

**Beginner's Guide  
To Building  
A Successful  
Online Business**

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## ***The Legal Bits:***

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## ***Introduction:***

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The Internet is an amazing tool that has provided many people with an alternative to going out to work each day. If you like the idea of having your own business, the Internet can make this dream so much easier to reach.

Not only that, but through the Internet many people who perhaps aren't physically able to go out to a 'normal' job each day can work from their own home. Or parents who want to spend more time with their family - they can work through an online business and have more flexible hours and do more of the things that they enjoy in life.

So that's basically what I want to teach you in this guide. It's to give you an overview of how to start an online business, all of the different things that you need to look at and the different steps along the way.

Once you start delving into this area you will see that there are countless opportunities to create a business that is just right for you. One that allows you to enjoy the lifestyle you dream of too - a lifestyle where you have much more choice over the hours you work and the amount of money you can make. If you work smarter, rather than harder, you can automate a lot of your business so that it runs smoothly without you, allowing you to spend more time on the other aspects of business management... or just enjoying life!

The Beginner's Guide To Building A Successful Online Business is just that... the beginning. Once you are aware of all of the opportunities that are waiting for you, and you start to implement each of the strategies recommended here, you will no doubt be hungry for more information and more ways to make your business even better. And rest assured, there is plenty of information out there for all levels, from novices through to the more experienced who are already making their millions online.

Start by going through the steps listed here and you will get an idea of what sort of business YOU want to run, then start with the basics of researching your business idea and getting it up and running. If you are unsure of where to go next, please email me at [donna-marie@donna-mariecoggins.com](mailto:donna-marie@donna-mariecoggins.com) any time and I would be only too happy to help you or at least steer you in the right direction towards those who can help.

So, let's begin!

Firstly, begin by setting out a clear plan for your business. Yeah, I know most people aren't keen on the planning bit - you just want to get stuck into getting this business going and making money, right? But trust me... having a clear plan will make the entire process so much easier.

So start by deciding what sort of business you're wanting. Do you want to have an online business that is automated as much as possible leaving you very little to do in the day-to-day management, once it's all up and running?

Or would you rather an online business that complements your off-line business, or perhaps one that is centred around your online presence but also combines you working with customers in a consulting capacity?

## ***Products & Services:***

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Once you know that you can start to think about what type of products or services you want to sell. Now if you're passionate about something in particular or are particularly skilled at something, it would be good to use those skills and passions as the foundation of your business. BUT it may not be the best idea from your business' perspective.

You see, if you love baking cakes there's no point basing your business around baking cakes if nobody wants to buy them. Or not enough people to keep your business profitable over time.

You would be much better off by finding a hungry market first - finding people who are looking for a particular product, service or solution - and then feeding that market. While you're researching, aim to discover what it is that people are buying; the things they simply can't get enough of. Now, if you can base your business around THAT you may be on a winner. Ideally, it would be good to find a market that is hungry for something whereby you can incorporate your passions too.

Here are a few general ideas for online businesses to get you thinking in the right direction...

- Sell products using a spare room, garage or warehouse to store your stock
- Sell products, but use a fulfilment house to store and supply the stock
- Sell products via drop-shipping, whereby you market the products and accept the payment and orders, then you forward the purchaser's details to the supplier who sends the products directly to the customer
- Sell digital information products whereby the products can be easily downloaded via the Internet. (This is a great type of online business to have as you don't have to store stock or deal with suppliers, and most of the

systems can be automated - which is beneficial for you as well as your customers.

- You could set up a membership site whereby people pay an annual or monthly fee to access the site, where they can benefit from valuable information and resources on a particular topic, along with perhaps a forum to mingle with other members.
- Set up an eBay business - eBay businesses can again be divided into various categories, whereby you can supply stock yourself, you can drop-ship or you can use a fulfilment house to store and supply your products.

So you've got all these different options available to you and it's a matter of finding the one that suits you best... something that fits in with the overall big picture of your lifestyle and your business.

Just as a sideline here, if you're interested in starting an eBay store, Matt and Amanda Clarkson are the eBay magicians who are fantastic at mentoring others in creating hugely successful eBay businesses. You can find out more about them by visiting [www.BiddingBuzz.com.au](http://www.BiddingBuzz.com.au)

Now Matt and Amanda travel the world teaching others how to set up successful eBay businesses. And once you see their strategy, and see how they set up their systems, you can understand why they have such a successful business and why it's so easy to replicate.

One of the easiest types of products to sell is information. Information products are generally easy to produce and can be supplied either in digital form, such as an e-book or audio file that is downloaded or an e-course that is emailed to customers. Or information products can also be a physical product, either a manual, a book, a CD or a DVD.

In the case of digital information products, you can easily set this up so that the distribution is automated. As soon as your customer has paid for their product, they are re-directed to a download page or they are sent an email with the link where they can access their products.

If you're selling physical information products, you can process these orders yourself or you can arrange for a fulfilment house to process orders on your behalf.

I've mentioned a 'fulfilment house' a couple of times now. That's a type of business where they store all your stock for you - and it's usually not just your stock; they would normally store stock for other customers as well. The orders come in and the fulfilment house processes those, packages them and sends them out with the receipt and any other instructions that you've given them. And it's all done as if the order is coming from you - they've got your return address label on and so on - and obviously the fulfilment house charges you a fee for that. But the beauty of that is that they store all the stock and you don't have to worry about warehouses or all the extra space it's going to take up in your house. So that's a great option to look into.

Now, if you would rather sell services than products, again there are multitudes of ways you can go about this. You can offer consulting or coaching over the Internet, via emails or via a variety of multi-media options. Skype is a great way of meeting with people online and you can set it up to use webcams and have video conferencing too. Or you can use a combination of phone calls and emails.

Now if you're interested in Skype, go and have a look at their website. It's [www.Skype.com](http://www.Skype.com).

If you're offering your services as a set program you could use a combination of emails, videos, teleseminars - there's so many ways you can provide your services 'virtually' - whereby you never actually meet your customers in person - or you can combine this with face-to-face meetings too.

Now with face-to-face meetings, obviously that's going to have a geographical challenge to it in that you can only meet with people in certain areas or certain regions. Whereas if you can work that in with emails and Skype and so on, it really opens the doors to so many more areas and so many more people.

Another way you could run your business is via affiliate products or services. This is where you recommend specific products or services that are provided by other businesses, and you receive an affiliate fee - or a commission if you like. This fee may be a set amount or a percentage. Either way, if you're using this strategy to build your business then make sure of two things in particular:

1. Make sure there is a decent affiliate tracking system in place so you and the supplier know exactly who has been referred by you, and thus how much money you are to be paid; and
2. Be certain that you are only recommending quality products and services. Remember - your reputation is on the line so if the business you refer someone to doesn't look after that customer, this can reflect badly on you.

## ***Arranging Products & Services:***

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Once you have an idea for your online business and are clear about the types of products you want to sell, one of the next steps is to source your products.

In the case of information products, you can create your own products if you are a specialist in a particular field, or if you can find other experts who may be interested in co-creating products with you.

For physical products, you'll want to locate wholesalers. A good place to start here is to attend trade shows and exhibits for the industry that you're interested in.

In Australia, there are companies such as [www.AussieWholesaleSuppliers.com.au](http://www.AussieWholesaleSuppliers.com.au) who are a great place to source a number of products. To find similar companies, just search on something like 'wholesale suppliers'. It's a good idea to do your own research into each company before you sign any contracts or buy from them, just to be sure that you are protected. What are their returns arrangements? If you order goods and they arrive damaged or broken in some way, who is responsible for them? Who pays for freight? Can they keep up with your demand? There's no point you promoting products and selling heaps of them if you are constantly running out and having to wait weeks - or even months - for new stock to arrive.

## ***Building Your Website:***

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The website is basically your shop... your store. If you don't have a 'real world' shop, so to speak, this is your shop. And this is where the fun begins!

Setting up your online store doesn't have to be challenging, nor expensive. The purpose of your website, or store, is to invite people to stay long enough to find out more about you and your products or services, hopefully to buy from you.

It's important that the focus of your site is not on creating a fancy or pretty site with all the bells and whistles... it needs to be practical, easy to navigate and able to meet its purpose. The specifics of what's required on your site will vary depending on what your products or services are and who your target market is, but the critical factor here is that it's built TO SUIT YOUR CUSTOMER... not you and not your web designer and not anyone else who's offering you their opinion. Just your customer because they're the ones you're selling to.

You will no doubt need some images to show what you're selling, but you must ensure that each page still loads quickly. If you have a lot of individual products, don't try to include decent sized photos of everything on one page. People will get frustrated and click away from your site long before all the images have loaded. In this case, you could break the products down into categories, with each category on a new page, and use thumbnails - small images where visitors can click on the thumbnail in order to see a larger version of the image.

Where possible, and especially with information products, it's much better to have one product per web site. You can have a central site that lists all of your products, but also give each product its own site. This will increase sales and helps visitors to focus on one product at a time so that they don't get distracted and side-tracked and end up buying nothing.

If you're proficient at using a professional web development program such as DreamWeaver, by all means go ahead and build your own site. But if you would like to keep costs down, or maintain control, and build your own site and you don't have the experience, a great site builder to use is Big Pixie - [www.BigPixie.com](http://www.BigPixie.com). This site builder is so easy to use and the support staff are extremely helpful. Plus, it incorporates a shopping cart and heaps of images and page templates, or you can add/create your own. The monthly fee includes the hosting, use of all the features that are offered and it also provides the support. So if you get stuck, just contact 'Support' and they'll give you all the help you need.

Alternately, if you decide you would like someone else to build your website for you, make sure you spend a bit of time looking for the right person. Ask to see lots of examples of other sites they've built, and look for someone who is experienced with creating sites similar to the style you'll need. There are web designers and there are web designers... it really does pay to shop around for someone who can do exactly what you need them to.

## ***Setting Up The Payment Processor:***

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Okay... so now you've researched your market, sourced your products and set up a web site. How are you going to get paid when selling goods or services online? After all, it's not like people can pay you cash or hand you their credit card.

There are heaps of payment processors available and some systems can be quite expensive, not to mention challenging to set up. When you're starting out, it's a good idea to start with something simple and straight-forward. You can always upgrade your payment processor later, once your business is up and running and making a huge profit, but initially, just keep it simple.

Two systems that I use are PayPal and Clickbank. Clickbank is excellent but it's for information products only, so if you're selling physical goods or services, you won't be able to use Clickbank. However for information products such as e-books or digital courses or manuals, one of the advantages of Clickbank is that your product can be added to the 'Marketplace' where other Clickbank members can sell your products for you, as affiliates. This can be a great way to get extra sales.

PayPal is useful for all sorts of products and services, whether you are selling one product, a service by the hour or have 1,000 products in your store. You can create 'BUY NOW' or 'PAY NOW' buttons or you can install PayPal's shopping cart direct onto your site.

One of the benefits of using Clickbank or PayPal is that they are generally well known and trusted throughout the world, so people are often comfortable paying via these companies. And in using these companies, you don't have to deal with customers' credit card details at all.

You could also apply to set up a merchant facility with your bank and then link that with a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Processor or Online Gateway - these companies provide a secure way for customers to pay via credit card, direct to your merchant account.

You could also allow people to pay via Direct Deposit to your account, and while this tends to work well with serviced based businesses, it isn't always ideal. Many customers would be reluctant to transfer money to your account before receiving their goods. Although this technically isn't that much different to them paying you via credit card before they receive their goods, in reality, if they pay via credit card, PayPal or Clickbank then at least they have that middle-man, the company that processes the payment, to offer them some sort of security and protection.

If you're selling physical products you could also provide your contact details for customers to be able to send you a cheque or money order and to mail their order to you. If accepting cheques, of course you wouldn't actually supply the goods until AFTER the cheque has cleared.

When choosing the payment processor that is best suited for your online business, remember to consider things such as where your customers are based. If your business is operating internationally, you need to make sure that your payment processing company can accept a variety of currencies and can convert that currency to your chosen currency. And you need to know that your payment processor or merchant facility is valid in all the countries you'll be operating in.

## ***Systems, Processes, Policies:***

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No matter what sort of business you have, it's essential for you to create systems, processes and policies. Now this may not sound overly exciting, but it is critical to having a successful business.

So okay, let's start with policies. These include things like your refund policy, credit policy and customer service policy. It's important to have set policies in place in the early stages of your business so that if someone comes to you asking for a refund, you know exactly what your legal obligations are, what your moral obligations are and how you will respond to this request.

The same goes if you receive a complaint - how will you handle it? Or what about if a client phones to thank you because they just loooove their new such-and-such? If you have policies in place, you would immediately thank that customer for showing their appreciation and then ask if they would mind providing you with a testimonial. And if you're really on the ball, you could also offer them an additional bonus gift or discount as a special thank you for them making the effort of showing their appreciation.

Next, let's look at our processes... how are you going to provide your products or services? If someone orders a DVD that you will need to send to them, how will you handle their order? Do you have a set procedure you follow? You should. And if these processes are documented then it not only makes it easier for you to know exactly what you need to be doing, but if you decide to employ someone or if you're ill or injured and someone else is looking after your business for you, then they can simply follow the documented procedures to ensure that your business continues to run.

When it comes to systems, this is one of the most exciting parts of your business! Well, I get excited about systems anyway... I hope you will too. A lot of people don't though, and that's okay.

Systems are similar to processes, but it's a matter of having as much of your business systemised as possible. What this means is that you basically have a standard way of doing everything that needs doing. And to take that further, you can automate as much as possible.

So for example, if someone buys a product from you then you would supply the product, right? Now with a solid system in place, you might send the product within 2 business days, accompanied by a receipt and a thank you note. And on that thank you note, you ask customers to subscribe to your monthly newsletter and in exchange, you'll offer them a free gift or a discount off their next order. Or perhaps you send them a voucher offering them a gift or discount for every new customer they refer to you.

Then, let's say the customer signs up to your newsletter. You could send out a regular series of tips that relate to your business or something else that's going to be of use to your customers. And the best thing is, you can set up these emails in an autoresponder, so they are automatically sent out without you even having to think about it. Your customer subscribes to your newsletter - your autoresponder automatically sends out the emails. **YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO A THING!** So can you see how powerful this is? Part of your business is running without you even being there to do anything. You could be asleep... you could be at the movies... you could be playing in the pool. Now, imagine if you could automate other parts of your business. Well guess what? You can. That's part of the beauty of running an online business... a well set-up, systemised online business.

If you are selling information products, you can automate about 80% of your business. Or if you're selling physical products, by using a drop-shipping company or a fulfilment

house, you can similarly automate about 80% of your business. Even if you have an eBay business, the same thing - you can automate around 80% of that.

But before you can start to automate your business, you need to plan and write down what your systems will be.

## ***Traffic Generation:***

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Once you have your online business up and running, you need to attract potential customers, also known as visitors or traffic. So here are my tips for targeted traffic... and lots of it!

First things first. Before you can even think about getting visitors, or traffic, to your web site you need to know who you're attracting. Who are your ideal customers?

Keep in mind that there's no point getting 5,000 visitors to your site each day if the majority of them simply aren't interested in your goods or services. It's far better to focus on attracting truly interested people who are hungry for what you have to offer, don't you agree?

So firstly... I want you to write down who your ideal customers are.

Next, start listing where these types of people might be found:

- What do they read?
- What else do they buy?
- What forums do they hang out on?
- What blogs do they visit?
- What other business and services might they use?
- What newsletters, ezines and magazines do they read?
- What networking groups do they belong to?
- Who do they go to for coaching or mentoring?
- Who are their friends?
- What seminars, workshops or expos do they attend?
- What professional groups are they members of?

By knowing the answers to these questions you've made your job of attracting web site traffic so much easier. Rather than hit and miss promotions, you now have a highly targeted list of where to promote your business.

Add to this list every time you think of somewhere else you might find your ideal customers, and keep it handy while you're working your way through each of the traffic generation techniques we're about to cover.

So... now you're ready to begin!

I've come up with my list of the top 18 techniques for generating loads of traffic - that is, good quality, highly targeted traffic - to your web site. I suggest you start with one technique and then add another and another and another. Use as many of them as possible and you'll soon have all the traffic you can handle, and so much more! You may decide that some of these methods just don't suit your style and that's fine.

## **1. Create A Free 'Something' And Promote It - Forums, Blogs, Adwords (And Similar Ads), Word Of Mouth**

The first one I would suggest is to create a free 'something' and promote it. This can be a sample, consultation, e-book, physical book or guide, white paper, audio, CD, or virtually any sort of gift. The thing is, it must be something of value to your customers... something they WANT to have (or need to have).

Before you give this away, make sure you set up a database management system. Ask people to enter their name and email address, and postal address if necessary, so that you can send them their free 'whatever'. When offering this freebie to visitors, let them know that if they sign up for your 'whatever', that you will then send them regular tips, hints, updates or special offers, and that they can unsubscribe at any time.

Now the benefits of this are firstly, that you have just given away a sample of your product or services. People can try your products or your services and will discover how great you are, plus how great your service and follow-up is, right? Secondly, you have those people's details on your database, so you can now market to them simply by sending an email. You don't have to keep trying to draw them back to your site again and again and again through all these methods of traffic generation, right?

When using this method, don't just send advertising to your database. You need to continue to offer tips, suggestions, advice... freely give information or recommendations that will help them. Of course, you can add some promotion of your products and services in there and let people know about new products and services. Just remember to keep it interesting and give more than you ask for.

And most importantly, **DO NOT SPAM!** Make sure every email you send complies with the Anti-Spam laws and that your subscribers can easily unsubscribe or be removed if they want to. Failure to respect these laws could land you in hot water with the authorities and they won't win your subscribers' loyalty.

Once you have created your free 'whatever' to give away, promote this offer via all of the methods I'm about to share with you.

## **2. Create A Viral Product**

The second traffic generation technique I recommend is to create a viral product.

Have you ever noticed how when a virus is going around, it seems to spread like wildfire? Well, similarly, a viral product spreads rapidly too, usually across a widespread area.

Again, for this technique you need to make something that can be freely given away for free. If you have a bit of a creative, witty mind you can really have some fun with this one.

The idea is that you want to create something that can be passed around freely from one person to another and another. This could be some sort of information guide where you include lots of links to your website. Make sure that you include a clear notice towards the beginning and again at the end, stating that people are free to pass the document on to anyone else who may be interested in it - their friends, family, clients... whoever. By encouraging people to pass it around, you're increasing your chances of being noticed.

And hopefully, people are going to read that and click on the links you provide for more information or to solve a specific problem they have... the links to your site!

Another form of viral marketing - something for those who are a bit creative - is to create something that's incredibly interesting, unique or funny. You know how jokes get sent from one email address to another at the speed of light? Well, you can create something like that, either as a PowerPoint presentation or a YouTube video perhaps, but make sure that you've got your branding on there somewhere, like your web site's URL clearly positioned for everyone to see.

Now if you're going to do something that's a bit funny or as a joke, make sure that it's in line with your philosophies and the image you want your business to portray.

You may be amazed at how quickly this spreads!

### 3. Affiliates

I LOVE affiliates! A lot of businesses - particularly those in the off-line world - will pay a sales person to sell their products for them, right? Well, affiliates can be just that.

Affiliates are people who happily sell your products for you in exchange for a commission, or affiliate fee.

The idea is that you create or produce a great product along with the supporting marketing material. You make sure you've got a web site that sells your products easily. You want to make it as easy as possible for your affiliates who will be promoting your products or services.

If you sell information products, a great place to find affiliates is by listing your products in the Clickbank marketplace. There are similar smaller sites around, but Clickbank is a great place to start.

When deciding how much to pay your affiliates, the golden rule is to be generous. Pay an absolute minimum of 40% of the total sale price, preferably 50-75%. The higher the amount paid to affiliates, the more keen they are to promote your products. And remember... the 25-50% that you get is a bonus - it's money you wouldn't have received had your affiliate not gone out and found a buyer for you.

### 4. Web Directories

Web directories can also be a great way of getting your site noticed. Web directories can be a local community listing, state or federal listings, industry listings... the list is almost endless.

The benefits of listing in REPUTABLE web directories are two-fold; firstly, people may go to these directories to find a particular product or service provider. And secondly, the extra links that are provided can bring valuable 'backlinks' to your site, which we'll talk about later.

When listing in web directories, many will charge a fee but there are also umpteen free web directories.

So just have a look around. You can even do a search in your search engine for 'free business web directory'. Just make sure that they are reputable. You want decent sites and listings, not junky trashy sites that are all links and nothing else.

## 5. Online Advertising

Online advertising may cost money but if you choose your advertising sites well, it will be money well-invested.

Remember before I started talking about the various forms of traffic you made a list of your ideal customer and included details of other sites they would visit? Well, now you go to those sites and check them out. Do any of them accept advertising? If so, do you think it will be worth the cost? You will need to make sure you monitor your traffic carefully so you know that you're consistently getting enough traffic from these sites to warrant the cost of the advertising.

And one of the easiest ways to monitor you traffic is via a free service such as Google Analytics. Simply sign up for an account and follow the instructions for adding the Google Analytics code to your websites. This then tracks your website and then you just log in to your Analytics account regularly to monitor all your statistics. You'll easily be able to see how many visitors you have had to your site each day, where they come from (geographically), how they found you (eg referrals from other sites), what

pages of your site they're visiting and how long they stay on your site. This is a fantastic tool - and a vital part of having a successful online business.

And did I mention? It's free. That's the great thing - a lot of things we need to run an online business are free or low-cost.

## 6. Competitions

Competitions are another great way to get targeted traffic to your site. Hold a regular competition where you give away something of decent value as a prize. Then you can advertise this competition on other websites. There are even websites that are solely dedicated to listing competitions. Of course, many people who enter a competition to win what you have to offer may also be interested in buying your products or services if they don't win.

Now there are a couple of things you need to keep in mind. If running a competition, just make sure that you comply with any local, state and federal legal requirements.

## 7. Joint Ventures

I just looove joint ventures. Joint ventures are basically where you form some sort of partnership with someone else, such as perhaps joining forces with someone who is not a direct competitor but who sells products or services that complement yours, to a similar market as yours.

So for example, if you sell a book on how to cook the best barbeque meals around, you could join forces with a barbeque store, where they sell physical products. You could recommend customers to each other, or perhaps the barbeque store owner could offer their customers a special discounted price on purchasing your book.

Or you could offer the store owner a percentage commission on every book sold to their customers. There are a number of ways to work together. You could even create a Complete Barbeque Pack - a pack made up of the store's products and your book, and then promote that to your own customers as well as the barbeque stores'. Start thinking outside the square and you're sure to come up with some great ideas.

## 8. Link Building

Another great traffic generation technique is link building - or creating backlinks.

Now backlinks are links to your website that are listed on other sites. The more of these that exist, the better your site will rank in the search engines. Plus it helps to give you exposure - for people to see those links, click on them and find your store, right?

While getting lots of backlinks for your site, just beware of 'link farms'. These are basically web sites that are nothing but links to other web sites - there's no useful information on there at all for visitors. The idea of these is simply to create backlinks for all these sites - and the site owner may well offer to include your web site on here. However if there's no real content or purpose to the site, the search engines won't want to know about it. So you're best to steer clear of those.

The best links to get are on reputable, highly trafficked web sites. Government sites and other sites of authority also help your search engine rankings as these sites don't just include other web site links easily. So the search engines figure that if your site is listed on there, it must be a reasonably credible site.

One-way links are when your site is listed on another site, or when you list another web site on yours. Two-way links are when you link to each other. So you've got Jo Bloggs' website listed on your site and Jo Bloggs has your site listed on his.

Now as far as the search engines are concerned, one-way links are better because it tends to indicate a genuine recommendation to that site. Two-way links can simply mean that two sites are doing each other a favour and linking to, or recommending, each other. So two-way links are good; one-way links to your site are better.

## 9. Forums

The next traffic technique we'll talk about is forums.

Forums can be a great source of traffic however there are some very important rules that you **MUST** follow otherwise this technique will not only fail to get traffic to your site... you also risk ruining your reputation. And that's something we don't want.

There are literally thousands of online forums where people with a similar interest 'meet' to discuss their passion. There are forums on business, internet businesses, craft businesses, women in business, US business people, pets, cars, family, music, games and all manner of sporting interests. In fact, I'm sure there would be a forum available on just about every topic you could think of!

These are a great source of information when you're researching your business as you can ask for specific advice, or ask members what their biggest challenges are, ask if they would buy such-and-such product if it were available. Often, you also have an opportunity to promote your online business direct to fellow members of that forum. Now, this is where the rules come in. It is not only rude to go to a group and start promoting your products or services willy-nilly, but it may also be against the group's rules. You may end up being black-listed and ruining your valuable reputation.

So, first things first... when you join a group, head to the 'rules' section - or it may be called policy, guidelines or something along these lines. Find out what you can and

can't do and whether or not you can include links to your website whenever you post, usually in your 'signature'.

Then start participating in the forum. Offer tips or advice, share information. If someone has asked a question that you can answer, do so. Be seen to be giving, rather than taking or asking. You will soon develop a reputation for being someone who cares and is genuine, and you're hopefully building your credibility at the same time. Of course, in doing this, you don't go giving away all your trade secrets - save something for those who pay for your knowledge.

You will find that in a short time you will gain the trust of the forum members and they are then likely to refer others to your site.

Whatever you do, don't go there, post about this great product as xyz.com and then never go back again. In fact, your post would probably be deleted, hopefully before you get a heap of abuse from unimpressed forum members!

Now you know the rules... where do you find these groups? The three best places to look for them are at [www.YahooGroups.com](http://www.YahooGroups.com), [www.GoogleGroups.com](http://www.GoogleGroups.com) or simply by going to a search engine like Google or Yahoo and typing in the topic you're interested in, for example **car restoration + group**. In doing that the search engine will bring up a listing of various groups related to car restoration.

## 10. Pay Per Click Advertising

So moving on to the next traffic generation technique, this is another one of my favourites, this one is Pay Per Click, or PPC. This is not the cheapest method of getting traffic but it is one of the quickest and most effective. PPC includes Google Adwords, which we'll use as an example, but there are many other PPC programs available through companies like Yahoo.

Basically, as the name suggests, you pay per click. That is, you create a small four-line ad to draw visitors to your website. These are the ads that come up down the right hand side of the page, or sometimes the top two positions across the top of the page, if you search for information at Google.com or Yahoo, or one of the other search engines. People see the ads and click on those that interest them. As the advertiser, you only pay for the ad if someone clicks on it.

So your ad could be shown 1,000 times but if nobody clicks on it, you don't pay a cent.

So whereas advertising on a website using a banner ad, for example, you may pay so much per month or per year, regardless of how many people take notice of that ad. In the case of PPC, you only pay when someone clicks on it and goes to your website.

Of course, once they've gone to your site it's up to you to then convert these visitors into customers or subscribers to your list.

When you set up each ad campaign, you can nominate keywords for each ad. Let's say your online business is related to health... your keywords might be something like, healthy diets, healthy lifestyle, food and health. That means that whenever someone goes to Google or Yahoo or another search engine and types in 'healthy diets', 'healthy lifestyle' or 'food and health', your ad may show up.

The cost per click varies greatly too. Basically, you - that's right, YOU, the advertiser - tell Google (or whichever company you're using) how much you are prepared to pay. Yes, you heard that right - you tell them. However, you will no doubt have competitors who are also advertising on the same keywords as you, and they're telling Google how much they're prepared to pay. The search engine will reward the advertiser who is prepared to pay the most with the best positions on the page. So at 10cents/click, with no competing advertisers, you may well find yourself in the first position on the first page of the search results. So that's a pretty good place to be.

However if you have a lot of competition, that price may well see you on page three, with far less chance of being found, let alone clicked on. So in this case you may decide to pay 20cents per click to improve your position, or even more. Alternately, you could look for some other keywords or key phrases that get lots of searches but have less competition.

It's important then to make sure that you spend a bit of time creating an effective ad. There is a lot of information to be found on this topic, or you can even just use the guidelines provided by the company you're advertising via, such as Google Adwords. They will walk you through the process of creating your ad for the best results. Obviously they want you to have good results because the more people that click on the ad, the more money they make!

## **11. Signature Block**

Whenever you send an email out you should be including a signature block at the bottom of your message - this is the bit that says your name, business name and contact details. Make sure you include your web addresses here too. And then make sure you include it on all of your emails. You may be surprised at how many people will click on the web link to find out more about you and what you do or sell. So this is a really valuable technique that a lot of people overlook.

Most email programs will allow you to set up a signature that will automatically be added to each out-going email, which is a great idea to save you typing it in every time.

When you're using forums, which we discussed earlier, you can usually include a signature to be tagged on to the end of each of your forum posts too. Just make sure you read the forum's guidelines as to what information you can include in your signature. And then, if they're okay with you including your link to your website in there, make sure you include it in every post.

## 12. Media Releases

Now the next traffic generation technique we're moving on to is media releases. Media releases should be an integral part of any business, whether it's an online or offline business.

These are how the TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, magazines - all of the media outlets - they get their news leads from someone sending their media release.

Now the thing is, news outlets will get, generally, heaps and heaps of media releases each and every day. So many that many of them actually go unread. So you need to know how to get yours read.

Now, the important thing is, first of all, don't just send something promoting your business or promoting your products or services. Media releases aren't meant to advertise and that will ensure that your media release doesn't get read.

The first thing to do is to make sure that your media release has a great headline. You need something that's effective; something that's catchy; something that makes people think; something that arouses their curiosity so that they have to read on to find the answer to the question in your headline, something like that.

Your media release should ideally be around one page. Don't ramble on. You're just giving the journalist the very basic details, and you should cover the **who, what, where, when, why, how**. So make sure you give them the general information, and make sure you include the contact details for whom they should contact for more information.

And make sure you have a really good angle for your media release. So what that means is, when I said earlier that the media release isn't meant to be promoting your products or services, what you can do is have a think about what sort of things the

media is interested in at the moment. You'll often find that they'll be interested in topics like the current state of the economy or global warming or maybe there's a particular story that's just broken that's creating a huge amount of media attention. Look for things like that and how you can work those into your own business.

So let's say that you've got a product that's really valuable in child safety issues. You could write a media release, something along the lines of how many children go missing each year. Use some statistics - some honest, factual statistics, quote where you got those statistics from (that builds your credibility)... you could even say something about how devastating that is to parents. Describe how a parent feels when they realise that their child is lost. And then you can go on to say that you just happen to know of this wonderful product that can either prevent children going missing or it can help them to be found quickly. These are things that the media will pick up on.

Okay, so does that give you some ideas? What I'd like you to do know is to just have a think about your business... have a look at your products and services and whether they can help solve some of the problems that the media is talking about at the moment. Really, the best way to get your media release read, and then to get some exposure - whether that be on the TV, in newspapers or in magazines - the best way is to simply give journalists what they want.

## 13. Blogs

Okay, now the next traffic generation technique is blogging. A blog is basically a **web log**. That's been abbreviated to blog - B L O G.

Now there are two particular forms of software that are great for blogging. They are [www.Blogger.com](http://www.Blogger.com) and [www.Wordpress.com](http://www.Wordpress.com). Now both of those are free. You simply go to their sites and join up and you can start your blog in just five minutes.

They're really easy; they're a great way of generating traffic and you'll find heaps and heaps of information around about how to have a great blog and really generate some serious traffic to your website.

Now what I actually recommend is that you have your blog hosted on your own domain. So for that I personally use Wordpress, but I don't get the software through the site at Wordpress.com. I use the software through [www.Wordpress.org](http://www.Wordpress.org).

What that is, you download the software to your computer, you register your domain and you hook the two up together and away you go.

Now I won't go into a great detail here but that's something that's definitely worth you looking into.

One of the most important things about blogs is to post regularly and the search engines absolutely love that. So in your early days of blogging, if you can post every day, that's great. And then over a couple of months or so you can start posting three days a week or so. It really is a great way to get traffic to your site.

## **14. Social Bookmarking And Social Networking**

Another great traffic generation technique is social bookmarking or social networking. There are heaps and heaps of sites around for this. Some of them include Facebook, Twitter, StumbleUpon, or Digg. There's Technorati. There's literally 100s of them - in fact, there's probably 1,000s of them - and they're generally free to use. They're great for building relationships with other online users and they're also great for building links back to your site.

So again, in this product I'm not going to go into a lot of detail because we could easily do another hour on this product alone, but basically... go to any of those sites, read up on the rules. What you're doing is creating relationships with other online

users and you'll find that they'll help promote your site, promote your articles and things like that.

Plus, every time you post there and you're including your keywords and your URL you're creating more... backlinks. Remember the valuable backlinks? That's what we're looking for.

## 15. Strategic Alliances

Another one, similar to what we talked about before with Joint Ventures, is Strategic Alliances. Now strategic alliances are brilliant people. These are generally other business owners or individuals whom you form alliances with and work together. So you might refer customers to one another or you can do joint promotions or co-produce products. As I said, they're very similar to the Joint Ventures that we talked about earlier.

One thing that I know a group of people did - they formed a strategic alliance. I know a group of people who were all in the wedding industry. They were from a small town that was really struggling economically and they were all finding it difficult just to keep the businesses going and affording marketing and promotions.

So what they did - there was a car hire company, a photographer, a wedding planner, a cake designer and a bridal boutique. They all got together and started working together. They produced a full colour glossy brochure that none of them could have afforded on their own, but between the five of them the costs came down considerably. They were all featured in this brochure and then it was displayed in all of their stores. They had an agreement where they would work with each other and they wouldn't recommend any other photographer or designer or planner; they would only recommend each other. That worked really well and the last I heard, they'd been

going well together for years. So if you can find a group like that, that's one of the best things you can do.

## 16. Article Marketing

Another excellent way you can generate lots of traffic to your online store is by writing articles. Now article promotion... basically what you're doing is positioning yourself as an expert. You're building your credibility and at the same time, you're getting lots of exposure and lots of links.

So when you write an article, basically you write something that gives really good content - again, that's one of the secrets... making sure that you're giving lots of really good content - and it will be something that's related to your niche or to your business.

Now at the bottom of your article you include something that's called your resource box or bio box. And that's basically telling the reader who the author is. So you might have something like:

“Sue Smith is the owner of XYZ Cake Company. She can be contacted on [these contact details].”

When you write your article you include some of your keywords - remember we talked earlier about keywords for your site. This will help your article to be found when someone searches on those keywords. Now the thing is with articles, you write the article and you distribute it online - and I'll tell you how to do that in a moment - you don't get paid for that. It's all done for free, but people can sign into these article sites and use the articles and use the content, and they can put your article on their website or their blog or in their newsletters. The condition is (a) they cannot change anything in your article; it must remain exactly as it is; and (b) they must include your resource box, or bio box.

In your bio box, remember, you've got your contact details and your website. So your article is going to get picked up and put all over the web, and people are going to read that, click on the link to get some more information and guess what? They're at your site. Remember also that the more articles that are getting posted all over the net, that's giving more backlinks back to your site.

Now in your bio box or resource box, remember I said to put a little bit about you and your contact details? Well you also should put in there - this is my tip - also put in there some sort of an offer; something that will encourage them to come to your site. Now some people may read your article and think, "Oh isn't that lovely? Next article please." And read on.

But in your bio box, if you can offer a free gift or a free report or a free sample or a free 'something', people will go there. It encourages them to go have a look at your site NOW. Again, this could be the same thing you're using on your website to get people to subscribe to your database. After all, that's our main goal - growing our database.

If on your website you're giving away a free guide on such-and-such topic, what you can do is, in your resource box, after you list your name and a little bit about what you're an expert on, you include a message to say, "To get your free report on such-and-such topic, go to abc.com and download your free guide now." Something along those lines.

Okay, so that's getting people to go to your site, download your guide... which of course means that they've subscribed to your list and you can continue to market to them.

Now if you're not that great at writing, outsource the writing, or at least the editing. There are a lot of good writers around, a lot of good copywriters, who will write the

article for you. Or sometimes it might be that you've written the basic article, you know your information, but you're just not that great with the spelling or grammar. Get a writer or an editor to have a look at that and polish it up a little bit. And then you submit your articles to article directories.

There's a heap of free article directories around. One of the best ones is [www.EzineArticles.com](http://www.EzineArticles.com). That's free; it's great; it's one of the best. You've also got sites such as [www.ArticlesFactory.com](http://www.ArticlesFactory.com), [www.GoArticles.com](http://www.GoArticles.com), [www.ArticleDashboard.com](http://www.ArticleDashboard.com). There are so many of them. Just go to your search engine and search on 'free article directories'.

Now that's all very well, but you might be saying, "Well that's great, but it's going to take me all day to sit there submitting articles." And it can take a while, I'll admit that, but it's worth it. If you'd like to make things a little bit quicker, and a lot more efficient, there's just one article directory you need to go to - [www.ArticleMarketer.com](http://www.ArticleMarketer.com).

That's not a free site, unfortunately. Well, there is a free component but you won't get the coverage. The paid membership is truly worth it. This is one thing that my mentor said to me, "Don't question it; just pay it and do it?" And that was one of the best pieces of advice he's given me because it was one of those things, I did start to question it but I did it anyway and I was blown away by the results. My articles, within 48 hours, were submitted to 6,000 different article directories and within a week my articles were splashed all over the web.

Now can you imagine if you do that - get into the habit of submitting two articles, maybe five articles, every week for ten weeks and then just sit back and watch the traffic pour in. It's worth it - just do it.

## 17. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Another great technique is search engine optimisation. Search engine optimisation, or SEO, is basically just making sure that your site is as search engine friendly as possible so it can be found easily and get a higher page ranking in sites such as Google and Yahoo.

There are approximately 200 algorithms that search engines use to determine page ranking, and these are constantly changing. So we're not going to go into a lot of detail here and unless you are a search engine optimisation expert, I don't suggest you try doing the whole lot yourself. Some companies will do it for you. I would look into it first and be clear about exactly what they're providing and whether you think it's worth it, but there's quite a few things that you can do yourself to help give your site that boost in the search engines.

The first thing is keywords. Choose your keywords carefully. This is really important in your online business because they come up time and time again. Remember, we're using keywords in our Google ads, we're using them in our articles, we use them on our website, we use them in our blog... you use them just about everywhere.

Once you've researched your keywords, make sure they're included in the metatags in your website. Now some search engines aren't giving the metatags a lot of weight or credibility anymore because, unfortunately, a lot of website owners abused this. Some search engines still use it and it will still help, so just include it.

What you do is, in the title for your website, make sure that you include your main keywords in there. Do the same for your description – make sure you've got a description for the site and also that you put your keywords into the metadata of your website. Now if I'm talking total geek language to you and you have no idea what I'm talking about, this is where you get a techie – get your website person, someone who really knows what they're doing – to put these in for you. It's not that hard to do and shouldn't take that long at all.

Your keywords should also be used within the text on the site. Please don't put keywords in the metatags on your site and then not use those on your site – the search engines don't like that. What that is, basically... if someone searches on a particular keyword, the sites that come up as being those that are most likely to provide what that person's looking for, they're the ones that

hopefully have that information on your site. So if your site comes up and somebody goes there but they can't find any relevant information on those keywords, they're not going to be happy.

In the content, while you're using the keywords in the copy on your website, don't overdo it. Don't stuff keywords in everywhere just to try to get them in there for the sake of it because at the end of the day, the people who will be reading it – your target market – are going to switch off. So the copy needs to be written for people, not the search engines. But a good copywriter will work in the keywords for the search engines while still making it sound good.

The other thing to do for search engine optimisation is to make sure that your pages load fairly quickly. So this is where, if you've got a lot of graphics on the page, the larger images are really going to slow down the page loading, so make sure you use smaller quality images.

It's also a good idea to actually submit your site to the search engines – that will help to make sure that you actually get found. If they don't know you exist it's going to take them a while before they actually stumble upon you. For that, you just go to the sites such as [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com), [www.Yahoo.com](http://www.Yahoo.com)... there's all sorts. You can just do a search on them. You can even go to, say [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com), and type into the search box, "How to submit website to Google" or "How to submit website to search engines." You'll get all these different suggestions of websites that can help you. Just go to those, have a look, read the instructions... it's really quite easy.

The other thing is that when you're choosing the domain name for what you will actually call your online business, try to include a couple of your main keywords in there, if possible. If it's not possible it's not the end of the world; but if you can, that is going to help your search engine rankings.

## 18. Offline Strategies

The last traffic generation strategy I wanted to talk about is offline strategies. Just because your business is online doesn't mean that you can only promote it online. Other strategies include using ads in industry magazines and print publications,

networking - where you go to different business meetings or groups and build networks and relationships with other people.

For networking, you might want to create a flyer or a business card, with again a special offer for subscribers. Something that's really catchy to say, "For your free such-and-such go to this website and you'll be sent [whatever it is that you've offered them]." Give them a reason to actually go to your website otherwise they'll tend to forget about you by the time they get home.

If you're a confident speaker, you could also give presentations on your area of expertise and again, encourage people to sign up to your newsletter. Now you're probably thinking, "Hang on... shouldn't I be selling my products and services?" Yes, you can, but remember we're trying to build that list - build your database - because you're trying to market to people over time. Once you've got people's contact details and permission to send them information, you can keep letting them know how great you are. Otherwise if you don't get their details you only get that one chance to impress them and if they go away, you've got to hope that they might remember you and be able to find you again in six months time when they might be interested in your product or service.

Another thing you can do as part of your offline strategies is to locate some groups whose members might be interested in your products and services, or your topic, and ask if you can give a presentation to their members. They may even like to become affiliates where they get a commission for people that they refer to you. Another thing you could do, either through these groups or separate again, is teach some classes in your local area.

These are all some ways to help you get some more visitors to your website. It really is a matter of thinking outside the square and I'm sure you'll come up with a lot more brilliant methods and techniques. I'm quite happy for you to share them with me if you do, or send me an email to let me know what you found worked best for you.

## *Follow-Up:*

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So now we've talked about getting your business up and running, generating traffic and making sales, but that's not the end of it. Remember all the effort you put in to attract customers to your site? Wouldn't it be easier if those customers kept coming back, without you having to find them and attract them all over again?

Well good news! This is easily done. In addition to building your database - your list - giving valuable tips and content, and building trust with these people, the important thing now is to follow-up with prospective customers and customers **AFTER** they've visited your site. A great way to do this is via a regular newsletter including special 'subscriber only' offers or offers from your strategic alliances and joint venture partners. This is your chance to show people that you are a caring, genuine person and to build a relationship. The more value you can give, the more it will come back to you further down the track.

Don't just send emails offering one sale after another, or promoting one thing after another. You need to give first - and give massive value.

## ***Test And Tweak:***

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Once you have your online business set up, it may take a little while to find the best systems and best way of operating. During this stage it's vital to 'test and tweak'. What that means is that you test everything - your web site, your products, your marketing, your sales material... everything. If you're not sure of something - say a headline on your sales page - use a couple of different headlines and see which one gets the better results and then work with that one, or test it then against a third headline.

You should test and measure one component at a time. So for example, you might start by testing your web site headline. Or maybe your shop layout. Use one format and measure the results. Then, without changing anything else, try an alternate format and measure those results. Which one performs best? You can do this several times to find what works best, then move on to test something else. If you change two things at once - say a headline and a photo - you won't know which one made the difference, that's why you test one thing at a time.

Tweaking is all the adjustments you need to make throughout the process of finding the best formula for your business' success, and setting up the best systems.

Once you've tested and tweaked and have your online business operating just the way you want it to, then you can either move on to improving your business by adding other products, related online businesses or providing a wider range of services. Or you can sit back and enjoy your business as it is. It's entirely up to you.

## ***Outsourcing:***

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Would you like to know another secret to a hugely successful online business? It's all about outsourcing. As a business owner, you shouldn't be doing all the work. Your job is to have the ideas... do the planning... manage and co-ordinate.

So, okay, you can employ staff. That's one way. Another way of finding others to do the work you need doing is to outsource or use other service providers. This can be a lot easier for you than having to employ staff and concern yourself with payroll tax and other workplace regulations.

Some of the things you can outsource include:

- Bookkeeping
- Graphic design
- Web site maintenance
- Copywriting
- General writing
- Order fulfilment
- Product creation or manufacturing

...and the list goes on and on and on.

So where do you find these people? You can search online, look in your local business directories or visit online sites such as [www.Elance.com](http://www.Elance.com) or [www.RentACoder.com](http://www.RentACoder.com). This really is a great way to leverage your time. Just imagine how much more you could get done each day if all **your** job entailed was thinking, planning and managing? Basically you're overseeing your business to make sure it's all running smoothly. And at the end of the day, you're a business owner and a business manager, not a web designer or copywriter (unless that's the service you're providing).

Once you grasp this concept and can run with it, you'll be amazed at how much you can get done and how fast your business can grow, so the sooner you can get onto that, the better.

## ***Legal and Accounting:***

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Of course, with any business, it's important to seek professional advice in various areas. Two of these are accounting and legal advice. Laws and regulations will vary from one country to another and between states or counties. So it's of utmost importance that you seek professional advice so you know you're getting guidance that's specifically tailored to your individual situation.

## ***More Info - Coaching, Mentoring, Learning:***

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So... that's the basics. Now where to from here? Well, that's entirely up to you. Some people will be able to take the information in the ***Beginner's Guide To Building An Online Business*** and run with it, using it to set up one or more hugely successful online businesses. Others may be looking for a little more guidance along the way and someone to do some hand-holding and help them through the processes.

No matter which category you fall into, I believe it's important to always continue learning. If you really want a short-cut to a successful online business, find a reputable mentor or coach and let them lead the way.

Most professional online business coaches have had a lot of experience; they've tested different methods, they've tried the different products, they've made mistakes and learnt from them. They've found the best system that's worked for them and they're generally happy to share that information. This can really shave off the time that it takes to get your business bringing in a decent profit.

There are so many successful online businesses around and many of them, when set up correctly, bring in plenty of money without requiring a lot of time in managing them. So just what do you do with all that spare time? Well, some people just enjoy the money and living a great life; others will spend more time helping their local community; meanwhile some people decide to teach others how to have the same success as they have achieved. So quite often you'll see the big Internet Marketing gurus up on stage, sharing this information and you might wonder why they are so willing to give away their secrets.

You see, the Internet is a BIG place. There are more than enough potential customers to share, and each one is looking for something different. With so many billions of dollars being spent online each and every day, a single person really only needs a

fraction of 1% of that market to be able to make all the money they need. So why not share the wealth?

Most of the internet marketers that I know truly do have an abundance mentality. They believe that there's enough to go around and by sharing and helping others. Many of them also appreciate the help that they received along the way and are more than happy to give that to others now.

I now do some coaching myself and personally, I love the feelings associated with helping others and seeing them get their businesses up and running... seeing the changes this has on their entire outlook on life.

Although I had been running a successful business for some years, it took me a little while to discover the beauty of an ONLINE business. Once I did, I decided that I'd wasted enough time and wanted to speed up the process. So I joined found myself a mentor and didn't look back. Having a coach not only showed me the short-cuts but also provided me with someone who I could ask questions of, seek feedback or just bounce ideas off. Plus I was able to meet many other online business owners, giving an opportunity to encourage, inspire and support one another.

Spread all across the world there are extremely successful, genuine and inspirational online business people who would be happy to show you the ropes and teach you their business models and specific steps to success. So if you think you have what it takes, why not invest in yourself... in your future? No matter what type of online business you decide is best for you, I wish you the very best.

Here's to your successful online business,

*Donna-Marie*

*Simplifying small business...*