



A BBIworld.Com News
SPECIAL REPORT

**Get Your Website Working For You
Without Getting Taken**
Updated For 2007!
By Stephen Rinaldi

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About the Author:



Stephen Rinaldi is a frequent author of articles on online business and marketing. He is the founder and director of Boston Business International (BBI) and provides web development and business consulting services using utilizing hands-on experience and ongoing industry analysis. He was an early pioneer in the development of online education and training programs, and takes a holistic approach to web site optimization, traffic generation, and online sales and marketing to maximize

efficiency and profitability for many businesses.

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How Has This Report Changed for 2007?

Originally released in early 2006, this report was designed for those considering a business web site, but not yet knowledgeable of what was really involved. The problem, as I saw it, was that I was seeing a lot of small businesses getting taken by web designers who really didn't know the first thing about online business. My goal was to empower business owners with some basic understanding so they could avoid the common pitfalls in setting up a website. And several-thousand downloads later; I think this report has had a positive effect – but it was definitely in need of updating.

Of course, the motives of all those web designers was not always bad – in many cases, it was just that they didn't even realize themselves that web development was a lot more than making pretty pages. So, for a while now, I have felt a bit uneasy about using "SCAM" in the original title and did plan to change that. But whatever the motive, the result was that many small businesses were getting stuck with sites that were useless for them. After all, it's still a big expense to set up a new site and it's sad to see people's initial excitement turn to disappointment when they realize they're stuck with a dud site.

So, for 2007, I changed the title from “Top-Ten Web Design Scams” to the current “nicer” version, in an attempt to show the new, kinder and gentler version of me ;) Also, I was again amazed at how much of the information about search engine optimization had changed since last year – nothing earth-shattering, mind you – but enough to require considerable updating – even with just the brief look we took at search engines in this report. Search engines are constantly in motion – and while that valuable free search traffic is still out there as much as ever, you really do have to monitor your results regularly and make adjustments as needed.

Of course, there were many other changes over the past year too:

- Reciprocal link exchanges are out – one-way links with targeted anchor text are in.
- Automatic Page Generators are out – valuable content is in (again)
- YouTube is huge.
- MySpace is huge

And some things remained the same:

- Good quality content is still the turtle that wins the race.
- Another year has gone by and you’re still trying to figure out if you need a website.
- George W. Bush is still a... (fill in your own blank)

Anyhow, what I appreciated most about updating this particular report was having this one-year perspective – and confirming that my main message still holds true. That if you want to build a real asset out of your website, it’s critical to have someone around that is on top of the ongoing changes in online business. If you’re relying on material written last year, or on someone who’s a part-time novice, you’re doing yourself and your business a great disservice.

As time allows, I plan to further update and expand this report, as well as update that scary bearded photo of me looking like some crazy guy from the forest..., which leads to the last point I want to make:

It’s easy to forget how fast things have changed over the past 15 years. Anyone 25 or younger probably won’t recall the days before computers and the “internets” (as G.W. would say). But for those of us older folks (eh.., perpetually late 30s that is), who experienced and remember the whole high-tech revolution, looking back at how life and business has changed is very interesting to say the least.

I recently found a collection of files and supplies from a business I ran in the mid-90s. This was a truly international business that required a lot of communication and follow-up. Anyhow I found all the supplies I used to create newsletters by cutting and pasting pictures and text to the pages with a razor blade and tape, which I’d then send off to the printer to copy. Everything was done by phone and the post office – not a mention anywhere of computers or the Internet. That was still several years off in the future.

How times have changed.

Introduction

If you're reading this report, you're either seriously thinking about having a web page (or site) built, or you've been burnt in the past by an unscrupulous, overconfident, or just plain ignorant web site designer.

This book has been designed to clear away some of the mystery that surrounds web site design, as well as make sense out of the process of keeping your website online and up-to-date.

There's no doubt in my mind that the Internet is still a mystery to most business owners. While you may know in a vague way that you're missing out on something by not having a web presence, not so many have even the slightest clue what they're really missing out on.

There are so many ways to benefit from being online – and because it's so critical to be on the web today, it's easy to get taken.

Let's look at a few scenarios you're likely to experience when having your web site built and maintained.

Common Scenarios

1. Designer over-sells the importance of having a site, but under-delivers with the end result.

The truth is that you can choose NOT to have a web site. If your business is going well, you may continue to do okay for a while without one. Yes, you'll miss out on a lot of growth and potential – yes, you'll be considered a **dinosaur** by your customers - but you probably won't go out of business overnight if things are going well for you now. The problem is that some "web designers" will over-sell you on the legitimate need for a well-built site, and when you bite - what you'll end up with is basically a useless waste of web space that will give you little in return, except a lighter wallet.

Conclusion: No matter what business you're in – a website or webpage borders on NECESSITY and CAN be a super asset for you over the long-term. BUT, it has to be done right – always keeping the purpose of the web site in clear view.

2. Designer Does NOT deliver within a reasonable amount of time, if EVER.

Yes, good things do take a little time..., but not forever! And if you wait forever for something that ends up looking like a 5 year-old slapped it together, you probably won't be very thrilled (to say the least). I can't tell you how many businesses I know that have snapped at the bait of a sneaky "web designer" – only to be sitting a year later with no working web site. Leads us to point number three...

3. Web Designer gets you to pay for the site in full, or a large percentage up front before your "site" is delivered.

Again, I've seen many people fall for this. Usually, in fact, by the same unfortunate folks waiting a year or two and still having no site to show for their \$2,500+ investment. Once this type of web site scammer gets your money, you could be waiting a long time before you ever see a completed web site. Don't ever pay for a site in full, up front.

Yes, it is expected (by legitimate, professional web developers) that a client pays a deposit upon committing to the proposal and signing a contract (25-50% is common) - the balance, however, should not be sent until the site you contracted for is actually live ONLINE. Before submitting your deposit, it's probably not a bad idea to ask for a couple of references, along with the web addresses of those reference sites. This way, you can check out their work and hear first-hand about how they were/are treated by the designer.

Also, unless you really know and trust the person or company building and maintaining your site, be careful to maintain control of your domain name and keep a back-up copy of your web site (on CD). The last thing you want is to be held hostage by some weasel-like web maniac who buys your domain "for you" under their name and provides you with no access to your site. If there's ever a disagreement - they decide not to pay your domain renewal fee, or choose to cancel your hosting – you'll be sitting there with no domain name, no site and no way to get back online until you find someone else to build you a site, find a new domain name, change all your marketing materials and navigate through the rest of the horrors that await.

The above may sound like a completely crazy scenario, but it can happen lightening-fast and without warning if you don't choose your web developer carefully and always maintain control of your online assets!

4. You hire a novice relative or friend who tells you they can build you a website.

Yikes! You might as well not even bother. Seriously, would you hire your novice niece or nephew to replace the brakes on your car? Would you hire just anyone to design an expensive advertising campaign for your company? Would you pluck a random guy off

the street to design your Fall product line? Of course not! Then why in the world would you let someone who doesn't have a clue about what they're doing – do something as important as design, build and maintain your web presence? This isn't just licking stamps – it's building an important new asset for your business.

5. Designer convinces you that if you just build and launch your website, customers will flock to you “just like that” through the mystical magic of the Internet!

No, no, no and no. It just doesn't work that way. The Internet in 2007 is a HUGE place that requires strong full-time working-knowledge of how Internet-business really works in order to navigate it successfully. If someone is telling you that if you just stick up an amateur website and customers will come flocking to you – they are either lying to you, or are completely ignorant about the web.

Yes, it is true that there is tremendous potential online to dramatically expand your business and increase your income by leaps and bounds..., BUT, do not for a second think that it's a simple, hands-off undertaking.

The fact is that, for every ten thousand business websites, you might find one that brings in enough to maintain itself. Out of every one hundred thousand sites, you may be lucky to find a handful that turns even a small profit.

If you go with a novice, or someone who's simply ignorant about what really makes the Internet tick, then you will likely end up with a site doomed for failure. It's no accident that a profitable website is profitable. These types of successful sites are built intentionally by experienced, current web developers that know what they're doing. In short, you'll be doing yourself a major disservice if you hire someone who doesn't live and breathe web development.

Hot Tip: Ongoing Maintenance is a MUST

You should expect to have an ongoing maintenance contract with your web developer. It's plain and simple, if you put up a web page and just let it sit there, unchanged month after month, you won't get far. Search engines want to feature sites that offer current information and will be good resources for their visitors. Sites that are relevant and continually updated tend to move up in the rankings and deliver quality, targeted traffic to you.

If your site is still showing last year's calendar, or has an outdated price list, old phone numbers, broken links and non-working email addresses – I'd suggest that you just take it off-line as quickly as possible. At most, people are seeing that and getting a impression of your business as one that is out of touch – Or, at the least, by getting rid of your site you can save yourself the money on hosting, etc.

A basic maintenance contract from a good web developer will cost you anywhere from \$75 to \$1,500+ per month depending entirely on what kinds of ongoing maintenance your site requires. Some need just a few basic updates each month, others will need weekly updates, regular monitoring and more.

You'll want to stay on top of your site's growth and set up an easy way to gauge and justify your maintenance expenses. Don't skimp on site maintenance and regular updating. It is what will make your site really work. I like to equate a new website to learning a new dance. You may start out by reading about all the steps, then you apply those steps through practice and over time you'll continue to refine the steps making finer and finer adjustments to technique. A new web site works in much the same way. At first, you'll have most of what's needed, but all the parts will need to be continuously refined over time so they work together in concert. Colors, headlines, page positions of various components all need to be continuously tested, updated and refined until your site is purring along like a finely tuned engine.

Justifying the maintenance expense is pretty straightforward. For example, if you get in the routine of asking customers how they heard about you; you'll know quickly how your site is working out. If your average sale is \$200 and you bring in just 10 customers a month from your site, I'd recommend that you start off by budgeting \$500 each month toward your site maintenance – maybe even more.

“Why? That sounds kind of expensive...”

Well, that's easy. if you're able to bring in \$2,000 in new business from your web page each month, some educated tweaking might double or triple that amount. Having a good web developer to manage that for you is the key. If you hire just anyone to grasp at straws and just blindly change things around, you'll get nowhere and just be wasting your money.

6. There's a world of difference between a web designer and a WEB DEVELOPER.

Yes, it might just seem like semantics, but there really is a major difference between the two – and if (worst case) the individual you hire doesn't understand what in the world you're talking about – run quickly in the other direction!

With the availability of inexpensive web page design programs, it has become relatively easy for just about anyone to piece together a basic web page that looks, well..., “fair” at best – and they print out a few business cards screaming “web designer”. There are also people that have a background in graphic arts and are using that skill to try to build websites. These types of designers seem to think that the artistic appeal of a site is most important. Or, in the case of the person with the web design software, think that snazzy, animated graphics, other outdated gizmos, or dangerous “black-hat” techniques are what make a site work.

The reality is that a good, profitable site will rely on solid web experience, good clean (behind the scenes) coding, search engine optimization, efficient use of quality content and skillful Internet marketing ability.

While a “web page designer” builds you a page and just sticks it up online for you with no further concern – a web developer builds your pages, integrates them with all the

other essential components of your online marketing campaign, optimizes your pages so search engines will find them interesting and send you traffic, and offer continuous monitoring so you know from where and how visitors are coming to your site, what they're doing while they're there and offer you educated suggestions on how to realize continuous growth and improvement over the long term.

7. Overcharging for the basics.

I see a lot of web site guys that charge their customers a premium for the basics, i.e., domain names and hosting. This is a shame, because the real costs of these services have dropped dramatically over the past several years. Not so long ago, Network Solutions was the only game in town for domain names and they charged \$35.00 per year for purchase of a domain name. That was then..., this is now. These days, there is no monopoly of domain registration, so you can pick up domain names for much less than that. \$20 or less per year is common, with lower rates available if you register for 2 or more years at a time.

Same goes for hosting. Most business sites don't require much storage space or other bells and whistles – yet many companies are still charging \$25+ per month or more for the most basic hosting - and then tack on even more charges for things like SET-UP, email, databases, etc. Frankly, that's a rip-off. For example, our BBI PowerHost service is an excellent, full-featured hosting system and we charge only about \$15 bucks a month for premium hosting, lots of email addresses, full stats package and all the personal service you'd expect from us. We purchase our server space, top-notch equipment and maintenance in bulk, so we're able to pass that along to our customers.

You don't need to overpay for hosting just because it's mysterious to you. There's no big mystery, really. Web site hosting is nothing more than a place to store the files for your website so when visitors type in your domain name, they'll see your site. Don't, however, buy into hosting just because it's cheap. There are many high-priced and low-priced hosts that offer equally terrible service and performance.

Did You Know?

Registering your domain name for 2 or more years can improve your search engine ranking in Google? It's really one of the ways Google uses to qualify that your domain is not a throw-away domain used only for search engine spam. All else considered you could find yourself with higher Page Rank and better search results by opting for the longer registration term.

With so many people relying on the newest trendy tricks to get listed in the major search engines - these same search engines are developing new ways to validate the good sites from the junk sites.

When it comes to hosting, I always recommend our [BBI PowerHost service](http://www.bbipowerhost.com) – <http://www.bbipowerhost.com> - because it's very reliable, managed by us and maintained in a highly secure professional datacenter – backed-up nightly and including some of the best features I've found.

Believe me, I've experienced such horrendous service from other so-called “professional hosting companies” before we decided to buy into our own hosting business. I researched very carefully before choosing the service we now offer and host many client sites there, not to mention more than 50 of our own websites.

Yes, Hosting is Important...

Web hosting is one of those things that most people take for granted. Hosting is a lot like the security system you install at your store. You don't think about it much until you have a break-in – then you see clearly all that's wrong with it. Same holds true for web hosting. It's all great until you have the inevitable problem.

What's worse though is when you hire someone to build your site and they can't tell you who is hosting your website, or they can't give you any way to contact support to try to get your site back online after, as an example, it has been offline on five separate occasions over the past month for 12 hours at a time. Sounds funny, but sadly, this happens all too often.

Don't rely on slick advertising when choosing a host either. More often or not, these heavily advertised companies will treat your business site like just another head of cattle. You'll likely end up on an overly “shared” server with super slow performance and a lot of other headaches. And to top it all off you'll have no one to ask for help except for someone sitting in India who does not fully understand English or your issue – and has little incentive to help you with any urgency.

You may think I'm exaggerating, but I'm serious. We can't even call our bank anymore without being transferred to an overseas operator. Just wait until you have to call your web host to try to explain a technical problem you don't understand, to a person on a crackly connection, 10,000 miles away who doesn't understand, or speak English fluently. It would be quite funny, if it weren't so entirely frustrating.

While I've gotten a little off-track here, I'm trying to demonstrate through dramatic example of why it's so important NOT to rely on someone who doesn't have a handle on all aspects of making and keeping your site up and online. All these little things can and will wreak havoc on your site if there's a problem and you have no one around who can solve it quickly and easily for you.

8. Not understanding how business works.

This is critical..., really. Unless you just fell off the turnip truck, you probably at least know that a huge amount of revenue is generated online in an average day. Just a casual listen now and then to the business news and you've no doubt heard names like

Google, Yahoo, eBay, etc. You may not know exactly what kind of revenue we're talking about here, but it's huge.

A prime example is Google. Google is an online giant. Their two main offerings are known as AdWords and AdSense. Simply put, advertisers like you bid on certain search terms from Google AdWords in order to place small advertisements within the search results on Google search - or on other websites via subject-targeted ads.

Web publishers place Google AdSense ads on their sites and receive a percentage of the money that advertisers pay to Google to place their ads.

Sounds simple right? What's amazing though is how much money actually flows through Google on a daily basis and how much advertisers actually pay to get people to click through to their site through a Google AdSense ad. Could you imagine paying \$5, \$10, \$25, \$75 or more per click?

If you answered NO, I can understand your initial reaction. But the reality is that business owners are lining up to pay these sums each and every time someone clicks through to their site from a Google AdSense ad – and doing it happily!

Have all these folks gone loopy? No way! The bidding on “keywords” in Google and similar pay-per-click services is based entirely on what the market will support. In other words, that \$50 click must be generating a good profit for the business owner; otherwise that bid price wouldn't fly for long.

The purpose of my little Google introduction isn't to get you hooked on starting a Google Ad Campaign – but to point you toward an understanding that your online presence deserves the same respect and attention that you might give to your bricks and mortar business. Because, in many cases, your online business has an equal or even much greater potential!

“Okay”, you say, “but where exactly are you going with this?”

The above is just a brief example meant to demonstrate the importance of getting someone who understands how business works to help you build your web presence. Online business is not a novelty or fantasy - it is a reality.

In the above example with Google AdSense, I wasn't just talking about giant mega corporations throwing money at a novel new advertising idea. I'm talking about a business like yours – small businesses investing in their web presence, not because a neighbor told them they should try it, but rather because it's an integral part of a sound, well-rounded business model.

And..., with all that said, would you want someone with no idea of how a business works giving you advice on how what you need to do to put your business web pages online?

No way.

9. Slow or Non-existent Support.

Okay. So you finally got your web page online, albeit 10 months late..., but, in any case, now you want to add a few changes. So, you contact your web person hoping to get the changes up online ASAP. Instead, all you're hearing are the crickets.

A couple weeks later, you send off another email – and still nothing – a month later, not a word. This is, of course, no way to service a customer - but again, all too common when you've chosen to go with someone who doesn't understand that a good business is built on keeping customers and clients happy.

A good web developer must be responsive. If you send an email on Monday morning asking for an update to your web page, you should expect to hear back within 24-48 hours with at least a confirmation that the work order has been received and a time-frame for the update to be completed.

You should also expect professionals to charge rates worthy of their skill level. We typically charge \$50 - \$150 per hour depending on the task. Work is performed efficiently and we always strive to over-deliver. The bottom line, however, is that you'll get much more for the money from a professional web developer, than you will from a novice charging you similar or even lesser hourly rates for a job that takes them 10 times longer to complete (if they're even able to do it)!

As most people learn the hard way, it's better to have things done right the first time than to try to gamble on a cheaper alternative, only to have to do it all over again to correct all the problems that will come up from taking the cheap way out.

I liken it to hiring an unlicensed electrician to install your house wiring because he only charges \$40 per hour compared to a pro that charges \$80 per hour. See which one is a bargain when you have to tear out your walls to replace faulty wiring and mismatched circuit breakers that the bargain guy put in.

Changing gears slightly..., we like to offer our clients simple maintenance contracts. This allows clients to easily keep their sites fresh and always up-to-date at a discounted rate. Our maintenance contract clients get priority service and the big benefit for us is that we know better what type of work load to expect month-to-month.

10. Now that's scary! You've got 1997 technology - and a site with no room to grow.

This is just what you need, right? Not only have you waited months and months to get your web pages online – now, after all that waiting, you end up with a site that makes you want to cringe! It has links that don't work, embarrassing misspellings, blinking lights that should come with a warning for epileptics, colors that make your eyes want to cross – and worse yet, the “designer” that built this “masterpiece” is nowhere to be found - and has already cashed your check for the balance.

Woe is you!

Yes, this is a common scenario. The nightmare isn't over though. If you end up keeping this embarrassing technological blunder **hoping that it will age well like a fine wine...**, think again. It will only get worse by the day. Not only will you grow to despise it more and more as time goes by, it will actually begin to perpetuate its negative energy into all you do – you'll hear snickers from passers-by and immediately think they're whispering about your web page – you'll pray that customers never ask you if you're "on the web", because you'll want to run and hide in the back office, or pretend that your cell phone is ringing – and whenever you do get caught with no place to run, you'll always preface your web address with the comment "it's just a temporary site", "we're still working on it", or "our real site was hacked into by communists".

Don't let this be you! Do yourself a favor and choose wisely.

The Instant Web Page Solution – An Option for Starting Small...

One thing that's important to understand is that a full-fledged website isn't necessary for every small business. Some businesses do still rely entirely on local customers and foot traffic.

So, if that describes you, I'd offer the following advice to you, as a friend and professional in the business:

Yes, you definitely need to have a web address and a basic informational page about your business online. This is the bare minimum – and could even be all that you'll need for a while. Again, there are many businesses that don't need big elaborate sites.

Further, it's important to know that there are three basic ways people will find you online. Either through a search engine, through a print ad that includes your web address, or customers coming into your place of business and seeing - through flyers, etc., that you have a web address.

You will be able to increase the effectiveness of all your advertising dramatically if you make good use of your web page or web site as a way to capture your potential customer's email address or other contact details online and stay in touch with them to encourage them to become your customer.

I want to stress how natural it is for many people today to start their search for a local business on the web. Even though you may be "old school" and think everyone goes directly to the Yellow Pages for all their business needs, I can tell you first hand that that's not the case. Most of the people I know, consider going to the phone book for business info about as quaint as reading the Farmer's Almanac for their daily weather report.

A web search on a local business yields so much more useful information. If I "Google" local Chinese restaurants, for example, I'll come up with your restaurant (if you're the owner, of course), your spotless record in the BBB, great reviews on your lunch specials, other respected sites that link to you and an article you wrote on making the perfect Hot

and Sour soup! YOU'VE SOLD ME. I go to your web page, grab the directions, your hours and print out your menu.

Sounds a lot more useful than a static phone book listing, right?

Even if you think you're happy with the level of business you currently have, you owe it to yourself to give this a real try. Look, it couldn't be any more "low commitment". I know it's a total bargain that will pay you back over and over again – and I can just about guarantee that in a few weeks after your page is live online, you'll be telling me that you don't know how you ever lived without it. No kidding.

For Everyone Else...

For the rest of you small business owners though, you will want to get an effective site up online as soon as possible. Today there are so many ways to profit from your business site, beyond your regular business. Remember; consider your site as a very valuable piece of virtual real estate. Build something quality that's a good resource to your customers and casual visitors and there will be a wide array of revenue-generating opportunities for you. A website is a lot like fine wine too..., they do age well. The longer you're online, the better. Established sites are usually considered more valuable resources to some major search engines (Google, for example).

As an online publisher, you have advertising space to sell, affiliate deals you can make with related companies – all kinds of joint-venture possibilities..., and that's all on top of your regular business revenue. You'll be amazed at how much potential revenue you've been leaving on the table.

For example, I like to tell the story of how I got started with Google AdSense. I originally signed up for an account with AdSense in 2003, but took a whole year before I actually set aside the time to place the ads on a few of our pages. At the time, I didn't think the payoff would have been high enough to justify giving up the ad space on my pages. Within a month or so, those simple little text ads were generating several thousand dollars per month - and have continued to do so through 2005, 2006 and now into 2007. By not jumping in with AdSense when I had originally intended to, I probably left \$50K of extra revenue sitting on the table. Needless to say, I'm not as likely to make those mistakes again in the future!

The best part of monetizing your website with targeted advertising is that, in most cases, it becomes a hands-off, recurring income source that's over and above your main source of business revenue.

Of course, like web development, effective online advertising has its own collection of tested methods that should be followed for best results, but it's far from rocket science.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this report is to help you understand the many benefits of bringing your business online – some that you had never even thought of before - and of hiring someone truly knowledgeable to help you through the process.

A \$3,000 or \$5,000 investment in your business site is not really a big expense when you consider all of the new potential revenue streams available to you. Not only that, but your initial and ongoing site costs are normally tax deductible (consult your accountant, of course – don't take my word for it) as a business expense.

If you'd like to talk with someone about your business and whether being online might be beneficial for you then, by all means, e-mail me about it. I'd be happy to talk with you. There's no obligation, of course. There's no hard-sell involved – if I don't think it's for you, I'll certainly tell you. However, I've noticed that most small-business owners feel like they've discovered a whole new world of possibilities after one of these free consultations..., so, give it a try yourself.

Oh, and congratulations on taking the initiative to read this report. You now know a lot more than most on this subject. Use this to your advantage.

Hope to talk with you soon,

Stephen Rinaldi
spr@bbiworld.com
<http://www.bbiworld.com>

Resources and Extras

A word about “do-it-yourself” templates, a.k.a., “web wizard” sites.

You've probably seen these around. They're basically a web-based tool that allows you to choose from a limited selection of outdated or just plain “bland” templates, add your own content and supposedly build and update your site on your own eliminating the expense of hiring a professional.

While this option might sound like a good idea on paper, the reality is much different. No matter how user friendly they're made to sound, if you've never built a site that draws in regular daily traffic, you should stay far away from this type of site. Unless, of course, you don't care what your site looks like, or if you get any traffic.

Remember, each time you start out with a new piece of software, there's a learning curve involved. The same is true for these web wizard thingies. If you're totally new at this stuff, you'll probably spend three weeks staring at the site management console trying to figure out where to start.

Eventually you'll try to read the online instruction manual – which was probably written by someone who does not write in ENGLISH often. After a month or two you may figure out how to get the text on your home page, but for some reason can't line up the photo of your store to fit. Soon you'll realize that you have to have your photos processed by an image editing software so it's a reasonable file size. A few more weeks will go by and you might, by luck, manage to create a few links and another page or two. You'll be so exhausted after all this that you'll be afraid to try to add anything else for fear of deleting everything by accident.

THEN after not touching the site again for the next 6 months, you'll want to make a couple changes, but have now completely forgotten how you did what you originally did. And all along you manage only to get a couple of accidental visitors each month and you're still paying a decent price for the "luxury" of maintaining your own website.

Sounds like a good idea, right?

Myths from the Web World

The more you hang around on the web, the more it seems like just about everyone's claiming to be an expert on this and that. This is even more prevalent today with the growth of Private Label e-books that allow anyone to buy the rights and add their name to a training manual that someone else has written.

In any case, over the years there have been quite a few myths that have popped up. Here are a few of my favorites.

1. Nobody makes money on the web!

Baloney! The Internet is nothing short of a business person's dream come true! Where else can you come up with an idea on Monday morning and have a full-fledged international business in place and ready to earn you your first dollar by dinner-time?

2. It's unbelievably EASY to make money on the web!

More Baloney! It's not easy at all if you have no clue what you're doing. Fortunately, online business has evolved enough that you don't have to reinvent the wheel if you hire someone to get things set up and going for you.

3. If I don't use complicated search engine optimization techniques, I'll never get any traffic to my web page!

There are two distinct types of web traffic out there. Free traffic and Pay traffic. Free traffic is traffic that comes to your site because search engines have found your site to be worthy of directing their visitors to you – Pay traffic is about as easy to get as punching in your credit card number, choosing a pile of keywords and watching your bill grow right before our eyes in real time!

While I prefer the free “natural” search results, there are many benefits to the pay-per-click engines too. BUT, you have to have some experience to set up an effective campaign. Otherwise, you'll learn first hand how easy it is to spend \$100 an hour on a few random clicks. There are literally tens of millions of searches everyday and if you're in a competitive industry, your keyword bidding and costs can get out of control fast. You have to know what you're doing.

With free search results, once your site has been tweaked over time to get those very valuable high search listings for the keywords and phrases that your customers are looking for, you can expect to receive a steady predictable stream of income day after day. Nice, huh? How great would it be to see that free traffic coming into your site each day? Say for example that you gain a good ranking on a niche keyword that brings you about 1,000 visitors each day on average. If that same keyword was going for 50 cents a click on Google and Overture (a rather low amount these days), that traffic would be worth about \$500 per day for just that one keyword! That's about \$15,000 per month worth of traffic coming into your site!

Now, if you're getting that kind of traffic from one keyword to your web site, you should first give a big hug to your web developer – and then you'd want to make sure you're capitalizing on that valuable traffic.

Marketing Confusions (or, how they make you think you're getting more than you really are!)

This is a small collection of features of web sites and hosting plans that are commonly overblown to make you think you're getting a great, amazing deal! Divulging these “secrets” may anger some sneaky web designers and hosting companies, but hey! That's the way it goes, right?

Web Hosting

There are a lot of ways that web hosting companies can confuse you into buying way more hosting than you need.

*** 500MB, 1GB Web Storage**

Most people have no idea how much space is required by the average website, so it's easy to sell you on a much larger and more expensive hosting plan than you'll probably ever need. Truth is you can probably get by comfortably with about 15MB of storage space for your site unless you need to store lots of large files.

*** 100GB, etc. of File Transfer**

File transfer is simply the total byte amount of files (pages, images, etc.) transferred over the course of a month. To give you an idea of how much is enough, you could have 3,000 visitors each day to an average site and still not use 3GB (that's Three) of transfer bandwidth each month.

*** 100, 200, 300+ email accounts, etc.**

Another good one! If you can think of 100 different email addresses you want to use for your site, then have fun with it! For most sites, 5 email addresses will suffice.

*** Autoresponders, Scripts, etc.**

Some hosting companies will try to wow you by offering tons of extra scripts (auto-install programs that do various things). The reality is that these are usually what's known as PHP scripts. Even though you can automatically install them, they're usually no up-to-date and you'll still need to customize them to match your site, set them up and configure all types of settings AND you'll have to integrate them into your site. These are definitely NOT for the novice.

*** Guaranteed 99 Percent UPTIME (or something similar)**

This is a good one too! Well, let's see..., 24 hours in a day times 365 = 8,760 hours in a year. So, if your site is only down 1% of the time each year that's no big deal, right? It's only 87.6 HOURS of DOWNTIME each year!

The least you need to know about hosting companies:

Most hosting companies are caught up in something that resembles the Cold War-Era Arms Race. They keep upping the features that they're offering with their hosting packages knowing full well that just about no website will ever use 300GB of transfer in a month..., not even a tiny fraction of that. A small site will might not even use up 5MB (that's megabyte, by the way) in the course of a month. Same goes for storage space.

They're comfortable offering these huge service packages because they're certain it will never be used.

All this is a smoke screen for the really important things you need to look for in a hosting account – reliability, performance, security and responsive support. All of which you're likely to find badly lacking if you don't choose carefully.

Web Designer Sneaky-Speak

Web designers have all types of fancy-speak to get you thinking you've won the lottery. Here are some of my favorites.

*** Your site submitted to 3,000 search engines!**

WOW! Sounds great..., where do I sign up? Actually, there are only a handful of search engines that are really worth the time to submit to. When I say handful, I mean it. Something like 9 of them..., definitely not 3,000!

And, if your web developer has done his or her job, you probably don't even need to submit – the search engines will find you. To top it off, many search engines today grab their search results from another major search engine anyway, so once you make it into one, you often start showing up in several others as well.

Perhaps the biggest confusion here is in thinking that submitting your site to a 5 or a gazillion search engines will net you any traffic at all. Fact is that unless you can get your pages up into the top 20 of a particular search term, you'll be lucky to see any traffic at all, no matter how many search engines you're listed in.

Another note about these mass search engine submissions, usually many of the sites that your site is submitted to are just useless link farms and other directories that won't get you much, if any traffic or benefit – and could possibly get you penalized.

*** “Your site link added to thousands of web pages for just \$79.95!”**

While it is true that link exchanges (with highly ranked sites) can be valuable to your search rankings and popularity - this has to be done slowly and methodically by someone who knows what they're doing. Search engines are wise to all the tricks and if you suddenly have 5,000 back links to your site today, when you had just 2 yesterday, all types of red flags will start to go up. What's worse is that your site will probably end up linked into “bad neighborhoods” on the web. This will not only do nothing for your site traffic, it could get you penalized or even banned from some search engines.

Again, slow and steady growth in both your linking and your site pages is the key to staying in good graces with the search engines. Even if you manage to slide a sneaky black-hat trick through and do get some short-term benefit from it – it will likely be very

short-lived as the major search engines are constantly on the look out for new black-hat techniques and will not hesitate to penalize sites that are trying to sneak down the easy road.

** We'll add to this list in future editions of this special report.

Online Business Resources

Wordtracker - We highly recommend Wordtracker as THE tool to find thousands of great keywords for your site. BBI regularly conducts thorough Wordtracker search and detailed reporting starting at \$150.00. <http://our.affiliatetracking.net/wordtracker/a/13111>

Links Manager - A Full featured, automated reciprocal link management system that really helps build your site's popularity! Ask about our installation, setup and monthly management service. <http://linksmanager.com/cgi-bin/welcome.cgi?karma>

Aweber - A superb list management system. Ask about our Aweber set up and site integration service. <http://www.aweber.com/?205338>

BBI Merchant Services - Our brand! The total package includes everything you need to get started selling online quicky and easily. Take a look and let us know if you have any questions. <http://bbiworld.evsholdingco.com/>

BBI Domain Registration - Our domain registration system. Not as inexpensive as other options out there, but very easy to use. Control every aspect of your domain set-up and maintenance from our online control panel. <http://www.bbiworld.com>

BBI Recommeneds **PayPal** as an excellent, low cost, easy to set up online payment processing system! Very powerful and flexible..., PayPal is a great option. <https://www.paypal.com/us/mrb/pal=Y6KTP6F5FKJW8>

