will give marketers a glimpse of what they can expect in exchange for providing you with free products.
5. Make it easy for people to contact you by posting your email address on your blog or utilizing a contact form. Marketers can't provide you with free products if they don't know how to reach you.
6. Check blogging forums and social networking sites for marketers and business owners who are interested in getting product reviews. You could also put out the word through these avenues that you are willing to review products.
7. Sign up with paid blogging companies that facilitate product reviews.

WebSite Reviews

Web site review procedures and search engine placement comments below can be used to critique and evaluate web sites, especially corporate web sites. They can also be used to review websites and collect

competitive intelligence. Most of the website evaluation tools below can also be applied by website designers for designing company and personal web sites.

Preliminary Steps for Conducting WebSite Reviews

1. Record the URL and date of the web site review.
2. Review the website with popular browsers (Netscape, MIE, webtv, etc), both recent and earlier versions. Be sure to select browsers most frequently used by the sites visitors. Record the specific browsers and versions used. Make notes of any "browser specific" problems (problems specific to a single browser or a single version of a browser) during the review.
3. Search for other URLs owned by the company. Also look for Intranets and Extranets.
4. Search for existing reviews of the web site. Try googling for "company name" "website review" or "company name.com" "web site review" and other variants.

Web Site Review Process / Web Site Critique Procedure

1. Site Purpose

1. Does the site have a distinct, easily recognizable purpose? (educating users, providing news, corporate image branding, supporting existing customers, gathering information, auction site, banking, government, political, social issue promotion, banking, community site for those with similar interest, club/organization, mall, subscription service, e-commerce, investor relations, distribute products or service literature, customer service, host online courses, search engine, bookstore, internet provider, etc.)

2. Is that purpose reinforced throughout the site?

3. Does the site prominently feature the company's Unique Value Position (USP) on the home page and primary entry pages. You only have a few seconds to capture a customer/visitor. You need to rapidly tell them why you are different from other similar companies / sites.

4. If the purpose of the site is to make money, what is their business model (sell subscriptions to the site, sell advertising, sell products, etc)?

5. Is it extremely obvious to viewer why they should do, what the company want them to do? (purchase items, read you site, subscribe, etc.)

6. See if you can find a press release (printed or online) announcing the launching of the site. It should put forth the major goals of the site. Are they being met? Have the goals changed?

2. Finding the site

1. URL

* Is the URL logical (companyname.com)?

* Company Name - Many companies have been formed specifically to capitalize on the

opportunities of the Internet. Amazingly, several of these companies chose their company name very poorly. Their name include dashes, underscores, special symbols, apostrophes, hard to spell words, long phrases and other characteristics making it difficult for users to correctly input "companyname.com". If this company uses companyname.com, does their company name lend itself to errors in typing "companyname.com"?

- * Do they also have thing.com? For example if their company name is Joes Machine Shop and all they do is manufacture staplers, do they have joesmachineshop.com AND staplers.com?

- * Does the URL contain dashes or underscores? (more difficult to guess the URL)

- * Have other relevant URLs been reserved? (product names, major brand names, trade names)

- o Dotster finds and suggests unregistered domain names (search for availability of a domain, then select "Alternate Domains"). The names it shows as being registered are also worth following as you may wonder who has registered them.

- * Is a separate URL used for a dealer portal or extranet?

2. Search Engines & Search Engine Placement

- * Has the site (and its primary entry pages) been submitted to the Open Source Directory (DMOZ.org). This one step may hold more "bang for the buck" than any other step it gaining traffic. DMOZ is used by many search engines as a source of listings and sites listed in it often also receive a boost in their rankings. The description used when submitted to DMOZ.org is also used by some search engines. If you do one thing to improve traffic levels, do this. If a company has not submitted their site, they are not search engine savvy. Many now think being listed in DMOZ is less important than it once was, that may be true, but we believe it is still important to be listed. Be prepared to wait - it can take months or even years to be listed.

- * Do the base URL or other primary entry pages require Flash, Shockwave or other viewers. We think this is a very bad idea. First they prevent many visitors from retrieving the page if they have a firewall with the security levels set fairly high, Second they prevent visitors from seeing the page if they do not have the viewers/plugin-ins, Third, they can prevent the page from being indexed by the search engine spiders (crawl the web like spiders finding pages for the search engines. Flash or Shockwave should not normally be used on the entry pages. There are certain audiences and situations for which they are appropriate on entry pages, but they are few and far between.

- * Similarly, does the site use "Frames" on its base URL or primary entry pages? We (and many others) feel they interfere with search engine spiders and should not be used on primary entry pages (many feel they should not be used at all).

- * Is the site easy to find, if you do not already have the URL? (listed high in search engines by company name, brand names, trade names, product category)

- * Are several links to the site provided by most of the major search engines?

o Market Leap Visibility Index finds total links from several search engines

* Is the site listed high in the search engines when you search for application words?

o The Overture Search Term Suggestion Tool can be used to identify the best "key words" / "buzz words" for a specific site based on their target audience.

o WordTracker has a somewhat similar tool with some additional features that is fee based, but offers a free trial.

o Digital Point Solutions has a tool that combines some of the results of both Overture and WordTracker.

o Google has an AdWords Keyword Suggestions Page that suggests key words. It also includes some relative frequency information and some historical data.

o KW Map has a keyword map of the Internet that can be helpful in generating keywords and preventing overlooking important ones.

o Google has a collection of links to Key Word Tools that may be helpful in determining which keywords to focus on.

* If the site has two or more "must have" keyword audiences, do they have separate pages setup to compete for each major key word? For example if a site is selling or talking about slip on shoe covers to protect your shoes during rainstorms, they might want to draw people searching for "overshoes", people searching for "galoshes" and people searching for "rain shoes". If these three key words appear to be pretty important in the key word tools above (Overture, WordTracker), they should be setting up pages dedicated to each keyword to bring visitors to their site. Each of these focused keyword pages would include a link to the main content of the site and "funnel" all three groups of users into the same area.

* Sometimes hyphenated words - The same approach holds for words sometimes hyphenated. Some searchers will use the hyphen, some will not, some will enter separate words, some will enter it "all together" as one word. Either list the word in multiple ways on your page, or create separate pages to capture the audience, then direct them to the general area. Band-Aid is a good example. List it as band-aid and bandaid.

* Plural and singular - Do they cover important terms both ways? For example, if they sell plates, do they prominently list the key word as both plate and plates? This is even more important on words that do not plural with "s", such as goose and geese.

* Frequently combined words - Some words are often combined by some searchers (for example weight lifter / weightlifter, weight lifting / weightlifting, boat builder / boatbuilder, web site / web site, key words / keywords, stern drive / sterndrive). When creating pages for words that are frequently combined we use them both ways on the page so the search engines will see both formats. In cases where the frequency is very high, separate pages for each ("weight lifting" and "weightlifting") can be created. Each page can then funnel its visitors to the main content of the site.

* Commonly misspelled words - Many words or combinations of words are frequently misspelled. When creating pages with key words that are frequently misspelled, we often misspell them a few times on purpose to make sure that spelling is also caught by the search engines (for example accoustical/ acoustical, receipt / receipt). The Band-Aid example used earlier is another example; Band-Aid, Band-Ade and versions without the hyphen may be attempted in searches. In cases where a word is very frequently misspelled, it may be best to create a separate page focusing entirely on the misspelled version.

* Anticipation of typographical errors - In cases where each individual visitor in the target audience can be of great value (for example, trying for signup clients suffering from specific diseases or ailments for a legal case worth millions of dollars) it may be necessary to anticipate mistyped words (typos) and include them in the page on purpose or even create a specific site for them. Mistyped words are different than misspelled words. Misspelled words were typed in correctly, the typist just thought they were spelled another way. Typographical errors result when the typist knows how to spell the word, but makes keyboard errors. One or both may need anticipated and planned for in certain situations.

* Phrases - start small and build. For example if the site sells or talks about acoustical ceiling tile, the site might have "Ceiling Tile" in the 1st line of the heading and then "Acoustical Ceiling Tile" on the second heading line (or create separate pages for each, then route traffic to the general area. Acoustical Ceiling Tile is another example of a site with a lot of spelling problems (acoustical / accoustical, ceiling, cieling, tile / tyle) that may need dealt with.

* Key words on competitive sites - visit web sites of major competitors (sell similar products, target similar audiences). Do they use additional / different key words. Should those key words be incorporated into this site?

* Are the key words up high on the page and in larger fonts? Note- the use of tables (used by many sites to control page layout) make spiders encounter text in the left column from top to bottom, then in the next column from top to bottom, etc). Code that may appear high in the middle of the page may actually be encountered after text at the lower left of the page. Are javascript and Cascading HTML code as far down the page as possible (spider encounters more text before it hits them, they devalue text positioned after them). Some put the codes on a separate page.

* Does the site include a "Site Map" page? Site Maps with text links are an easy way to make

sure the spiders/crawlers can find all the pages of your site, especially if you use javascript links on some of the other pages. Spiders have trouble following javascript links.

* How much is enough? Covering related key words, frequently misspelled key words, frequently combined words, frequently hyphenated words and related phrases are all ways of reducing the risk (Mitigating Risk) your target audience will NOT find your site in the search engines. You mitigate the risk by being "on the first page" and preferably in the top few sites displayed by the search engine for whatever words, singular AND plural forms of those words, combination of words, or phrase an individual in your target audience might key into a search engine box on purpose or in error. You need to balance the time you spend in adding these variations and the complexity they add to your site against the number of visitors they might attract. Increased complexity on a given page can actually decrease search engine ratings by making each phrase appear as a smaller percentage of the total number of words. The tool on Overture can help you do select which alternatives to add, plus you do not have to add them all at once. If your primary key word gathers half of your target audience and two or three variants get most of the rest, you may choose to stop once you include this second group of words. Other companies may have a much more fragmented target audience.

* Does the web site design recognize the existence of major competitors for specific key words?

In some cases it may be appropriate to list the names of major competitors.

* Internal links within your web site - use text links and use key words for the pages as the text. This will help your ratings in several of the engines. Some have trouble (or can't) follow text links.

* Does the site "look" like it was designed for the search engines? The page is relatively short, contains few images, the first dozen words or so look like they were chosen very carefully, primary key words appear early and often, has only a few links on it? Source code for the page can be viewed in Internet Explorer by a command under the "VIEW" command at the top of the browser. Does the source code contain metatags? Are the metatag content codes carefully chosen? Does the code look reasonably efficient or has it been generated using one of the software packages that generates a lot of spurious codes? Do images contain "alt" tags. We do not use "alt" tags for images near the top of the page as they may push keywords past them further down the page (key words may rank lower).

* Paid placement - Many search engines now have a paid listing service allowing you to purchase certain words and have your listing displayed a given number of times or be clicked on a given number of times (sometimes as part of the normal list and sometimes specifically marked as a paid placement). Personally, I am not real big on this idea. I am a believer in "If you build it, they will come." If you construct a web site with great content for your target audience, maintain it well, frequently update it, make sure it is submitted to the major search engines, and encourage at least a few site with moderate popularity to link to it, it will rank well in the search engines. You will not normally need to pay for placement, however there are exceptions. As mentioned earlier, specific customers can be of great value to some situations.

* Reference - Where to Submit to Search Engines - you can submit to a zillion engines, but we suggest try to focus on;

- o DMOZ an open source directory use by some search engines
- o Yahoo
- o Google

3. Do several sites link to this site?

* Google has a tool that identifies pages linking to a specific site. The Advanced Google Search Page has a "Page-Specific Search" area with a Links box that allows you to enter the URL of the page you are interesting in finding links to. It will report the number links to the site from currently indexed sites and provide a link to each one of those pages

* Alta Vista has a tool that identifies sites that link to a specific site or to a base URL. Enter `LINK://www.companyname.com` for a list web pages with links to their main web page. To search for sites with links to a specific page, go to Alta Vista, then enter `LINK://www.companyname.com/companydirectory/companypage.htm`. Also check `LINK://companyname.com` as some firms leave off the www. Is the company's web site really integrated into the net or do very few sites link to it?

* Are the site AND pages on back into the site easy to link to? Several sites create dynamic pages that are difficult or practically impossible to link to. Some sites using frames have internal pages that are very difficult to link to. Making pages difficult to link to, results in fewer external links.

* Are the sites linking to the site significant and in similar industries or are they junk sites that are just endless lists of unrelated links, or from unrelated sites? Links receive much more weight in some of the engines when they come from meaningful, related sites.

* Do they maximize the use of internal links? Does each page contain a link back to the front page? Several companies maintain more than one public web site. Do the other sites frequently link to each other? Do allied companies link to their site? Small companies can improve placement by encouraging their employees with personal web pages to provide a link to the company site. Employee communications can explain how links from their personal web site may improve the company's search engine rankings, resulting in more traffic, more business, and great job security for employees.

4. Do they publicize their web site URL?

Is their URL listed prominently on all their product literature, business cards, newsletters. Is their URL listed prominently on all their product literature, business cards, newsletters, letter head, promotional items, printed advertisements, newspaper ads, TV commercials, mentioned on their radio commercials, shown on their actual products? Have they written articles for technical and trade publications that include their URL? Do their press releases include their URL?

5. Traffic is one of the best indicators of a good URL and good search engine placement.

* AA9.com has a toolbar that provides access to Alexa data (a report on the relative frequency of "hits" for sites using a specific word or phrase. You can permanently install the toolbar, or those without the toolbar can just type their query into their existing browser URL text box at the top of their screen. Type <http://www.a9.com/query> (enter phrase w/quotes, etc). For example if you want to know some indication of the relative popularity of sites using the word "boat", Type <http://www.a9.com/boat> into your browser URL box. A list of sites will be displayed. If hover the mouse pointer over the "site info" box by each listing you will see some data for that site. If you "click" on the "site info" box, additional information will be displayed.

This tool is also useful in that it list the time taken to display the site. Is the site you are interested in fast? Slow sites are often sites are often bypassed by searchers in a rush. When they don't come up fast, they just try the next one on the search engine list.

It also lists the first date the site first went online.

* Alexa can be used to estimate relative web traffic counts for popular sites. Find the site and compare traffic levels to its competitors. For sites of less prominence, you can install their free toolbar and view historical traffic data for each page. They also sell databases of traffic data.

* Alexaholic another way to view Alexa data

* Google Trends shows relative search frequency over time, including marking news items on a time line, great for company and industry searches

* Google has a free tool bar that indicates the relative popularity of specific web pages. You can visit one company, see their rating, then visit their competitors, view their ratings, then estimate the relative popularity of the sites.

* Some sites may have a traffic counter. Some even post web logs.

* If you do not already understand the difference in hits, visitors, unique visitors and caching, you probably need to learn how these apply to traffic counts.

6. Local Search Capability - If a local search feature is used inside the web site, is it effective? Is it easy to find? Who supplies it?

3. Content is KING

Many talk about optimizing for specific search engines, but "Content is KING". Content drives

traffic! If you build it they will come. Yes it takes some attention to the search engines, but sites "oozing" with great content for their target audience will draw visitors like ants to a picnic. Some companies spend too much time worrying about the search engine and not enough time worrying about content.

Content is not just a bunch of pictures of their products, content is useful, helpful, interesting and even captivating information for their target audience.

1. Does the site have a substantial amount of significant, interesting text and visual content for its target audience? Does it have better content than its competitors.

2. Is the content frequently updated? Are old items archived?

3. Are bulletin boards, message boards, industry news, RSS news feeds, polls, databases, industry information, and useful links used to make the site a real "hub" or "portal" for the industry?

4. Can relevant recent articles in current trade magazine and technical publications be accessed from the site?

5. Are articles that might be printed off available with a "print" button that routes the user to a page displaying the document only, without all the headings, navigation bars, advertisements, etc.?

6. Are lengthy articles, brochures, specifications and technical articles available in Adobe Acrobat (pdf) format?

7. Are any games on the site? Are they relevant to the audience and branded by the company?

4. Getting Past the Firewalls, Virus Checkers and Ad Blockers

1. Does the site display properly when firewalls and other security measures are set to maximum levels? Does it display at all?

2. Does the site use banners to display text messages that can be blocked by Ad Blockers? Many sites use images as links to return to certain parts of their site and those images are sometimes blocked by Ad Blockers in Norton/Symantec and other Utilities.

5. Review the ENTIRE site

Sometimes it is difficult to know if you have seen the entire site. Sometimes the individual/company may be purposefully hide part of the site. The tools / methods below will increase the probability of viewing the entire site.

1. The Advanced Google Search Page has a means for identifying the pages on a specific base URL that have been indexed by Google. Enter the domain name (Base URL) in the Domain search box and leave the search terms box empty. Click on enter and the number of pages indexed on that URL and a link to each page will appear.

2. Alta Vista has a tool for finding all the pages they links to for a specific company. Go to Alta Vista, then enter URL://companyname.com for a full list of the company's web pages indexed by Alta Vista (are there some pages that should not be online? old pages?, proprietary info?)

3. Crawl a company's web site - Quest software provides Funnel Web web stats analyzer AND another program called Funnel Web Profiler. Profiler will crawl a URL and map the links within the site. Very helpful for finding areas of a site you might not otherwise find. They no longer directly provide the software, but it is still available from some major download portals.

4. Stripping URLs - Following links on a web site typically leads you deeper into the web site. At various places along the path, try going up into the full URL displayed in the browser and remove a portion of it (strip it back the next "/". If that does not work, keep stripping it back. Sometimes you will find a directory to pages not normally accessed.

5. Sometimes viewing the source codes of pages on back into the site will reveal other locations, directories not normally noticed by casual visitors.

6. Navigation

1. Does the site have a consistent feel and appearance or does it feel piecemeal constructed?
2. Easily Navigated?
3. Is the site too deep? (Too many clicks to find desired info)
4. Is the use of scrolling minimized, especially on primary navigation pages.
5. Are navigation methods consistent and in similar locations?
6. Are symbols, icons, photos or graphics used for navigation obvious in terms of what they represent?
7. Does the home page establish the basic navigation methods?
8. Are places viewers are to click obvious?
9. Is a consistent navigation bar(s) provided?
10. Is the color code on the links and previously followed links intuitive? Are they easy to see against the background color and images?

11. Do viewers become lost in newly opened browser windows? (launches new browser window and you cannot back out of it)

12. Does the site let you leave, some keep hanging onto you and stopping you at their home page when you click the back button?

13. When you click on the BACK button are you redirected to another site instead of being allowed to back out? Porn and Gambling sites are notorious for trapping visitors in a endless loop of their own sites.

14. Is a "Home" icon, button or link present in the same position on every page in the site?

15. Is mouseover used to indicate which navigation button you select? If mouseover is used to activate a box of additional information about the choice, is this additional information very conspicuous? or could it be overlooked by a casual surfer?

16. Does the personally recognize you when you come back? Does it tell you that it does?

17. Is the site customizable by individual viewers (like some search engine and news sites)?

18. If user id's, passwords, PIN numbers or similar input is required to access to certain portions of the site, is the entry system convenient for the user while still providing the level of security needed? Does it have an option of remembering your password (stored cookies)

7. General

1. Would it be considered visually appealing by its target audience?

2. Are the background colors dithered, did they use browser safe colors that register correctly on 256 color displays? See a safe color chart,

3. Is the site internally/locally managed or is it operated by and advertising agency or internet provider? Locally managed sites can interact with viewers more effectively.

4. Width and Length - does the site require you to move a slider to the right to view the full width of the screen? Does it require extensive vertical scrolling?

5. Updated regularly?

6. Is the content easily readable by the target audience. Copy some of the text, past it into Microsoft Word and use its Spelling and Grammar Readability Tools to evaluate the text.

7. Is older content archived?

8. Is the date of the most recent update provided?

9. Is a "What's New" type section provided? (list of recent updates)

10. Is an email service announcing recent major updates available?

11. Attention to details? Spelling errors, broken graphics, broken links (404 Error)

12. Do they write to their audience (not talk over them, talk down to them, use their jargon)?

13. Does the site look nice?

14. Size of site? small? average? very large?

15. Does it supply significant content, or is it just a brochure with a bunch of links to other sites?

16. Is the site viewable with both Netscape and MIE in their latest revisions as well as their last 2 editions.?

17. Available in more than one language (English, Spanish, Japanese, German, French, etc)? Are the translations well done?

18. Real content provided or just a catalog site?

19. Does it generally resemble other sites in the same industry?

20. Loads fast? (check it on a dial up line, check it at different times of the day and in their peak times / peak season)

21. Sufficient product information to make a choice?

22. Provides additional helpful information for users of their products or services

23. Easy to print information from? Many sites have background colors making printing difficult or no way to print them at all.

24. How do they try to build site traffic

- * TV ads

- * Print URL on all business literature

- * Magazine Ads

- * Press Releases

- * Ad space purchased on other web sites

- * Major campaign to get their link listed on other sites

- * Generate traffic with an Associates program (Pay for traffic or sales generated from links from other sites)

25. Use of Frames

- * Can they be easily navigated (multiple scroll bars)?

- * Can the content of the frames be printed?

- * Can internal pages be effectively book marked?

- * Can search engines log the material in the frames?

- * Tables are often more user friendly, but frames are easier to design.

26. Use of Cascading HTML Style Sheets, Cascading Style Sheets allow web designers to easily change the basic layout on hundred of pages by changing only one page. Personally, we think it is a nice idea, but are not yet sold on it.

27. Does the site leave you wanting to come back again?

28. Have the amount of resources devoted to developing and maintaining the site obviously changed? (more or less investment)

29. Information about major down times (failed to respond for "x" hours on Dec. 22nd) is available in media for very high profile sites in certain industries (internet providers, auction sites)..

8. Branding

1. Besides having a consistent feel throughout the site, is that feel and image consistent with the image and feel presented through other media and the products of the company involved?
2. Does each page bear the corporate logo?
3. Are colors consistent with other corporate images?

9. Primary Sections of the Site

1. Service tools

- * Online troubleshooting FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions section)?
- * Parts Book online?
- * Service Manuals online?
- * Product Service Bulletins online?
- * Email access to service group?

2. List of local places to purchase?

3. Provides links to other useful sites?

4. If Dealer Locators are used, are they effective?, are maps provided to the locations?

5. If a Job Openings section is available, is the information current? does it post enough detail about the jobs? is it possible to submit your resume online?

6. Helpful tools - Are charts, tables, calculators, graphics and other tools used to help the viewer completely understand the information being provided, and allow them to apply it to their own situation if needed?

7. External Links - is a helpful selection of currently functioning external links provided if they could be of benefit to the user? Or are they just internal links and links to their sister companies?

8. Level of online interaction - is two way communication easy and encouraged?

- * Provides email path to ask questions (see how quick they respond)?
- * Are any special tools provided (deck designers, prop slip calculators, cost of moving calculators, etc)?
- * Any webcams? These are rarely used by business sites, but a great attention getter.
- * Provides a phone number for interacting with the company?
- * If a form must be filled out for access, it requires minimal information, does not feel like you are being interrogated.
- * Several sites now have live interaction with robotic customer service agents and with "real people".

9. Are they part of Associate type programs? Do they have their own Associate program?

- * Some book programs allow you to help your viewers select the best books for their

situation. If you do a good job, they begin to recognize you as an authority in the field.

- * Post ads for Associate Programs to generate funds

- * Offer an Associate Program to build web traffic

10. Are there other possible sections that could be included in the site to benefit its viewers and purpose? (women, children, beginners, an alert service of major breaking news)

11. Are other internet tools that could be effectively applied to the site (animated gifs, mouseovers, streaming video, MP3, current date & time, maps, local weather, calendar of events, webcams, etc)

10. E-Commerce

1. Provides online ability to purchase (E-commerce) - uses secure site?

2. Shipping charges and other transaction costs provided?

3. If you cannot purchase online, is price information still supplied?

4. Accepts credit cards online?

5. Uses a shopping cart system?

6. Accepts foreign currencies?

7. How easy are purchases completed in comparison to the Amazon 1-Click system

8. Is your order confirmed by email along with your order number?

9. Are you notified by email when your order is shipped?

10. Are the company's logo imprinted products (hats, cups, T-shirts, etc) offered for sale on the site?

11. Do they sell refurbished, refurbished, rebuilt products online or help their dealers do so?

12. Can customers purchase items online and pick them up at "brick and mortar" stores?

13. Can customers return items bought online to "brick and mortar" stores?

14. Is a return goods / exchange policy in place? Is it easy? Can you return goods locally?

15. Does the site hold up in peak times (Christmas, after major TV commercials, etc)?

16. Web site efficiency? How long does it take to search for a well known item (also available from others), locate it, buy it, and wait for it to arrive by the fastest shipping method vs. other similar sites? Reference: "Christmas Toys.com". Wall Street Journal 3 Dec. 1999. Page W12.

11. Test Their Online Response Times

Before attempting either test below, you might want to move to a public email server (like Yahoo Email) so the company will not see your real email address. We do NOT encourage for asking competitive information online. Just ask them everyday questions a normal customer might ask and supply your real name.

1. Study their site, then send them an email with a question not answered about their product or service on their web site. See how long it takes them to respond and how good the quality of their response is.

2. Find an error on their web site and send them a note about it, see if they respond to you. The easiest thing to do is find a broken link and report it to them. How long did it take for them to respond, how long to fix the problem?

12. Technical Operations

1. Method used to create the site? HTML coded, Microsoft Front Page, heavy duty packages and databases?

2. In-house operation or done by an advertising firm?

3. Easy to find in the search engines by company name, product names, trade names, industry? Position on the search engine lists?

4. Metatags

- * Good use of metatags (labels in the code used by search engines)?

- * Metatags are within length limits?

- * Keyword Metatag does not use one word too frequently?

- * Appropriate keywords are used on each page that has a keyword metatag?

- * Keyword Metatags include a limited number of prime "key words", not dozens of words. Some search engines may penalize prime keywords if many words are listed.

- * Proper use of correct keywords, including guessing possible misspellings of them?

- * Lists competitors and their product names in keywords Metatag? possible trademark violation issues

5. Any comments about traffic level?

6. Who hosts the site? Service providers can sometimes be found from information on the URL at a "whois" sites, like "Whois.Net and BetterWhois

7. What kind of operating system are they running and what type of server are they using? This can be answered at NetCraft.Com

8. Can you detect the existence of site logs? Are they really using them to improve their site?

9. Are browser types and versions checked for, to insure everyone can view the material presented to them?

10. Chat boards, bulletin boards?

11. Uses frames? (top only or top and a side?)

12. Accesses databases?

13. E-commerce site?

14. Accepts PayPal?
15. Accepts credit cards?
16. Secure site used for inputting personal information?
17. Computer languages used (Java, Java Script, Pearl, HTML, etc)?
18. Use of mouseovers?
19. Does the site address the differences in browsers both current and previous?
20. Plug-ins
 - * Does it require special software (viewers / plug-ins) for viewing / listening (Shockwave, Flash, Adobe Acrobat, Real Audio, others)?
 - * Can it still be viewed in a limited manner without the plug-ins?
 - * Are links provided to obtain the plug-ins / viewers from?
21. Provide machine readable text content for the visually handicapped? See WC3 Web Accessibility Initiative
22. Do they have off site backups?
23. Do they have real time backup systems capable of instantly taking over?
24. You may be able to find a technical discussion of major sites in internet magazines (printed or online).
25. Graphics minimized for fast loading by minimizing number of colors?
26. Graphics use internet safe colors?
27. Provides forms requiring access information from visitors?
28. Has a guest book?
29. Offers a sign-up for subscription access?
30. Does the site use cookies?
31. Does the site personally recognize people when they return
32. Does it provide material to viewers based on their past choices?
33. Does it suggest choices to the viewer based on past choices?
34. Does it use a shopping cart system? Whose is it?
35. Are certain incoming URLs rejected (competitors, hackers, others)? May be difficult to determine.
36. What kind of platform (Windows, Unix, etc) are they operating their server on?
37. What kind of server software are they using?
38. What kind of hardware is their server? (Pentium III, Indy, Sun, etc)?
39. If it is a high use site, is it scalable (can it be rapidly setup for more users using the same basic software by adding more or larger servers and lines? Or can the graphics be rapidly downsized or removed to reduce bandwidth in peak use (CNN does this during major news events.)
40. Is the source code efficient, or is a lot of extraneous code being generated by the software used

to write the site?

13. Security

We are not speaking of security in the context of the e-commerce security issues mentioned in the technical issues above, but instead of security issues of the integrity of the website against both natural disasters, acts of God, floods, fires, bombs, tornadoes, attacks from hackers, computer viruses, saboteurs, etc.

We are certainly not qualified to offer extensive advice in this area, but if you are a major website, you need to find someone who is. You will need a regular program of off site backups and an extensive review in the hacker area if you are a high profile site, a government site, a site with access to secure internal databases, or your site accept forms as a method of user input (forms offer an easy portal of access to your server if they are not carefully used).

The best known protection against computer viruses is to isolate the system (do not use the server other purposes), regularly run a major virus software package that is frequently updated with the latest virus profiles, and a good off site backup program.

If the server is connected to internal systems, proper firewalls need to be in place along with proper internal sabotage precautions.

14. Competitive Intelligence Opportunities Viewing a competitor's website to learn more about them.

1. Study the product descriptions and specifications

2. Human Resources

- * Do they post job openings?

- * What kind of people are they looking for?

- * How many people do they need?

- * What plants are they needed at?

- * What kind of benefit packages do they offer? insurance, moving expenses, retirement, education, etc

3. Is a company history provided?

4. Is the number of employees provided?

5. Are photos biographies of major executives provided?

6. Can you learn something from the URL registration? Try BetterWhois

7. Do they sponsor any community activities or causes?

8. Do they sponsor any sporting events, sports teams, race cars or things of that nature?
9. Does the site include a factory tour?
10. Press Releases?
11. Service tools
 - * Troubleshooting FAQ? Tells you what their problems have been.
 - * Online Parts Book?
 - * Online Service Manuals?
 - * Online Product Service Bulletins?
12. Is a list of dealers provided?
13. Is pricing information posted?
14. Does the site have an investor relations area? It can be very helpful.
15. Product and Factory photos posted?
16. Are product warranty and guarantee information provided?
17. List of upcoming trade shows they will be attending?
18. How do they deal with the problem of direct online sales going around their dealer system without infuriating dealers and still provide local service?
19. Other Country Web Sites and Languages
 - * Check for other web sites ran by same company in other countries, especially in their country of origin.
 - * Note, Japanese sites are often: <http://www.companyname.co.jp>
 - * Fully review all language versions. More materials may be available in one (usually language of origin) than in others. Even if you cannot read the language, photos may provide useful information.

15. Review Historical "caches" of the site

The Internet Archive has captured many historical "pictures" of internet web pages. Most popular sites can be found there. Major changes in the site can be observed as well as possible historical product or business information.

Holiday & Gift Ideas

Create special gift-giving packages or deals (offer free cards with gifts or gift wrapping, for example). You can create Holiday Cards to be inserted in the package (IE Direct shipping for a Birthday Gift) You offer a happy birthday Card that has your company Info on the Back of the card.

Offer gift certificates.

Get more customers into your business and keep them coming back with branded, pre-paid gift cards. Acting as mini-billboards in your customers' wallets, gift cards are one of the fastest growing payment trend.

Customers prefer gift cards for their convenience and ease of use, but they also provide a host of benefits for your business, eliminating cash returns, lowering administrative costs, reducing fraud and encouraging customer loyalty.

Gift cards come in an assortment of styles or can be custom designed to meet the needs of your business. The cards can also be reloaded to fulfill the consumer's preference for gift cards that they can continue to add money to—using it as a type of "budgeting tool."

1. Gift Cards Help Increase Revenue at YOUR Store!
2. Purchases made with a gift card are 20-50% higher than the average ticket...
3. Brand Awareness and Customer Loyalty
4. Build your brand – the customer is reminded of your store every time they open their wallet and see your card.
5. Gift cards undoubtedly bring in new customers, new store traffic, increased revenue and incremental sales.
6. Cards can be reloaded with value, creating a loyal customer and ensuring repeat business. Customers like plastic; switching from a paper-based to a card-based gift program results in higher customer participation.
7. Gift Cards Keep Money in YOUR Store!
8. Gift Cards can be used as a store credit and refund alternative.
9. Reduces Fraud! Cards are only valid when activated through your terminal.

APPENDIX

Business Descriptions

Sample Marketing Plan

Sample Business Plan

Business Loan Request

Meta Tag Sample

Key Word Sample

List of Domain Registration Service

List of Web Hosting

Free Business Ebooks

Free Pagan Ebooks

Free Programs

Business Descriptions

Sole Proprietorship

The sole proprietorship is a simple, informal structure that is inexpensive to form; it is usually owned by a single person or a marital community. The owner operates the business, is personally liable for all business debts, can freely transfer all or part of the business, and can report profit or loss on personal income tax returns.

Limited Liability Company (LLC)

The LLC is generally considered advantageous for small businesses because it combines the limited personal liability feature of a corporation with the tax advantages of a partnership and sole proprietorship. Profits and losses can be passed through the company to its members or the LLC can elect to be taxed like a corporation. LLCs do not have stock and are not required to observe corporate formalities. Owners are called members, and the LLC is managed by these members or by appointed

managers.

General Partnership

Partnerships are inexpensive to form; they require an agreement between two or more individuals or entities to jointly own and operate a business. Profit, loss, and managerial duties are shared among the partners, and each partner is personally liable for partnership debts. Partnerships do not pay taxes, but must file an informational return; individual partners report their share of profits and losses on their personal return. Short-term partnerships are also known as joint ventures.

C Corporation (Inc. or Ltd.)

This is a complex business structure with more startup costs than many other forms. A corporation is a legal entity separate from its owners, who own shares of stock in the company. Corporations can be created for profit or nonprofit purposes and may be subject to increased licensing fees and government regulation than other structures. Profits are taxed both at the corporate level and again when distributed to shareholders.

Shareholders are not personally liable for corporate obligations unless corporate formalities have not been observed; such formalities provide evidence that the corporation is a separate legal entity from its shareholders. Failure to do so may open the shareholders to liability of the corporation's debts.

Corporate formalities include:

- * issuing stock certificates
- * holding annual meetings
- * recording the minutes of the meetings
- * electing directors or ratifying the status of existing directors

Corporations should always be assisted by a qualified attorney.

Sub Chapter S Corporation (Inc. or Ltd.)

This structure is identical to the C Corporation in many ways, but offers avoidance of double taxation. If a corporation qualifies for S status with the IRS, it is taxed like a partnership; the corporation is not taxed, but the income flows through to shareholders who report the income on their individual returns.

This page offers help in the location of information about the Small Business Administration (SBA). Included are links to SBA's official site with information on government services, regulations and resources, government contracting and procurement information, information about obtaining small

business counseling, a SBA page to help women in business and the formal definition of a "small business".

<http://www.businessplans.org/topic23.html>

SBA Business Development Program

SBA's 8(a) Business Development program is intended to help small businesses be successful for the future. Companies like yours, just starting or in a growth stage, can benefit from the wide-range of services we offer—support for government contractors, access to capital, management and technical assistance, and export assistance—just to name a few.

Federal rules that may affect small business.

Advocacy page to learn about and comment on newly proposed federal rules that may affect small business.

Small Business Administration

Official site with information on government services, regulations and resources.

Office of Women's Business Ownership

The U.S. Small Business Administration is doing more than ever to help level the playing field for women entrepreneurs, who still face unique obstacles in the world of business. The SBA's Office of Women's Business Ownership is leading the way.

SBA Counseling and Resources

Information about obtaining small business counseling on a walk-in, telephone, or online basis.

What is a Small Business?

Small business defined by the SBA. For the purposes of this Act, a small-business concern, including but not limited to enterprises that are engaged in the business of production of food and fiber, ranching and raising of livestock, aquaculture, and all other farming and agricultural related industries, shall be deemed to be one which is independently owned and operated and which is not dominant in its field of operation: Provided, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, an agricultural enterprise shall be deemed to be a small business concern if it (including its affiliates) has annual receipts not in excess of \$500,000.

Small Business Newsletters

The FREE SBA newsletters listed offer a wide variety of information and business opportunities for small businesses. Subscribe to one or many and receive e-mail notification as soon as items are published.

SBA Programs & Services

Guide for locating appropriate programs for financing, business counseling and training and federal government contracting within US Small Business Administration.

Central Contractor Registration

Assists small businesses to register to conduct business with the US Government.

BusinessLaw.gov

BusinessLaw.gov is an online resource guide designed to provide legal and regulatory information to America's small businesses. Because it acts as a gateway to federal, state and local information, entrepreneurs can use BusinessLaw.gov to scan checklists to quickly define their problems and find solutions on topics ranging from federal advertising laws to local zoning codes.

Sample Marketing Plan

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

- General Outline

- Previous Sales

- Sales & Profits

- Proof of Sales & Profits

- Unique Features

- Who will buy your products/services?

- Competitors

- Achievements

Sales Analysis

- Revenue Breakdown

Sales Trends

Review Sales

The 80:20 Rule

Seasonal Fluctuations

Market Analysis

Market Profile

Market Trends

Gap in the market

Market Segments

Possible Segments

Benefit Analysis

Potential Target Market

Detailed Segmentation

Business Perception

Customer Perception

Centres of Influence

Competitor Analysis

Competitor Analysis

Competitive Strengths and Weaknesses

Competitive Positioning

Product Positioning

Target Market Analysis

Objectives

SWOT Analysis

Mission Statement

Objectives

Marketing Plan (Product/Service)

Sales and Market Objectives

Market Positioning

Marketing Information Systems

Perception by Customers

Product/Service Branding

Packaging

Warranty/Guarantee

Accessories

Upgrades

Product Developments

Marketing Plan (Price/Distribution)

Pricing

Discounts

Payment Terms

Distribution

Appoint Distributors

Sub-distributors

Retailers

Marketing Plan (Promotion)

Customer Promotions

Media Activities

Centres of Influence

Influencer Promotions

Sales Strategy

Communication

Sales Force Checklist

Marketing Tactics

Marketing Resources

Types of Promotions

Sample Business Plan

The business plan consists of a narrative and several financial worksheets. The narrative template is the body of the business plan. It contains more than 150 questions divided into several sections. Work through the sections in any order that you like, except for the Executive Summary, which should be done last. Skip any questions that do not apply to your type of business. When you are finished writing your first draft, you'll have a collection of small essays on the various topics of the business plan. Then you'll want to edit them into a smooth-flowing narrative.

The real value of creating a business plan is not in having the finished product in hand; rather, the value lies in the process of researching and thinking about your business in a systematic way. The act of planning helps you to think things through thoroughly, study and research if you are not sure of the facts, and look at your ideas critically. It takes time now, but avoids costly, perhaps disastrous, mistakes later.

This business plan is a generic model suitable for all types of businesses. However, you should modify it to suit your particular circumstances. Before you begin, review the section titled Refining the Plan, found at the end. It suggests emphasizing certain areas depending upon your type of business (manufacturing, retail, service, etc.). It also has tips for fine-tuning your plan to make an effective presentation to investors or bankers. If this is why you're creating your plan, pay particular attention to your writing style. You will be judged by the quality and appearance of your work as well as by your ideas.

It typically takes several weeks to complete a good plan. Most of that time is spent in research and re-thinking your ideas and assumptions. But then, that's the value of the process. So make time to do the job properly. Those who do never regret the effort. And finally, be sure to keep detailed notes on your sources of information and on the assumptions underlying your financial data.

Business Plan

OWNERS

Your Business Name

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

City, ST ZIP Code

Telephone

Fax

E-Mail

I.	Table of Contents	
I.	Table of Contents	3
II.	Executive Summary	4
III.	General Company Description	5
IV.	Products and Services	6
V.	Marketing Plan	7
VI.	Operational Plan	15
VII.	Management and Organization	20
VIII.	Personal Financial Statement	21
IX.	Startup Expenses and Capitalization	22
X.	Financial Plan	23
XI.	Appendices	26
XII.	Refining the Plan	27

II. Executive Summary

Write this section last.

We suggest that you make it two pages or fewer.

Include everything that you would cover in a five-minute interview.

Explain the fundamentals of the proposed business: What will your product be? Who will your customers be? Who are the owners? What do you think the future holds for your business and your industry?

Make it enthusiastic, professional, complete, and concise.

If applying for a loan, state clearly how much you want, precisely how you are going to use it, and how the money will make your business more profitable, thereby ensuring repayment.

III. General Company Description

What business will you be in? What will you do?

Mission Statement: Many companies have a brief mission statement, usually in 30 words or fewer, explaining their reason for being and their guiding principles. If you want to draft a mission statement, this is a good place to put it in the plan, followed by:

Company Goals and Objectives: Goals are destinations—where you want your business to be. Objectives are progress markers along the way to goal achievement. For example, a goal might be to have a healthy, successful company that is a leader in customer service and that has a loyal customer following. Objectives might be annual sales targets and some specific measures of customer satisfaction.

Business Philosophy: What is important to you in business?

To whom will you market your products? (State it briefly here—you will do a more thorough explanation in the Marketing Plan section).

Describe your industry. Is it a growth industry? What changes do you foresee in the industry, short

term and long term? How will your company be poised to take advantage of them?

Describe your most important company strengths and core competencies. What factors will make the company succeed? What do you think your major competitive strengths will be? What background experience, skills, and strengths do you personally bring to this new venture?

Legal form of ownership: Sole proprietor, Partnership, Corporation, Limited liability corporation (LLC)? Why have you selected this form?

IV. Products and Services

Describe in depth your products or services (technical specifications, drawings, photos, sales brochures, and other bulky items belong in Appendices).

What factors will give you competitive advantages or disadvantages? Examples include level of quality or unique or proprietary features.

What are the pricing, fee, or leasing structures of your products or services?

V. Marketing Plan

Market research - Why?

No matter how good your product and your service, the venture cannot succeed without effective marketing. And this begins with careful, systematic research. It is very dangerous to assume that you already know about your intended market. You need to do market research to make sure you're on track. Use the business planning process as your opportunity to uncover data and to question your marketing efforts. Your time will be well spent.

Market research - How?

There are two kinds of market research: primary and secondary.

Secondary research means using published information such as industry profiles, trade journals, newspapers, magazines, census data, and demographic profiles. This type of information is available in public libraries, industry associations, chambers of commerce, from vendors who sell to your industry, and from government agencies.

Start with your local library. Most librarians are pleased to guide you through their business data collection. You will be amazed at what is there. There are more online sources than you could possibly use. Your chamber of commerce has good information on the local area. Trade associations and trade publications often have excellent industry-specific data.

Primary research means gathering your own data. For example, you could do your own traffic count at a proposed location, use the yellow pages to identify competitors, and do surveys or focus-group interviews to learn about consumer preferences. Professional market research can be very costly, but there are many books that show small business owners how to do effective research themselves.

In your marketing plan, be as specific as possible; give statistics, numbers, and sources. The marketing plan will be the basis, later on, of the all-important sales projection.

Economics

Facts about your industry:

- What is the total size of your market?
- What percent share of the market will you have? (This is important only if you think you will be a major factor in the market.)

- Current demand in target market.
- Trends in target market—growth trends, trends in consumer preferences, and trends in product development.
- Growth potential and opportunity for a business of your size.
- What barriers to entry do you face in entering this market with your new company? Some typical barriers are:
 - o High capital costs
 - o High production costs
 - o High marketing costs
 - o Consumer acceptance and brand recognition
 - o Training and skills
 - o Unique technology and patents
 - o Unions
 - o Shipping costs
 - o Tariff barriers and quotas
- And of course, how will you overcome the barriers?
- How could the following affect your company?
 - o Change in technology
 - o Change in government regulations
 - o Change in the economy
 - o Change in your industry

Product

In the Products and Services section, you described your products and services as you see them. Now describe them from your customers' point of view.

Features and Benefits

List all of your major products or services.

For each product or service:

- Describe the most important features. What is special about it?
- Describe the benefits. That is, what will the product do for the customer?

Note the difference between features and benefits, and think about them. For example, a house that gives shelter and lasts a long time is made with certain materials and to a certain design; those are its features. Its benefits include pride of ownership, financial security, providing for the family, and inclusion in a neighborhood. You build features into your product so that you can sell the benefits.

What after-sale services will you give? Some examples are delivery, warranty, service contracts, support, follow-up, and refund policy.

Customers

Identify your targeted customers, their characteristics, and their geographic locations, otherwise known as their demographics.

The description will be completely different depending on whether you plan to sell to other businesses or directly to consumers. If you sell a consumer product, but sell it through a channel of distributors, wholesalers, and retailers, you must carefully analyze both the end consumer and the middleman businesses to which you sell.

You may have more than one customer group. Identify the most important groups. Then, for each customer group, construct what is called a demographic profile:

- Age
- Gender
- Location
- Income level
- Social class and occupation
- Education
- Other (specific to your industry)
- Other (specific to your industry)

For business customers, the demographic factors might be:

- Industry (or portion of an industry)
- Location
- Size of firm
- Quality, technology, and price preferences
- Other (specific to your industry)
- Other (specific to your industry)

Competition

What products and companies will compete with you?

List your major competitors:

(Names and addresses)

Will they compete with you across the board, or just for certain products, certain customers, or in certain locations?

Will you have important indirect competitors? (For example, video rental stores compete with theaters, although they are different types of businesses.)

How will your products or services compare with the competition?

Use the Competitive Analysis table below to compare your company with your two most important competitors. In the first column are key competitive factors. Since these vary from one industry to another, you may want to customize the list of factors.

In the column labeled Me, state how you honestly think you will stack up in customers' minds. Then check whether you think this factor will be a strength or a weakness for you. Sometimes it is hard to

analyze our own weaknesses. Try to be very honest here. Better yet, get some disinterested strangers to assess you. This can be a real eye-opener. And remember that you cannot be all things to all people. In fact, trying to be causes many business failures because efforts become scattered and diluted. You want an honest assessment of your firm's strong and weak points.

Now analyze each major competitor. In a few words, state how you think they compare.

In the final column, estimate the importance of each competitive factor to the customer. 1 = critical; 5 = not very important.

Table 1: Competitive Analysis

Factor	Me	Strength	Weakness	Competitor A	Competitor B	Importance to Customer
Products						
Price						
Quality						
Selection						
Service						
Reliability						
Stability						
Expertise						
Company Reputation						
Location						
Appearance						
Sales Method						
Credit Policies						
Advertising						
Image						

Now, write a short paragraph stating your competitive advantages and disadvantages.

Niche

Now that you have systematically analyzed your industry, your product, your customers, and the competition, you should have a clear picture of where your company fits into the world.

In one short paragraph, define your niche, your unique corner of the market.

Strategy

Now outline a marketing strategy that is consistent with your niche.

Promotion

How will you get the word out to customers?

Advertising: What media, why, and how often? Why this mix and not some other?

Have you identified low-cost methods to get the most out of your promotional budget?

Will you use methods other than paid advertising, such as trade shows, catalogs, dealer incentives, word of mouth (how will you stimulate it?), and network of friends or professionals?

What image do you want to project? How do you want customers to see you?

In addition to advertising, what plans do you have for graphic image support? This includes things like logo design, cards and letterhead, brochures, signage, and interior design (if customers come to your place of business).

Should you have a system to identify repeat customers and then systematically contact them?

Promotional Budget

How much will you spend on the items listed above?

Before startup? (These numbers will go into your startup budget.)

Ongoing? (These numbers will go into your operating plan budget.)

Pricing

Explain your method or methods of setting prices. For most small businesses, having the lowest price is not a good policy. It robs you of needed profit margin; customers may not care as much about price as you think; and large competitors can under price you anyway. Usually you will do better to have average prices and compete on quality and service.

Does your pricing strategy fit with what was revealed in your competitive analysis?

Compare your prices with those of the competition. Are they higher, lower, the same? Why?

How important is price as a competitive factor? Do your intended customers really make their purchase decisions mostly on price?

What will be your customer service and credit policies?

Proposed Location

Probably you do not have a precise location picked out yet. This is the time to think about what you want and need in a location. Many startups run successfully from home for a while.

You will describe your physical needs later, in the Operational Plan section. Here, analyze your location criteria as they will affect your customers.

Is your location important to your customers? If yes, how?

If customers come to your place of business:

Is it convenient? Parking? Interior spaces? Not out of the way?

Is it consistent with your image?

Is it what customers want and expect?

Where is the competition located? Is it better for you to be near them (like car dealers or fast food restaurants) or distant (like convenience food stores)?

Distribution Channels

How do you sell your products or services?

Retail

Direct (mail order, Web, catalog)

Wholesale

Your own sales force

Agents

Independent representatives

Bid on contracts

Sales Forecast

Now that you have described your products, services, customers, markets, and marketing plans in detail, it's time to attach some numbers to your plan. Use a sales forecast spreadsheet to prepare a month-by-month projection. The forecast should be based on your historical sales, the marketing strategies that you have just described, your market research, and industry data, if available.

You may want to do two forecasts: 1) a "best guess", which is what you really expect, and 2) a "worst case" low estimate that you are confident you can reach no matter what happens.

Remember to keep notes on your research and your assumptions as you build this sales forecast and all subsequent spreadsheets in the plan. This is critical if you are going to present it to funding sources.

VI. Operational Plan

Explain the daily operation of the business, its location, equipment, people, processes, and surrounding environment.

Production

How and where are your products or services produced?

Explain your methods of:

- Production techniques and costs
- Quality control
- Customer service
- Inventory control
- Product development

Location

What qualities do you need in a location? Describe the type of location you'll have.

Physical requirements:

- Amount of space
- Type of building
- Zoning
- Power and other utilities

Access:

Is it important that your location be convenient to transportation or to suppliers?

Do you need easy walk-in access?

What are your requirements for parking and proximity to freeway, airports, railroads, and shipping

centers?

Include a drawing or layout of your proposed facility if it is important, as it might be for a manufacturer.

Construction? Most new companies should not sink capital into construction, but if you are planning to build, costs and specifications will be a big part of your plan.

Cost: Estimate your occupation expenses, including rent, but also including maintenance, utilities, insurance, and initial remodeling costs to make the space suit your needs. These numbers will become part of your financial plan.

What will be your business hours?

Legal Environment

Describe the following:

- Licensing and bonding requirements
- Permits
- Health, workplace, or environmental regulations
- Special regulations covering your industry or profession
- Zoning or building code requirements
- Insurance coverage
- Trademarks, copyrights, or patents (pending, existing, or purchased)

Personnel

- Number of employees
- Type of labor (skilled, unskilled, and professional)
- Where and how will you find the right employees?
- Quality of existing staff
- Pay structure
- Training methods and requirements
- Who does which tasks?
- Do you have schedules and written procedures prepared?
- Have you drafted job descriptions for employees? If not, take time to write some. They really help internal communications with employees.
- For certain functions, will you use contract workers in addition to employees?

Inventory

- What kind of inventory will you keep: raw materials, supplies, finished goods?
- Average value in stock (i.e., what is your inventory investment)?
- Rate of turnover and how this compares to the industry averages?
- Seasonal buildups?
- Lead-time for ordering?

Suppliers

Identify key suppliers:

- Names and addresses
- Type and amount of inventory furnished
- Credit and delivery policies
- History and reliability

Should you have more than one supplier for critical items (as a backup)?

Do you expect shortages or short-term delivery problems?

Are supply costs steady or fluctuating? If fluctuating, how would you deal with changing costs?

Credit Policies

- Do you plan to sell on credit?
- Do you really need to sell on credit? Is it customary in your industry and expected by your clientele?
- If yes, what policies will you have about who gets credit and how much?
- How will you check the creditworthiness of new applicants?
- What terms will you offer your customers; that is, how much credit and when is payment due?
- Will you offer prompt payment discounts? (Hint: Do this only if it is usual and customary in your industry.)
- Do you know what it will cost you to extend credit? Have you built the costs into your prices?

Managing Your Accounts Receivable

If you do extend credit, you should do an aging at least monthly to track how much of your money is tied up in credit given to customers and to alert you to slow payment problems. A receivables aging looks like the following table:

Total	Current	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	Over 90 Days
-------	---------	---------	---------	---------	--------------

Accounts Receivable Aging

You will need a policy for dealing with slow-paying customers:

- When do you make a phone call?
- When do you send a letter?
- When do you get your attorney to threaten?

Managing Your Accounts Payable

You should also age your accounts payable, what you owe to your suppliers. This helps you plan whom to pay and when. Paying too early depletes your cash, but paying late can cost you valuable discounts and can damage your credit. (Hint: If you know you will be late making a payment, call the creditor before the due date.)

Do your proposed vendors offer prompt payment discounts?

A payables aging looks like the following table.

	Total	Current 30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	Over 90 Days
Accounts Payable Aging					

VII. Management and Organization

Who will manage the business on a day-to-day basis? What experience does that person bring to the business? What special or distinctive competencies? Is there a plan for continuation of the business if this person is lost or incapacitated?

If you'll have more than 10 employees, create an organizational chart showing the management hierarchy and who is responsible for key functions.

Include position descriptions for key employees. If you are seeking loans or investors, include resumes of owners and key employees.

Professional and Advisory Support

List the following:

- Board of directors
- Management advisory board
- Attorney
- Accountant
- Insurance agent
- Banker
- Consultant or consultants
- Mentors and key advisors

VIII. Personal Financial Statement

Include personal financial statements for each owner and major stockholder, showing assets and liabilities held outside the business and personal net worth. Owners will often have to draw on personal assets to finance the business, and these statements will show what is available. Bankers and investors usually want this information as well.

IX. Startup Expenses and Capitalization

You will have many startup expenses before you even begin operating your business. It's important to estimate these expenses accurately and then to plan where you will get sufficient capital. This is a research project, and the more thorough your research efforts, the less chance that you will leave out important expenses or underestimate them.

Even with the best of research, however, opening a new business has a way of costing more than you anticipate. There are two ways to make allowances for surprise expenses. The first is to add a little "padding" to each item in the budget. The problem with that approach, however, is that it destroys the accuracy of your carefully wrought plan. The second approach is to add a separate line item, called contingencies, to account for the unforeseeable. This is the approach we recommend.

Talk to others who have started similar businesses to get a good idea of how much to allow for contingencies. If you cannot get good information, we recommend a rule of thumb that contingencies should equal at least 20 percent of the total of all other start-up expenses.

Explain your research and how you arrived at your forecasts of expenses. Give sources, amounts, and terms of proposed loans. Also explain in detail how much will be contributed by each investor and what percent ownership each will have.

X. Financial Plan

The financial plan consists of a 12-month profit and loss projection, a four-year profit and loss projection (optional), a cash-flow projection, a projected balance sheet, and a break-even calculation. Together they constitute a reasonable estimate of your company's financial future. More important, the process of thinking through the financial plan will improve your insight into the inner financial workings of your company.

12-Month Profit and Loss Projection

Many business owners think of the 12-month profit and loss projection as the centerpiece of their plan. This is where you put it all together in numbers and get an idea of what it will take to make a profit and be successful.

Your sales projections will come from a sales forecast in which you forecast sales, cost of goods sold, expenses, and profit month-by-month for one year.

Profit projections should be accompanied by a narrative explaining the major assumptions used to estimate company income and expenses.

Research Notes: Keep careful notes on your research and assumptions, so that you can explain them later if necessary, and also so that you can go back to your sources when it's time to revise your plan.

Four-Year Profit Projection (Optional)

The 12-month projection is the heart of your financial plan. The Four-Year Profit projection is for those who want to carry their forecasts beyond the first year.

Of course, keep notes of your key assumptions, especially about things that you expect will change dramatically after the first year.

Projected Cash Flow

If the profit projection is the heart of your business plan, cash flow is the blood. Businesses fail because they cannot pay their bills. Every part of your business plan is important, but none of it means a thing if you run out of cash.

The point of this worksheet is to plan how much you need before startup, for preliminary expenses, operating expenses, and reserves. You should keep updating it and using it afterward. It will enable you to foresee shortages in time to do something about them—perhaps cut expenses, or perhaps negotiate a loan. But foremost, you shouldn't be taken by surprise.

There is no great trick to preparing it: The cash-flow projection is just a forward look at your checking account.

For each item, determine when you actually expect to receive cash (for sales) or when you will actually have to write a check (for expense items).

You should track essential operating data, which is not necessarily part of cash flow but allows you to track items that have a heavy impact on cash flow, such as sales and inventory purchases.

You should also track cash outlays prior to opening in a pre-startup column. You should have already researched those for your startup expenses plan.

Your cash flow will show you whether your working capital is adequate. Clearly, if your projected cash balance ever goes negative, you will need more start-up capital. This plan will also predict just when and how much you will need to borrow.

Explain your major assumptions, especially those that make the cash flow differ from the Profit and Loss Projection. For example, if you make a sale in month one, when do you actually collect the cash? When you buy inventory or materials, do you pay in advance, upon delivery, or much later? How will this affect cash flow?

Are some expenses payable in advance? When?

Are there irregular expenses, such as quarterly tax payments, maintenance and repairs, or seasonal inventory buildup, that should be budgeted?

Loan payments, equipment purchases, and owner's draws usually do not show on profit and loss statements but definitely do take cash out. Be sure to include them.

And of course, depreciation does not appear in the cash flow at all because you never write a check for it.

Opening Day Balance Sheet

A balance sheet is one of the fundamental financial reports that any business needs for reporting and financial management. A balance sheet shows what items of value are held by the company (assets), and what its debts are (liabilities). When liabilities are subtracted from assets, the remainder is owners' equity.

Use a startup expenses and capitalization spreadsheet as a guide to preparing a balance sheet as of opening day. Then detail how you calculated the account balances on your opening day balance sheet.

Optional: Some people want to add a projected balance sheet showing the estimated financial position of the company at the end of the first year. This is especially useful when selling your proposal to investors.

Break-Even Analysis

A break-even analysis predicts the sales volume, at a given price, required to recover total costs. In other words, it's the sales level that is the dividing line between operating at a loss and operating at a profit.

Expressed as a formula, break-even is:

$$\text{Break-Even Sales} = \frac{\text{Fixed Costs}}{1 - \text{Variable Costs}}$$

(Where fixed costs are expressed in dollars, but variable costs are expressed as a percent of total sales.)

Include all assumptions upon which your break-even calculation is based.

XI. Appendices

Include details and studies used in your business plan; for example:

- Brochures and advertising materials
- Industry studies
- Blueprints and plans
- Maps and photos of location
- Magazine or other articles
- Detailed lists of equipment owned or to be purchased
- Copies of leases and contracts
- Letters of support from future customers
- Any other materials needed to support the assumptions in this plan
- Market research studies
- List of assets available as collateral for a loan

XII. Refining the Plan

The generic business plan presented above should be modified to suit your specific type of business and the audience for which the plan is written.

For Raising Capital

For Bankers

- Bankers want assurance of orderly repayment. If you intend using this plan to present to lenders, include:
 - o Amount of loan
 - o How the funds will be used
 - o What this will accomplish—how will it make the business stronger?
 - o Requested repayment terms (number of years to repay). You will probably not have much negotiating room on interest rate but may be able to negotiate a longer repayment term, which will help cash flow.
 - o Collateral offered, and a list of all existing liens against collateral

For Investors

- Investors have a different perspective. They are looking for dramatic growth, and they expect to share in the rewards:
 - o Funds needed short-term
 - o Funds needed in two to five years
 - o How the company will use the funds, and what this will accomplish for growth.
 - o Estimated return on investment
 - o Exit strategy for investors (buyback, sale, or IPO)
 - o Percent of ownership that you will give up to investors
 - o Milestones or conditions that you will accept

- o Financial reporting to be provided
- o Involvement of investors on the board or in management

For Type of Business

Manufacturing

- Planned production levels
- Anticipated levels of direct production costs and indirect (overhead) costs—how do these compare to industry averages (if available)?
- Prices per product line
- Gross profit margin, overall and for each product line
- Production/capacity limits of planned physical plant
- Production/capacity limits of equipment
- Purchasing and inventory management procedures
- New products under development or anticipated to come online after startup

Service Businesses

- Service businesses sell intangible products. They are usually more flexible than other types of businesses, but they also have higher labor costs and generally very little in fixed assets.
- What are the key competitive factors in this industry?
- Your prices
- Methods used to set prices
- System of production management
- Quality control procedures. Standard or accepted industry quality standards.
- How will you measure labor productivity?
- Percent of work subcontracted to other firms. Will you make a profit on subcontracting?
- Credit, payment, and collections policies and procedures
- Strategy for keeping client base

High Technology Companies

- Economic outlook for the industry
- Will the company have information systems in place to manage rapidly changing prices, costs, and markets?
- Will you be on the cutting edge with your products and services?
- What is the status of research and development? And what is required to:
 - o Bring product/service to market?
 - o Keep the company competitive?
- How does the company:
 - o Protect intellectual property?

- o Avoid technological obsolescence?
- o Supply necessary capital?
- o Retain key personnel?

High-tech companies sometimes have to operate for a long time without profits and sometimes even without sales. If this fits your situation, a banker probably will not want to lend to you. Venture capitalists may invest, but your story must be very good. You must do longer-term financial forecasts to show when profit take-off is expected to occur. And your assumptions must be well documented and well argued.

Retail Business

- Company image
- Pricing:
 - o Explain markup policies.
 - o Prices should be profitable, competitive, and in accordance with company image.
- Inventory:
 - o Selection and price should be consistent with company image.
 - o Inventory level: Find industry average numbers for annual inventory turnover rate (available in RMA book). Multiply your initial inventory investment by the average turnover rate. The result should be at least equal to your projected first year's cost of goods sold. If it is not, you may not have enough budgeted for startup inventory.
- Customer service policies: These should be competitive and in accord with company image.
- Location: Does it give the exposure that you need? Is it convenient for customers? Is it consistent with company image?
- Promotion: Methods used, cost. Does it project a consistent company image?
- Credit: Do you extend credit to customers? If yes, do you really need to, and do you factor the cost into prices?

How to Prepare a Business Loan Request for Your Bank

Most owners of small businesses believe that banks only lend money to companies that don't need it. This is not true.

However, what is true is that bankers and the banks they represent will not typically make an effort to understand a business when an owner has not made a concerted effort to explain, in an organized and concise manner:

- The company's business.
- What it will do with the money it wants to borrow.
- How it intends to repay any borrowed funds.

The following hints will help any small business owner ensure that a banker sees their business in the best possible light.

Rule #1 For The Banker: "Know Your Customer"

The first rule of every banker is "Know your customer." This means that before a bank can make a loan, the bank must have an in-depth understanding of the business, including its history, its future, its products, its customers, its suppliers and its owners. The company's business plan will normally include these topics.

For smaller business, the bank will rarely distinguish between a company and its owner. This means that the bank will want to understand the personal financial circumstances of the owner, including the details of the owner's net worth and cash flow, just as the bank needs to understand the finances of the business. The bank will also want to understand the owner's character. The bank will want to examine the owner's personal credit history on the premise that the owner will manage the company's debt similar to the way he manages his personal debt. Also, personal guarantees will always be required. A bank will never consider taking on the risk of lending money to a small business whose owner will not accept the same risk.

Helpful Business Plan Tips

Following are some helpful tips to make a loan request package stand above the crowd:

- The package must be well organized.
- The package must be complete. Requesting additional information is time consuming for both the bank and borrower.
- Make it easy for the bank to understand the business.
- Carefully explain how the borrowed funds will be used.
- Carefully explain and document how the funds will be repaid.
- Any required forms should be neatly and completely filled out.
- Be prepared to offer the bank a lien on all of the company's assets.

Bankers Also Need To Know

To ensure that you help make the bankers life easier, consider including the following supporting documents in your loan request:

- 2-3 years company financial statements. Ensure they tie in to your bank account activity!
- 2-3 years company tax returns.
- Latest accounts receivable aging (if applicable).
- Latest accounts payable aging.
- List of 5-10 largest customers. Indicate each customer's percent of total sales if over 5%. Not applicable to retail businesses like restaurants or shops.
- Personal financial statement of owner(s).
- 2-3 years personal tax returns of owner(s).

In Conclusion . . .

A business plan is the company's plan for the future. The bank will want to know if the company intends to grow and how it will achieve its growth objectives. The bank will want to know how the company will compete. The bank will want to know how the company will function in bad times. Who will manage the business in the event of death or illness? Be prepared with the answers to the banker's most likely questions and you have increased your chances of raising banking financing

Meta Tag Sample

You need to replace a few things MY your store name, etc

```
<HTML>
```

```
<HEAD>
```

```
<TITLE>MY Wiccan Pagan Store</TITLE>
```

```
<META NAME="Keywords" CONTENT="Witch store,spells,wiccan supply,  
supplies,occult,pagan online store, love spell,  
ritual,jewelry,rede,chat,witchcraft, new age, wicca, magick,witchcraft  
books,jewelry,wholesale, resale, affiliate program, pagan holiday, pagan symbol,  
jewelry pagan, art pagan, pagan ritual, card e pagan, music pagan, chat pagan,  
pagan wicca, pagan gods, pagan god, pagan goddesses, pagan music,wicca spell,  
supply wicca, spell wicca, dropship, occult, pentacles, pentagrams, celtic,norse,  
egyptian, shopping,retail, silver,sterling,knives, swords,athame,goddess,horned  
god,tools,circle,earth religions,nature,shaman,native  
american,sales,pendants,totems,totem animal, necklaces, rings, chains,  
bracelets,a mber,gemstones, ceremonial, cloaks, robes, cauldron, besom, broom,  
wand, staff, chalice,magick,magic,crown, fairies,dragons,dagger,spiritual,black  
handle,double edged, bolline,">
```

```
<META NAME="Description" CONTENT="Occult shop wicca witch shop online serving
thousands of shopping pagans worldwide. Wicca Witch Occult Shop Witchcraft
Paganism Store Druidic and New Age Supplies">
<META NAME="Subject" CONTENT="wiccan pagan shopping">
<META NAME="Classification" CONTENT="Internet">
<BASE HREF="http://www.mystorename.com">
<META NAME="Author" CONTENT="My name">
<META NAME="Copyright" CONTENT="© 2006 mystorename.com">
<META NAME="Contact" CONTENT="myemail@mystorename.com">
<META NAME="Publisher" CONTENT="Wiccan Pagan Store">
<META HTTP-EQUIV="Expires" CONTENT="0">
<META NAME="Robots" CONTENT="ALL">
<META NAME="Robots" CONTENT="INDEX, FOLLOW">
<META NAME="GOOGLEBOT" CONTENT="NOARCHIVE">
<META NAME="Revisit-After" CONTENT="30 Days">
<META NAME="Distribution" CONTENT="Global">
<META NAME="Rating" CONTENT="General">
<META HTTP-EQUIV="Content-Language" CONTENT="en">
<META HTTP-EQUIV="Content-Type" CONTENT="text/html; charset=iso-8859-1">
</HEAD>
<BODY>
This would be the contents of your web page . . .
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

Key Word Sample

Pagan, Pagans, Paganism, Wiccan, Witch, Wicca, Witchcraft, Asatru, Dianic, Ceremonial Magick, Druidry, Left hand Path, Right Hand Path, Earthwise, Bos, Book, Shadows, Gods, Goddesses, God, Goddess, Diana, Hecate, Astarte, Kali, Fey, Pan, Loki, Spell, Ritual, Rite, Rites, Rituals, Spells, Craft,

Spell Working, Incences, Brews, Circle, Coven, Eclectic, Egypt, Dragons, Totems, Magic, Magick, Magical, Magickal, rites, rituals, Australia, Australian, Aussie, Neo-Pagans, Wiccan, Coven, teaching, spell, spells, spellworking, Covens, witchcraft, neo-pagan, neo-pagans, neopagan, neo-paganism, Alchemy, Astrology, Altar, Ancient Ones, Book, Shadows, Coven, Circle Work, Celtic, Cauldron, Charms, Casting, Conjuring, Crystals, Deity, Elementals, Esoteric, Environment, Earth, Wise, Worship, Elements, Goddess, God, Herbs, Initiation, Invoking, Kabalah, Lore, Lord Lady, Mysteries, Meditation, Moon, Myth, Mysticism, Metaphysics, Numerology, Occult, Divination, Paganism, Religion, Runes, Spirit, Sacred, Shadow, Shamanism, girl Spells, Seasons, Sabbat, Tarot, Talisman, Traditions, Voodoo, Warrior, BOS, Watchtowers Wicca, Paganism, Healing, Divination, Mysticism, Christian Wicca, Witchcraft, Psychic Powers, psychic powers, herbs, gems, and healing, and religion earth-based tarot readings strega, faery, celtic, druidic, green-witch, healing, herbs, crystals, telepathy, naturist, naturists, male female book, books, video, videos, herbs, healing, tarot cards, oils, art, music, gemstones, jewelry, celtic, tapestries, cloaks, scarves, silver, candles, spell kits, cauldrons, incense, sage, drums, knives, swords, athames, besoms, crystal balls, statues, goddesses, gods, celtic jewelry, wicca witchcraft supplies, wiccan jewelry, celtic jewelry, cheap witchcraft supplies, wiccan wands, witchcraft stores, sterling celtic jewelry, wiccan pentagrams, wicca shops, celtic cross, amber jewelry, celtic jewelry, crystal ball, crystals, quartz crystals, crystal balls, incense burners, crystal jewelry, quartz crystal, wiccan jewelry, jewelry charms, aromatherapy oils, pagan crafts, gemstone jewelry, witchcraft books, wiccan herbs, celtic cross jewelry, wiccan stores, witch supplies, wiccan jewelry, norse jewelry, viking jewelry, astrau jewelry, egyptian jewelry, stone pendants, chains, gold pentagrams, gold pentacles, goddess jewelry, god jewelry, discount witchcraft supplies, wiccan craft sites, online store witchcraft, discount wicca supplies, wicca online stores, pagan jewelry, wiccan jewelry, wiccan supply stores, pagan jewelry, celtic druid pagan jewelry, witchcraft supply stores, new age jewelry, new age creations store, occult jewelry, wicca crafts, wicca pentacles, ritual magick supplies, new age stones crystals pouch bag velvet, magic new age gifts, where can i buy tarot cards, new age retail stores, tarot cards, healing stones, witchcraft jewelry, wiccan ritual supplies, occult shopping online, online store witchcraft, cast iron cauldrons, candles, votives, tapered, 12" tapered candles, 6" household candles, scented votives, pillar candles, image candles, female candles, male candles, devil candles, witch candles, 7 day candles, spell candles, jar candles, witch works candles, baphomet candle, witch candle, buuha candle, 7 knob candles, marriage candles, 8" tapered candles, beeswax candles, Egyptian Cat Black candles, cat candles, skull candles, sabbat candles, sabbath candles, wiccan holiday candles, candle kits, t-lite candles, tea light candles, lighting stickes, candle holders, brass candle holders, celtic candle holders, cloaks, capes, celtic clothes, apparel, tapestries, tapestry, celtic scarf, goddess scarves, wiccan scarves, altar clothes, pins, patches, shoulder bags, bumper stickers, posters, wall hangers, gaia statues, Gargoyles, egyptian statures, egyptian art, horus, isis, bast, Fairy Figurines, votive candle holders, candle magick books, Anubis Dog, Anubis, Ganesha Buddha, Ganesha, Shiva Dancing, horned man, green man, seth, pan, cupid, eros, Bacchus, belenos, Cernunnos, Brigit, Cretan Snake Goddess, Diana, epona, Hecate, Millennial Gaia, Nathor, nuit, moon goddess, Persephone, Psyche, Kuan- Yin, laxmi, shiva, maat, Serket, Nile goddess, bumper stickers, sun catchers, posters, Gargoyles, Wall Hangings, Bath & Floor Washes, bath oils, bath salts, ritual baths, Perfumed Oils & Lotions, herbal baths, Soaps, magic soaps, ritual soaps, sachets, sachet, Black Water, Florida water, holy water, glory water, rose water, lavender water, war water, books Astral, Divination, Dream Meditation, books Angels Devas Fairies, audio books, books Magick Aleister Crowley Egyptian, books Goddess Studies Women's Studies, books Celtic British Isle Norse Shaman, books Children's Craftwork Design, books Crystals Healing & Herbs, books Psychic Occult Sexuality, books Spellcraft Candle Burning Santeria, books Witchcraft Paganism Eastern, Pendulums, Pendulums brass, Pendulums gemstone, Pendulums wood, Runes, Runes gemstone, Scrying, Scrying bowls, Scrying mirrors, Cryptique, ouija board, Pathfinder Psychic Board, Psychic Circle, Telekinetic Enhancer, divine, divination, tarot books, astrology books, Crystal Balls, gemstones, crystal points, amethyst, bloodstone, carnelian, jasper,

aventurine, amazonite, lapis, fluorite, tumbled stones, moonstone, worry stones, rose quartz, massagers, crystal clusters, crystal wands, herbs, bulk herbs, sample herbs, teas, Arabic Gum Powder, Beeswax, Brewers Yeast Flour, Buckeyes, Catnip, Chamomile, Coltsfoot, Comfrey, Damiana, Dandelion, Devils Shoestring, Epsom Salts, Eucalyptus, Eyebright, Fennel Seed, flax seed, Galangal Root, Garlic, Ginseng Powder, Guar Gum Powder, high john, Horehound, Hyssop, Juniper Berries, kava kava, Lavender, Verbena, lemon Verbena, Linden Flower, Lobelia, mandrake, Mistletoe, mugwort, Mullein, Nettles, nutmeg, Orris, passion flower, Patchouli, Pau d'Arco, pennyroyal, Peppermint, raspberry, Rosemary, rose bud, rose hips, Sage Leaf, sandalwood, scullcap, sea salt, st. john's wort, Sulfur Powder, Brimstone, Valerian, wormwood, yarrow, Mortar Pestle Soapstone, tea strainer, tea bags, magick teas, and much, much more....

Improve Your Cash Flow

Any business owner always gets that sinking feeling that whilst they are cost-conscious; most of their people are not. And yet when the inevitable moment comes when “someone has to go” suddenly everyone becomes aware of all the ways the business has been wasting money.

The trick is, therefore, to get your people saving costs without it becoming an issue and before you have to start cutting staff numbers.

Here are 50 ideas which, when implemented, will surprise you in just how much you can save.

1. **Set staffing levels to cope with normal work levels.** Hire temporary staff for peaks rather than increasing costly over-time. Temporary staff are always available, usually cheap and when you do not need them cost you nothing.
2. **Offer unpaid leave.** People do not want to lose their jobs through redundancy and you do not want to use valuable staff. There is a great interest in putting family first these days and it may be that if business is stagnant a compromise can be reached.
3. **Cut working hours.** It is hard to get the right people, so keep them. Take the time to talk one-to-one to your staff and clearly set out the issues, it is remarkable how many will respond.
4. **Do not replace staff immediately.** It is sometimes difficult to work out exactly how important a member of staff was until they go. Rather than instantly replacing them, try without. You never know, and this is particularly true of that vital employee who suddenly leaves, how well you can do without them.
5. **Hire staff cheaply.** Job centers, unemployment bureaus, free newspapers, local college notice boards and talking to the staff you already have often attract just the right person and for little cost. Do not just reach for the telephone and talk to the first agency in the book, think of other options first.
6. **Change working hours.** It is astonishing how certain we are that 9-to-5 is best. By staggering your hours you can cover the same tasks and have an office presence early in the morning and deep into the night. Why does your wages person or your factory staff have to work during the day? Many companies can exist on cheaper part-time staff, be open longer and increase productivity by avoiding the 9-to-5 routine.

7. **Review your lease.** Is your rent review a one-way option? Why? Insist on a two-way review, insist on all repairs being done, insist on all your rights; if your landlord does not want to meet all the terms, how much are they willing to reduce your rent, the average is about 13%.
8. **Sub-letting rights.** Get them and use them. If you have a part of your business that is stagnant or losing money, filling the area with a rent paying tenant is an easy way out.
9. **Appeal against your business rates.** All your taxes are open to debate, and yet very few debate them. Burglaries up in your area, how much off of your taxes so that you can improve security? Garbage not collected, street-light not working, staff continually late because of traffic problems? Why should you pay twice?
10. **Find alternative accommodation.** If customers do not visit you, find the cheapest accommodation you can. If they do, find "somewhere nice" to see them and move everything else to a cheaper alternative. Expensive premises are not always necessary.
11. **Appoint a purchasing person.** Choose somebody to handle the purchases and ensure they get as many quotes as possible and ensure they know how to negotiate, not argue, negotiate. Do not allow *any* manager to purchase; you will lose money time after time.
12. **Someone else's new business.** Take a look at the job advertisements for sales people; most businesses want people who can generate new business. Companies pay a fortune and many lose money on getting new business, so move on from your old supplier, and become someone else's new business. You will save a fortune.
13. **Reduce purchasing administration.** Why are you spending money looking after someone else's business? Do not pay people to check goods-in, purchase orders, reconcile to invoices and all the other things you probably do. Get a simple system in place and check the purchasing once.
14. **Complain.** If they only sent 99, complain. If they promised by Tuesday and delivered Wednesday, complain. Whatever your supplier did that did not meet what you expected, complain. And establish the value of each complaint.
15. **Buy with others.** Talk to your friends, other business owners, and the people at the golf club or the gym. Go to your local chamber of commerce, people will be buying the same stuff as you and together you will both get it cheaper.
16. **Old ways, new technology.** Rather than spending a fortune on a web-site think about the real advantages of the web. You can correspond for nothing, you can receive orders, you can place orders, you can supply documentation and a whole lot more and all for nothing. Use it to save money.
17. **Utility costs.** It is a certainty that you can reduce your utility costs. Do not pay someone to find out for you and take half your savings, do it yourself.
18. **Office expenses.** Why are you paying to keep desk areas tidy, your staff should do that themselves. Make your staff responsible and cut your bills in half by having the cleaner every other day.
19. **Telephone bills.** You can save hundreds, if not thousands of dollars with just a few simple rules. No personal calls to mobile phones. Use e-mail rather than the telephone. Change your documentation to put the onus on people to call you. In particular ask suppliers to ring and check if you need something, say, once a day or week. Use the telephone bill to identify telephone abusers; some of your staff may cost you double their wage in calls.

20. **Software licenses.** The average company is paying about 40% too much in licenses. Ensure that you need the software you are paying licenses for and ensure that you are paying for the right number of licenses.
21. **Car trade-ins.** Why not trade-in one year later than you do at the moment, that normally means a saving of 33%.
22. **Review business trips.** Investment in videoconferencing and computer conferencing pays for itself remarkably quickly. Business trips cost money and take a long-time in these days of congested roads, stations and airports. Make the other person pay for the trip by inviting them to see you at your offices.
23. **No-frills travel.** Who cares how you got there? Too many businesses use first-class travel and first-class hotels when there is no need for it. Budget airlines and smaller hotels can be just as comfortable and certainly just as efficient, save the “better” options for your personal travel when you can spend all the extra money your business is now making.
24. **Seek volume hotel discounts.** Find a small chain of hotels and negotiate a block discount.
25. **Set subsistence allowances.** Set a rate and set out what it covers. Pay your staff for the inconvenience of being away from home and they can use that money to pay for their own newspapers, meals, drinks and late-night movies.
26. **Use the Internet internally.** Your staff can submit expenses, reports, orders and just about everything else via the Internet and it saves time in re-punching and processing.
27. **Send invoices daily.** Find a way to bill everything on the day it happens. The average business takes a week to invoice, how much does that cost you in interest costs and efficiency?
28. **Improve credit control.** No sale has taken place until it is paid for. Credit is a privilege, not a right. Do not allow your sales people to sell to companies who persistently pay late. Work out how much it costs you in interest, telephone calls, letters and arguments between sales and accounts staff when someone persistently pays late. If your sales people are good, tell them to find other customers. Every business that ever failed has enough cash owed to it by bad payers to keep going, for a little while longer anyway.
29. **Reduce audit fee.** Ask your auditor what you have to do to reduce the audit fee, if they cannot suggest anything go somewhere else. If they do, then do it, and pocket the savings.
30. **Bank on-line.** There is no better way to understand cash-flow than having instant access to your account on-line. It brings the account under your control and is also useful for finding out about bounced checks and additional bank charges, and doing something about them, that much quicker.
31. **Always pay checks in on the day.** You will be surprised to find how many times you do not.
32. **Review marketing costs.** People always talk about cutting or increasing marketing costs; very few measure them. How much did you make on your last mail-shot or advertisement? How many people see the car with your logo, how much does each salesman actually make you and so on. Measurement not only will enable you to find out how much you should be spending, it will also make your sales and marketing people work that little bit harder as you are watching.
33. **Review your database.** Marketing to people who have moved is a costly business. Once again e-mail is a great way to save money as you can use it to check who is still there. You may even use it for direct mail although experience suggest that it is rarely as successful as old-fashioned “snail-mail”

34. **Stop making expensive brochures.** Brochures are a breath-taking waste of money for most businesses. The moment they are finished they are out-of-date. Once again the web is a great place for keeping people informed and it costs no more to have an extravagant brochure than a cheap-looking one.
35. **Spread the marketing costs.** You will be amazed how few people try joint marketing with their supplier. Why not try it? It is obviously in their interests if you sell more. What about marketing with another company offering a joint solution, you have a product they have an add-on, the only way the customer can get both is to buy from you both.
36. **Shop around for printing.** The quality of work done by copywriters, photographers, designers and printers rarely differs, but their prices will when they know you are shopping around.
37. **Review frequency of sales calls.** How many calls to get an order? Don't know? Then find out. A remarkable number of businesses call customers every week when their customer orders every two weeks, three weeks or monthly. Why?
38. **Your best customers.** Do not fall for the new business is best philosophy. Your best customers are your current customers. Treat them as you would a potential big prospect, you will be surprised how much business is out there with the people you already know.
39. **Commission on poor sales.** What happens when your sales people do not hit target? Very few companies take money back, but introduce a two-tier system, commission for good months which increases as the number of good months do. If someone hits target every other month they are manipulating your present system, give them the opportunity to earn more money for consistently performing well.
40. **Review sales targets monthly.** Do not drift. Sit with your sales team once a month and set targets that are agreeable to you both. Do not allow your business to become one of hope or one dominated by easy or hard targets.
41. **Eliminate waste.** Whether you produce goods or not, eliminate waste. That is not the materials you cannot use, but processes. Do not use suggestion boxes, go and ask everyone, what are they doing that they regard as a waste; they will certainly tell you.
42. **Do not manufacture.** A remarkable number of businesses would provide products more profitably if they did not make them themselves. Your business may have a great reputation and great sales people that can sell well in your market, so do you have to make it yourself?
43. **Use your machinery.** Every minute your machines are not working they are costing you money. Can they make other things, can you sub-contract them, and can you work them 24 hours a day?
44. **Manufacture just-in-time.** When you next look at your stock convert it to dollars in your mind. Having a lot of stock is not good business practice; it is a cash-flow nightmare.
45. **Distribution is key.** Get your distribution right. Get the right product delivered to the right customer at the right time. The second time you deliver something is the time you spend all your profit, the third time and it is your money you are spending.
46. **Forecast.** Start by estimating how much you will have in the bank next Thursday. How much stock of a product at close-of-business Friday. Estimate your sales for tomorrow and two weeks on Wednesday. You can learn how to forecast more accurately very quickly by this approach. Now imagine the benefits of knowing how much you will have in the bank next Thursday and what your sales will be two weeks on Wednesday.

47. **Business Alliances.** Two heads are better than one. Most people are terrible about working with other businesses and the loss to both businesses is enormous. Share marketing costs, increase sales opportunities and improve the chances of better funding and opening up geographical opportunities.
48. **Outsource your services.** Book-keeping and distribution come immediately to mind. Always set out, in a contract, what they will do for you. The key saving is that they will only work for you when there is work.
49. **Sell your business.** It is remarkable how many people wait to sell their business until it is bankrupt, or they are too ill to run it or they just cannot take the stress any more. There is nothing better than buying fresh bread; no-one wants it a week later.
50. **Consultants?** Consultants borrow your watch to tell you the time, we should know! If you are going to use them ask them to charge by results, the consultants who will be good for your business will soon emerge then, as they are the only ones who can afford to take the chance.

Free Business Ebooks

Free Pagan Ebooks

Free Programs

IN CONCLUSION

As we enter a new millennium, we find ourselves in the Age of the Start-up.

Everywhere, it seems, people have a new idea that they want to turn into a business, a new business model that they want to turn into a company -- or an old company that needs a new idea. If you're not incubating a start-up, you're starting an incubator.

Which prompts us to ask a question: How do you navigate your way through this new era of start-ups? Whether you're launching your own "dotcom" or starting the restaurant that you've always dreamed of opening, how do you make the right decisions? Should you hold on or let go? Find the right partner or go it alone? Stay small or learn how to grow?

Here are tools, tips, and time-tested tactics from 17 advisers, founders, and professional managers, all of whom have made start-ups work. Each has soared -- and each has hit some bumps along the way.

Hey, you wanna start something?

Good people are in short supply. Whether you're an investor, a company owner, or someone strategically trying to figure out what to do in a business, you need to pay more attention to employee motivation and human relations.

The challenge is to find great people and then to inspire and empower them. The skills that it takes to start a company are not the same skills that it takes to keep a company going. In the beginning, you need to inspire a small team of people to meet deadlines and to deliver results. You need to micromanage -- because a lot has to happen, and you're responsible for all of it.

Later on, as the company gets bigger and the strategic challenges get broader, you have to be able to delegate. You need to bring in lots of good people, to give them responsibility -- and then to leave them alone.

Ultimately, in the world of start-ups, most consolidation occurs less for financial reasons than for management reasons. You'll hear a lot of people saying, "We've got this absolutely great company, with a great product, but there's no one to run it." There's an important point here: Consolidation doesn't necessarily mean failure. It's part of the natural order of things.

My biggest mistake?

Believing too much in the power of a brand name or an alliance, and thinking, "We'll get a better CEO later."

The key to a successful start-up is networking -- both personal and professional.

Money is just money. Who invests is more important than how much is invested. The questions that you should ask are all about networks: How connected is the investing company? Does it have connections with large companies, sources of money, or channels of distribution? Have the founders maintained relations at their old companies? Do they have the right connections with companies that can provide talent? Leveraging other people's assets is important when launching a start-up. Look at how Yahoo! depended on Netscape.

That alliance happened early.

Networks are the steel of the future. The global telecommunications industry is spending \$1 trillion to update both analog and digital networks, because that's the new infrastructure. Ultimately, you have to build infrastructure. Look at Amazon.com. It's buying warehouses, software companies, and networks.

You have to assume that you're in business for the long haul. That belief will drive you to build value.

But in your haste to put your spin on the place, you have to be sensitive. If you're not, you'll slow down the transformation process. As the new person, you need to spend time socializing throughout the business. Put more nurturing into it. People joined a start-up; they didn't join you. Here I am thinking that we're going to be a great, huge company. But not everybody signed up for that.

Don't start a business unless you have enough money to invest in the business yourself and enough money to live on for a year. You're not going to be profitable for at least that long. How are you going to pay your rent in the meantime? And when you do take money from other people, be selective. So many entrepreneurs come to me and say, "It's no longer the business that I started." That's because they lost control. Control doesn't come with the title of CEO; control comes with cash.

You don't need to have a million dollars in the bank. Be creative, and understand how to get money.

In the beginning, venture capitalists didn't want us. After all, being a financial educator for the poor isn't very sexy. Now they see that we have something to offer. But we feel that they would sell out our target market, and we don't want to become McStreet. Here are my tips for starting a business.

- Make your idea your idea -- legally. Get the paperwork done for patents and trademarks.
- Know your market. And don't just focus on traditional demographics, such as white males, ages 35 to 45. Dig deeper: What are the buying habits of your customers? What are their families like? Getting that kind of information takes time and money. So partner with universities to do market research.
- Develop an exit strategy from the get-go. Go beyond strictly financial considerations. What is

your personal exit strategy? You're not going to want to run the company forever. Step aside when the mission has to change, or when the market need shifts to involve something that you know nothing about. Otherwise, you're going to run your company into the ground.

Finding a business partner is like finding a life partner: You should try to find someone whose talents complement yours. A good team has both a visionary who keeps raising the bar and a good operations person who keeps things running smoothly. And each has to trust the other implicitly. In our business, team management seems to resolve a lot of conflicts.

Managing a start-up requires learning to let go. And part of letting go is developing others -- creating opportunities for people to move up and run organizations on their own. Shorebank has 22 subsidiaries, and every one of them has a president or the equivalent. We keep watching to see who the leaders are. If we were to do something different, we would start investing in the development of general managers even earlier than we do. As we try to expand, we're finding that we don't have enough people with general-management skills.

When you start a business, don't underestimate the growing pool of potential investors who are interested in business ideas that have a social component. There's a growing group of wealthy people who want to invest some of their capital in something that has a social purpose. But those people aren't looking for idealistic dreamers; they want to be confident that their capital is going to be conserved. And if they can actually make some money, that's even better.

What's unique about a second-generation company like ours is that we draw not only on our own experiences but also on the experiences of the people with whom we've worked.

Our early experience with the Internet helped attract the amazing team that we recruited. And that helped us attract funding. The first people you hire form the DNA of the company, and that team will drive your valuation in the future. So it's important to get the funding that you need to build the right organization. These days, money is so much easier to come by than it used to be. But people are hard to get, and investors understand the costs of building a great team. It's much easier to tell an investor that you need money to hire more people to solve problems than it is to tell an investor that you need money to license a cool technology.

One of our challenges has been to keep the quality bar high. If we build great technology, that's only because we've been able to hire great engineers. We want to build a great consumer brand that serves millions of people -- in other words, a real business. And we're taking all of the organizational steps necessary to make that happen.

There's something metaphysical about taking a concept, making it a reality, and creating a great enterprise. The management of any start-up is the administration of the unforeseen. And space -- the focus of my start-up -- is a concept without limits.

Before you even get started, there has to be absolute enthusiasm about the idea behind the business. And love of the subject matter has to exist organization wide: Those who will provide the capital have to share your vision.

You have only one chance to create a world-class business. Creating a world-class company may cost a little more money. At the margin, it may even create a diversion from your core business. But the payoffs can be profound.

We're all operating in Web time. It doesn't take much more than a year and a half for a new business to become encumbered by the same constraints that affect traditional companies. You want to avoid establishing ways of doing business too quickly, and you want to avoid establishing mind-sets and procedures that are not conducive to marketplace opportunism. Bureaucracy is a state of mind, and it's remarkable how quickly that state of mind can be created.

Today, there are more companies competing for capital and more companies competing for mind share. How do you stand out? Here are three rules for start-ups.

First, have a differentiated product or service -- one that can capture mind share. Find a beachfront property in an area that's not already crowded.

Second, obtain capital of the highest quality, so that your money will open doors for you. Sign up with venture capitalists that have the best track records and the most-recognized brands. Investors today are savvy about recognizing the money behind a company. And get as much capital as you can early on, so that later you won't have to worry about having enough money. Go to the private as well as the public market, and do both an initial round and a follow-up round.

Third, show that your company is able to evolve. If you're a commerce company, you want to show the lifetime value of each of your customers -- and the expected growth rate of your business, based on the number of customers that you have. And once you're established, you have to go beyond business as usual. You need to keep creating new initiatives for people to latch onto.

I don't have a problem with a company not making money during its first few years in business. It doesn't do any good to be profitable in the first year if you're not going to be around later. You're running a marathon -- so remember to focus on whether your company can stay in the race.

A start-up is the ultimate test of you as a professional. Why do people climb Everest? Because it represents the ultimate test: You have to be willing to die in order to climb.

If you're trying to start a Web site from scratch, you need to have something up within 10 weeks. If you have an idea, someone else has it too. You'll never get there if you try to put up the perfect site. I tell people to stop talking about it and start doing it! It even helps with raising money. Venture capitalists

like to see something concrete. While they do get thousands of ideas, they don't get thousands of ideas that can be executed -- and executed well.

People at large corporations really do not tolerate mistakes. But when you're doing things that haven't been done before, you're going to make mistakes. It's not the mistakes but how you react to those mistakes that makes all the difference. You have to iterate. Listen to your customers constantly. Give them what they want -- and a little more.

You have to take risks. And when you take risks, you may not be everyone's best friend. Business is about community. It's about constant engagement. We're living in a time of mass consumerism, and it's hard to fight the battles associated with that trend: the price wars, the location wars. The most important asset that an independent merchant has is a community tie -- a relationship that has been built over time.

Training programs are important to the success of a business. Even if you have unlimited capital, you can't expect to pour it into a location, fill that location with inventory, open up the doors, and wait for hordes of customers to arrive. You also have to treat people well.

Finally, I'd like to dispel a common myth about owning your own business. A lot of people who go into business for themselves do so because they've had a bad experience as a corporate employee. They think that they want to be their own boss. In some ways, when you are the owner of a business, you have many more bosses than you ever had before.

You have to remain constantly vigilant.

If you're going to be a pioneer in a market, you have to spend at least half of your time selling that market. I used to spend 70% of my time selling the potential of the Asian-American marketplace, and many other agencies do the same kind of thing.

You sell the market first and your company second.

The first thing that you have to do when you start a company in a new market is to look at whether that market is big enough. In the ad business, a market needs to include at least 10 million consumers before you can convince a company that it should target those people. And with Web sites getting hundreds of millions of hits a day, the very concept of what represents a significant number has changed.

My philosophy is simple: Love what you do. Don't do something because you hear that it's a great way to make money.

Start as small as possible: To achieve 100% success, you need to grow organically. Pass up outside

financing until you know that you can run the company. Starting with limited financing forces you to learn every single aspect of a business: how to balance a ledger, how to collect receivables, how to draw up contracts. If you don't understand all aspects of your business, you've set yourself up to fail.

People who start a company want to hang on to it. They want to protect what they've started. But they really need to let the people inside the organization -- and even those outside it (subcontractors, vendors) -- bring ideas to life. You have to let go a little bit.

There's a new wave of managers and leaders who can quickly build a company and take that company global. They start up in many countries at once, so that after 12 months the company has a balanced business in Europe, the United States, and Asia. The old, restricted view that you can start in your domestic market and then progressively expand, taking countries one by one, is completely obsolete. You need to find the right leaders and managers -- people who are used to living in various countries and dealing with various cultures.

The challenge is to build a company that is global in its reach but local in its execution. The point is not that we have our headquarters in Paris and that we tell our people in America what to do. The local team knows better, so we assign clear duties and emphasize communication.

You have to start with knowledge of your consumers. From the start, we also dealt with consumers one-on-one. How do you find that magic price point at which everything starts to move? How important is quality to consumers? Will they come back again, or were they just buying a novelty item?