

The Register.com Small Business Handbook

# Your Guide to Growing Your Business Online



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Why Do You Need a Web Presence?

One hundred eighty-two million American consumers, and as many as 580 million worldwide, actively use the Internet to get information, make purchase decisions, and buy products and services.



Online shopping accounted for nearly 2% of all U.S. retail sales in Q4 2004. Total eCommerce sales for 2004 were estimated at \$69.2 billion, an increase of 23.5% from 2003. The Internet marketplace will only expand in coming years, and thanks to the comparably low cost of launching a Web business, it may represent the most effective—and

inexpensive—way for entrepreneurs and small businesses to acquire new customers.

While launching a Web business can help you sell products and services around the clock and around the world, its greatest impact may be felt closer to home as more and more customers use the Internet to find businesses in their neighborhoods. Whether you're building global brand awareness and credibility, or helping local customers find you, your Web site has become a necessary tool to help keep pace with your competition, near and far.

## Entrepreneurship is Alive and Well in the U.S.

Entrepreneurship Alive and Well in the US; New Nationwide Study Finds 47% of U.S. Adults Have Taken Steps to Start Their Own Business or Supplement Their Income.

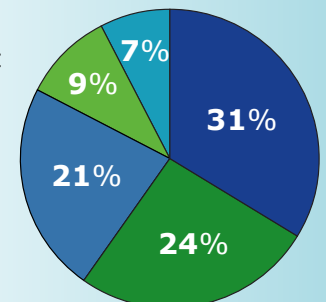
NEW YORK, Apr 21, 2005 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in the U.S., according to findings released today from a new nationwide study, revealing that 47% of U.S. adults have taken initial steps toward starting their own business or supplementing their income. The new survey was commissioned by Register.com, Inc. (Nasdaq:RCOM), a leading provider of global domain registration and Internet services, in tandem with Small Business Week and the Small Business Administration's SBA Expo '05 (April 26-28, 2005) in order to highlight the strength of the entrepreneurial spirit in the United States.

"With almost half the nation's population wanting to start their own business or supplement their income, this study speaks volumes about the health of the entrepreneurial spirit in America," said Monica Hodges, general manager of Retail for Register.com. "It also underscores what a powerful force the Internet is for today's aspiring entrepreneurs. Whereas the Web was once the turf of large enterprises, today it can help to level the playing field for small business owners."

Volunteer small business consultancy Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE®) CEO Ken Yancey said, "For many Americans, owning a small business is a part of the American dream. It's no surprise that this survey revealed 47 percent of U.S. adults are moving in the direction of small business ownership. The survey results indicate that small business hopefuls are proactive and taking steps to

### Entrepreneurship – U.S. Adults

- 31%** of U.S. adults have crafted a business idea
- 24%** have researched his or her idea online; 26% plan to do so
- 21%** have already formulated a business plan, and 27% anticipate doing so in the future
- 9%** have already built a Web site; 17% plan to in the future
- 7%** have sold product directly through online channels, while 13% plan to do so



form, start, and launch their business in the marketplace—including online.”

“Still, despite the thousands of new Web sites coming online each day, the survey suggests that a significant portion of future small business owners have yet to launch the online component of their business. Many small business owners may be intimidated by the prospect of building a Web site, fearing that it is too complicated, expensive or too time consuming. We’re committed to exposing those myths and demonstrating how simple it really is for any business to establish an online presence by partnering with a company like Register.com,” added Hodges.

Register.com offers a full suite of products and services specifically targeted at small business customers, including domain registration, DIY Web design tools (WebSiteNOW!™), professional Web design services, branded email, and data back up. All Register.com offerings are backed by 24x7x365 access to live, toll-free telephone customer support. The Company’s support team is specifically trained to help business owners get the most from their Web solutions and to eliminate the hassle and frustrations historically associated with building a Web presence. By partnering with Register.com, small business owners can have a Web site up and running for less than \$100 per year in as little as 24 hours.

## 2 BUILD YOUR WEB SITE

### Why Do You Need a Domain Name?

Having a domain name and Web site has become a standard element of a new business owner’s marketing game plan. Even if you’re not ready to build out your Web site, you can park your domain name on a Coming Soon page or point your domain name to an existing site using a domain forwarding service.

Many reasons exist to register a domain name and build a Web site. The most frequently heard reason to build a Web site is to get online exposure for an offline business, club or organization, but many others choose domain names and build Web sites for online businesses.

### Here are some other reasons why you might need a domain name:

- **Your business is your brand.** Having a domain name is a way to protect and build brand identity. Using the Internet to promote your domain name is a way to increase the awareness of your brand.
- Registering a domain name is a smart investment to make for a future point in time when you might want to **include the Internet in your marketing strategy.**
- If you don’t register a domain name for your business, **your competition might get the name you want.**

A poll of small business leaders identified the following as the top three reasons small business owners want and need a Web site:

### Reasons to have a Web site according to U.S. small business leaders

(as a % of respondents)

**81%** Web site generates leads for their business

**77%** Business is healthier and more competitive

**55%** Helped company weather downturns

Source: Interland, December 2004, ©2004 eMarketer, Inc.

## The Cost of Getting Your Small Business Online

So, what’s all this going to cost you? It’s a familiar question and one that’s not hard to answer. The biggest challenge is to understand what you want and need a Web presence for.

**A broad range of options exist for getting your small business online**—from a one-page electronic brochure to post your hours and directions—to a full-featured hosted Web site that lets you process orders in real time as well as integrate your online store with inventory and bookkeeping functionality.

**Here’s a range of services and costs to give you a sense of how to budget:**

### Domain names

Register.com offers toll-free phone support 24/7 from expert Web Services Consultants. Costs for a domain name range from \$10 to \$35 depending on the extension, registration term and special pricing promotion. Not all domain name registrars include the same services with a domain name or the same level of support. Some registrars charge for phone support.

### Web site building tools

Basic Web site building tools range from free to about \$10/month. Register.com offers a do-it-yourself site building tool that averages less than \$5/month.

### Web hosting packages

Online merchants have an array of tools at their disposal to make building an online store and selling products and services online easier than ever. You can expect to pay anywhere from \$10/month to

\$50/month for hosting your Web site including, a suite of tools you can use to transact business online.

### Email services

No Web presence is complete without an email address to support it. Email is the most common online application. Just about everyone has an email address and most people have a browser window open as they read their email, so it makes sense to promote your Web presence with branded email at your domain name. Email services range from free email you can get from your ISP or a provider like MSN that offers free Hotmail accounts, to a network-type solution like Hosted Microsoft® Exchange that lets you set up a staff of people in minutes with the tools they need to communicate and collaborate efficiently and effectively.

### Online advertising

Many forms of online advertising exist from free viral techniques to engaging an advertising agency to put together an integrated plan. The most popular online advertising technique involves working with the search engines to purchase keywords tied to online listings that can drive more traffic to your site. The two current market leaders in the search/keyword advertising arena are Google and Yahoo!® Search Marketing. Both have inexpensive programs you can participate in to help get more exposure for your Web site.

**Better Overall Value!** **Competitive value chart**

	register.com®	Network Solutions	Go Daddy	Aplus.Net
One-year subscription to Fortune magazine (\$19.99/year value)	Included	NO	NO	NO
24/7, Toll-free Customer Support	Included	Included	NO	Included
30-day Money Back Guarantee	Included	NO	NO	NO
J.D. Power and Associates Certified Call Center*	Yes	NO	NO	NO
10+ Years of Experience	Yes	Yes	NO	NO

\* For J.D. Power and Associates Certified Call Center Program<sup>SM</sup> information, visit [www.jdpower.com](http://www.jdpower.com) or call 1-866-842-7548.

## What if the Domain Name You Want is Taken?

Let's face it, the incredibly intuitive names like register.com are taken and have been for some time, but that doesn't mean you can't get a name that works for your business. When customers call us for help with selecting a domain name we usually start by explaining that having the .com extension does not necessarily guarantee success. Consider a .net, .biz, or even .us domain name if you can't get the .com domain name that you want. It's the awareness campaign behind your domain name that helps people to find your site.

You can also make slight adjustments to a domain name choice while still keeping the general feeling by adding 'a', 'the', 'home', 'site', 'online', 'my' or even by appending a state abbreviation, like: GenesBikesNY or NYBikesbyGene. You can also try using numbers in your name, so if you're going into business with your siblings and ThreeBrothers is taken, try 3Brothers. Another example is using the letter 4, as in: Limos4Hire.

Should you find the .com available at the first shot, you'd do well to secure the other available extensions. You can use those other domain name extensions to point to or link to your .com Web site, increasing your chances of being found.

If abbreviations or variations won't do and you're willing to enter into negotiations for an already taken domain name, you can make an offer through an online exchange service offered by Afternic. Afternic acts as the conduit for your bidding and exchange and will hold the agreed upon fee in escrow until your negotiations are complete.

Obtaining the domain name you want for your business is not an impossible task. With some creative thinking and an understanding of how you plan to promote your domain name you should be able to find one that works for your business.

**Feel free to call us.**  
**Register.com's Web Services Consultants will be happy to help you come up with an available domain name for your business.**

**1-888-Register (1-888-734-4783)**



# The Easy Way to Launch Your Web Business

## Make a Name for Yourself

Launching an online business intimidates many business owners who expect the experience to be too complicated, too technical, too time-consuming or too expensive. Creating a Web site can be easy, fast and economical if you know a few basic things about the process and understand how to evaluate service providers. The following tips can help you stake your claim on the Internet and build a commercial presence there without giving up a weekend, reading a manual or spending more than you would on a tank of gas.

### Find a Name

First reassure yourself that launching a Web business is a modular process—you can start with a simple core and add more to it as your needs grow. The foundation is your domain name (e.g., “Register.com”), which you can register any time, the sooner the better. You may need to search several times to find an unregistered domain name. Most registrars will offer alternatives, sometimes with suffixes (called top-level domains or TLDs) such as .net instead of .com, sometimes with variations of the name you searched for.

Keep searching if the alternatives don’t work. Some registrars even provide searching help over the phone, toll-free. Once you decide on a name (you can legally register multiple names) you can use it indefinitely as long as you renew the annual registration.

### Build a Web Page

Domain name registrars typically include a customizable Web page with every name registered. Take advantage

of this perk. The setup for these pages is designed for beginners, and reputable registrars offer toll-free help if you need it. By completing this step you create a page on the Internet seen by anyone who types in your address. Make sure that visitors can find out what you offer and how to reach you. Displaying your contact information is essential.

### Set Up a Mailbox

Register.com offers a complete small business starter package. For less than \$100 you can get a domain name, Web site and email box to get your business off the ground. Your domain name is essentially your business’ address on the Web. For the same reasons you set up mail service at your business’ street address, it makes sense to set up a mailbox at your business’ Web address.

The most basic option is usually Web-based mail service where you check your mail and send messages through a Web mail interface similar to free mail systems. One advantage of Web-based mail is the ability to access your mailbox from any computer with an Internet connection. You can manage mail from your desktop using an application such as Microsoft® Outlook.

Using your business email address will convey a professional image. You don’t have to give up your old email address that friends or clients have previously used. You can forward this mail into your business mailbox so you can use your new address without losing your old mail. As your business grows you can add more mailboxes for different

functions or new employees. Nearly every domain name registrar offers basic, Web-based mail service starting at roughly \$10/year for a single mailbox. Expect toll-free help setting up and using your business mail service for this price, and make sure your registrar offers at least a limited money-back guarantee on all services it provides.

### Next Steps

Your one-page Web site and email address may meet your business’ needs over the next year for less than \$50. From here you’ll be able add more complex mail service, a template-based Web site, or a fully customized site that may include an eCommerce component.



## Avoid Web Site Limbo

There's a potentially awkward phase in your business' Internet life between the day you register your domain name and the day you launch your Web site.

There's a way to stay out of Web site limbo and use your domain name to generate awareness and leads for your business even before you're ready to unveil a fully functional site. Many registrars offer customers a customizable Web page, which can be quickly built from a template and requires no technical knowledge or programming skills to design and launch. Register.com includes a page like this, called **FirstStepSite**<sup>®</sup>, with every domain name registration.

**Register.com's FirstStepSite is a great way to start the ball rolling on your Web site.**

**It's **included** with your domain name and can be set up in minutes.**

**To put your name to work immediately,** use your registrar's design tools to create your Web page as soon as you register your domain. Register.com's tools will let you place your logo on the page; add a few images of your business, your products, or maybe of you; and enter text into a professionally designed template. Describe your business, be generous with contact information (don't forget your email address), and encourage people to come back. FirstStepSite uses the same technology as our WebSiteNOW!<sup>™</sup> site builder, so you can upgrade to WebSiteNOW!<sup>™</sup> and simply add pages when you're ready without losing or reformatting any information on your page.

You can do more to get the most from your domain by updating your business cards, stationery, brochures, invoices and other forms to include your domain name. You can even start driving traffic to your page, using search engines to generate visits and leads.

## Choose Web Site Options That Meet Your Needs

To help customers find you while you're considering your Web site options or building your site, Register.com provides a customizable one page starter site, FirstStepSite<sup>®</sup>, with every domain name registration. It can present valuable information about your business including contact information.

### WebSiteNOW!<sup>™</sup>

When you are ready to upgrade your one-page starter site, you'll find a number of different options for developing your online presence. The needs of your business should determine what type of Web site you create. The range of options is broad enough to accommodate nearly every business plan and budget.

Register.com's WebSiteNOW!<sup>™</sup> offers the easiest and most economical way to design and build your Web site, while Web hosting allows you to add eCommerce and create a more complex unique site. Register.com also offers custom design solutions with monthly enhancement services so your site can grow and change as your business needs grow. WebSiteNOW!<sup>™</sup> provides a selection of templates for your Web pages, and lets you insert your own titles, text and images. Each step is detailed with simple clear instructions created to guide beginners through the process, without requiring technical knowledge or Web design experience. When you've designed your Web pages, WebSiteNOW!<sup>™</sup> publishes your site.

With WebSiteNOW!<sup>™</sup> and similar packages, you can design and launch a site quickly and easily without buying or downloading additional software and without paying for a separate Web hosting account. WebSiteNOW!<sup>™</sup> offers 5 or 20 page sites with Flash templates and online forms, and costs far less than traditional Web hosting accounts.

Found out more about WebSiteNOW!<sup>™</sup> at:  
[www.register.com/retail/product/website.rcmx](http://www.register.com/retail/product/website.rcmx)

### Professional Design Services

Register.com offers two levels of professional design services to satisfy your level of need. Our **Build-It-For-Me** service removes all of the barriers to having a Web site and professional email address by making it quick, easy and affordable. In one short 30 minute session our design team will consult with you about your business needs and create a site that will help meet your goals and allow you to grow your business online. Our monthly fitness program performs ongoing maintenance to your site.

Find out more about **Build-It-For-Me** at:  
[www.register.com/retail/pro\\_design/index.rcmx](http://www.register.com/retail/pro_design/index.rcmx)

**Website Pros** advanced design services can provide you with a custom Web site designed to support databases and eCommerce. You can sit back and leave the design to professionals. You'll work one on one with a professional Web site designer to get the solution you need.

Find out more about Website Pros at:  
[www.register.com/retail/pro\\_design/index.rcmx](http://www.register.com/retail/pro_design/index.rcmx)

### Web Hosting Basics

Web hosting is defined as putting your Web site live on the Internet via a server. In order to do this, there are many different options depending on your business and your Web site needs. They range from hosted one-page starter sites all the way up to full fledged eCommerce stores.

### Types of Web Hosting:

#### One page free hosted sites

Typically when you register a domain name your registrar provides you with a hosted one page starter site. Sometimes with ads, sometimes without, typically these pages are not customizable and templates can not be changed or personalized.

Register.com offers a FirstStepSite which is customizable and can quickly be built using templates from our template gallery. When you are ready to upgrade to additional pages, you can easily upgrade to one of our more robust products, WebSiteNOW!™, a self hosted site builder.

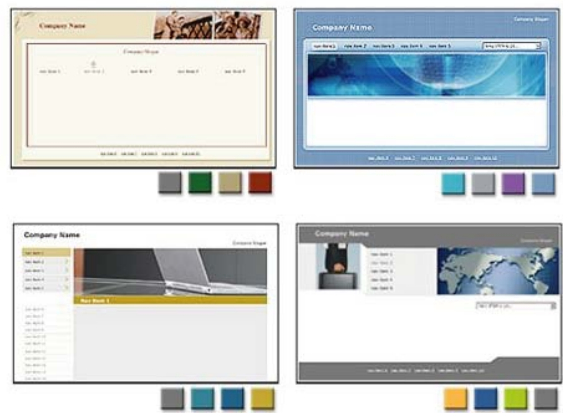
#### Self Hosted Site Builders:

A fully fledged Web site where visitors can find information, product pictures, service descriptions and a professional environment free of ad banners. The tools to create these sites are typically non-technical and use templates to simplify page design. Often these products are sold based on the number of pages that you need for your Web site. Typically you can upload your company logo, customize colors, choose templates and create a

## Website Design Solutions:

Do it yourself or we can do it for you, the choice is yours

**WebSiteNOW!™:** You can build a Web site yourself and publish it on the Internet with just one click. Choose from dozens of layouts in our template gallery.



#### WebSiteNOW!™ blew me away

*I love the cut and paste technology. I am absolutely thrilled with what I am able to accomplish online and I'm proud to show people my website. Now that's what I was looking for.*

Suzanne Koch  
[www.wowimports.us](http://www.wowimports.us)

**Build-it-for-me:** Our hassle-free, affordable and professional Web design service. You can have your own customized Web site for a fraction of the cost of contracting with an independent design firm.

*Since getting online and taking advantage of Build-It-For-Me, business has increased 32%. Having a Web site has been an absolutely essential ingredient to growing my business.*

Vernon Graves,  
 Michigan Place Banquet Center  
[www.michiganplace.us](http://www.michiganplace.us)

Web site quickly and easily without any technical knowledge. These products usually have design wizards that will walk you through the Web site creation process.

Register.com's product, WebSiteNOW!™ allows you to build and publish your Web site with one click in as little as 20 minutes.

### Web Hosting Accounts:

Web hosting allows you to create your pages from a blank slate and incorporate more sophisticated features such as eCommerce, database functionality and multimedia files. Most hosting providers include site design software with their web hosting accounts, although most users prefer to create their own pages using HTML or other Web design software or have Web site design professionals design and maintain their sites for them.

Web hosting accounts allow for eCommerce solutions to sell products online and include options for shopping cart software, payment gateways and merchant accounts. eCommerce hosting accounts typically include all of these elements, or access to all of these elements where they can be supported in one environment.

Web hosting accounts are typically priced based on disk space and data transfer amounts, and other Web merchant tools rather than Web site page limits.

Register.com offers multiple hosting and eCommerce solutions to fit your business needs. Find out more about Web hosting at: [www.register.com/retail/product/hosting.rcmx](http://www.register.com/retail/product/hosting.rcmx)

## 3 SET UP PROFESSIONAL EMAIL

### Personalized Email Lends Credibility

A professional email address can lend credibility to your business because established Web businesses generally use their own mail systems to send and receive email through their domain names. For example, Register.com email boxes look like your-companyname.com, and not like your-company-4917A@aol.com.

### Mailbox Options

Register.com's basic email accounts can be attached to your domain name. You can name your mailboxes (i.e., info@ or yourname@) and access them from any computer with Internet access and/or through desktop email client programs like Microsoft® Outlook. You can even automatically forward mail from other accounts to your professional account, or vice versa.

As your business grows, you'll probably need to add more mailboxes. Although you may initially want to add another single mailbox, Register.com offers multiple user solutions that provide sophisticated networking functionality.

Find out more about Email at:

[www.register.com/retail/product/email.rcmx](http://www.register.com/retail/product/email.rcmx)

## Grow Your Most Valuable Asset—Your Email List

Email can enhance your customer relationships and help you find new clients, but building an effective list takes diligence and creativity. Email list building specialist Constant Contact offers the following tips to strengthen your email list:

### Collect email addresses at every chance

**Make sure that you, your sales staff, customer service reps, and other employees collect email addresses and permission at every point of contact:**

- On customer service, sales, and support calls
- On invoices, statements, brochures, customer surveys, and feedback forms
- At tradeshows and events
- In conjunction with other marketing efforts
- like radio, print, direct mail or TV advertising

Email is among the most affordable and immediate methods available to small businesses. By collecting email addresses and permission on your homepage, and everywhere else possible, you can take advantage of every opportunity to solidify your existing customer relationships and turn one-time visitors and prospects into your best customers.

### Recruit Members on Your Web Site

One easy way to collect email addresses and permission is through a signup box on your Web site. Email has been called the “killer app.” It’s a low-cost marketing tool that can be used to attract as well as retain customers.

### Let Members Opt-in Through Your Correspondence

Place a ‘join our mailing list’ link in the email signature of your regular correspondence. The link should go to your home page or the most appropriate page of your site where your signup tag is prominently displayed.

### Maintain a Guest Book in Your Office or Store

Place a guest book prominently by the register or receptionist. Remind employees to ask customers if they would like to receive your email newsletter, special promotions, or notification of private sales and events.

## No one knows better than you how to talk to your customers

### Some general rules of thumb can help make your messages more effective:

- **Make them welcome.** Always provide a prominent, easy way for recipients to opt-out of receiving future communications from you. Better still; invite your customers to opt-in to receive email from you.
- **Make them relevant.** You know your customers, and you probably know their interests and needs. Your emails should reflect this.
- **Make them short.** When they contain a lot of information, make it easy for readers to find what they want. Then get to the point.

To learn more about creating html newsletters visit us at: <http://register.constantcontact.com>.

## Build Stronger Customer Relationships One Email at a Time

Email can be one of your most effective marketing tools. Email is a low-cost and effective way to communicate with prospects and customers. Email also gives you the opportunity to promote your brand with every message you send.

How often do you email your best customers? Most major online retailers owe at least part of their success to regular email communication with their customers. Whether they’re announcing discounts, sending reminders about holidays or occasions, helping customers use their products, or delivering the latest news, top companies use email to stay in touch with their best clients.

Sometimes these messages pay off directly by arriving just as some customers are about to buy, but the benefits of email communication are usually less immediate--and often more valuable. If your messages help build customer loyalty, recipients will choose you over your competitors; they’ll buy more frequently, and most important, they’ll become voluntary marketers, recommending you to others. Your messages can also provide an ideal way to collect feedback from the customers whose views are most important to you.

Several dependable, affordable programs exist to help manage your list and create and send messages without investing in software or outsourced solutions. You can learn more about one, Constant Contact, a Register.com partner, at <http://www.register.com/site-jump.cgi>.

## 4 PROMOTE YOUR WEB BUSINESS

### Determine the Goals for Your Small Business Web Site

To ensure that your site benefits your business

and its users, clearly define your site goals from the beginning. Focus on a primary function and build your site around delivering that to your visitors. Clearly defined goals will help to keep your priorities in perspective as you manage the process of building your online presence.

You'll need to balance your business goals, the needs of your audience and your resources to create an effective Web site. You'll also want to keep in mind your longer-term goals, so that you design your site with some room to grow.

This sort of Web site can deliver useful, practical information about your service and enable you to develop your image and build trust and customer loyalty.

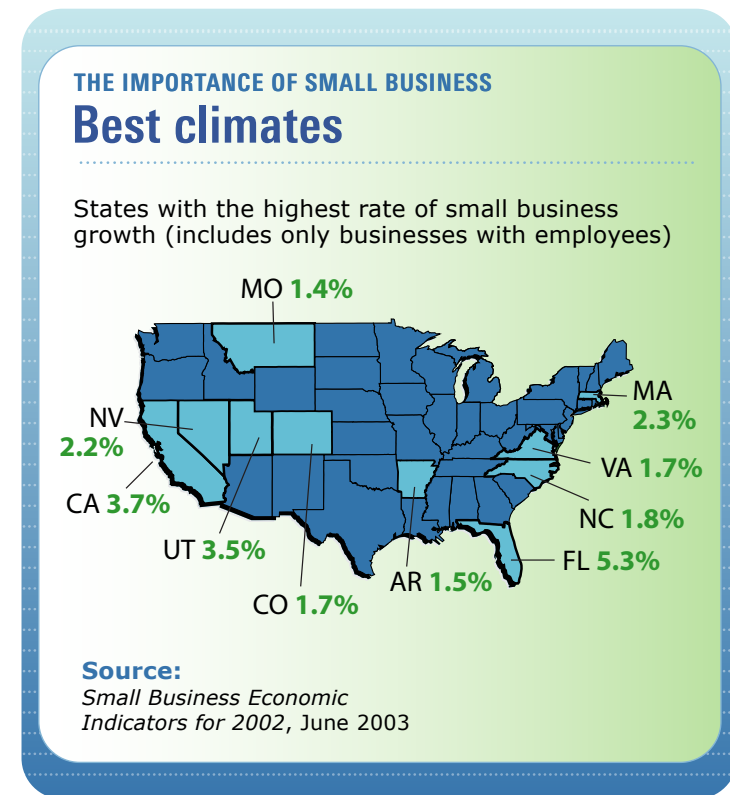
- **Online service.** If you deliver an online service, you'll need to build an infrastructure for the delivery of your service. This type of site is more complex than the first two and requires you to anticipate what you'll feature in your product catalog and how you'll handle online payments and process online orders.
- **Information delivery.** If your primary business is publishing information, then your site will be some form of online publication. You'll need to determine how to charge a fee for your content. You can do this either through subscriptions (which you could bill monthly or annually) or on a per-use basis (which may require that you use sophisticated applications to handle billing through your Web site).
- **Customer support.** While every business with a Web site may want to provide some level of customer support, a higher level of support will require a much more sophisticated design. Whether you're selling directly from the Web or from a physical storefront, providing up-to-date product information, tips and tricks for using your product, and a page for frequently asked questions makes it easy for customers to get the information they need. You may want to plan to automate these functions.

Regardless of the primary purpose of your Web site, a number of design fundamentals apply broadly to all good Web site design. One of the biggest shortcomings of many Web site designs is a failure to put the needs of the customer at the forefront.

Give people what they want. It seems obvious, but sometimes we forget and give people what we want instead of what they want.

**By Delilah Obie workz.com**

workz.com is the trusted information and services community that helps small businesses grow and prosper online.



**Some common goals for Web sites are:**

- **Online sales.** If your primary business is selling physical goods, focus on creating an online store that gives visitors a sense of place (so they can easily find what they are looking for) and makes purchasing simple and easy.
- **Marketing.** If your primary business is delivering an offline service, you may want an online brochure.

**Build Better Web site Conversion**

An effective email marketing campaign is a powerful tool to drive additional traffic to your Web site. Establishing your credibility as an

expert, highlighting your great prices and value, etc. can all be accomplished via email, and can create a click. However, many companies fall short once that click is made.

The idea, surely, is to encourage the site visitor to take some further action. Measuring the number of those 'actions' is your 'conversion rate'.

The foundation of your strategy to convert Web site visitors to leads/sales should be rooted in two key elements: your specific goals, and your understanding of the target audience.

It's funny, but many of the companies I talk to have developed a Web site for no real purpose. Sure, at the time there was some sort of rationale - "you need one these days, don't you?" or "our competition has one, so we must keep up." Unfortunately, these reasons provide no guideline for the creation of a site. Nor do they contain any criteria for measuring success.

To compound the problem, they give no real consideration to the needs, desires and characteristics of their target audience. In my opinion, this has led to the plethora of un-navigable, poor content, zero conversion Web sites that seems to be the standard for corporate America. Harsh? Maybe. But if you fall into this category, you'd better do something about it ASAP because the Web is here to stay.

### So what do you do?

First, I'd suggest that you carefully consider and write down your specific goals for your Web site. These should be written remembering that your site is a corporate resource that must provide an ROI (return on investment), just like any other corporate resource. To simplify matters, there are 3 primary goals that you might want to consider:

#### Primary goals:

- To generate leads
- To generate on-line sales
- To generate qualified referrals

**Now stop for a moment.** Was your current site built based on any of these objectives? How is it performing? (Just FYI, the typical (poor performing) Web site has a 1-3% conversion rate of visits to action, whereas successful sites convert 20- 30% of their traffic.)

#### Typical secondary goals include:

- Building credibility
- Establishing expertise within a certain industry
- Projecting a credible image
- Building your database of newsletter, or other, email subscribers

You can also use the Web to provide cost effective customer service (through the use of knowledge bases), create communities (such as chat rooms and forums), and as a delivery method for what used to be printed material.

With a clear understanding of your primary and secondary goals, you are ready to consider what you know of your target audience. Consider demographic information - sex, age, etc. But also think about their needs and desires. You'll use this information to craft emotional calls-to-action, and provide compelling offers.

Hopefully, your target audience is somewhat homogenous. This leads to the creation of a highly targeting (and highly converting) Web site. If your target group is diverse, you might want to consider creating multiple Web sites - especially if you have different products that attract different groups. At first glance, this option might seem cost-prohibitive, but we have found that the difference between a 3% conversion rate, and a 25% conversion rate can often justify the extra expense of creating multiple sites, and provides a return-on-investment after just a few months.

With a well-understood target audience, you can go about creating a look and feel, messaging, calls-to-action, and offers that are comfortable and compelling.

**By Mat Greenfield** - founder and CEO of Faster Marketing, a consulting firm that specializes in developing high-conversion Web sites.

### Why Set Web Site Goals?

Learn how identifying specific objectives can help you identify the right content for your Web site and determine your return on investment

## Promote Your New Domain Name

Once you've secured your domain name you're ready to start promoting it. Here's a simple checklist to help you determine the best places to advertise your brand by visibly promoting your domain name:

- ✓ Stationery
- ✓ Address labels
- ✓ Invoices/order forms
- ✓ Business cards
- ✓ Local directory listings
- ✓ Store signage
- ✓ Flyers or brochures
- ✓ Packaging (bags, boxes, stickers)
- ✓ Premiums (give aways)

## Unlock the Key Search Engine Secret

If you're going to build a Web site and you want to have it found, you'll need to understand how search engines work.

**You need traffic.** You know search engines can deliver customers to your site. You've followed some basic search engine optimization instructions, you've tried some free submission tools, maybe even submitted paid listing requests, but you need more. What's the secret to uncorking the traffic potential of search engines?

**Maybe money.** Many online businesses rely more on traffic from keyword advertising than from search results. Keyword advertisers create text ads that search engines display whenever specific words are searched for. Advertisers pay a set fee only when searchers click on their ads--the reason that this arrangement is often called pay-per-click advertising.

Keyword advertising fees are typically based on demand. Ads coupled with popular words and terms with broad commercial appeal generally cost more per click than

THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE HOME

### The importance of small business

**13.2 million**

U.S. home-based businesses generated income in 2003

**9.3 million**

accounted for their owners' primary income

**1.8 employees**

in a typical home-based business

**Source:**

IDC, *SOHO Market Overview 2002: Small Businesses with under 10 employees and home-based businesses*

those with more specific, narrower terms. In the most competitive categories, companies outbid each other for the best positions, driving up the cost per click. But in more closely defined categories the price per click may be relatively low, even for the best positions.

Although nearly all search engines accept some form of advertising within their results displays, reputable ones clearly differentiate between paid listings and search results, so buying keywords won't buy your way into higher rankings. But it can ensure that qualified searchers always find your ad.

**Top search engines that offer keyword advertising include Google and Yahoo!® Search Marketing.** Both are Register.com partners and offer more information at [www.register.com/retail/promote/index.rcmx](http://www.register.com/retail/promote/index.rcmx)

## Make Sure Search Engines Can Read Your Web Site

Do you know whether the search engines, whose crawlers and spiders scour the Web for text to index, can read your site?

Recently I was consulting on the creation of a Web site for a visual artist. The Web designer wanted the text to be rendered in a beautiful font, but the only way to control that was by setting the text in a graphic—essentially turning it into a picture. That means all the text throughout the site would be images, even if users see words.

What my client didn't know was that text rendered as a graphic is un-searchable by users who may want to search a page for a particular word or topic, and un-indexable by search engines that control where you come up in the rankings. And although the designer knew these things, his goal was to create a good-looking site. He was ready to sacrifice function for form.

After much debate, we decided to err on the side of function and chose a Web-friendly font (Times New Roman, Arial, Verdana and Helvetica are a few).

**So here's the tip:** For optimum usability, make sure the majority of your text is rendered as html text, not as graphics. Graphics are fine for headlines, but don't use them for entire blocks of text.

**Ilise Benun** is the author of *Designing Web Sites for Every Audience* and director of New Jersey-based consultancy Creative Marketing and Management.

For more helpful tips on Web design, visit the design section of our newsletter archives at:  
[www.register.com/retail/newsletters/articles/sitesdesign/index.rcmx](http://www.register.com/retail/newsletters/articles/sitesdesign/index.rcmx)

## Affiliate Yourself with Winners

If you've spent any time on the Internet, you've probably heard about affiliate programs. Find out if working with an affiliate program is right for your business and how to select one that suits you best.

Find out how to join the Register.com affiliate program and make money while you help small businesses get online: [www.register.com/retail/partner/index.rcmx](http://www.register.com/retail/partner/index.rcmx)

Joining affiliate programs can do a few things to help your Web business succeed. While you may earn a reasonable commission on sales you generate, your greater benefit may be the image you project by associating yourself with prominent, relevant businesses. The credibility gained by representing familiar brands that your customers trust, coupled with the convenience of providing access to desirable product lines, may help convert visitors into customers.

Linkshare.com offers one convenient place to review multiple affiliate programs at once. (In fact LinkShare administers Register.com's affiliate program.) You'll be asked for basic information about your site, including monthly estimates of the number of visitors and page views, and enough personal data to cut you a check for any commissions you earn.

When you select programs, you're actually submitting applications to join them. Some require minimum traffic levels, or specific subject matter, and others manually review applicants' sites before accepting new affiliates. These programs may turn down your application if your site doesn't match their criteria, but most will approve you if your site appears to offer an appropriate environment for their products.

Once approved, you'll be prompted to select banners or links to place on your site. You're free to try different programs, different banners, and test different combinations to see which perform best for you. As you search for the right balance, your customers will know you by the company you keep.

## Web Site Forwarding: Teaching New Stores Old Tricks

Your Web site is like any retail store - if you drive more people through the door, you will probably generate more business. Using Web site forwarding, a feature that lets you forward traffic from one Web address to another, you can employ a couple of basic offline retail strategies to help grow your online business.

### Put a better sign out front

Do you have a great Web site that lives at a difficult or unprofessional address like (www.sitebuildingservice.com/thebookstack)? You can keep the site and improve the address by simply forwarding a more memorable, professional Web address (like www.thebookstack.com) to that site. You can even “mask” the forwarding address so your visitors never see the less desirable address in their browser window.

**At Register.com, every domain name comes with a Basic Web Site Forwarding account you can use to increase traffic by directing several domain names to one Web site.**

### Open up more locations

Securing multiple addresses and forwarding them to one Web site gives you more chances to get traffic to that site. Just like you would with a real address, you can anticipate where your visitors are likely to go (relevant words and phrases) and put yourself there. If you have already protected your brand name by purchasing different extensions (.biz, .info, .us) or variations (misspellings, similar names), put them to work! Forward them. You could be wasting traffic to these addresses.

Register.com offers two Web site forwarding services. One is a free service that comes with every Web address and includes an advertising banner that forwarded visitors will see at the bottom of your Web site. The other is a premium version without the banner that you can purchase.

## A Three-Part Marketing Checklist

The Internet’s full of hyped-up promises of the ‘ultimate’ marketing secret that will single-handedly skyrocket your business to instant success.

Naturally, this is all it is: hype. There’s no single ‘secret’ that will magically transform a fledgling business into a powerful money-maker. Instead, every business owner is responsible for testing and refining various techniques until he or she has developed a solid, effective base that produces the desired results.

What works for one business may not work for another! Likewise, another business may have poor results with one method, while others experience great success. Here’s a quick checklist of some of the more popular

– and completely free – marketing techniques to help you build your online business.

## PART ONE: Free Online Marketing Techniques

1. **Build and use your own opt-in list of targeted and interested prospects.** Offer a free newsletter that provides fresh, interesting, and relevant content. You’ll receive feedback from your readers about what’s important to them, and over time they’ll come to know and trust you. Your products, services, and even recommendations will then be taken much more seriously because you’ve developed credibility with your readers.
2. **Contribute to newsgroups or discussion boards.** Establish yourself as a helpful member of a community. Other members of the community who come to know and respect you will often refer you to others.
3. **Niche directories or search engines.** Find all the highly-targeted directories and search engines for your market, and then work to get listed. You’ll be surprised at how many niche sites there are! Good places to start looking are <http://www.yahoo.com/> and <http://www.dmoz.com/>.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL BUSINESS

## Businesses with fewer than 100 employees

- Represent more than **99.7%** of all employers
- Employ more than half of all private sector workers (**54.9 million**\*\*)
- Account for **39%** of high-tech jobs
- Create **60%–80%** of the net new jobs annually
- Account for **52.6%** of all retail sales\*\*
- Represent **89%** of U.S. exporters

#### Source:

SBA, *Small Business by the Numbers*, April 2003

\*\* SBA, *Small Business Economic Indicators for 2002*, June 2003

fewer  
than  
**100**

4. **Build your link popularity.** For example, you can trade links with other businesses in your market so that you can 'share' each other's traffic. Most of the major search engines take link popularity into consideration when ranking your site.
5. **Endorsed mailings to other lists.** Find the editor of a great newsletter, and offer your product or service to him for free in return for a review or an endorsed ad to his list. Endorsements from the editor can far outperform regular 'ads', since they come from someone they know and trust (the editor).
6. **Testimonials.** It's fine for you to say that your product or service is wonderful... but there's far more 'punch' when someone else says it! Testimonials show prospects that you have happy customers and helps them to make the decision to buy.
7. **Use auto responders** to follow-up with your prospects. It has been proven time and time again that auto responders can dramatically increase your profits! They're also great time-savers, saving you from following up with each prospect manually.
8. **Ad swaps.** You can get extra exposure for 'free' (no out-of-pocket expenses) by swapping ad space with another editor that caters to your audience. Plus it's a great way to put 'remnant' ad space to good use.
9. **Join a Webring.** Link to other sites like yours and build an online 'community.'
10. **Offer coupons or gift certificates** to entice visitors to make a purchase \*now\*.
11. **Make good use of referral marketing.** Ask happy customers to refer prospects to you. Many people are so busy these days that they're willing to rely on a trusted friend or contact's advice – it saves them the time necessary to do all the research themselves.
12. **Write and distribute articles in your area of expertise.** This is a great credibility-builder! People who appreciate what you have to say are much more likely to check out your business. Another 'bonus' is that articles are often archived on websites for visitors to refer to time and time again.
13. **Become an 'expert'.** If you like to write and have the time to do so, consider partnering with a high-traffic site within your niche market and offer to write a regular column or article. You establish credibility and get exposure; your partner site and their readers get great content.
14. **Use a 'Recommend-It' or 'Refer-A-Friend' script.** These scripts let visitors send your URL to friends.
15. **Make it easy for others to link to your site.** Consider adding a 'Link to Us' section where you

provide the HTML that visitors can simply cut and paste to their own Web pages. Again, this helps to build your link popularity (see point #4).

16. **Hold contests.** For example, every month you could give away one of your products to a lucky subscriber or customer.
17. **Use a signature.** Also known as 'sig files', a signature is a brief blurb about your business along with your URL and/or contact information. Put a signature on every piece of email you send out, as well as on any message board posts (if appropriate).
18. **Give away a quality free eBook or report.** eBooks and reports can be excellent viral marketing tools. You can even offer them as a 'premium' to other businesses within your niche, so that they can give it away to their own customers or subscribers. This is an effective way to build a network that will willingly promote your business for you!

Hopefully this has given you a few helpful ideas on how to market your online business. In the next section of this series, you'll read about several marketing techniques that may cost you money, but that can be worth the investment many times over. The final installment is all about marketing your online business in the 'offline' world!

## PART TWO: Effective Fee-Based Online Marketing Methods

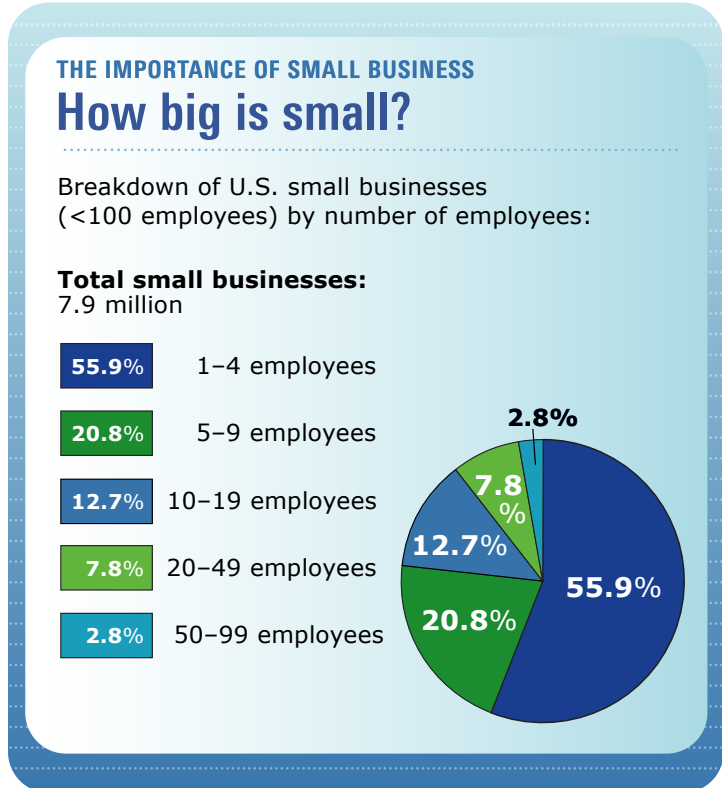
As much as we all love free stuff, an Internet business is still a business and you can reasonably expect to invest in marketing. Fortunately, online marketing can be quite affordable – even to beginners on limited budgets. Here's a quick list of some of the more popular paid methods for small businesses.

1. **Search engines.** Web surfers typically use the large search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN to find the information they want. If you can manage to get a good ranking for some of your top key phrases, you can get a steady stream of traffic. Expect to invest funds for review/submissions, and possibly even for hiring an optimization expert or for self-education. A great site to learn about search engine optimization is Search Engine Watch, <http://searchenginewatch.com/>.

2. **Major indexes.** Yahoo [<http://www.yahoo.com/>] and Open Directory [<http://www.dmoz.org/>] are two of the best-known indexes. Both of them can significantly increase your link popularity, and provide you with additional traffic.
3. **Pay-per-click search engines (PPC SE).** With these search engines, you literally pay a certain amount of money for every click they send your way. The more you bid, the higher you'll rank for your search term and the more visible your link will be. The largest and most popular PPC SE is Yahoo!® Search Marketing, <http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com/>  
  - A list of PPC SEs is available from <http://payperclicksearchengines.com/>.
4. **Ezine advertising.** Although this takes a fair bit of practice and experimentation, ezine advertising is potentially one of the best and most profitable ways to promote your business online. The editor has already done the hard work of putting together a list of opt-in, interested prospects; you just take advantage of it.
5. **Direct email campaign from a reputable list broker.** There are companies on the web that specialize in building permission-based email lists, targeted to each subscriber's area of interest. This is true 'opt-in', unlike the endless stream of spam email that implores you to purchase '30 million addresses for only \$99!' True opt-in lists are not cheap by any means, but they have the potential to yield great results. Check out <http://www.postmasterdirect.com/> as an example.
6. **Press releases.** Your newsworthy press release could generate loads of free publicity for your business. Invest some of your marketing funds in educating yourself on how to generate publicity. A useful resource is <http://www.prweb.com/>.
7. **Advertise on a targeted website.** Find complementary but non-competing sites and check their rates for advertising. Banner ads are the most common type of advertising permitted; however, they're usually not very effective. Text ads or endorsements typically perform better.
8. **Mini-sites.** These small sites (typically around 3 or 4 pages) are focused on selling one product. There's usually no free content; just a sales letter, perhaps a FAQ and some contact information. Mini-sites are an excellent way to get your prospect to do just one thing, whether that's order your product or sign up for your newsletter. The costs to create a mini-site would include domain name registration and hosting fees.

9. **Experiment with some of the promotional services offered online.** The only way to know for sure whether or not they'll work for you is to try them (and track the results). Use discretion – be careful not to associate your business with promotion services that are nothing but 'disguised' ways to spam! Before you shell out the cash for these types of services, ask around for first-hand experiences.
10. **Hold a conference.** A great credibility builder is to offer a Web or phone conference for your visitors. Use it to offer helpful information – for example, you could open the conference to questions from the audience – and generate additional interest in your product or service.

Don't be afraid to invest in marketing your online business. Effective 'free' promotion is always wonderful, but there are many equally effective paid methods that can result in a great return on your investment. Be sure to track the results for each method you use; that way you'll be able to concentrate your efforts on those methods that work best for your business. In the next section of this series you'll find a checklist for promoting your Internet business in the 'real world'!



## PART THREE: Marketing Techniques for the 'Real World'

1. **Business cards.** Leave a few in the local library or with other local businesses where prospects gather (with permission, of course); include a card in your postal mail; tack up a card on the bulletin board at your grocery store, etc. On a tight budget? Go to VistaPrint for free trial cards:  
<http://www.vistaprint.com/vp/ns/gallery.aspx?g=53>.
2. **Direct mail.** Flyers, brochures, catalogs, coupons.... there are all sorts of things you can send through the mail. Need help? Freelancers can create pretty much any type of direct mail promotional items for you at competitive rates.
3. **Use your car!** How much time do you spend driving (or, unfortunately, sitting stuck in traffic)? Take advantage of this opportunity by placing your URL on your car for everyone to see.  
  
It's also a good idea to keep a few business cards, brochures, flyers, or other information in your car that you can give out to people who stop to inquire about your business.
4. **Newspaper advertising.** Keep in mind that classified ads are usually extremely short; you'll need a punchy, compelling ad that fits into just a few lines. Nationwide Newspapers offers classified advertising in over 8000 newspapers across the United States: <http://www.nationwideadvertising.com/> U.S. Media Inc., <http://www.usmediainc.com/>, specializes in many types of 'offline' advertising, including newspapers, radio, TV, magazines, and more.
5. **Get to the 'heart' of your audience by advertising in a quality magazine with loyal readers.** U.S. Media Inc. lists a wide variety of trade and consumer magazines and publications. Contact their reps for more information: <http://www.usmediainc.com/>.
6. **Participate in trade shows.** Get exposure by networking with others in your industry. While you're there, you can even make a pen and paper available to collect the email addresses and/or postal addresses of people interested in receiving your newsletter or additional information about your product or service. Visit the Trade Show News Network to search for trade shows of all types in industries worldwide:  
<http://www.tsnn.com/>.

7. **Visit your local Chamber of Commerce.** They may be able to offer you suggestions on where you can promote your business locally.
8. **Send out postcards.** Postcards are short, attractive, and readers can easily see your information 'at-a-glance.' Don't forget to display your URL!
9. **Put your URL on every piece of printed material that leaves your office.** This includes brochures, business cards, flyers, faxes, labels, letterhead, invoices, cheques, envelopes, and anything else you can think of.
10. **Consider using promotional items such as notepads, pens, mugs, etc.** Imprint these items with your URL. Give some away as gifts to your best clients. You can even sell them online!
11. **State your URL on your voice mail message.** Say your standard spiel, then add something like, 'For more information on [your product], visit our website at [www.\[myproduct\].com](http://www.[myproduct].com).'
12. **Seek potential partnerships with complementary businesses.** For example, let's say you sell a dog training video. You could approach local groomers or dog agility centers and offer to share the cost of their next direct mail campaign: when they mail a postcard or letter inviting their clients to return, you also offer their clients a discount on your dog training video. This way you both reduce your costs... you reach a targeted audience quickly, easily, and through a trusted party (the other business)... and your business 'partner' can make a valuable product available at a discount to their customers.

### About the Author:

Angela operates the [Online Business Basics](http://www.onlinebusinessbasics.com) website, which offers free marketing tips and articles for beginners to the 'net. Visit [www.onlinebusinessbasics.com](http://www.onlinebusinessbasics.com) for more tips on how to effectively market your business on a limited budget.

## 5 RESOURCES

**SCORE**, “Counselors to America’s Small Business” is the best source of free and confidential small business advice to help you build your business—from idea to start-up to success. SCORE offers a myriad of resources for small business owners taking their first steps. Get easy online access to a professional counselor through our ASK SCORE link at:

<http://www.register.com/net-res/score.cgi>

**WSJ Start-up Journal** provides weekly news feeds relevant to starting up a new business.

<http://www.startupjournal.com>

**AllBusiness.com** delivers a wealth of articles and forms you can use to get your business operating at peak performance.

<http://www.allbusiness.com>

**Web Marketing Today** presents common sense and case studies of the ever-changing ways of marketing on the Web. Sign up for the free weekly newsletter.

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

**Search Engine Watch** gives great insight into how the most popular search engines and directories work and how you can make the most of the search channel as a way to bring more visitors to your Web site.

<http://searchenginewatch.com/>

**Register.com** publishes a monthly newsletter with free tips and advice about making the most of your online presence. You’ll find articles about Site Design as well as Site Promotion and General Business.

<http://www.register.com/articles/index.cgi>