

Tactical Website Marketing
on a
Skinny Shoestring
QuickStart Guide



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Dedicated to my family, without whose love and support I can't function!

Version 1

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Check for updated versions at <http://www.skinnyshoestring.com/ebooks.htm>

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We are not tax experts, or legal experts. We advise you to seek further assistance from a professional if you do not feel able to make decisions about difficult issues. We do not assume any risk for your success or failure.

We provide general guidelines to get a business off to an intelligent start, and to avoid some types of problems later on. You are solely responsible for verifying legal requirements for your business, and for timely application for necessary licenses and for payment of taxes.

No business is without risk. Even if you do it right, unforeseen circumstances may intervene with unpredictable results. Starting on firm footing though can help you to make those risks as few and as small as possible. We make every reasonable attempt to help you understand the necessary elements for building that foundation.

More comprehensive coverage of this topic may be found in our full Tactical Website Marketing on a Skinny Shoestring book, at <http://www.skinnyshoestring.com/ebooks.htm>.

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The following additional chapters are included in the full version of this book, available at <http://www.skinnyshoestring.com/ebooks.htm>.

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Introduction

Marketing is an area where many small business owners feel that they are out of their depth, and that hiring help is out of their budget. It is an essential aspect of operating a business though, no matter what kind of business it is.

Most of the information available is geared toward telling you to have a marketing budget, and how much of your profits to turn back to marketing, or that you must do this or that costly thing. They don't tell you what to do that works, if you HAVE no profits yet, and no money to throw at the business. The few resources that really go into free or low cost marketing either come from less than honorable sources, or people that are suggesting a few free tactics which they have not really used personally, or as a means of leading you into a purchase situation.

I am not trying to get you to buy any advertising services from me from these chapters. Sure, if you need website help, or marketing assistance, I'll be glad to offer it at a reasonable rate. But the purpose of this book is to give you some real tools to build a business without having to sink a huge amount into it. Most of the strategies here are ones that you can do for the cost of paper, time, or a small fee to a third party. I am not going to tell you that you have to spend money that you cannot afford to market your business. In fact, I'll tell you NOT to spend what you cannot afford.

Further, I am not recommending untested theories, or things that I did alongside the more expensive stuff. I have built a business from almost nothing twice. I have helped my clients do the same. I know which things work, and which things don't, and I know it from experience. I have never paid for clicks on Google or Overture. I have never hired an SEO consultant, and I have never hired anyone to do marketing for me. I learned the hard way, by trial and error, which things were valuable and which ones were not.

Marketing is a gamble. No getting around that! Do you spend the money in the hopes that it will return in the form of increased income, or do you avoid the risk? I'll tell you what you can do within what you can afford. And if all you can afford to risk is time, there are plenty of things you can still do that will work. When you do spend money on advertising, there are things you can do to keep the risk of no return reasonable.

It is important that you understand that my advice is for one class of business startups only! I am not a corporate expert! I deal with shoestring startups, and nothing else. The strategies outlined here may not be appropriate for larger businesses (some will be, some will not). And it is important for you to realize that as your business takes hold and grows, that your options will change. If I instruct you right, you'll eventually outgrow me.

You don't have to do all of it. This book is designed to present you with options. There are enough free strategies that just about anybody can find several things that they can do, if not more. We can only present a few in this guidebook, but there are plenty more that work too. Take them one at a time, starting with the simplest and least costly ones. Choose what you can do, and do it.

Some of the information in this book is also included in our Strategies for Building a Business on a Skinny Shoestring book. There are overlaps in topics throughout our Skinny Shoestring series. This book also has overlaps in chapters, so some things may be referred to more than once. We did this so that you could pick the chapters that you needed most, and not feel like you missed something that was explained somewhere else.



Preparation

Once your website is built, uploaded and functioning in the way you want it to, you have to announce to the world the great things you can do for them. **An unannounced website is like an unlisted phone number. Fine if you don't want anyone to find you, but deadly if you do.**

A word of caution. Marketing tactics for websites take time. Without aggressive marketing and generally a lot of money behind it, it will take three to six months to begin to pull in orders, and eight months to a year to just know whether or not your baby is going to survive. So give it a year before you throw in the towel, and keep your day job until you know it will keep working. The web can be a slow moving vehicle to market in, but it DOES gain momentum, and once you get going the results can be amazing and VERY powerful. We know this from personal experience. We have done it not once, but several times ourselves, and we have helped our clients do the same thing.

So if it is so slow, you want to get your site registered and promoted as soon as possible, right? Yes and no. You want to start the marketing process as soon as your site is READY to be viewed, and READY to be a useful tool. Unless you are submitting to Yahoo or another directory that wants all your t's crossed and i's dotted, then you can submit your site as soon as you have usable content in place. But if you do that with some directories or listing services, they will just toss out your listing. Read the rules and you'll know.

It is very much like opening a storefront in town. You want to make sure your store is functioning on a basic level at least before you start running ads or have your grand opening. A "Coming Soon" announcement on a page or two won't hurt if your visitors can still get the most commonly needed items. This is true of all but those few directories that have policies for requiring things to be completely finished. Also if you want to enter any contests or competitions it has to be totally finished, with no under construction pages, or promises of things coming.

Please do not upload a website with nothing but your business name and no product listing or instructions for people to get what you offer. At the very least your website must have a good description of what you do, and instructions for how to get it, plus good contact information to reach you by email, snail mail, and phone. Less than this is an insult to the person who just decided that out of all the search engine hits they could choose from they would try you, and then waited for your page to download. They won't come back when you are better prepared, you lost them permanently.

If you sell products, your website is more harm than help if you do not list products on it. People will go away if it does not have products listed by name and type, and a price - even if it is a price range. They need to know that you have a standard mode of operating and pricing, and if you don't list what it is or how much, they feel uneasy trusting you. A shopping cart is a great tool to help you sell much better, but you CAN sell products without one. You CANNOT sell them without detailed listings. The web is all about information, and people come to your site to get information. If you do not list information that they feel you can easily put out there (after all everyone else does), then they will feel you are unprepared in all your business dealings. Again, they won't come back, you lost them for good.

So make sure your site has the minimum degree of function for what you are selling, and that it will actually serve to gain you customers instead of losing them before you publicize it in any way. Search engine registration can go into effect in as little as a few hours, or as long as six months, depending on the engine, how they manage it, and how busy they are. Don't count on lag time though, be prepared for hits right away, even if they don't come.

Your site should also have the following features, in order to market well:

- 1. Logical Navigation.** Your visitors need to easily be able to find what they need. If they cannot, they'll go elsewhere. You should have links in the same places on all pages, so that once a person sees how the site works, that it works that way on every page.
- 2. Attractive and functional layout and design.** Your site design should suit the mood of what you are selling or presenting. It should function reliably on a variety of computers.
- 3. Contact, and About information.** People want to know who you are and why you are doing what you do. They also want to know that you are openly available if problems arise. The lack of either of these pages on a small business site makes people uneasy.
- 4. Email link on every page.** This is a way of making contact very easy. It is a gesture that marks you as

thoughtful enough to do something that isn't strictly necessary, after all, if there is a contact page, you don't really NEED it! But it is a convenient item that shows that you thought about the needs of your clients or customers.

5. Good descriptive text throughout the site, but especially on the home page. It needs to be clear to both people, and the search engines, what your site is all about. And the best way to indicate that, is by saying so!

6. An effective means of encouraging your customers to buy, or a plan of growth in place for infosites, to encourage repeat visitors. Your site has a purpose. That purpose is to earn. If it earns by selling, then it needs to do that well. If it earns through ad revenue, then it needs return visitors.

7. Well thought out policies for shipping, returns, copyright, and site use, which are posted clearly on the site. This provides not only a helpful resource for your visitors (which can save you a LOT of time answering the same questions over and over again), it also shows you to be prepared and thoughtful.

Proper preparation can help your business grow better. There is no point bringing a flood of people to your site if it is not going to serve its purpose. When it is at a point where it can do that to an acceptable degree, it is ready, but not before.

Now, as I said, you can start preliminary marketing when you have just the basics up, but you'll want to wait until it is functioning completely before you make any kind of major push that might bring you people interested in purchasing now. **If you tell them it is ready, it had better really BE ready!**

Are you tired of working long hours doing tedious work while your time could be better spent working with your clients, or spending time with your family? Advantage Marketing can help! Advantage Marketing offers many services for the small business and home based business owners. Virtual assistance, website design, graphic design, banner and button creation and more, Advantage Marketing is your one stop resource site.
<http://www.advantagemarketing4u.com>



Marketing Musts

The purpose of this chapter is to give you some background to understand some basic marketing concepts. No matter how you market, these things matter. I'll try to proceed through in a logical and understandable manner.

Avoiding Hype - I personally think that the bane of internet marketing is hype. Everyone, everywhere has something to sell, and they are willing to cram it down your throat with whatever force they deem necessary. Now, if you are trying to push someone into an impulse buy that they are likely to regret later, hype is fine. If you want to appeal to people who do not think things out, or who

are not concerned with ethics, then hype will work quite well.

If, on the other hand, you want to sell an honest product to honest people, and to develop a solid and trustworthy reputation that will benefit you and your customers far into the future, then you must avoid overselling with insincere enthusiasm.

Understanding the Market - Before you can sell anything, you need to know your market. That means, you need to know what the norms are for the type of product or information that you are selling is. You must understand expected prices, descriptive terms, and what types of policies are standard in your industry. If you bought a distributorship, some of this is done for you, but you must study up on your materials and know your products and terms.

Understanding your Customer - Who is your average customer? If you are selling clothing for tall people, how do your customers differ from average height people? If you are selling technology, are you providing solutions to business people, home buyers, people with low budgets, or people who want high end solutions? You must know what the mind-set and needs are of the average customer whom you hope to attract to your site, or you'll fail in establishing a rapport with them. No rapport, no sales, and no repeat traffic.

Identifying needs - Once you understand who your customers are, you can identify their needs. This can be a general thing, or a very personal thing. If you are selling things in a store online, you must create a selling environment which addresses the needs of your customer. If you sell shoes, the need of your customer is NOT footcovering - it is style, or comfort, or a hard to find size, or special features that give them a solution to a problem in their lives. They can find shoes anywhere. But they will buy from whomever solves their REAL problem.

If you sell customized products or services, then you must come to know your customer more personally in order to truly deliver on an individual basis. Each of my website clients has a different need. They all fall into a general category - business owners who have enough resources to hire a site built, but who do not have enough resources to hire a team. But each one needs a particular style, wants to reach a particular market, and has a different idea of which elements they wish to include in their marketing efforts - some want a newsletter, some not, some want a Blog, some do not. If I do not listen to my clients, I cannot sell them anything at all.

Guarantees and Assurances - Good guarantees help a customer feel like they are not going to be abandoned if the product fails to meet their needs. Give as generous a guarantee as you can afford to give. Look over some of the standards in your industry and meet or exceed them. Then be 100% reliable about honoring them. Guarantees are an important influence on marketing, because a good one helps build trust, and will bring back customers even if they had to resort to using it.

Trust - You have to give your customers a reason to trust you. You can do that in a number of ways, by giving them an understanding of who they are dealing with, by providing complete information, by giving them easy to access contact information, replying promptly and openly to emails, having fair policies, good guarantees, etc. As many of these methods as you can use, you should. Be truthful, and back up what you say. What is certain is that there are only two ways to persuade people to buy - either sucker them into setting aside their distrust, or give them solid reasons to trust you. And frankly, it is no harder to do one, than the other, but gaining trust and respecting it enough to keep it certainly lasts longer and has much more power!

Build Relationships - Many of the people who visit sites I have created keep coming back because they feel they know me just a little. They come and look for a little more, or to read something they did not have time for

before. Whether you personally meet your site visitors or not, you must go about forming relationships consistently. When I write, I write like I am talking to someone. I have a particular type of individual in mind when I write, so I can direct my comments appropriately. When you don't have the chance to meet your site visitors personally, you must still make them feel like you have some idea of who they are, and what their needs are.

If you provide customized services, then you may have the chance to correspond with people or talk to them directly. When you do, it is essential that you build a good working relationship with them. You must be able to communicate well with them, and teach them about the aspects of the service that you provide that will help them to understand how you can meet their needs. Never treat anyone with a condescending attitude. Treat them with respect, and never imply in any way that just because you know something they do not, that you think that they are not as intelligent as you. If you explain, and they do not get it, apologize for not being clear, and explain it another way. Your customers deserve your time and respect.

Integrity - Integrity is not optional, it is essential. It costs much more to get a customer for the first time than it does to get repeat business from an existing customer. That reason alone justifies integrity as a cost effective business move, and not as a frivolous luxury. Especially for a shoestring startup, this is possibly the most important influence on the ability to maintain long term success.

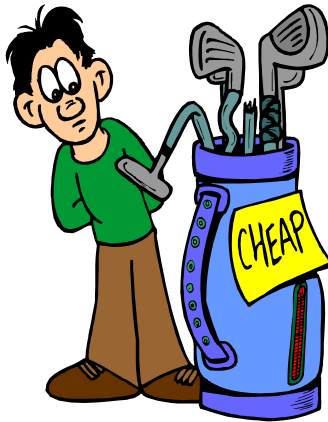
Believe in Your Product - How can you sell something to someone else that you don't truly believe is wonderful? Attempts to do so usually end in failure. Enthusiasm for something you believe in cannot be feigned, it comes across as false. When you really believe in it, you'll be able to say not only that you think it is great, but why, and how you use it. Much more persuasive than empty claims of efficacy.

Have a Plan – Once you understand what your marketing goals and options are, write up a plan. Be realistic, but set some clear daily tasks and make a list of marketing strategies to try. Assess each one and adjust your plan as you go.

Give your audience good information, good value, and be willing to work hard to let people know you are there.

The marketing tactics covered in the rest of the book will assume that you are using these principles first. The avenue that you use to market, as long as it is an honorable one, will work in part according to how well you understand the basic principles of successful marketing.

Hosting, domain, and residual income. Good income opportunity for individuals with lots of energy and enthusiasm. Minimal technical skills required. Good perceived value within target market. [Read full honest review here.](#)



Tactical Overview

I have a lot of faith in free and low cost advertising. I have used it enough to know that it has two proven elements:

It takes longer than higher cost methods.

It has more power long term.

Perhaps I can explain. When you don't have money, you trade time instead. With marketing, that means both your time to do the marketing tasks yourself, and the extra time it takes for them to develop momentum. Free and low cost marketing is not fast. But it is powerful.

You see, most of the methods that are effective will go on working for you long after you have stopped working on them. And this is your ultimate goal in marketing, to gain a reputation and presence that all but maintains itself. It can, and does, happen!

Good free or very low cost advertising should fit a minimum quality criteria.

1. It should never harm your reputation. You must never use suspect means. Our section on What Does Not Work will cover the details about that.

2. It must return enough potential business to be worth the time it costs you. Now this can vary from business to business, so you'll not only have to study the options, you'll have to decide which ones are not practical for you.

3. It should continue to have an effect after you leave. Viral marketing is the most powerful, but all of the things we recommend have the power to bring in customers long after the initial effort.

4. Ideally, it will accomplish more than one thing in the effort. Link Exchanges, for example, not only have the potential to bring customers from the links, but they also affect your search engine listings and can improve them, so your efforts have a double effect.

5. It should never cost you anything you cannot afford. It should not require you to put out money that you don't have on the hopes that it will return it someday.

6. It should not just bring you visitors, it should increase your profit. Marketing tactics that just bring clicks from disinterested visitors are useless. If they do not help you increase your profit, they are not worth your time.

7. It should be trackable. There should be a way to determine whether the effort was worth it in retrospect so that if it was not, you can modify your strategy for the future.

There are, of course, many tactics. Avoid tactics that promise you a ton of traffic. Avoid marketing methods that are in any way unethical, or that assume that you can trick people into buying or paying for something - it will hurt you more in the long run than it will help you. **Do not link to sites with a questionable reputation.**

Generally you will not find a single thing that will market your site. You do each thing that you can do, that is affordable and practical for you and your website, and each one brings in a few more people. A webring may bring in 10-200 people per week. PayPal Shops may bring in 5-100 people per week. Banner exchanges and cross links may bring 10-300 people per week, depending on how much you do. Search engine registration can bring in 20 to 500 people per week (WAY more if you get really popular). And each of these things grows with time. So your long term results are much better than your short term results.

Quality of visitors varies too. If you get hits from people who are just browsing, they are quite different from people who feel they know you ahead of time, or customers who are ready to buy. Visitor to customer (making a purchase) is called the "Conversion Rate". You want good quality hits so that your conversion rate is high. Lots of traffic is not nearly so important as lots of SALES. This is one reason that affiliate programs no longer pay for clickthroughs in general, they mostly pay only for purchases.

Marketing a website is work. After your website is finished and you start to register it with search engines (usually the first step), you will have to do one more thing each day for quite a while to get your site noticed. Make a list and keep progressing to the next step. It is slow and discouraging at first, but really does pay off in the long term. Keep working at it. And give it a year of effort before you throw in the towel - usually you will get hints that it is working long before then, but it genuinely takes that long to really see the true potential for growth.



What Doesn't Work

About half or more of the "free" marketing tactics don't work. Even some that are recommended by people who are doing them don't work, and the people using them have not yet figured out that they are either wasting their time, or hurting their business.

It is hard for someone without extensive web marketing experience to really know which are the good ones, and which are worthless or harmful. Even when you do know, the rules keep changing, so you have to keep adjusting. The rules below are based on industry standards, and current options.

1. Submission Services. In general, these are a waste of time. **With the one exception listed in the next section.** Many search engines do not accept auto-submissions, and automatic services (or even services that promise to submit your site monthly) do not personalize the listing so it may not be working in your best interests. At best, they are a waste of time or money, at worst, they can harm your site reputation and set you back.

2. Frequent submissions. This is NOT necessary. It is also not necessary to submit every page in the site. Unless your site undergoes domain name changes, or other major changes that will confuse the search engines, re-submission is not necessary because once your site is in the listing it is regularly spidered anyway (checked on by a robot). Some experts will tell you otherwise, but we have proven this with our stats tracking. The search engines that don't do this aren't usually big enough players to count anyway. **Some of the big ones TELL you not to resubmit!** If you add pages, or new sections, the search engines will find them on the next pass. There are ways you can even tell the search engines to spider you more often if you want (do a net search for "robots.txt" to learn more). So don't waste your time with submitting more than once per site per search engine. There are better ways to spend your time. If you change your domain, or if you have not made any changes to your site for 6 months or more (that is, new pages or significant content changes to the existing pages), then you'll want to resubmit to get them indexed again.

3. Coding tricks to increase your rank in the listings. The so called "secrets" used by people who tell you there is one are either commonplace tactics (which everybody uses so it gives you no advantage), or they are things that will get your listing kicked out because the spider detects them as dishonest or unethical. Invisible links or text, meta tags for unrelated content, words repeated too many times on your pages, purchasing mass inbound links from a "link farm", etc, are all things that raise a red flag and hurt your listing.

4. Listing with search engines and nothing else. Search engines are just the beginning.

5. Free Classified sites. Your ad does not stay on long enough to have any effect, and it just results in your inbox filling with SPAM. Many search engines now penalize you if you list with some of these.

6. Search Engine Optimization Services. Ok, I'll get in trouble for saying this, but for a shoestring startup, trying to rank in the search engines against the big guys is not realistic! You'll end up focusing your energies on what is NOT the key issue, and you'll waste time trying to fight a fight you cannot win. There are other MUCH better strategies to put your limited funds and time behind! **There are a couple of things that make a little difference that you should do, and one major thing you MUST do** - make sure your content contains good descriptive text that uses common and alternate keywords for your site. **For the most part though, anything you can afford won't do anything you can't easily do, and services that do more are not cost effective for a small business.** So focus your energies elsewhere. The people telling you otherwise are usually trying to sell you their service or book.

7. Submitting each page on the site, or even more than one page in a domain. If your page is linked to any other page in the site, then the spider WILL find it. Just run a link validator that checks all the links in your site, or use your server log (if your web host provides reporting) to check for 404 errors (broken links), and then LET the search engine do its job!

8. Google AdWords are not an effective tool for a startup, UNLESS, you have a product with a high per order profit margin or a high marketing budget. They are NEVER cost effective for a startup advertising supported site.

9. Most Traffic Exchange programs - they give you credit for clicking on the pages of other member sites. You earn clicks back to your own site in this way. This is NOT an effective way to market a site! I can't believe that some "experts" even recommend this either! They clearly have not THOUGHT about what they are doing! They spend an hour every evening clicking on other sites, and closing the window as soon as the site comes up, so

they can click on as many as possible. They do not read the site, or pay any attention to it. They are just accumulating credit. In return, they get clicks on their own site, which are VALUELESS! Because they are just getting clicks from other site owners who are doing the SAME THING! Why bother? These types of programs are a total waste of your time. They may make the numbers on your site look good, but they won't help you increase income from your site one bit, they will only take an hour of your time each day that could have been spent doing something productive! **There is no point in doing marketing tasks that do not increase your income from your site!**

10. Traffic programs that use pop-ups, pop-unders, toolbars, or other annoying features. If a traffic program requires that you install anything on your computer, it is suspect. If it causes you to have to install code on your site that creates pop-ups or unders, or if your site appears on pop-ups on other people's sites, then it will be an annoyance, and not good advertising. The last thing you want to do is annoy your potential customers!

11. Link Trades with anyone and everyone. Search engines class poor quality sites as "bad neighborhoods". This includes porn sites, scam sites, sites selling anything illegal or unethical, free for all link sites, free classifieds, sites which use unethical marketing or search engine tactics, bad affiliate sites (you know, the ones that are nothing but a list of affiliate links?), etc. Trade only with honorable sites.

12. Spamming guestbooks, forums, groups, and other sites where you are allowed to post. Now, first of all, you tick everybody off. No way to get customers. And second, your post gets deleted and you get banned. For the half a day your post was there, that was really a waste of time! There are MUCH more efficient ways to get your link out there! Leaving a signature line or URL is acceptable, as long as it is not the purpose of the post.

Generally you can get a feel for what is good and what is not once you learn the rules. If it feels off, don't do it. If something about it bugs you, trust your gut! And if you have any doubts, get a second opinion.

Free and very low cost marketing does work, but you have to avoid the traps.

Google AdSense is the number one ad revenue service online, and there is a reason why! [More info on Google AdSense](#)



Search Engine Registration

Search engine registration is highly overrated. Don't get me wrong, it is something you SHOULD do, but it is not the most important web marketing task, nor is it one you need to spend a lot of time on. There are some things to know about it, and some info to help you do it right.

A search engine is nothing more than a sort of phone directory for the web... Only it indexes websites instead of phone numbers. When you get a phone, your number gets listed unless you don't want it to, in which case you have to take action to get it UNLISTED. It is the opposite with a website. You have to go around to all the right indexes and directories and ask them to put you IN. If you don't, then nobody knows you are there!

I have taken over administration of more than one site which had not been properly registered to start. No other marketing efforts had been made either because the previous web admin had not done it, nor had they informed the site owner that it needed to be done. When stats tracking was finally looked at, the site was getting 5-10 hits a month - only the people the site owner told to go there, or the web admin themselves checking in on this site that was not even getting seen by anyone else!

Search engines come in several varieties. Some are not technically search engines, but indexes or directories. We will refer to them collectively, because they all have similarities in how they work. There is only one major difference - If you do not register with a search engine, it will usually eventually find you. If you do not register with directories, they will not necessarily seek you out.

There are tons of them online. So many you cannot count them all. And they change very quickly, so the only real important ones are the big ones. Basically, if you are registered with Yahoo, Google, and MSN, you are covered for 90% of the traffic your site is going to get. I usually register with others as time permits, but only worry about the big ones to begin with.

I did say that Registration services were a waste of time, and I said there was one exception. That exception is SelfPromotion.com. This service is a paid service, but you can use it free if you can't afford to pay. If you can, you pay him what you think it is worth. The reason most services are not helpful is because they just auto-submit to the sites that still take auto-submissions. Most now require you to submit by hand, only a few still allow auto-submission. SelfPromotion auto-submits the ones that you can, but then he provides links to the submit pages for the rest. Not only that, he tells you which ones have restrictions, which ones now have paid only listings, and other handy bits of info to keep you from wasting time. This is the most helpful site for search engine info. Forget paying \$30 for a service that won't work, use this one, and if you like it, send him a gratuity.

So, you'll want to get your site submitted as soon as it has usable content in place. **Don't bother submitting more than once, that is a waste of your time**, even though many people say you should. Once you get listed, the major engines send out a "robot" to search your site. They will follow the links in your site, and pick up all of the pages of your site. That is why you also only need to submit the Home page for your site.

Now, it is true that some of the engines do not do this. But they are not the important ones, so you are going to make the best use of your marketing time by submitting the home page once to each place that you submit.

Search engine registration is not the be all and end all of web marketing. In fact, you can launch a site and get found by the search engines if you never register with them at all! If you get links from other sites to yours, they will eventually find you, because they are spidering other sites and following the links to your site. It is faster if you register though, because you don't have to wait for them to find you on their schedule.

Search engines may index your site only once every six months. Some, like Google, do so more regularly (an average of once a month). That means that some will update changes frequently, and some will still be trying to send people to pages that are long gone for months after they have moved.

When you register a site it may be indexed immediately, or it may take as long as 6 months. I find that normally it takes about six months for hits to show up from more than just one or two of them, and about a year for you to

get hits from a wide range of them (hits are visits to your page that come from searches on the search engines).

I am not trying to devalue search engines. In fact, a huge percentage of your traffic will eventually come from them. But since they rate you on how much you link to other sites, and since they do a lot of the work for you, there is just no reason to get in a knot about developing a huge plan to submit to this one and that one and all your pages, and once a month, etc. This is one task you can just do once and then forget.

If you launch a new site, you'll want to submit that to the search engines. If you add an entirely new area to an existing site, you can submit if you want it found more quickly, but it will get found and indexed even if you don't.

The one time you do want to be sure to resubmit is if you change your domain. That means, if the address to your site changes. For example, I had my small business stuff in my adventuretech.us site. Later, I decided to move that portion of the site to skinnyshoestring.com. When I did that, I had to register the new domain, because even though the info was the same, the search engines could no longer find it. As long as your domain stays the same though, they'll come and take a peek and make regular updates for you.

Keep your content up to date, and keep expanding your site, and the search engines will revisit and reindex your site on a regular basis. The best way to do this is with a Blog, but if you aren't up to that, just add a page a month, and your site will get indexed regularly. If you have not made changes for six months to a year, then you might want to re-register your site to insure that the changes get found, and so you can reestablish a more frequent indexing schedule with the search engines that do so regularly.

Many Search Engines have Paid Inclusion. The value of this service is generally questionable for a startup, because while the cost per engine is not terribly high (\$20 to \$50 one time fee in many cases), the ones that charge really only reach a small percentage of potential site visitors. You'll get most of the search engine traffic that you are going to get from free listings. Those paid listings can edge you up a bit, but they are not going to even double your traffic unless you list with every single one, and then you'll be looking at a fairly high dollar amount when you add them all up!

Many listings that have paid inclusion will eventually list you even if you don't pay for it, or they just return higher listings in the indexes that your site will show up in anyway. The value cannot even be guessed at for many of the listings.

In general, I'd suggest that paid inclusion is not a necessary consideration for a small business. I feel you can do better by listing with niche directories, even if you have to pay a fee for them, because they are more likely to send you high quality targeted traffic.

You are going to hear other opinions than mine. I am not saying there is no merit in what others say. **I am just saying that as a small business owner who is juggling time and money, and trying to be everything with no help, you have to focus your time and energies where they will do the most good.** The information on this page tells you just that. Beyond a certain point, it simply is not worth the time - you could be spending the time doing things that will make more of a difference and which will increase your business better than trying to nit-pick the search engine listings.

So check out SelfPromotion, register with the biggies, and anything else you have time for. Come back later if you have a slack moment to register with a few more, but if you are busy with things that make more of a difference, then don't worry, you have your bases covered!

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Reciprocal Linking



The web world has become very aggressive. It is increasingly difficult for new businesses to get a firm hold without vast resources behind them. And I know very few people who start a small business because of what they HAVE. Most do so because of what they NEED.

If you have read any of the other articles that I have written on marketing, you'll know I have a huge belief in the importance of linking your site with others. There are only a few good ways that you can do that anymore, and a lot of bad ways that hurt you more than they help you. One of the best ways is with reciprocal linking. This is often misunderstood though, and difficult to learn to do, so that is the reason for this article.

Reciprocal linking refers to exchanging links on a one to one basis with other site owners. Sometimes people call this link exchanging as well. But the term "link exchange" is also used for other things. So, first, what "reciprocal linking" is NOT.

It is NOT participating in "Free Traffic Exchange" programs. These programs give you 1 hit on your site for every XX number that you generate for them from links off your site. The problem with these is that if you have almost no traffic, it is very difficult to generate enough traffic from your site to get any significant amount of hits back to your site. And the quality of hits is not good - if it does not increase your income, what is the point of wasting your time with it? And last, they often use pop-up windows, or other tactics that annoy site visitors. Do you want your site to have to have pop-ups on it, and do you want your link to show up on a pop-up? There is a whole category of internet browsers who will NOT click on a pop-up, and up to 50% of browsers now have pop-ups blocked, so they will never even see your ad.

It is NOT participating in a "Link Exchange Program". These programs work in many different ways, but many of them work on a principle that is totally ineffective. You go browsing through the "approved links" which are sites of other people who are participating in the program. Each time you visit one of their sites, you get points for generating traffic for them. Of course, when you do this, all you are going to do is click on their site, then click out as soon as the page loads, so you can click on another one and get your points as fast as possible. You'll never even read what is on the page. The problem is, that ALL of the traffic that comes to YOUR site, is just going to be other site owners doing the same thing! Why waste your time? You need visitors to your site for a PURPOSE! You need them to either generate ad revenue, or make purchases. Without those two elements, there is NO reason to try to get them to come in! Traffic numbers mean NOTHING if they do not get you INCOME! These types of programs only generate traffic - they do not improve search engine position (reciprocal links will). They do not help you generate income at all, and if they don't help you earn, they are a total waste of your time.

It is NOT purchasing a large number of links from a company that promises to put a huge number of links on the web for you overnight. This kind of tactic is labeled as a Link Farm, and it will get you banned from search engines. These links are of no value anyway, they don't bring in traffic, or help search positioning.

It is NOT putting your link on every free classified and Free For All link site out there. Again, these are not quality links, and too many of them can get you banned, because the search engines will assume you are trying to manipulate your standing. These links have no value to you in bringing in traffic anyway, they primarily exist to create email lists for Spamming.

What IS Reciprocal Linking?

1. Seeking out any source online where you can place a link to your site, in exchange for a link to their site.
2. Placing a page on your site with an invitation to exchange links with you.
3. Offering ad for ad exchanges.
4. Trading links in newsletters or eZines for comparable links. This is one instance where numbers of exposures may be counted.
5. Listing your site in a Reciprocal Link site, where you can find other sites that are willing to trade links, and where they can contact you to trade links.

Generally, reciprocal linking is just a link trade. Nobody keeps track of traffic to each site, they just trade links.

There are some rules:

- 1. Choose quality sites.** If you choose unethical or trashy sites, your site will be grouped with them. If people request link exchanges from you, then review their site before linking.
- 2. Verify that the link was placed.** Most people who ask to trade will do so, but a TON of sites require that you link to them first, and when you use their "verification", it fails to find the link you placed, and they never supply you with a return link.
- 3. If you install an automatic system, make sure it actually works (see above).**
- 4. By putting an invitation on your site for exchanging links, you invite other businesses to come to you.** That saves you time.
- 5. Generally, once you find one site that will exchange links, they will lead you to others.** Check their list of links and request links from the other sites in their lists.
- 6. Use Reciprocal Link Directories.** These are different than traffic exchanges, they are simply listings of businesses who will trade links.
- 7. Cooperate to Succeed.** Don't worry about competition, just trade links. Who cares if it helps your competitor to be linked to you if it is also helping you to be linked to them? Just get the links!

If you build a section of your site for reciprocal linking, then it can be done in stages.

1. Build a Links page. Put an invitation to trade links with an email address at the top and bottom of the page.
2. Put a link on EVERY page that says, "Exchange Links With Us", and link that to your Links page. You can build two separate link pages if you like, or two sections on your links page - one for Related Links (having to do with your site topic), and one for Exchanged Links (off topic).
3. Add more pages for categorized links if you need to.
4. Put in a form for submitting links. It should have a place for their name, business name, email addy URL, site description, the page that they placed your link on, and a message field. This form can simplify things for you.
5. Later, if the number of links justify it, you can put an automated system in place, but you still need to review sites personally for fitness.

Reciprocal links are not a magic solution to a flood of traffic. What they are though, is a solid and reliable means of building consistent quality traffic over the long term, if you do them right. They will get you a few more hits each month. But sites that get you hits will KEEP ON getting you hits, so your traffic grows slowly but steadily, the longer you do it.


Some links are more valuable than others:

- 1. Links from sites with a high page rank.** If another site has lots of traffic and a lot of inbound links, it will help you more than one that is just starting out. This is not a reason to NOT exchange links with other startups, it just means that when you get the chance to trade links with any site that is better established than yours (good quality, of course), then you should, and thank the site owner.
- 2. Links that come into your site that you do NOT have a return link for.** In other words, if it appears that they listed your site because it was a good resource, without expecting a trade, that means more. If you have more than one domain, you can trade links so that your link for site 1 is put on their site, and their link is put on your site 2.

Because many Search Engines now pay attention to "inbound links" or links to your site from other sites, the power of Reciprocal Links may be much more than just the few hits per month that they bring in from their site to yours. Those links have the power to compel the search engines to bring you more traffic as well.

Getting links takes time. And it is very slow to build power, but it DOES build power. And the cool thing is that many of your links will be permanent, so you work to get them once, and they stay there long term. Even if one brings you just 10 visitors a month, it is worth it, because over time, that adds up.

So go get some links! Happy Hunting!



Agenda

Summing it Up

I know I haven't been able to give you full and complete instructions in this guide (remember, I have to save some goodies for the paid version!), but hopefully you'll at least know what to avoid. You'll need more information, and then you can write down the things you want to try. Try just one at a time so you do not get overwhelmed, and so you can tell what works.

You'll come up with a different list of things that someone else would. That is as it should be. Because your business is as unique as you are, and it will need to be marketed in a way that reflects both the needs of your customers, and your personality. **Good marketing will be very individual.**

Your business plan should list items in order of easiest to hardest. That is because the easy ones will go fast, and will give you a sense of accomplishment. Most of the quick ones will get good long term results also, so they will be working hard for you while you are starting on additional strategies.

Each day or week should have some marketing tasks assigned to it. If you want your business to grow into the vision you have of it, you'll have to be willing to keep doing the drudge tasks and keep tracking and assessing your efforts.

Many marketing tasks simply are not that much fun to the average business owner. But I promise you, when you see the numbers climb, and when your income starts to show results of the efforts, THAT is FUN!

Bob Ross (artist) speaks of selling his first painting for \$25. That sale inspired him to go out and paint several more paintings which he indicated weren't good enough to sell!

We are like that with marketing too. We get discouraged, and then something happens that justifies the effort. Then we go off and do a few more things, some of which work and some of which don't. But we learn, and we grow, and our business reflects our learning. It becomes part of us, and we invest more than just our time into it. When it starts showing progress, it is an awesome feeling.

You can get all the rest of it right, and if you fail to promote your business, you'll never know what it could have done. You don't have to face anything horrid all at once. Just make a list of the tasks you think you can do. And work through it one thing at a time.

Doing those things will help you to learn and have more confidence. After you complete your list, go through the options again and make a new list. Chances are you will now feel like you can do some things that you did not feel comfortable about before.

Many free tactics work. They take time, but they build a strong momentum and keep going once you get them done. But in order for them to work, you have to DO them. All the theory in the world won't help you if you don't just do the work. If you do your part, you'll get a return, and it will far outweigh what you put into it in the end.

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The Importance of Integrity

Honesty and integrity are not just a moral issue, they are good business.

Consider the following situation:

You set up a business. You decide that you can cut some corners where no one will notice. You pay a lot for aggressive marketing, and your first customers come in the door and make a purchase. Weeks later your product fails to perform in one way or another, and the customer is dissatisfied. They not only do not come back, they warn their friends. You spend more money trying to get more customers. Eventually business dwindles and you have spent much of your profit trying to get customers. You are forced to start over and build another business. Where is the logic in that?

There is a saying, "You can shear a sheep many times, but only skin it once." There is a lot of wisdom there. To shear the sheep, and get the wool, a rancher has to care for the animal in between shearing. It is a win-win situation for both of them. If you skin it, you may get a little more once, but they you gotta go buy another sheep and raise it to be big enough to be worth skinning. Which do you think is more efficient?

One of the really cool things that happens with a reputable business is that over time it gains momentum. This happens because at first, you are educating people about who you are and what you do, and persuading them to give you a try. If your product is sound, and your customer service and return policy is good, people will come back. In fact, some customers will even come back after an error if you are strictly honorable. You don't have to spend nearly as much to keep a customer as you do trying to get one in the first place. That is a statistical fact.

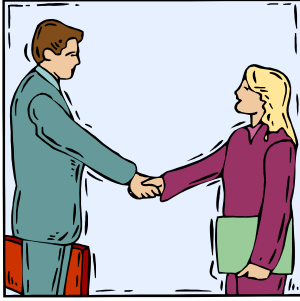
The only way you can start with nothing and build a business, is on a firm foundation of honorable work and reliable customer relations. **Momentum won't build if you take liberties with other people's satisfaction.** Scammers spend months building up their scam, then they spend money on marketing their scam. It has one wild flare of frenzied success, and then it fizzles, and they are forced to start over. That doesn't happen with a reliable merchant. In fact, they can start with no marketing, and build slowly over months, and their business will grow and grow, and never dwindle and die. It can, in fact, be hard to STOP if you want to close the doors!

Customers expect integrity in all aspects of your business. And integrity filters through all the areas that the customer sees, and the areas that the customer does not see. You need to be honorable in paying taxes that are due, and keeping needed licenses up to speed. Tax penalties and licensing penalties are counterproductive, and will hamper your ability to make a profit.

Integrity has been described as "doing the right thing even when you think nobody is looking". And it makes good business sense. Being honorable in your conduct with your customers is one of those things that you may think no one will ever know about if you fudge on little things. But they do. It is apparent in your attitude about things that you don't realize are connected, and customers who are on the ball will feel uneasy if you are not scrupulously honest.

Sometimes you get into a situation where one customer is dissatisfied through no fault of your own. It is important in those times that you take the responsibility to make it right anyway. One dissatisfied customer may be the means of preventing many more from purchasing, and it just isn't worth it. Some people will never be satisfied, no matter what you do. But if you have tried in every way that is reasonable, then you can at least present your side to anyone who questions, and reasonable people will understand.

Honesty is now considered to be a optional indulgence. It is not. It is an essential element in growing a stable business that will last.



The Power of Cooperation

I learned a concept which has such power, I am not even sure I fully understand it myself. It changed my philosophy on marketing, and influenced my interaction with my clients. I'll try to explain this concept. There is no hype in this article. I wrote it very slowly because it was hard to find words to explain what I meant. Some people will catch the vision of what I am saying, others will only see the profit margin. But if you read this as thoughtfully as I wrote it, something grand will come of it.

Gotta get the edge on your competitors. Edge them out. Gotta get something in return for everything you give, and you hafta get paid for every service you offer. It's good business sense, they say.

In the past, when I have given advice to clients, I have told them to get their links out on every site they could. To look for complimentary sites, but not competitive ones. I have also advised many things in business that others do not - to give free advice when you know, to pay attention to the best interest of your customer even when it seems to not be in your own best interest. I always advise what I feel is the very best strategy for business long term.

I have always believed that when I truly applied the Golden Rule in my business that it would give me more financial returns in the long term than selfishness would. And my experience with customers who overpay me, and who call me even when I have stopped advertising long ago has convinced me that this is the case.

I believe that there is a broader application of the concept of cooperation than just thinking of things from your customer's point of view. I think that it has a very powerful application in marketing.

Business is terribly competitive now. Getting a toehold is a difficult thing for a new business to do. You must have either a lot of money, or a lot of patience and determination to start a business and to get it to succeed.

The advertising world is one of aggression and money. Places where you can legitimately advertise for free are diminishing. Ads that used to be inexpensive are now out of the range of many startups. And payment of money is no guarantee of results. Purveyors of "internet marketing secrets", "online business promotion", and "search engine optimization" promise you that all you have to do is pay your money and your business is guaranteed instant success. **But those promises and those payments have sucked the resources out of many small businesses without returning enough to keep them from sinking into oblivion.**

I believe in good and evil. And I believe that it is the goal of selfish and designing people to keep the little guy down, and to consign them to discouragement and a sense of hopelessness. Prices are rising, regulations are increasing, and if you start a business the "official" way, you'll be in debt for tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars before you even open the doors.

So what does this all have to do with cooperation, and how can it help you market smarter instead of more expensively?

The advice to get your link out there still holds, because one of the ways to get around the barriers is to have lots of links placed on other people's sites. But I am seeing it a different way now. I think that the Golden Rule, when taken literally in all aspects of business, including marketing, is the answer, not just another problem to be solved. I believe that applying it is the best way to sneak in the back door, through the carefully constructed barriers that selfishness of other businesses have built. Kindness is the one thing they cannot overpower.

So, here are some strategies:

1. Give something away. Oh, yes, this is an old strategy. But give away something of value - something that is of genuine help to others. Ask for a link in return. Just a link. The web gives you the ability to do this multiple times for each item, if what you are giving away can be downloaded over and over. Make your terms generous. Advertising is the only thing you'll ask in return. Find a way that you can give away something related to your product or service - [Herbal Momma](#) specializes in handmade soaps and personal care items. The owner also takes incredible photographs, so we established a photo gallery with free photos on her site. The only stipulation is that anyone who uses them needs to supply a link to her site.

2. Share your knowledge. Articles are a proven way of advertising. Give good information. **Give more**

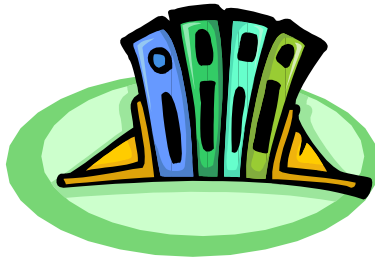
information than is wise for your business by common standards. Teach others about what you do and how to do it. And let others pass your writing on - with a link at the bottom. **Kindness and honesty with the best interests of the recipient will build credibility and trust faster than if you say the same thing everyone else is saying.**

3. Exchange links. Ok, everyone knows this too, but here is where I am going to diverge. Share links with EVERYBODY who has a site that meets your moral standards. **Make sure they are honest, and clean, and let that be the only criteria.** If they are your competitor, do it anyway. Find complimentary products or services to cross link with if you want, but cooperate! Both of you are fighting the same uphill battle, which you each get a little closer to winning when you help each other! Put a link on every page on your site that invites people to exchange reciprocal links. Build a page for the links, and if it fills up, build another one. Advertising for advertising is a fair trade, even if it is from a competitor. Links on other people's sites are valuable even if the content is not compatible, because it will help your site get a small edge with the search engines, even if it does not directly bring you hits.

4. Replicate your site and give it away. Give someone else an edge and advantage in building a site like yours. Just ask them to leave links back to your site on it. Tell them how to make it work, and how to replace your affiliate links with theirs - just ask them to sign up for the programs under you so when they succeed, you do too. And tell them how to make it their site so it does not keep looking like a replica.

There are other applications of this too. Don't just go looking for ways to take advantage of other people. Look for ways to promote your business while helping someone else at the same time. I feel so strongly that this is the most powerful tool that a low budget business can have. Because if you follow the rules of the big guys, or of the experts who are only experienced with dealing with established companies, you'll fail before you even get started. We have to make our own set of rules, and it has to be founded on something that they have missed. This is it! Alone we do not have the power to fight the establishment. Together we can form our own niche and help each other succeed.

So email me about one of the ad boxes on my sites - You don't have to be able to afford \$5 a month, or \$25 a year. Just offer me an ad spot with equivalent value and I'll trade. If you need something that I can offer, and you have no money, talk to me about an advertising trade. If you need links, then email me and I'll offer you some suggestions for places to find them for your site. **Lets build the power of cooperation, and then give a hand up to others who are struggling to follow.**



Resources and Sponsors

<http://www.ebusinessstutor.com/staticpages/index.php/searchenginesubmit> – Search engine submission page listing.

[Http://www.selfpromotion.com](http://www.selfpromotion.com) – Website promotion service, very good, pay if you can but use it free if you can't.

<http://www.ezinearticles.com/> - submit articles

- <http://www.e-zinez.com/> - publishing info
- <http://www.zinebook.com/publicz.html> - promote info
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- <http://www.ezineworld.com/> - directory and articles
- <http://www.cumuli.com/ezine/> - directory
- <http://www.emailuniverse.com/bestezines/> - articles, directory
- <http://www.connectionteam.com/current.html> - articles
- <http://www.adswap.net/> - banner exchange, ad swap
- <http://www.bizpromo.com/ezinetrades.htm> - ezine ad swaps
- <http://new-list.com/> - directory
- <http://www.netterweb.com/ezines/> - directory, articles
- <http://www.ezinelocater.com/> - directory
- <http://www.freesticky.com/stickyweb/> - articles
- <http://www.searchwarp.com/> - article submission and article database
- <http://www.marketing-seek.com/index.php> - articles
- <http://www.upromote.com/newsletter/submit.html> - article submission - very tight length limitation
- <http://www.pagecrafters.net/newsletter.html> - article submission
- <http://www.powerhomebiz.com/archives/articles2.htm> - article submission
- <http://www.smarteremarketing.com/> - article submission
- <http://womans-net.com/directory/> - directory, articles
- <http://ftos.searchking.com/> - directory
- <http://www.adventuretech.us/supermom/editors.htm> - Volunteer to edit a section in SuperMom Unlimited site (home, family, and small business, including special needs, homeschool, adoption, single parenting, and more). Good exposure, credits given with link, good experience to build credibility, training if you need it.
- supermomnewsletter@adventuretech.us - submit home business, family, or web related articles.

<http://www.adventuretech.us/directory/> - Independent affiliate link directory. List your affiliate program here free.

<http://www.mals-e.com> - Free shopping cart system, with affiliate program option.

<http://www.wecai.org/> - Women's eCommerce Association International

<http://www.ryze.com/> - Business networking resource.

[Http://www.maxincommon.com/](http://www.maxincommon.com/) - Business networking resource.

<http://www.ezinedirector.com/> - eZine Director, newsletter management service. Free up to 200 subscribers, reasonable price over that.

<http://www.bravenet.com/> - Bravenet, has several easy to use tools for webmasters to use. We don't recommend all of them, but some are useful.

Sponsors

[WAHM Team](#) - Press release writing, business building articles, button and banner design, marketing ideas and MUCH more for work-at-home-moms.

[Herbal Momma](#) - Luxurious herbal products for home and family. Affiliate program and distributorship available.

[Safe Homes For Children](#) - 501c3 Non-Profit. Operates Casa de Sion Orphanage in Guatamala. Adoption info and more.

[The Town of Medicine Bow](#) - Official website for the Town of Medicine Bow. Home of The Historic Virginian Hotel. Right on the edge of the National Forest, legendary hunting and fishing. Close to Como Bluff Dinosaur Museum, and centered in Oregon Trail country.


[Close to My Heart Scrapbooking](#) - Got family? Got pictures? Got memories?, Scrapbook them faster, simpler, and easier - Make connections with your memories and your family.

Discover [emotional freedom](#) and learn physical symptom management. Get your free starter package. Widely acclaimed training program available!

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About the Author

This book was entirely written by Laura Wheeler, owner of Adventure Tech-Web. She is a busy Mom of Eight children, five of whom are still at home. She homeschools, and works her business in around the needs of her family. She puts in long hours, and manages to complete the equivalent of full time work most days. She subcontracts some services to trusted sources, and works personally with her clients.

Way back in 1982, she took a two week course in computer usage. She failed it utterly, and could not understand the command line interface used at the time. About 14 years later, the family was gifted a Mac Classic. After a little tentative exploration of the use of it, she found that she could actually understand how to use it quite well. She bought a copy of Macs for Dummies, and within 6 months had reformatted the hard drive just to see if she could.

Within two years they upgraded their computer to a new model, and Laura was hired in a small school as a computer instructional aide. Her business was started a few months later. At first it was just printing, word processing, and data entry. Not many people had home computers in the small town they lived in, so she got a bit of work doing that. She kept learning more about computers, and built her first computer system shortly after. She learned graphics processing, page layout, and copy writing in this time period also.

She saw her first website in 1999. Five months later she was awarded a contract with the Town of Medicine Bow to redesign and maintain the town website. She began building websites for herself and others, picking up contracts with the Wyoming Dental Association, and the Historic Virginian Hotel, and several others. She built many websites for a variety of purposes, including craft sales, electronic specialty services, non-profit organizations, and many more.

When Laura began business, she had no money to spare. Her business was build around the ownership of a computer, printer, scanner, and later an internet connection. She bought software when she could afford it, and learned to use free software when she could not afford it. She knew that if she did things the "recommended way", she'd be heavily in debt, and might never crawl out from under it. There had to be a way to start with nothing but work and determination, and that is what she did. Since she was in a small town, her business evolved into several lines of work in order to fill local need. Her website services encompassed everything a client needed, because her clients could not afford to hire a team. This need gave her a broad base of skills in all areas of website design, layout, and administration.

In 2003, her youngest son was diagnosed with cancer. She resigned as web administrator for the Town and for several other contracts. Her business was streamlined so that it could be flexible enough to accommodate sometimes unpredictable medical needs. Her websites were closed down, and new ones were established which would adapt themselves to a more flexible work schedule. Basically, she took her experience and equipment, and started over. Most of her business lines involving house calls, building or troubleshooting equipment, and anything else that was not portable, was shut down. She began putting more effort into her own website work and instructional writing. She began building shopping carts, exploring more web marketing strategies, and developed more expertise in the home business market. During this time she did not make a lot from her work, but spent a lot of time laying a good foundation. When the work began to pay, it did so whether her schedule was predictable or not.

Life interfered again with a difficult pregnancy. Near the end she was put on bedrest and bought a laptop. Her baby died a few minutes after birth, and after a month of heavy grief during which she could not bring herself to face the task of writing down the story, she began hard work on her websites again. She feels that work saved her sanity during this time. The worst part about losing a child is the emptiness and the purposelessness. Work kept her occupied and she made rapid progress with her sites. Within five months she build and established over a dozen sites. Her client base began to grow again, and her ability to offer more extensive services grew also. Her business is now fully portable, and she has gained the ability to work in spite of family crises (which have occurred with regular frequency), and in almost any location.

One reason Laura is good at working with shoestring startups, is because she has done it. Not once, but twice, and with multiple business lines. She knows how long it takes to get orders or traffic. She knows the inexpensive

ways to get that traffic, and she understands what makes a customer or visitor feel comfortable on a site so that they will purchase or come back. She is also skilled at teaching other people what she has learned, and knows how to explain it in terms that they can understand if they have no experience with it.

The Town of Medicine Bow has reissued the web contract to Laura. They contracted with her to redesign their site, and to write an extensive website administrative manual for the Town. After the completion of this special contract, they will resume a standard maintenance and improvement contract with her. They feel she is simply the best person to do the job for them, in producing a quality site for them, marketing it effectively without unnecessary or ineffective expenditure, and in making good design decisions that suit the resources and specific needs of their small businesses. The Town Council also trusts her to give them accurate information about what is genuinely needed, and to honorably fulfill the terms of the contract.

Her experience and expertise are unique. She knows the backroads that nobody else travels, which can save time and money. She understands which of the "experts" are telling the truth, and which ones are just trying to get you to buy their product. She knows that there is one truth for large corporations with healthy advertising budgets, and another nearly hidden truth for small startups that don't have money to waste. She understands how hard it is in these times for the little guy to get a foot in the door and make a place for himself in a world that is dominated by the mega-corporations. And she understands which back doors will actually get you inside, and which ones will get you mugged. And she is good at assessing individual needs so she can give good advice on what is a useful feature and what is a waste of time or money.

Her niche is one that almost nobody else wants to occupy. The expertise required in this area is difficult to acquire, and it shuts the door on many of the perceived "cash cows" in the web business world - but for Laura, it opens up possibilities for herself and her clients that provide very real opportunities. Not only is it a tough niche to occupy, but many pros do not want it because there is no profit in telling people that they DON'T need the nifty gadget you just learned how to install! Laura makes her profit from building cost efficient sites for shoestring startups (her overhead is low so she can offer quality at affordable rates), and from producing information on various home business topics.

Life has taken her in an unexpected direction. Some of that direction has hurt, and then benefited her in unlooked for ways. All of the happenstance, strategy, and research that she has done to learn and develop a high level of expertise in helping startup website and business owners in all aspects of developing a successful web presence, combine together to give her a combination of skills which sets her apart from virtually every other web designer in the nation.