



Web Success For Your Business

By Graham Jones

A booklet to accompany the Web Success workshop

Workshop

This booklet is based on the Web Success Workshop run by Internet Psychologist, Graham Jones. Further booklets, handouts and other downloads associated with this workshop are available from:

www.grahamjones.co.uk/websuccessworkshop

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ISBN: 978-1-871550-45-9

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Introduction

Billions of pounds are traded over the Internet each year; clearly some businesses are making money online. However, the sad truth is that the vast majority of businesses are failing to exploit the Internet in any way.

Recent studies show that most businesses in the UK have yet to set up a web site. The first web site was launched on 6th August 1991, so here we are several years later and still many businesses in the UK don't have a web site. Even worse than this, less than 25% of those with a web site are actually selling their products and services from it.

The picture is not much better in places where you would think that the Internet has taken a stronger hold. In California, for instance, a recent survey showed that less than 50% of all SME businesses in this high-tech area had a web site to call their own. Only a quarter of those with web sites actually sold anything online - and of those who sold things, only a tiny percentage of companies were selling all their products and services using e-commerce.

Clearly, the billions being spent online are going into the accounts of only a small number of businesses. The vast majority of businesses worldwide have yet to make any money out of the Internet; they are clearly way behind the times.

This workshop will help your business take up the opportunity the Internet provides. You will also discover how you can increase your profits online. But be warned - what you discover in this workshop may mean you will have to change the way your business operates and the way it is managed. Succeeding online depends not just on exploiting Internet technologies - it means a whole new way of doing business.

Assessing the opportunity

The opportunity for making money online is huge. People and business shop online in their millions. And even if they don't buy a product or service on the Internet, they research their requirements online. This means whatever your business, you can use the Internet to influence purchasing decisions or sell your products directly.

The first step worth taking is assessing the opportunity for your business. Is there an online demand for your products and services in the first place?

The way to find that out is straightforward. Find out if people are already searching for your kinds of products and services. Make sure that you set Google to provide predictions, then start typing in a product type or the kind of service you offer. The Google search box will drop down a list of searches according to their popularity. This is a quick guide to your chances of success online.

Also, look at the adverts that appear at the top of the Google search results. If there are plenty of adverts, you can be reasonably sure that people are making money from those search phrases you typed in; otherwise they wouldn't pay for advertising on them.

The combination of assessing the level of Google advertising and search predictions will tell you just how much potential there is for selling your products and services online. It will almost certainly be much bigger than you expect. There is very little that cannot be sold online these days. Indeed, I know of a £16m item that was bought online by clicking a "Buy Now" button.

It's different online

Having assessed the opportunity for your business online it's time to start considering some of your business processes and attitudes. Many businesses have brochures, catalogues or other sales literature that they use to entice customers. Often, sales executives will direct customers to the relevant part of the brochure or catalogue.

Online, that doesn't happen. People use "offline" catalogues and brochures in a different way to the way they behave on the Internet. Traditional sales literature has either been "pre-sorted" or selected in some way by a sales executive who has had prior contact with the customer or potential client. Alternatively, customers use index facilities in catalogues, for instance, to find what they are looking for,

Online, people don't do that; they look for the solution to their problem at that moment in time. Or they look for a specific product or kind of product. If they are presented with a catalogue or brochure, they rarely go further. They try another web site instead. If your web site provides an array of information on what you sell, it is unsorted or unselected by a sales executive. In other words, web sites don't give customers what they want at that moment in time.

The book, *The Long Tail*, by Chris Anderson, explains the need to provide exactly what a customer wants at that specific moment in time they are online. When they visit your web site they want the particular item they are searching for - nothing else, not everything else you offer, just that one thing.

This implies to be successful online, you need not one web site, but dozens, if not hundreds, of landing pages to satisfy all of those specific demands Internet users will make for what you sell. You might even need several different websites.

Thinking like a surfer

When people go online they are usually seeking **instant answers** to a problem they have. For instance, they may need to find out the times of a film at the local cinema. They may want to book a car service or they may wish to discover how to use their word processor to print in draft mode. Whatever their need, people use the Internet to help solve an issue at a specific moment in time.

They also use the Internet to connect with other people - friends, colleagues, people with similar interests. Increasingly, the Internet is also becoming the main source of news for many people - overtaking TV for young people in particular.

But people are not going online to read your company brochure. Nor are they going online to find out "everything there is to know about" any particular situation. Their needs are specific and time-related.

Matching your business response to the way people behave online makes it more likely that your products and services will be purchased. This means having web pages that deal with specific situations. It also means being present in the news pages and in the social areas where people gather.

You can't any longer just have a website - and hope people will come to you. That would be just the same as setting up a shop down a dark alley, where no-one will stumble across you - even less so if no-one knew of your existence anyway. That's precisely the situation most Internet businesses are in. Don't let your business be the same - think like a web surfer and your business will thrive.

It's all about information

Online, people are really looking for information. They are not just seeking to buy what you sell; they only want information to help them deal with the situation they find themselves in.

The fact that your business sells a particular product or offers a specific service is of no interest to the person online. Instead they want to know how to solve their particular problem; they are searching for information, help, advice, support even. This is partly why the communication facilities of the Internet are so popular - people can help each other.

If your web site does not offer information that helps people, it will not succeed in today's online world. Your web sites need to be full of articles, advice and other informative materials such as forums where people can share information between themselves. Your web site needs to be constantly topical and up to date.

Many websites are well designed, bright and clear. Yet they are clearly "selling" to us or trying to impress us with their beauty. Other sites are rather poorly designed, yet are informative, showing the expertise of the company and its desire to be of assistance to the visitor. Online, people are more interested in function than design; Amazon, for instance, is not brilliantly designed, but it certainly works...!

It's a social world

The Internet is now very much a social world. This means your web site needs to be social as well. Having a constantly updated social presence works for many business, as does a blog whereby people could add their comments to your articles. A forum for discussion could also work. Equally, social networking facilities added to your own web site would boost interaction between your business and your customers and potential clients.

Nowadays, people expect web sites to offer social facilities. If yours doesn't, it is viewed as out of date, behind the times, old fashioned. Furthermore, having a lively, social site makes your business more attractive to the search engines. It also means you get repeat visitors.

Developing a strategy

In the new online world, you need a new strategy. Instead of seeing a web site as a useful addition to your business, that might, hopefully bring in some extra revenue, you need to use the Internet in a more central, strategic role within your business.

Having worked out that there is an opportunity online for your business and having seen how the Internet is increasingly being used by your customers your next step is to calculate how you are going to fit within this new world. There are two essentials to consider:

- How many web functions you need to run
- How to manage your web presence

For many companies this means changes in the operation and structure of their business. It means alteration in attitudes and staff functions and expectations. Taking grasp of the opportunity the Internet provides is not as straightforward as setting up a website.

You need to consider who will add articles, blog entries and other information-based materials to your web site each day - yes, day! Who will respond to forum entries on other forums, thus cross promoting your web sites? Who will email your customers and potential clients with useful information each week? A strategy and management plan is clearly needed. But so too is "permission" for staff to be active online in forums, blogs and wikis, so that they can socially promote company products and services.

Pulling in the cash

Once your new Internet strategy is in place you will need automated systems to help you administer the e-commerce or financial sides of the operation. Internet shoppers expect everything to run smoothly; they want to be able to trust your system and get their products or services with the minimum of fuss.

This may mean abandoning current systems of e-commerce provided by hosting companies or using in-house developed systems that work for your business, but not for the social users you now face.

Firstly, you need credit card processing systems in place. Even if you have merchant status with your bank you will still need an online credit card processing company. The easiest way of doing this online is to use Stripe:

<https://www.stripe.com>

Managing the business

Having set up your websites, your payment system and your shopping cart and having addressed the strategic issues within your company it will be time to get down to business online and start making even more money via the Internet.

This means performing several activities on a regular basis and setting up various "systems" to enable your business to run with as much automation as possible.

You will need to establish a database of prospects and customers so you can mail them regularly with information - which is what they are after. You need a "sequential autoresponder" to do this. You can set up automated information emails to go out regularly for years. One of the best email systems is MailChimp. Or consider Campaign Monitor. You can even run your own email marketing system using Sendy.

Customers also need reasons to come back to your web site, so regular addition of articles is necessary, or a blog. This should be updated every day to get the maximum benefit. Writing press releases is also a weekly requirement now because many clients will access news releases directly, rather than via the media.

You will also need to monitor and contribute to forums, blogs and wikis related to your products and services. There is a lot of work to do. Skimping on it will reduce your potential to make money online.

Further Reading

Creating a great web site and having a superb online strategy requires understanding the new way the Internet works. Here are three books which will help you do just that.

The Long Tail

By Chris Anderson

This book takes you through several examples, showing that there is huge demand for products and services, yet few companies are lined up to meet that demand. The book shows that in order to meet the online demand you need to stop targeting for mass appeal - instead aim for niche, tiny markets; but plenty of them.

<http://uklik.me/long-tail-book>

The New Rules of Marketing & PR

By David Meerman Scott

This is an excellent book showing just how you can capitalise on the changing trends for social networking, direct to consumer press releases, blogs, wikis, podcasts and viral marketing so you can reach your customers directly. There are several examples of companies who do it well.

<http://uklik.me/new-rules-book>

Web Copy That Sells

By Maria Veloso

This is regarded as one of the leading books on copy writing and it is specifically focused on copy writing for the web. The book takes you through, step by step, creating great copy for your web pages so they sell - even if they are information pages.

<http://uklik.me/web-copy-book>

Graham Jones

Internet Psychologist Graham Jones helps businesses succeed online by harnessing the power of the Internet for increased profits.

Internet Strategy Planning and Coaching

Advice, information and ideas to ensure your business is using the Internet effectively and efficiently so your business can make more profit. Development of strategic plans to help your business use the Internet to its maximum effect. Assistance with integration of Internet technologies into your existing business structure and organisation.

Internet Efficiency and Productivity Audit

Many businesses feel they are suffering because staff get distracted when using the Internet at work. Or companies feel that personal use of the Internet can reduce productivity. This audit will help your business ensure that staff continue to be motivated to work without being distracted by all that the Internet has to offer them. Using this audit you will be able to work out how to manage the Internet within your business to ensure maximum productivity.

Internet Marketing Analysis

Is your business doing as much as it can to capitalise on the Internet? There is so much more that many businesses could be doing online, but it usually takes a fundamental shift in attitudes and in business processes. This analysis will help you find out if your business is ready for that shift and what to do to ensure you can profit from Internet marketing.

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ISBN 978-1-871550-45-0



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