

Online Business Starter Kit

A complete guide to your online success story

Mohammad Musavi

www.musavis.com

Online Business Starter Kit

A complete guide to your online success story

Mohammad Musavi

www.musavis.com

Copyright © 2007 by Mohammad Musavi. All rights reserved. This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced without permission from the author.

NOT FOR SALE.

You may distribute this book FREE of charge in your website, ezine or part of your product bonus.

Table of Contents:

Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1: Discovering the Real “YOU”	7
Chapter 2: Planning your Online Business	10
Your Online Business Starter General Checklist.....	11
Simple business plan template	14
Chapter 3: Choose your product, make it available!	18
Chapter 4: Domain & Web Hosting	23
Chapter 5: Your website: “design or be designed? That is the question!”	27
Some website design tips	29
Chapter 6: Accepting Credit Card Payments on your website	30
Different types of merchant accounts	30
Chapter 7: Advertising your website	34
Top 10 pay-per-click search engines	40
Chapter 8: Add-on products.....	46
Chapter 9: Starting your own Affiliate Program	49
Keeping track of your affiliates	50
Affiliate Managers: Your Top Five Biggest Affiliate Program Mistakes	52
Chapter 10: Interactivity = Definite Online Success Vitality	57
An introduction to Content Syndication	59
One Final Word	61

Introduction

Hello and welcome to “Online Business Starter Kit”.

You have made one of the best decisions in your life and that’s deciding to step in the road of success. That itself is a great achievement. Think of it this way: “You have started to think more than just your 9-5 job if that’s your case!”

Many people have started the journey of online business, some have succeeded and some have failed. By working on the practical concepts that this book has to offer, your success is 100% guaranteed, because this book is no magic, no “get-rich-in-24-hours” and no “make-a-zillion-bucks-in-one-week”. It is pure practical know how to firstly get you organized, give you ideas of what you have to do in an easy to understand fashion, and then provide you with ways to implement your ideas on the World Wide Web.

The internet is a phenomenon. It has and will continue to change the world, its people and their lifestyle. The truth is that there’s simply no stopping its incredible growth, and that’s good news for you, because you can also be part of this fast and effective growth of the global economy. One other good news is that with this growth, the amount of money spent online grows each and every month, enabling you to potentially be earning far more than you would expect to earn at your current job.

For some of you this is one of the numerous books you have found regarding the “How to” of Online Business. If that’s so, then we almost have an agreement that unlike what you might have read elsewhere about making money online, there’s no such thing as “FREE Money” and there’s no such thing as getting rich in one or two weeks on the internet, let alone getting rich in 24 hours as some say. We all have to realize that no matter what the business is, making money online is no harder than making money in the offline world. It’s just that the internet is simply another channel of making money in business. However if used correctly, the Net provides many highly effective opportunities to help you skyrocket your profits in a relatively short space of time which is not very often possible offline.

You might ask “How is this possible?”

Well the answer is pretty simple: By using the World Wide Web as your business place, you’re practically reaching millions and millions of customers just waiting to purchase your product or service. Thinking of it this way, the internet becomes a pretty exciting place to be in! Imagine making an average 10’s and 100’s of sales in a day; that’s something that would be considered magic for a small business in the offline world, but

with the internet in mind, this is completely possible to make such profits online, provided that you follow the right guidelines.

This is one very distinct advantage on the Net when it comes to making money, the ability to automate some or all parts of your online activities, leaving you to build your business and increase your profits.

If you're looking to start your online business from scratch, use the proven techniques described in this book and you truly cannot fail. There are BILLIONS being made online and your share is there for the taking.

I myself am a very "Plan-Plan, List-List Guy", and because of this I have provided you with various straight-forward plans, lists and usable forms and tables etc. to make it easier for you to have a precise and effective approach towards your future successful online business.

If you are already excited, well you ought to be, because you're about to here what others haven't been telling you. There's no such thing as secrets in making big money on the internet, it's just that you have to realize your potentials and learn how to use them effectively by generating good ideas and implementing them on the internet, and that's the exact thing that I will show you in this book. I have provided various questions at the end of each chapter to make sure you have grasped the needed knowledge in order to move on to the next section. We will stick to the guts of the trade and hopefully we will come up with a masterpiece matching your area of interest. So what are you waiting for? Let's do it!

Chapter 1: Discovering the Real “YOU”

Before we start the real work, what I need is to make you feel good about yourself and to be positive that you really can do it, just like the other tens of thousands of individuals just like you who are generating large amounts of income through the internet to buy their dream home, their new car, saving money for the kid’s college, going to their best vacation spot and generally doing the best things in life and truly enjoying what life has to offer. These are things we all want and wanting it is the first step before making it happen.

Do you know why birds can fly? Yes, they have wings, but they can forget about using them! So why is it that they can fly? It’s because THEY WANT TO FLY! Mankind saw that birds could fly, so he said: “Why shouldn’t I be able to fly?” So he decided that he wanted to fly. So he invented the airplane, and as you can see today, we can all fly (Provided that we pay for the ticket and check-out through the airport security in a non-terrorist manner! 🛫)

So the whole point is that if you want something to happen, you can be pretty sure that if you do the right things and go the right way, sooner or later it will happen!

It doesn’t matter how slow you go, as long as you don’t stop.

<Confucius>

Note: Throughout this book, I will recall “Products & Services” as “Products”, just to make it easier.

As you might or might not know, the best internet business is selling your own product. You might say: “But I don’t have my own product!”

Well believe me, THERE’S A PRODUCT IN EVERY ONE OF US! You know why?

Each of us is good at one thing or another. Some are good at cooking, some at gardening, some at different professions like teaching, management, pets, wood work etc. Anything you can think of ... As they say “The sky is the limit”

Each of these topics can be a product!

The best thing to sell on the internet is information!

Imagine this: For example your mother is a good cook and has about 20 years of cooking experience! Now that's something valuable! That's 20 years of good information people searching for cooking recipes and techniques would buy!

One of my friends is a teacher. I told him about the fact that I was writing this book and I gave him some information about it and I told him that he too could make use of the information and start his very own online business from the comfort of his own home!

He said in question: "Like?"

For example things a teacher can do as an online business related to his profession would be:

1. Writing about "How to manage class, keeping it fun and cool!"
2. "How to help out kids with learning disabilities"
3. "How to teach history in a modern way"
4. "Best practices in teaching students social well-being, sharing and tolerance"

These are just some ideas! Remember experience is something that you simply cannot achieve by reading a million books about the "science and theory"!

You see, it's not that hard to come up with ideas! You just have to realize that whoever you are and with whatever educational background, you can do it too, because *you have the ability inside you*. Even if you don't have a specific profession that you could count on, by following the easy steps in this book you will still be able to come up with a product and start making money ASAP.

Remember, it's a power within you that enables you to succeed. People who are making thousands of dollars through their online businesses aren't genius! They are just normal people that have realized their true potential and have put it to work.

I'd like to give you a vision that has been given to me and is probably one of the most important reasons that you have this book in front of you; and that's being able to define "Vision" itself:

Vision isn't what things are; it's what they can be!

Please take time to think about it. Try to digest it into your brain and make mental contact with it.

So if things aren't the way you'd like them to be, then you must realize a vision of what you want them to look like; then try to realize them around you in your environment and plan your way to make them physically available around you! Then is the time you have been successful with your vision.

With your vision, things you want will physically form around you. The rate you reach your desires depends on how clear your vision is towards them; the clearer the better. Always have your vision in mind, even in your simplest tasks, this way through your vision you will point all your life and activities toward your goals and believe me, **YOU WILL REACH THEM!**

Believe in yourself, realize your vision, plan toward your goals, and sprint towards them and be sure that you'll cross the finishing line with pride! You will be the champion!

Chapter 2: Planning your Online Business

You might want to start a small online business at first, but the internet makes you think big. Whatever product, service or mixture of them you choose; the internet levels the playing field and helps you reach customers around the world who are just dying to buy your products and services as a solution to their problems.

What you must realize is that in the competitive World Wide Web as so called the WWW, conducting your business in order to generate your desired sales and profits, requires careful planning.

For every few successful online businesses, there are dozens that fail by simply not addressing basic risks and pitfalls along the way, therefore to take advantage of the online business opportunity, make sure you base your online business on a solid foundation that covers every element of a successful online business. To do this you must carefully make practical plans and slice up these plans into applicable step-by-step procedures; and that's what this book is all about.

For starters, I'd suggest that you don't choose a business that is impracticably suited to your abilities. Try to choose a business that you have the most passion for. Start with what you know, and what a well-targeted group of people really need. More on that later!

First of all we will start with list of things that need to be done in order to plan your business. The list is in a completely separate page in case you might like to print it out.

Your Online Business Starter General Checklist

1. Come up with the business idea (decide what to sell)
2. Update your knowledge regarding the chosen product/service by searching the internet etc...
3. Plan your business and divide it up into applicable time-based procedures
4. Gather your start-up money (which by this time you have already made a close estimate of how much you will need to start)
5. Gather all prerequisites (opinions, suggestions, ideas etc...)
6. Make your product or write down your service conditions and policies. For instance if you are in the web design business like me, you would write down your service fees and detailed information regarding your services.

Note: If you are not planning to sell your own product/service, you can always search the internet to find some good commission-based affiliate programs in order to sell other people's products and services.
7. Design a professional looking website or have it designed by a professional
You must decide whether you will be designing your website yourself or having it designed by a professional web designer. There's a big difference in that. More on that later!
8. Sign-up for an online merchant account in order to accept credit card payments online.
9. Double-check and fix any possible usability problems with your website and product before launch.
10. Launch your website
11. Advertise your website in the search engines and other websites
12. Find some add-on products to add to your product list in order to generate more income
13. Add interactivity to your website by adding a weblog, forum, mailing list and syndicating you're your content using RSS
14. Take a closer look at your plans and website and think of some new ideas on how you can improve your sales.
15. Start a Affiliate/Reseller program and have other people sell your products

Now that you have seen the steps involved in starting and achieving results with your online business, you should have a rough idea of what we are going to do and what procedures are involved.

Things to remember when writing your business plan:

1. Think big but be realistic about your abilities related to your business
2. Make a good estimate of how much money you'll need to start your business and also define where this money is coming from.
3. Make sure you ask yourself this question: "Do I really have time to start and run this business?"
4. Will your product /service fill a need? For example: There's no use in selling snowboards in the Sahara Desert
Ask yourself this question: "Would I buy such a product myself?" If you feel doubted, then you might as well think of another idea for your product
5. Think of ways you will market your product and your marketing audience! You will probably need some money put away for this purpose, because advertising costs money!
6. Will you be required to have some sort of licensing for your product or business in order to make it legal? Check this with your local licensing agency.
7. How are you going to do the bookkeeping and tracking for your business?
8. What will you name your business?
9. Make sure you keep your personal and business finances separate. This will make your business seem legitimate, credible and professional and will help you manage your income and expenses more efficiently.
10. Make a timetable for all the different steps you are going to take so you will know where you have to be after a certain time in terms of project process

Believe me planning will do you wonders! It will focus on your business and product, who you are selling to, how you will sell it, how much you will charge, how much it will take to startup and what your startup inventory and requirements will be and where all the money will come from.

You will specify all different options and facilities you will have for your online business and website; and different procedures you are going to take in order to make sales. When

defining goals and initiatives, be short and descriptive, so you will know what you have written about when you come back to read your plan at a later time. For example you might write your advertising procedures like this:

My Advertising:

1. Have a Search Engine Optimizer to review and optimize my website for search engine placement
2. Advertise on Pay-Per-Click Search Engines after website launch
3. Make arrangements with the community hall and give out some promotional leaflets
4. Design a professional looking business card and hand it out to friends and relatives and ask them to spread the word about my business etc...

Don't get scared if you don't understand some of the definitions noted above, because we will be discussing everything in detail as we go on.

In the next page, you will see a simple business plan template that you might like to use as a sample for your own business.

Simple business plan template

[Your business name] business plan

Date:

1. Business Owners: *[names go here]*
2. Business Purpose: *[What do you want to accomplish? What are your goals?]*
3. Describe your business (preferably in a bulleted list)
[What are you going to sell? Product/Service or both]
 -
 -
 -
 -
4. Define your target market: *[Who are you selling to? Specify the age range. Is there a need for your product or service? Write them down]*
5. Explain how you intend to meet these needs: *[How will you produce your product or offer your service? How will you deliver goods to your customers?]*
6. Define your staff, or supplies, if any: *[Is there anybody who will be providing customer service for your products/services? Write down a list of people (if any) that you will need in order to run your business].*
7. Make a timetable: *[Do you expect to reach a certain goal in a certain amount of time? Write them down! Also assign time durations for every process you will be taking to start your business, this way you will be able to figure out how much time you will need to get started].* For example:
Website Design: 2 weeks
8. Calculate your finances: *[organize them in a table like the one provided]*

Online Business Starter Kit

#	Finances	Cost
1	Startup Money	
	A Copywriter	
	B Web Designer	
	C Domain Registration	
	D Hosting (normally a monthly fee)	
	E Software (if needed)	
	F Other	
2	Licenses or fees	
3	Advertising	
	A Search Engine Advertising	
	B Print Advertising	
	C Advertising tools and software	
	D Other	
4	Product delivery	
5	Subcontractors	
6	Staff/Affiliates	
Total		

Notes:

Some finances are considered monthly, whereas others are one-off expenses, therefore it might be a good idea if you have an additional list separating the two so you'll have a good idea of what you will be expecting to pay monthly and what your one-off expenses are going to be.

If you make a mistake in this area, by all means count on needing more than you've actually estimated. Many terrific businesses have ground to a screeching halt, simply because they ran out of operating money too soon (because they didn't make the right estimates), so this is a critical issue you should watch out for.

Remember the more detailed your business plan is, the better your roadmap will be, so I suggest that you assign a great deal of time focusing on the different aspects of your business plans.

As we discussed earlier, information products are the best and the easiest to sell products on the internet. If you plan to start selling your own information product, the list below would be a close example of what you would need and the required time and money for starting-up the business.

- Creating your product yourself

Do-it-yourself		Duration/hour	Cost/USD
1	Evaluating your business idea	1-3	0
2	Writing your business plan	2-5	0
3	Create the product	10-15	0
4	Setting up a website (mini website – 1 to 2 pages)	2-5	0
5	Domain Registration & Hosting	-	8-10/Monthly
6	Writing a sales letter	1-2	0
7	Accepting Credit Cards and payments	1	0
8	Cheaply advertising your product	1-2	25±
Total		Minimum: 18 Maximum: 33	Around 35 USD/ Monthly

- Having your product and website written and designed by professionals

Have it done by professionals		Duration/hour	Cost/USD
1	Evaluating your business idea	1-3	0
2	Writing your business plan	2-5	0
3	Create the product (After Research)	5-10	100-500
4	Setting up a website (mini website – 1 to 2 pages)	2-5	100-300
5	Domain Registration & Hosting	-	8-10/Monthly
6	Writing a sales letter	1-2	100-200
7	Accepting Credit Cards and payments	1	0
8	Cheaply advertising your product	1-2	25±
Total		Minimum: 13 Maximum: 28	Minimum: 300 + Around 35 USD/ Monthly Maximum: 1000 + Around 35 USD/ Monthly

Note: The given numbers are just rough estimates and exact values can be obtained by consulting with a professional in each field. Prices differ according to:

1. The quality of the writer/designer's services

2. Their years of experience
3. Their portfolio and previous work they've done

Note: When choosing a writer/designer make sure you take a look at their previous work and judge if they fulfill your required needs for the job. Nearly all professional freelancers have a website with details on their services plus their portfolio of work; therefore it's a good idea to only hire professionals who have an online portfolio of work.

4. Complexity of your project: the more complex and time-consuming your project is, the more you should expect to pay. There's an old English saying that says: "We're not that rich to buy cheap things!" It all goes to say that whatever you pay for a product or service, it's important that you get value for your money.

I don't agree with some people that say both methods of designing (doing it yourself or having it done by a professional) are equal in results. In that case why would we need professionals?

It is very clear that what a professional does is different to an amateur in terms of quality and overall effectiveness, but the important this is that you ask yourself this question:

"Which do I have more? Time or Money?"

If you've got the time and patience, write then your own product and design your website yourself.

If you've got the money, hire a professional!

Chapter 3: Choose your product, make it available!

For those of you who want to do it themselves, does this apply to you?

You haven't written a thing since high school and you think that you can't write your product!

Right? WRONG!

You can easily get a hang of what you have to do by following these rules:

1. If your information product is a topic you specialize in, do one of the following:
 - a. Write down every possible question you can think of regarding the topic (also search the Net) and answer each and every one of them.
 - b. Have a friend interview you, record the interview and type it out into a report
2. Research-Research-Research!

Always remember to research on your product topic (use the internet, local library, experienced professionals etc...), then compile your information into categories of choice. This way, you will eventually see the product come into shape; you will just need to brush-up the text and make it super-fine!

Remember what friends are for? *To help each other out when in need!*

Have one of your smart friends review the text and fix-up any remaining spelling and grammatical errors.

Don't forget that you can always use text editors like Microsoft Word (best one I can think of) to fix your errors.

If you are in need of software, you don't need to pay hundreds of dollars to buy retail versions. There's always OEM! OEM stands for "Original Equipment Manufacturer". OEM software is legal versions of software from the manufacturer, but without the package and user manual, resulting in a dramatic price drop. By purchasing OEM software, you only pay for the software itself. If price is the problem, OEM is the way to go! Just search OEM software or visit my website's forums for more information.

If you're planning to design your website yourself, I would suggest the following software:

HTML Editors:

- Macromedia Dreamweaver
- Microsoft Frontpage

Graphics Software:

- Adobe Photoshop
- Macromedia Fireworks
- Jasc Paintshop Pro

There is a lot of other good software available, you just have to search!

If you wish to hire a professional freelance copywriter, there is a list of good copywriters available in my website that you can take a look at. They all have their own website with a comprehensive portfolio, so you can compare and decide who to choose.

If you wish to hire a professional web designer, this is my surprise for you:

All buyers of "Online Business Starter Kit" are eligible for a one-time complimentary 15% discount on their online business website design, provided that they contact me with their invoice number within 4 weeks of their book purchase.

If you still think that your work won't have value because you are the author, download some free or paid e-books related to your topic (if available) and have a look at the writing style used. www.ebookdirectory.com is a good place to look for if you have no idea where to go!

To decide on the best business to start, consider what surveys have shown over the passed few years:

Good Business Opportunities:

- Books
- CDs/DVDs/Cassettes
- Computer Software
- Toys
- Clothing

Whichever product you choose to sell, make sure they pass the following tests:

1. Quality -- You will always need good quality. "Good quality = Sales"
2. Competition -- Less Competition = More Sales
3. Market size -- the bigger the market, the better
4. Promo ability -- the product should be easy to promote at an affordable price
5. Profit margin/Pricing: You should be able to assign a price on the product so that you can cover all your previous expenses plus make profit ASAP.
6. Web advantage -- You should be able to sell your product online without much hassle
7. Supply -- You should be able to increase your supplies if you encounter a situation which you make numerous sales through your website
8. Support -- Your product should require the least possible support
9. Regulations -- Your product should be "Okay" with most or even all worldwide governmental laws. Note that some products and services are banned in certain countries.
10. Cost of transportation -- Your product should have the least possible cost of transportation
11. Cost of production -- Your product should have the least possible cost of production for you. This way you can sell it at a lower price and increase the number of sales
12. Repeat purchase potential -- Your product should be something that has a possibility of getting better or in other words it should be updatable, so that your customers come back and buy new versions. This is applicable to software and also some e-books.
13. Happy! Happy! Joy! Joy! -- Your product should preferably be a topic you have a passion for. Doing this will probably increase the chances of putting more and more time on it and therefore increasing sales.

Note that not every single factor is required, but you should want and have favorable results in as much categories as possible. This way you should choose the perfect product for YOU!

As I said earlier, digital or knowledge based (informational) products are ideal to sell online. Below are some reasons you might or might not want to sell them:

The good things:

- There's no packaging or shipping involved
- They don't need any storage space
- Your customers can download them right away – This is exactly what customers are looking for these days: To get their hands on the purchased item right away!
- They generally have lower overhead than other traditional non-digital products

The not so good things:

- It's a bit hard finding unique digital products to sell; on the other hand creating your products can be somewhat time-consuming and/or require special related skills.
- There are people that are comfortable with a physical product like a hard cover book, but still, there are enough people happy with the electronic format so you can make a fortune with.

If you are not comfortable to sell your own products, you can always sign-up with a reseller or affiliate program and sell other people's products and receive commissions in return. But again if you can have your own product, then don't lose extra profit by not making and selling it.

If you don't have an idea of what to write, then NO PROBLEM! Here is what you can do:

1. Write down your areas of interest
2. Go to your favorite search engine and enter some key phrases similar to "Internet Top Searches" – this will show the most searched key phrases on the Net
3. Scan the results to find your favorites; now write them down somewhere, or copy-paste them into your favorite text editor.
4. Now refine your list and bring out 2 or 3 of the best.
5. Go back to the search engines and search your chosen topics
6. Scan your search results and visit related websites to see what kind of information is provided.

7. Now this is the decision part: Depending on the one you think is most relevant, you've found your product topic!

Notes:

- The best product isn't always the most searched product
- Sometimes topics with medium importance in search will make an ideal product
- When you have chosen the right product, don't forget to research and update your knowledge on the topic, because you'll want to provide your customers with the latest gossip regarding your chosen topic. Remember the secret to great accomplishment in Karate is not learning 4000 different moves. There aren't 4000 different moves in Karate. There are only 12! Becoming a master is not about doing 4000 different moves; it's about doing 12 moves, 4000 times each!

If you still have problems finding your product topic, there's computer software that I recommend to anybody who is looking for success in their online business. It's called Niche Finder. It will help you find your product topic 12 times faster than you would on your own plus loads of great features. Read my latest review about it at www.musavis.com

There's an old Chinese rhyme that says:

"This one makes a net, this one stands and wishes. Would you like to make a bet, which one gets the fishes?"

The time to get started is not tomorrow, nor the day after it. The time is to start is NOW! Plan it! Make it! Test it! Optimize it! If you have any problems, you can always post your queries to the website forums.

The next thing to do is to design a **PROFESSIONAL ONLINE PRESENCE!**

Yes, that's exactly what I mean: **YOUR WEBSITE!** But before that you will need to register a domain and sign-up for a web hosting account.

Chapter 4: Domain & Web Hosting

Your Domain:

The first step before establishing your online presence is to select your web address (your home on the internet) which is called a “Domain Name”. Your domain name tells your customers how to find you in the World Wide Web. It is more like your Online Brand, and since no two parties can have the same domain name, your domain name will always remain unique. Domain name registration and web hosting are two completely separate services. Selecting the right domain name is an important part of developing a successful online business.

There are two good ways you can choose the right domain name:

1. By the actual name of your business. For example Microsoft Corporation’s website is www.microsoft.com
2. By the name of your brand or the product you sell. For example www.software.com or www.flowers.com

Although virtually every word in the English language is registered as a domain, there are many clever ways around the problem of finding a good domain name. For example if you are into web design and www.webdesigner.com is already taken, you can always register something like www.best-webdesigner.com . What’s interesting is that some search engines are considered “-“ (dash) friendly, meaning that by using “best-webdesigner”, the search engine interprets the phrase as “best webdesigner” as two separate words, thus giving you a better chance of ranking higher in the search engines, whereas if you use “bestwebdesigner”, you might not get the same result.

As an alternative to the .COM, you can also register names with .net, .org, .biz, .us, .name and various other extensions, but “dotcom” is still the most well known and accepted extension for business domain names.

If you’d like to register a domain, you can do this through musavis.com at a super-low price aimed to keep more money in your pocket and reduce your expenses. Please visit musavis.com for ordering info.

When registering a domain name, remember to choose an easy-to-remember meaningful name. Remember your domain name counts towards having a better search engine positioning according to your domain name keywords. We will discuss search engine positioning later on.

Overall a domain name should be easy to remember and easy to relay to someone over the phone. Remember never to use free domain and hosting services for your business. By making this mistake you will simply bring your online business to question. Free services will leave a lot of banner ads and popup windows in your pages. This won't leave a good impression on your website visitors about your business and professionalism.

Summarizing:

In summary here are the basic guidelines for choosing a good domain name:

- As short as possible
- As generic as possible, but related (resale value, trademarks, brand etc...)
- No numbers or misspellings
- Easy to remember
- Easy to spell
- No doubling of letters. e.g. downloaddevil.com → downloadevil.com
- Remember .COM is still the most recognized extension, but other extensions are catching-up

Your Web Hosting:

Web hosting is the space where you place all your website files in. In this way by entering your domain name in your web browser, the domain name contacts your web hosting server and shows your website.

Below are some basics you must take into consideration when choosing your web host:

1. **Reliability** (known as uptime): This refers to a percentage of time your hosting server is working and displaying your website. These percentages are mainly reported by the web host company itself. Normally the uptime all web hosting

companies will report is 99.99% which is not true. A good rule to verify their reliability is to check through their current customers.

2. **Customer Support:** a way to test this is contacting the hosting company through email. If you receive a reply within 5-12 hours, you can be pretty sure that it has good customer service.
3. **Web Hosting Space:** an average webpage is 1 KB to 100 KB in size. Pictures and graphics range from 1 KB to 500 KB. Considering a small website with 10-15 pages, you would need around 4 MB to 10 MB of space. To be on the safe side we'll consider it 20 MB. So you say: "Why do some web hosts offer 500 MB – 1 GB"? The answer is that they already know that most users won't be using that much space anyway, it's just for the competition with other web hosting companies, so you could say it's just to sound "Too Good to be True!"
4. **FTP Server:** There are various ways to upload your web pages onto your web server. The easiest and fastest way is through your FTP Server. Another way is through your Web Hosting Control Panel's File Manager (if provided). So when choosing a host, make sure they provide you with an FTP account and Control Panel.
5. **POP & Web based E-mail:** Make sure the web host provides you the ability to create, edit and delete e-mail accounts through your web hosting control panel. Also make sure that your e-mail accounts are POP-based. By using POP and web-based e-mail accounts (Known as POP3 Email Accounts), in addition to accessing your e-mail account through your web browser, you can access your account through e-mail clients like Outlook Express, MS Outlook, Eudora etc...
Ask your web host how many extra POP3 e-mail accounts it will let you have without paying extra money.
6. **Web Programming Support:** There are two types of web servers most widely used on the internet. Linux and Windows. Make sure your web host supports the following web programming languages at the least: PHP, Perl, JSP etc.... The Windows Web Server provides support for more languages such as ASP and ASP.NET.
7. **Database Support:** Your Web Server must support the following database types: Access, MySQL, and SQL7 & SQL Server 2000. Databases are useful when adding

interactivity to your website and in other words turning it from a “Static Website” into a “Dynamic Website”.

8. **Included Software:** Some web hosts include no software on the web server; others include a large number of tools to help you run your website more easily. Examples of programs you should expect to have would be:
 - Autoresponders (to send customized e-mail replies to your customers)
 - Site Statistics (to monitor your website traffic)
 - Webmail (to check your e-mail using your web browser)
9. **CGI-Bin Access:** This is another capability your web server should have. CGI-Bin enables you to run programs written for Common Gateway Interface (CGI) to be run on your server.
10. **Number of Domains:** some hosts will allow you to have more than one domain name on each hosting account, and some don't. It's a good idea to ask how many domains they will allow other than your main domain name.

For your convenience, quality web hosting packages are available through the musavis.com website at affordable prices. Please visit the website for more details.

Chapter 5: Your website: “design or be designed? That is the question!”

Nowadays the internet becoming the busiest business area the world has ever known. However, having a website should mean more than reproducing existing online advertising, online! It should mean taking full advantage of the internet’s capability of interactivity. Some elements of interactivity in the internet are:

- Online Shopping
- Forums
- Weblogs
- Chat Rooms
- Mailing lists
- Surveys
- Polls, etc...

A professional looking website is vital to your online business survival. A professional looking website is like tidy-formal clothing in a business meeting. It shows your serious approach and professionalism in conducting business. Unless you take the time to learn web design, you’ll need the help of a professional webmaster or at the bare minimum the web and graphics design software discussed earlier. But the easiest solution is to hire a webmaster with experience and a proven portfolio.

Below is a comparison table between designing your website yourself and having it designed by a professional.

Remember it’s a matter of time or money! If you’ve got lots of time, go for the learning curve and design it yourself. But if you’ve got money, you’ll be better off hiring a professional web designer.

Designing it yourself	Hiring a professional
You’ll have to do everything yourself	The designer will do everything.
You’ll just pay for the software + need some time to learn how to design	You’ll have to pay either an hourly or flat rate
Amateur design	Professional design
Will cost you reasonably lower for a 5-10 page website	Will cost you more than the OEM software you would buy
The process will be slower	The process will be faster with professional quality

Overall hiring a professional would be ideal, but again if you are short on the “Bucks”, then I’d suggest you do it yourself and leave the money for advertising.

There are some very affordable quality web design and combo eBusiness packages available at the musavis.com website. Please refer to the website for conditions and pricing.

If you have chosen to do the designing by yourself, below are the basic web pages a simple website would have:

1. **Homepage** – Also referred to as the front page of the website, the first page you see when you enter a website.
2. **About Us** – an overview of your online business
3. **Products** – Complete product descriptions, features, key benefits, pricing, specifications, order page etc...
4. **Services** – Same as products
5. **Testimonials/ Success Stories** – So potential customers will believe in you by reading other people’s opinions regarding you and your services. Testimonials will ring the “confirmation bell” for customers to buy your product or service.
6. **Contact Us** – A page with all your contact information and possibly a contact form. Include your address, phone, fax, e-mail and instant messaging information (if applicable). It’s a good idea to have a contact form in order for your customers to contact you directly from your website.
7. **Privacy Policy** – A page which clearly describe your business policy for protecting your customer’s personal information. This is a must for every website.
8. **Terms of Use** – A page defining the conditions that your website visitors are eligible to use your website. Violating any of these conditions will result in the user to be prevented from accessing your website (sometimes known as IP banning).
9. **Sitemap** – The name says it all! It provides direct links to all non-protected pages on your website. It is also effective in your search engine positioning.
10. **FAQ** – A page to answer Frequently Asked Questions

Some website design tips

- Carefully examine your own favorite online business sites and creatively adapt the most compelling marketing and design techniques to your site in order to enhance overall effectiveness.
- Make it easy for your customers to explore your site. In other words design your site to have easy navigation. Use text links as much as possible, because image links tend to become boring after some time.
- Keep things simple: Don't overload your website with excess graphics, animations, and other visual bells and whistles. Remember not to use background music; it is rather unprofessional. Keep the color scheme and fonts same to all pages so the visitor doesn't feel he/she is visiting a new website each time she clicks on a link. Make sure your text is easy to read. Black text on white background might look simple, but it's still easier on the eyes than yellow on bright green.
- Keep download times short: Keep the size of your web pages small. Too much graphics will slow down your website. Try to optimize your images for the web; this will reduce their size while maintaining their quality. Try to make your web pages load less than 30 seconds using a dial-up connection. Remember that most users click away to another site if a page takes too long to load, resulting in lost potential income.
- After you have finished your website design, double check it for possible errors and spelling and grammar mistakes. Now it's time to upload your website onto your web server. Use an FTP tool for this job. For the latest list of FTP tools, please visit the musavis.com website.

There's still something left! We haven't enabled payment processing for your website yet! In the next chapter we will be discussing merchant accounts and credit card payment processing. After signing-up for a merchant account, you will need to modify your website in order to accept online payments. More on that in the next chapter!

Chapter 6: Accepting Credit Card Payments on your website

One of the most important aspects of the internet's interactivity is the capability of making financial transactions by sending and receiving money online. This is called e-commerce. E-commerce enables you to accept online payments through your website. For this you must enable e-commerce on your website. Doing this is accomplished by opening up an online merchant account using the services provided by various 3rd parties and configuring it to run and operate with your website. Also in order to enable online payments through your website, you will need shopping cart software. Usually this is provided with the merchant account. Through your merchant account and shopping cart software, you will add products to your online store and assign prices, taxes and any other required product information. After this is completed, the software will provide you with a payment link for the newly added product which you must insert in your webpage as an order button. When the user presses the order button, the secure order page will appear, enabling your customer to make the payment using one of the available payment options. Current payment options throughout most providers are payment by Credit Card, Telephone, Fax, Wire Transfer, Online Check and Mail Order.

Different types of merchant accounts

Integrated Merchant Accounts:

Integrated Merchant Accounts provide you with complete online solutions, from offering merchant account and shopping carts to secure online payment gateways. These services make it very easy to get a complete e-commerce website up and running, often for very reasonable fees.

Personal Merchant Accounts:

Personal Merchant Accounts work a little differently than other merchant accounts, but they still offer the ability to accept credit cards online. In general it is very easy to qualify for a personal merchant account and is a good alternative for your newly established online business, if you're having trouble qualifying for other types of merchant accounts.

Traditional Merchant Accounts:

Traditional Merchant Accounts offer businesses of all types the ability to accept credit card payments both online and offline therefore more suited for storefront businesses, but today most merchant account providers are actively working to accommodate Internet-based businesses with their new solutions.

You should try to see if you qualify for a traditional merchant account if you plan to accept payments by phone and mail order in addition to the usual online credit card payments.

If you're building an online store, an Integrated Merchant Account may be a better choice for you and if you are a high-risk or low-volume merchant (which for starters you actually might be); you may want to consider a Personal Merchant Account.

Security is a vital factor in online transactions, so you should make sure that you sign-up with a provider that provides maximum security using secure servers to you and your customers. A rule of thumb is to make sure that your provider has the following:

1. **Digital Certificate:** Verifies that the provider is who it says it is.
2. **Is a Hack-proof website:** This means that the provider's website is checked daily by a "3rd party Online Security Company" to make sure it is not vulnerable to hackers.
3. **BBBOnline Member:** If your provider has a BBBOnline member sign, you can be pretty sure that it is good enough for your purpose.

Having these signs on a website is as easy as placing their image on the web pages. What is important is that you see the provider's information when you click on each of the mentioned images, otherwise there's a risk that it could be a scam.

When choosing a merchant account providers please consider the following factors:

- Maximum security for you and your customers
- Their fees: Some providers require setup fees + recurring monthly fees, while others require only a percent of each of the transactions made through your website. Merchant account fees are discussed later on.
- Customer Support: They should provide prompt replies to your questions and problems through e-mail, phone and Live Help.
- Ease of use: Make sure that they provide you solutions with a quick and easy learning curve.

- **Testimonials:** Make sure you take a look at what people think about the provider's services and support.

Please refer to the musavis.com website for the latest list of providers and their comparison charts.

Merchant Account Fees to watch out for:

1. **Application/Setup Fee:** This fee is a one-time cost, usually \$100-\$300, but can vary greatly depending on the provider. This is a usual fee which almost all providers will charge, but some integrated solutions may waive the setup fee.
2. **Discount Rate:** This fee is usually a percentage of the transaction amount. The average real-time processing rate is around 2%-3%. The discount rate is always taken off the top along with the transaction fees before any money is deposited into your account.
3. **Transaction Fee:** Each time you process and charge a customer's credit card, there's a transaction fee involved in order to pay for the network and computers required to process the transaction. This is more like a maintenance fee. Providers may charge anywhere from 20 to 50 cents per transaction.
4. **Statement Fee:** Depending on the type of merchant account you have, your bank and/or your payment processor will send you a monthly statement detailing the transactions and deposit made into your account during the month. This usually costs around \$10 per month and varies from provider to provider.
5. **Monthly Minimum Fee:** This is the minimum amount you will be charged by your merchant account provider. This fee is usually imposed only if your credit card transactions and fees don't reach the specified minimum for the month which is usually around \$25-\$50 depending on the provider.

Keep in mind that rates and fees may vary from those outlined here and this list is only for you to get a rough idea of what fees you would be expecting to pay to your provider. Refer to the terms and conditions of your own merchant account contract for complete information.

After you have finished configuring your merchant account and have made required modifications to your website, it's time to double-check for any possible errors, dead links (links that don't work) and spelling and grammar mistakes. After this is completed it's time to upload the final revision of your website on to your web server.

Congratulations! Your website is ready for use. The only thing that is left is to tell the world that your website exists! This is done by advertising your website on the search engines and other websites. Chapter 7 will tell you all about that and more!

Chapter 7: Advertising your website

After you have launched your website, it will be time to spread the word across the global community, and “how do you do that?”

Well to tell you the truth, there are numerous ways of advertising your website but very few are actually effective and will *gradually* bring you sales. I’m especially picky on the “gradually” part because there’s no such thing as instant advertising results in the internet. Everything requires time and a great deal of patience. Just because you have a terrific product, a great website and a killer sales letter doesn’t mean that you will make sales! First of all people have to find you and then decide if they are going to buy your product or not. Therefore you must pay attention and realize the extreme importance of advertising as a vital factor in your online success.

By implementing the simple and straight-forward notes and tips described in this chapter, you will be in the road of getting your website noticed and generating income ASAP.

Different ways you can advertise your website are:

1. Submit your website to all major search engines and directories (more on that later)
2. Include your website address in your e-mail signatures
3. Have your website address written on your new business card
4. Include your e-mail address in your voice mail message as another way for someone to get in touch with you
5. Tell everyone about your website
6. Add your web address to print ads if you are also selling offline
7. Add your URL (**U**niform **R**esource **L**ocator = Website Address = Domain Name) to your forum postings signature
8. Add your URL to your invoices
9. Add your URL to postcards and e-cards you might send to your friends
10. Mention you website/product in your talks and speeches
11. Have it in other people’s newsletters and in your own
12. Word of Mouth (Yet the best method for advertising)
13. Brochures, fliers, stickers, caps, T-shirts, mugs, door hangers, refrigerator magnets etc ...
14. Exchange links with other websites (more on that later)

15. Start an affiliate program for your products and services
16. Write e-books and give them away
17. Post articles about your profession and add your URL at the bottom of your signature
18. Post banner ads and text ads in websites, e-zines and e-books
19. Set-up a "Tell-a-friend" feature on your website (more on that later)
20. Offer your products/services to other websites as an addition to what they can offer to their customers (more on that later)
21. Have people write about you and your products on their own websites
22. Write reviews about other people's products/services on other websites and also on your own website
23. Start a Web Ring (more on that later)
24. Sign other people's guestbook at their website and include your URL under your signature
25. Sponsor/contribute in online and local contests and events
26. Network with other online businesses and find out what works for them and share your ideas with them also!
27. Write your URL on every piece of mail leaving your home or office
28. Leave your business card behind wherever you go
29. Keep your website updated as much as possible (This will make your visitors come back for more)
30. Get yourself a self-inking or rubber stamp made up with a catchy note and your URL (maybe even your name and phone number) and stamp everything with it especially on your envelopes and memos.

These are just a few ways that you can advertise your products and services. Think and see if you find some other useful ways of advertising, and you might even like to post your new ways of effective advertising in the website forums.

Search Engine Submission:

It's important to know that Search Engines play a very important role in your online success. There are literally millions of searches being done about different topics each day and a lot of these searches are being done by people looking for a specific product. Imagine if at least a 100 people searched for your product on the internet and found you (but that's after you have efficiently advertised your website)! Now imagine if even half of them decided to buy your product because you had a terrific solution and a great looking website. That would mean 50 sales and 50 sales a day would mean a great daily income that you would hardly achieve in your offline small business. Of course there are pitfalls in and along the way, but what we want to do here is simulate how good things can be just to give you an idea of the great potentials everybody is just talking about and maybe never reaching. There's a Persian saying that says: "*There's a long way between talking about something and actually doing it*", which means that just talking about something doesn't mean it will happen, therefore you've got to know how to go around doing it and making it happen and that's what's important!

Just to get you familiar with the idea of Search Engine Submissions and their importance, let's say that you've successfully done your **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** and you have a good position in the search engines, which mean people, can easily find you. Now let's say your product has a price of 30 USD and you have an average of 50 sales each day (remember that's just a rough example, your sales could be more or less; it all depends on you and how well you establish your business and the amount of time you dedicate to your online success), so let's settle for 50 sales a day! Now multiply 50 by 30 days of a month:

$$50 \times 30 = 1500$$

That would mean 1500 sales each month

Now multiply 1500 by your product's sales price of 30 USD:

$$1500 \times 30 = 45,000 \text{ USD}$$

That's 45,000 USD in monthly income and a rough 540,000 USD in annual online income

I think you get the picture now! And the good thing is that thousands of people are making such amounts of money from their websites each day, every month and every year, and there's no reason why you shouldn't be one of those people!

The thing is that in order to make your online business work, you need to gain publicity, and that's worldwide publicity, period. And Search Engines are what you'll be watching out for.

I'm currently working on a new project about Search Engine Optimization and submissions. www.seo-fire.com will have all the things you will need to know before getting started with marketing your products through the Search Engines and related online resources. You might like to check the ebusines-starter.com for seo-fire.com's development status.

To keep this book bare to the bones of what you'll need to get started, I won't get into detail about search engine optimization itself, thus I will be showing you the basics and what you should be looking out for once you get to this stage regarding your online business.

We all know that Google.com is one of the most popular search engines on the Net; and so are Yahoo.com, msn.com, altavista.com, aol.com and some other websites like dmoz.org and hotbot.com. Your goal is to get the highest positions (first 100) in all or at least most search engines. The fact is that if your website isn't listed within the first 100 search results in a specific search phrase or keywords, you probably won't have a chance of getting any traffic at all, and that's because most users (including myself) will only be viewing the first 3 or 4 pages of search results and they are likely to find what they've been looking for in those 3 or 4 pages. But that's nothing you should be scared of or something that would turn you off. Everything will be just fine if you stick to the principals and have the right tools in hand. Whatever you do, your goal will be to get included in as much search engines and directories with a good position and overall ranking.

There are two types of submissions:

1. **Free Search Engine Submissions:** This is a free service provided by most search engines in order to maximize and extend their search database. Note that your inclusion is not guaranteed and they will tell you that you might get crawled within 6 to 8 weeks (Crawling is what search engine spiders do to recognize and add your

website to their database). Your website statistics software (provided by your web host) will definitely have a section telling you which spiders crawled your web pages in a specific duration of time (usually monthly).

2. **Paid Inclusions:** This service is a service provided by the search engines guaranteeing you inclusion and a good position according to your relevant keywords. What they do is review your website and provide you with guaranteed submission to their database.

There is also another paid submission service, where your website is submitted to the search engine directories such as DMOZ and Yahoo! They will add you once they have reviewed and approved your website.

Pay-Per-Click Search Engines:

Pay-per-click (PPC) is a service provided by search engines where you pay something around 1-10 cents (or whatever you bid) for each click that comes from the search engines to your website. That's a great way to start if you're looking for real people looking for your products.

When choosing a PPC service, make sure that they are recognized and well-known for good business.

Be aware that there are companies and websites doing an act called "Click Fraud" where people sign-up with them and earn money for just clicking on links and banners. This is "no-good" traffic because these people are just interested in earning money by clicking on links; therefore these are not real buyers and are not what you want. So beware of click fraud and choose the right services.

In order to submit your website to the search engines, first you must optimize your website. This includes optimizing your content, meta tags, title tags, alt tags and other aspects of your website. The more content-rich your website is, the more search engine spiders will like you! Remember **Content is King!** Try updating your website often, this has proven to be greatly effective for more and better search engine crawls.

Meta tags are small pieces of code you place in the HEAD section of your web pages. You won't see these tags as actual viewable content on your website, but search engine spiders read them.

Different types of Meta tags are:

- Keywords
- Description
- Author etc.

Keywords are words people will use to find you, your products and services.

The Description tag is a tag featuring a few lines of information about you, your website and your product. Keep it short, simple and to the point.

The Author tag is the tag you use to describe yourself as the author of the webpage usually featuring your name.

Here's an example of the Author, Keywords and Description tags for my freelance web design services website (www.musavis.com):

```
<HEAD>
<meta name="author" content="Mohammad Musavi" />
<meta name="keywords" content="freelance web design, freelance web design job, design
freelance web site, design freelance job site web design, freelance rate web design freelance web
work, consulting design freelance web, bid design freelance web, design freelance web, freelance
work, freelance graphic design, freelance web designer, freelance designer, freelance graphic
design jobs, freelance design, freelance graphic, freelance web developer
, professional freelance web design, affordable website design" />
<meta name="description" content="professional freelance affordable web design by Mohammad
Musavi. If you're looking for professional affordable freelance web design, graphics design, and
search engine optimization (SEO) and registration, musavis.com is the place to look for. I meet
deadlines" />
</HEAD>
```

Here are just a few websites I recommend if you plan to do the SEO yourself:

1. www.searchenginewatch.com
2. www.apromotionguide.com
3. www.selfpromotion.com
4. www.seo-fire.com (my website)

These websites have in-depth information required to start your very own SEO and submission campaign. For the latest site recommendations, please visit the musavis.com website.

Top 10 pay-per-click search engines

(Source: payperclickengines.com)

- **[Overture](#)**

The King of pay per click search engines, Overture has a well organized system.

You can bid for rankings and also choose the description and title you want, which provides highly targeted traffic to your website. You can control your bids at all times and adjust them, based on the quality of your results. Especially handy is the Search Term Suggestion Tool, which shows you how often people search for a particular word or phrase.

More people will click on your link if you use your key phrase in the title and in the description.

You'll probably receive more traffic from Overture than from all the other pay per click engines combined. However, because they are less popular, buying highly targeted traffic is much cheaper than at Overture.

The huge advantage of this kind of advertising is that you pay only when someone actually visits your site.

- **[FindWhat](#)**

FindWhat.com distributes your keyword text ads throughout a distribution partner network of hundreds of high-traffic websites including large search engines such as CNET's Search.com, Excite, Webcrawler, MetaCrawler, Dogpile and Microsoft Internet Explorer Autosearch. They also partner with specialty sites serving niche markets in order to drive the most targeted traffic to your website.

You can start an account for as little as \$25.

- [GoClick](#)

GoClick is a recommended pay per click search engine that is always growing in traffic and having new tools and utilities added. You can have bids automatically rise or lower based in a maximum set by you. Local targeting is available; select from US/Canadian or worldwide specific traffic. Easily set up sub-accounts for different URLs or sites with their own set of keywords and bidding rules.

It is now easier to change titles, URLs, descriptions as well as add and remove keywords and change bids in the GoClick accounts area. Got thousands of keywords? No problems--use the readily available bulk submission tool.

GoClick's Keyword tool not only helps you research more keywords, but also estimates how much traffic you will receive at a given bid amount.

GoClick still lets you start an account with only \$10 and bid from 1 cent.

- [Enhance Interactive](#)

Enhance Interactive has just undergone a site re-design featuring a new and improved accounts area. You can participate in its LogoLink program by including a logo graphic next to your listing. Listing your site with Enhance Interactive will make your site visible to about 50% of the top 10 pay per click search engines. With Enhance Interactive's affiliate program you can earn \$15-\$50 per sale with quarterly bonuses for good performers. You can open an account for \$50.

- [7Search](#)

7Search results appear in over 35% of the top 150 search engines in English-speaking countries and Alexa shows it to have a significant amount of traffic compared to other pay per click search engines. Services offered to advertisers include immediate e-mail notification when you are outbid for the top ranking on a

keyword, a keyword generator tool, and a 1:1 banner exchange program.

- [**Kanoodle**](#)

Kanoodle is currently offering a free \$10 trial account to new users. Kanoodle has partnerships with sites such as, NetZero, DogPile, CNET, Metacrawler and Turbofind. Its non-paid listings are supplied by Inktomi. You can start an account with \$50.

- [**ePilot**](#)

ePilot's results are displayed on partners' sites such as YellowPages.com, Fitness.com, Index.com, Pageseeker, and many more.. ePilot's suite of account management tools is designed for ease of use. You can start an account with \$100.

- [**Search123**](#)

Search123 has great tools to help you control your pay per click advertising budget. You can set a spend limit by the hour, day, week or month. You can start an account with \$25 and continue making deposits as little as \$5. For information on Search123's affiliate program, [click here](#).

- [**SearchFeed**](#)

SearchFeed provides specialized tools that allow advertisers to create campaigns from scratch or easily upload existing campaigns using the Bulk Keyword Uploader and there are easy to follow online forms available for adding smaller sets of keywords. You can start an account with \$25. There is a good affiliate program paying 35%-50% on bidded click throughs plus 5%-7% on referrals.

- [**Espotting**](#)

Espotting is a UK based pay per click search engine. Your top 5 listings appear on

Yahoo! UK, Lycos and Hotbot UK and will reach 72% of the UK Internet population. It also allows you to target a German, French and or Spanish audience with Espotting across Europe. Espotting has merged with FindWhat. You can start an account for £110. (£10 of that is a service fee.)

Link Exchange:

Another way to add to your website's publicity is by exchanging links with other websites. Don't get me wrong! I don't mean signing-up with link-exchange websites (they don't give you the exposure you deserve). What I mean is: "Search and find websites related to your business and line of interest." Then write to the webmasters or website owners and ask them to include your link in their won website in exchange to their link in your website.

Of course they won't just accept your proposal, you must convince them that this will prove effective to their business and website growth; you might even want to provide them your product as a compliment or provide the website's customers with value-added products and services at an exclusive discount price.

This is what I would do if musavis.com wasn't my own website:

1. I would contact the webmaster/website owner
2. I would provide them with a review about their website/product/service or even provide them with a testimonial (make them feel good and proud about what they are doing)
3. I would tell him/her what we have in common and how we could be of service to each other and our customers
4. I would provide him/her with my proposal and would convince him that this is a deal he/she can't miss!
5. If agreed upon, we would exchange links

Exchanging links helps your website's link popularity and overall ranking. The more links you exchange with "High-Traffic" websites, the more traffic you will likely get from their website visitors and the higher page rankings you will achieve.

Try searching for high-traffic websites and contacting them. The higher a website has in the search engines, the more likely it is that they will have heavy traffic to their websites.

Be sure that you have a complete and running website with a good look before you contact anyone regarding link exchange, because you shouldn't be expecting them to exchange links with you if your web pages are under construction or your website is looking pale.

Tell-a-Friend:

This is a purely easy and effective way of directly advertising your website from your website and without much work from your side. "Tell-a-Friend" or "Recommend-a-site" is a web application that is configured to work on your web pages as a form which your user fills in their name and e-mail address and their friends email(s) and a predefined message is sent to their friends on their behalf from your website recommending them to visit your website. Easy as that!

There is loads of free and paid webmaster services on the internet providing Tell-a-friend hosted on their servers. The free versions normally contain some sort of advertisement (normally text ads and links to their website and services) and are limited in functionality, whereas the paid versions have additional options and are more flexible.

Please visit the musavis.com website for the latest list of free or paid webmaster resources providers.

Web Rings:

The name says it all! Web rings are groups of websites sharing the same interests. When you sign-up to be part of a certain web ring, your website visitors can see other web ring member names and websites by clicking on their links. After you sign-up with a web ring, you have to insert a piece code in one of your web pages (normally in the homepage of your website) in order for the web ring interface to load in your website. You can even start your own web ring if you wish by hosting a web ring application on your own web hosting server.

For more information please refer to musavis.com for the latest software and services.

That raps up the advertising section of "Online Business Starter Kit".

Check the musavis.com website's Tutorials section periodically for additional information regarding online advertising or sign-up with my bi-monthly newsletter to receive the information in your mailbox.

Chapter 8: Add-on products

The next thing you'll want to do after advertising your product and making sales is increasing your sales volume and therefore generating more profit. There are two ways for doing this:

1. **Creating more products** (Keep in mind that this takes time and therefore might not be ideal if you're looking for fast results for your already sales-generating website.)
2. **Selling other people's products** by signing-up with affiliate and/or reseller programs.

Selling your own product is something that we have already discussed in detail and you are somewhat an expert on how to go through the process of making your own product and selling it.

What we will discuss in this chapter will be selling other people's products. Getting started is as easy as 1-2-3:

1. Joining Affiliate programs (Find the merchants which you would like to sell their products)
2. Create links (Create special links pointing to the merchant's website and pasting them into your web pages.)
3. Running Statistics Reports (Check to see how many visitors you have taken to the merchant's product page and how effective the affiliate program is.)

Remember what they say: "CONTENT IS KING!" You must have a content-rich website in order to have new and return visitors and most importantly "buying visitors", otherwise none of your plans will work and you will end up with a neat website and at least a couple of hundred dollars in loss of time and money.

Nowadays visitors are searching for information and they're no longer interested in mere advertisements; and that's exactly why you have to give them the information they're looking for, or else ... they will simply leave your website. After you give them the information that they were looking for and prove that you are trustworthy, then and only then you can recommend them good products and services from other companies (which you have either affiliated with or are going to resell for). And you have to recommend

them in such a way that will not only convince them to click on a link, but also to look at the product with “buying glasses”.

Be advised, try to choose an affiliate/reseller program that matches your current business theme or is somehow clearly related; let’s face it, there’s no use selling doughnuts in an online web hosting business or a business promoting search engine optimization.

Now, being an affiliate means that your job is to refer customers to other businesses. To be able to this, you must have a lot of visitors and that’s in the hands of your SEO and how well you position in the search engines.

Important: Remember not all companies with affiliate programs provide quality products. Please choose a program that you feel good about recommending it to you friends and relatives. That’s the amount of respect you should have towards your website visitors!
He’s a friend! He’s family!

Some things to remember:

1. Never urge your visitor to “buy now” or “buy while stocks last!” That’s not your job! Your job is to just guide them to click and visit the website. If the visitor feels that you’re pitching, he/she will resist and you’ll be lucky if he/she remains on your website.
2. It’s a good idea to provide a short personal review of the product before they click!
3. Provide the right information at the right time and then present the affiliated products convincingly. Don’t let them smell a sales effort!

Your job is to convince the visitor to click. Let the company that sells the product convince the user to buy! Just convince the visitor to visit the website in an “open to buy” mood!

If the seller is not able to close sales, well that’s not your problem, however it might mean that you should close your connection with that company and look for another company to promote.

4. A personal testimonial can do wonders (as noted in previous chapters), but remember that you have to use the product yourself in order to provide accurate information and how it benefits you. You must make sure that you are not saying anything that is not true! It might be tempting to lie, but what you’ll get in the long

run isn't anything other than questioning your trustfulness. Unless you're the perfect liar! 😏

5. Use short paragraphs to recommend the product. If you right a lot, it will look something like a sales letter and people might think that you're trying to sell and therefore might get suspicious. Keep the sentences short, few and 100% true!
6. If you haven't purchased the product yourself, then underline the motifs that made you love the idea of recommending the product. Always consider your visitors as intelligent human beings searching for quality (that's why the visited your website, isn't it?) 🤔
7. Don't copy-paste the company's sales letter into your webpage! Only use it as inspiration! Use your own words! Make it genuine and unique!
8. Do not use banners unless you really-really have to! Research has proven that text links are the most effective method for online advertisement!
9. Do not promote too many companies or products. Doing this might confuse your visitors and you want that to happen!
10. Select companies that give you a high percentage of sales! They must have competitive prices too!

Speaking of affiliate programs, here is just a small list of the leading affiliate program websites:

1. www.cj.com (Commission Junction): You can sign-up with various affiliate programs and receive all your earnings in one check, therefore raising the minimum amount required to issue a check, therefore resulting in receiving your check earlier.
2. www.associateprograms.com
3. www.affiliatesdirectory.com
4. www.cashpile.com
5. www.refer-it.com
6. www.affiliatepromote.com
7. www.affiliatefind.com

Since I update the list of recommended websites frequently, please visit the musavis.com website for the latest list.

Chapter 9: Starting your own Affiliate Program

After generating sales from your online business website and adding other people's products to your product list, it's time to start your own affiliate program and sell your products/services on other people's websites.

Below are 25 of the most well-known affiliate program websites. They are in no particular order. Please take the time to examine each and every one of them to see which ones suit your requirements the most. Good Luck!

1. www.cj.com
2. associateprograms.com
3. associate-it.com
4. affiliatesdirectory.com
5. cashpile.com
6. refer-it.com
7. affiliatepromote.com
8. becomeanaffiliate.com
9. clickslink.com
10. wesubmit.com
11. 2-tier.com
12. affiliateworld.com
13. adbility.com
14. makemoneynow.com
15. associatecash.com
16. affiliatefind.com
17. affiliatefirst.com
18. associatesearch.com
19. free-affiliate-programs.com
20. revenuemakers.com
21. startearning.com
22. sponsordirectory.com
23. webmaster-programs.com
24. affiliateadvisor.com
25. clickquick.com

Your own affiliate program will accelerate your sales (your website will not be the only website directly promoting your product) and you will get more exposure (your affiliates will be linking to your website from their own websites giving you referrals to your website).

There are several ways you can start your affiliate program or compensate your associates:

1. **Click-through program:** Each time a visitor clicks on your text/banner link from your affiliate's website, you pay your affiliate a small fee (very similar to the Pay-Per-Click Search Engine method, the difference is that the user doesn't search for

your product and your product advertisement is already present). This small fee is usually between \$0.05 to \$1.00 per click depending on your product and your margins.

2. **Pay-Per-Lead:** the affiliate gets paid for every targeted lead he/she sends from his/her website. This is normally done through filling out a form by the visitor either from your website or your affiliate's website from which after submission, the affiliate will be paid a fee for the directed lead. This form can be anything such as requesting information about a product, a quote, or doing something like downloading a trial version of software. Regardless of what the visitor is asked to do, your affiliates are paid for each lead they send you.
3. **Revenue Sharing Program:** This is by far the most popular type of affiliate program which in it you will be offering your affiliates a portion of the profits on everything that is sold (through your affiliates).

This is the most popular and the most recommended kind of program available, and you are guaranteed to make money because you only pay for sales which are generated by your affiliates.

When it comes to the "nitty-gritty", the only things you have to carefully consider will be installing a complete software solution to track all of your affiliates, traffic and sales generated, plus supporting your affiliates and "helping them help you" by answering their questions via e-mail and proving your honesty and trust by sending-in their checks in time!

Keeping track of your affiliates

There are three ways for keeping track of your affiliates and sales:

1. Mirror pages (very time consuming)
2. Hiring an affiliate program service (think twice before doing this)
3. Purchasing your own affiliate managing software (The best way possible)

Mirror Pages: You will have to design identical sales pages for each of your affiliates and having their affiliate tracking ID hard-coded into the webpage. This can be very time consuming and troublesome once your affiliates increase in number. Even worse: If you want to change content or graphics in your affiliate's page, you will have to modify a

numerous number of pages. Now that's a HUGE job! Other drawbacks are not having real-time statistics reporting for you and your affiliates and also not being able to tell how much they've earned until the end of the month and after you've calculated everything manually! Imagine having 100+ affiliates! The calculation itself would take more than a month!

One more thing to mention is that in this method you can only sell one product with each mirror page. So what happens if you have 5 different products? You guessed it! 5 different mirror pages, which makes it practically impossible for today's online businesses.

Hiring an affiliate program service: There are various websites on the internet with the aim to of conducting affiliate programs for other websites. So what's the catch? Some will charge you a setup fee and a percentage of each sale, whereas others will waive the setup fee and instead charge you a higher percentage of each sale. There's a well-known website called Clicktrade where they don't have a high setup fee, but they will charge you 30% of every sale. Coming to think of it, you'll be loosing large chunks of money as soon as your sales volume increases. So that's something to think about! But again, if you have low-volume sales, it might be a good idea using these kinds of services.

Warning: Be aware! Once you sign-up with one of these services and have affiliates sign-up with them, you will be practically dependant to them from then onwards, because if you dump them, you've dumped all your affiliates and there will be nothing you can do about it!

If you have high-volume sales, it would be wise if you start with the third method in the first place:

Purchasing your own affiliate managing software: Purchasing and installing an affiliate management software on your web server would cost you something between \$1000 to \$10000 depending on which software you choose, but you will certainly save a lot of money when your affiliate program starts to make profit for you. Remember that the whole purpose behind setting-up your affiliate program is to make more money; and you shouldn't be paying a large sum of it to another company!

Goof affiliate software cost something between \$5000 and \$7000. Other cheaper software usually lack functionality and features. But remember, there are always exceptions and I've

tried my best to find and list them to help you find the best solution at the best price. Check out the musavis.com website's software reviews section for more information.

Last but not least, if you are looking forward to having a successful affiliate program, keep in mind the following:

1. Your product must always be and look great (Your affiliates must believe in you and your product in order to be able to promote and sell it for you!
2. Choose your affiliate program software wisely!
3. Your affiliates can also be your customers, so be extra nice to them!
4. Pay out excellent commissions to your affiliates to keep them motivated to promote and sell your product
5. Always test your sales volume compared to your number of visitors. This is called "visitor to sale conversion ratio". If this is low, then be 100% sure that there's something wrong with either:
 - a. Your sales letter
 - b. Your website
 - c. Your price
 - d. Your expression, etc.

Michael Wong is a much respected internet marketing and SEO expert. He has written a very great article about the top 5 biggest affiliate program mistakes you should avoid making in your program. It's a pretty complete piece of information and I thought it would be a petty not sharing it with my readers.

Affiliate Managers: Your Top Five Biggest Affiliate Program Mistakes

In this article I will show affiliate managers the mistakes they should avoid if they want to build a successful affiliate program.

I felt compelled to write this article after seeing the same mistakes made by most of the hundreds of affiliate programs I have joined since I started promoting them in 1997. I have made a nice living from affiliate programs over the years, so I know a thing or two about them. I would dearly love to make more money with affiliate programs, but affiliate

managers don't make it easy for us affiliates. So hopefully this article will do a bit for the cause.

Here are my top five biggest affiliate program mistakes that I find today:

1. Competing With Your Affiliates.

This is by far the worst mistake made by companies that offer affiliate programs. I often see companies for products I am trying to promote compete with me in the search engine rankings and pay per click advertising programs.

Why companies invest money and resources in competing with their affiliates is beyond me. By competing with me, you're trying to put me out of business. Have marketing directors ever thought of it in that way? Because if you succeed, you will no longer have an affiliate network to speak of.

The money would be better spent on supporting your affiliate network by creating a better product, providing more referral statistics, higher commission payouts, faster support, and more, fresh promotional creatives.

So if you're an affiliate manager reading this article, tell your affiliate director at your next meeting to STOP competing with your affiliates, and support them instead!

2. Not Providing Your Affiliates with Useful, Real-Time Statistics.

All marketers rely on statistics to measure the effectiveness of any marketing campaign. Yet most affiliate programs only provide their affiliates with basic statistics such as number of visitors sent, number of sales, and commission earned. These statistics aren't much help to affiliates who want to measure the effectiveness of a particular pay per click campaign.

Affiliate managers - please consider providing these useful statistics so that I can market your products effectively:

- Archive of daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly statistics and by date range.

- Commission earned, broken down by product or service, and how the customer was referred to the site.
- Daily email updates of all affiliate statistics.
- Instant email notification of a new affiliate.
- Instant email notification of a new free trial sign up.
- Instant email notification of a new sale and all relevant statistics. I love getting new sales notification emails!
- Number of free trial downloads or subscriptions.
- Number of returns and all relevant statistics.
- Affiliate links with trackable IDs, so that affiliates can tell exactly which site, or ad campaign is sending the referrals and sales.
- Unique clicks - which refers to the unique number of visitors referred - in addition to raw clicks - which refers to the total number of click throughs.
- A list of top performing affiliate statistics, so that affiliates can compare how they're doing and which areas they can improve on.
- Include the most important statistics at the top of the email and subject line. There's nothing worse than having to scroll down to see what the referral purchased or how much commission I have made.

The following only apply if the affiliate program offers more than one level of commissions.

- Commission earned as a result of referrals sent by 2nd-tier affiliates.
- Commission earned, broken down by commission level.
- Number of 2nd-tier affiliates referred.

I've been promoting products and services via affiliate programs since 1997 and I have yet to come across an affiliate program that provides anything close to these statistics.

3. Not Compensating Your Affiliates Fairly For Their Hard Work.

The #1 incentive for any affiliate is cold hard cash. Money sells! So tell your marketing director to fire the search engine optimization firm and advertising department, and redirect the resources to paying your affiliates a higher commission rate.

Another thing I hate is seeing my commissions go down the drain because someone I had referred signs up to the affiliate program and purchases the product via their affiliate link. It almost feels like I'm being robbed blind! I highly recommend affiliate managers deter this practice by making it harder for affiliates to pocket the commission from their own purchases, at least the initial one.

4. Not Providing Enough Fresh Promotional Creatives.

Most affiliate managers seem to give their promotional creatives little thought. All they offer is a handful of 468x60 banners, buttons and text links. What happens is that affiliates end up using the same ads on hundreds, even thousands of web sites.

Affiliate managers - what about these promotional creatives?

- Articles and tips with embedded affiliate links
- Classified ads
- Customer testimonials
- Direct email ads
- Email signatures
- Newsletter ads
- pay per click ads
- Pop-up/under ads
- Product photographs
- Product reviews
- Product screenshots
- Rich-media ads
- Skyscrapers
- Staff interviews

Listen up! Different ads perform better on different sites. And ads generally have a life span of a carton of milk. So offer your affiliates a greater variety of ads, more often.

5. Not Providing Fast, Quality Support for Your Affiliates.

This is the 21st century. Don't make your affiliates wait longer for an email reply than it takes to send a letter by snail-mail post.

Don't outsource your affiliate support work. If you have to, then at least train your support staff so that they understand the ins and outs of your products and affiliate program. I'm often dumbfounded by affiliate support staff who can't give me answers to simple questions.

Well there you have it - my five biggest complaints about affiliate programs today. I hope affiliate managers take note and take strides to better support their affiliates, because if you don't affiliates will find other avenues of income, such as the new Google AdSense program.

Affiliate marketers - if you agree with what I've said, send this article to your affiliate program managers!

About The Author: [Michael Wong](#) is a respected internet marketing and SEO expert. He is the author of a leading [search engine optimization guide](#), numerous [marketing tips](#), and reviews of [marketing tools](#) and [ecommerce software](#).

Publishing Rights: You may republish this article in your web site, newsletter, or ebook, on the condition that you agree to leave the article, author's signature, and all links completely intact.

Final note: The beauty of affiliate programs is that you have hundreds and even thousands of people promoting your product for you and you have nothing to lose, because you'll be paying them each time they make a sale! So take advantage of it and skyrocket your sales, because if you don't, others will!

Chapter 10: Interactivity = Definite Online Success Vitality

Adding interactivity to your website is definitely one of the most important methods of attracting new and return visitors and keeping your visitors glued to your website. In this chapter I will be introducing some of the most important interactivity tools available on the internet. It's up to you to decide which ones suit your purpose and implement them on your growing business website.

1. **Mailing List:** A mailing list is a list of people's names and e-mail addresses that is used to send customized messages or announcements to many people all at once. These people will usually share a common interest (the mailing list subjects) just like in the real world. Joining a mailing list is as easy as filling in your name and e-mail address in the mailing list subscription form; and you can always unsubscribe any time you like. A mailing list is managed and operated by a list owner (or several owners for large mailing lists). The list owner controls everything from managing subscriptions to sending out messages to the list subscribers. Mailing lists usually have an archive with a record of all previous posts saved in a database for future reference. Mailing lists are highly interactive additions to your website with a wide range of uses such as:
 - a. Announcements and News
 - b. Newsletters
 - c. Online e-mail courses, etc.

There are numerous number of mailing list software available on the internet today with different prices depending on features and functionality.

Please visit the software reviews section of the musavis.com website for the latest addition to our recommended mailing list software.

2. **Forum:** A forum is a virtual community where people gather to share their thoughts and opinions regarding topics of interest. Forums have more than a handful of useful features such as:
 - a. Unlimited forums can be organized into as many categories as you like
 - b. Private forums and those only for specified user groups
 - c. Powerful search facility

- d. Message formatting with various font styles and sizes as well as allowing quoting, code display, image posting and automatic URL linking
- e. Support of standard and extended BBCode tags and controlled HTML tags
- f. Polls can be simply added to posts
- g. Email notification of replies to your topics
- h. Powerful topic subscription capability
- i. Original emoticons to portray emotions
- j. Powerful forum, user and group permission management
- k. Control forum access to specified user groups
- l. Control all aspects of the posting experience
- m. Allow limited access to viewing, posting, replying and many other options
- n. Unlimited members
- o. Personal profile creation
- p. Post counting and administrator-definable ranks for users
- q. Email-like private messaging system
- r. Supports local, remote and uploadable avatars
- s. Topic editing
- t. Mass delete/move/lock/unlock of posts
- u. Topic splitting
- v. Option of auto-pruning of old or unanswered messages on a per-forum basis
- w. General configuration
- x. Forum & category setup
- y. Easy database backup and restore
- z. Disallowed usernames
- aa. User authorization
- bb. Word censoring
- cc. Complete member management
- dd. Emoticon setup
- ee. Optional new post verification
- ff. Extensive ban management, ban by email address, username or single/multiple IP address or hostname
- gg. Mass emailing of groups and users by the administrator

* Above features belong to PHPbb Forum available at www.phpbb.com

Forums are managed by moderators (for each forum category) and on top of all the forum admin. Today's online forums support content syndication which we will discuss further on.

Setting up a forum for your website will be more than useful if you are looking for pure interactivity and return visits to your website. Forums will help you learn more about your members' opinions and point of view and help you improve your products and services according to your members needs.

An introduction to Content Syndication

RSS or “**R**ich **S**ite **S**ummary” or “**R**eally **S**imple **S**yndication” (an apt name) “**R**eal **S**mooth **S**tuff” (as some call it) describes a simple framework to publish headlines and links on the web. Although it has been around since December 2000, the standard had grown immensely after its inclusion in nearly all forums, weblogs and all major websites. Websites like Yahoo!, BBC News, PCWorld magazine etc. support RSS feeds.

XML, the standard used by most database driven websites, enhances the simplicity of RSS. The XML standard lets content providers define data with tags such as title, link, product, description, author etc. Once data has been stored in this format, it's very easy to retrieve the relevant information for an RSS feed.

Much like RSS, Atom is also an XML-based file format. Although it's not exactly the same, Atom allows weblog content lists or news headlines known as feeds to become available for syndication. Both for RSS and Atom, the information may come in the form headlines only or headlines with content. RSS and Atom feeds are read using aggregators (a special type of software for reading syndicated content)

Content syndication is a blanket term used to refer to accessing and publishing web content (text, images, etc.) in RSS and/or Atom format.

Tip: Search Engine Spiders are especially fond of content syndicated websites (RSS and Atom feeds) and tend to give them better positions in search results.

3. Weblog: There's a lot of hype around weblogs that makes them both more and less than they are. Weblogs do not represent something new in human communication and are more like a "digital diary". "A weblog is just a website organized by time" says Russ Lipton Documents Radio. I must say that I very much agree with his definition. Weblogs are organized by time and calendar making it easy to retrieve previous postings at any desired time. Editing, posting and generation of the weblog is largely automated using the easy online user interface weblogs have.

Question: Who needs a weblog?	Answer: Anybody who wants their content organized and has anything to say (remember that you want people to read your weblog, so what you write is very important).
--------------------------------------	--


You might be surprised, but speaking in our own voice and "out of the English literature" will draw more attention to your weblog; remember it's your "Online Digital Diary"!

Again a word from Russ Lipton (I really like this one! Well said!):

Your weblog may endure for one post or across many decades to come. It may be read by millions or only by yourself as a record of ideas, events and deeds that mattered to you. If it gives you pleasure, you will continue. If it doesn't, you will stop.

And why not?

A weblog is just a website organized by time.

These were just a few ways to liven up your website and interact with your website visitors. A Chat Room is another good idea, but you already know what that is even better than me! Don't you? 

One Final Word

We've come to the end of this book.

This book is finished, but there's still a lot to say! Now that you have grasped the basics of starting your very own successful online business, go on and do it (if you haven't already) and believe in yourself: You really can be your own boss! You're just a step away!

Now that you have been taught, I ask you to teach others and spread your knowledge and don't forget to e-mail me with your success story! I'll be waiting!

"From what we get, we make a living; what we give, however, makes a life"

<Arthur Ashe>

P.S. Don't forget to join the website forums and website bi-monthly newsletter to keep up-to-date with the latest in eBusiness.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Musavi". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Mohammad Musavi

musavis.com