

MAKE YOUR **2002** SITE SELL!

How to Turbo-Boost Your Site's **SALES POWER**

by Ken Evoy, M.D.

Your Web site either makes the sale, or it doesn't.

Ninety-nine out of one hundred sites **don't** get the order.

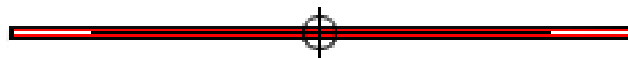
We blame that on gun-shy, suspicious, scared Web-consumers.

Wrong.

This book is about joining the one in a hundred

who know how to sell on the Net...

It's about **getting the order.**



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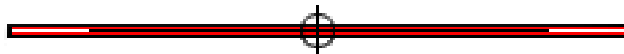
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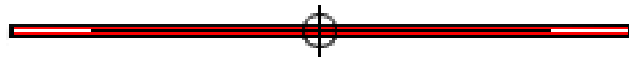
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Dedicated to Janice, Nori, and Yuki,
the wonderful woman and two darling girls that **are** my life.
Thank you for your patience that allowed me the endless hours
of pounding away at the most important,
and best, work that I've ever done.
I love you, more each day.



Foreword

By Joel Leonoff

Joel Leonoff also wrote the foreword of the first edition of MYSS!. His perspective for this second edition, MYSS! 2002, is invaluable. Joel is now the COO of a new company, SureFire Commerce, a transaction-processing company that already processes over \$1.5 billion online. In December 2000, SureFire acquired SiteSell.com, closing the circle on a fascinating relationship between Joel and Ken that started "way back," when Joel was a 13 year old all-star pitcher and Ken was "Coach."



Adversity is to me... a tonic.

-- Sir Walter Scott

It seems like just yesterday that I wrote the foreword to the first edition of **MYSS!**. And yet it also seems "forever ago," in a world and an era so far, far away. In that short time, I've watched from my post at three successful Net companies, the stratospheric rise of the dotcom economy, followed by the cataclysmic dotbomb.

Through it all, good times and bad, I've watched Ken and his company, SiteSell.com, steadily and rapidly grow. I've actually been witness to the "birth of a guru." I've seen **how** Ken does it. He recognizes what small businesses need and then, as he likes to say, he "OVERdelivers like crazy."

When I wrote the **MYSS!** foreword, Internet mania/hysteria was running rampant. Dot coms were popping up everywhere. Venture capitalists were competing to throw money at raw concepts. Stock options fed the craze. College students joined Net startups, expecting to ride those rocket ships to riches and glory. Everyone obsessed over their online stock portfolios.

Fast forward three years. Dot com mania is dead. Stock markets are back to normal. Companies focusing on e-commerce and other Net initiatives must once again **generate both cash and profits** in order to survive and appreciate in value. (What a radical concept!)

The good news is that adversity brings opportunity. It shakes out the weak. It eliminates the crazed "give it away free" business model. Those companies never had a chance, but they certainly made it hard for others -- how do you compete against "free"?

Ken never bought into the "free" model, and neither did I. As Ken likes to say... "A

customer that pays zero is worth zero.” In our “back to normal” business environment, customers are willing to exchange value for value. **Good companies will once again grow and prosper, building real equity.**

SureFire Commerce Inc., the company where I now devote all my passion and energy, is built on the proposition of value for value. We are one of the few e-commerce companies that has grown revenues significantly, generated cash, and maintained respectable value in a sea of e-corpses after the sinking of the e-Titanic.

Our lifeboat? Seasoned professionals that built value upon value in our online transaction processing business. And now, we turn our attention toward **small business enablement on the Internet**. Of course, you know where this is headed.

Who would have thought, way back when Ken and I met again, decades after our baseball days, that Ken would become an integral part of the Surefire team? Well, a couple cups of coffee and a few crazy thoughts have resulted in just that.

It’s a wonderful marriage -- we have the expertise needed to provide “best of Net” small business tools. And, as Ken says, “I now have the ‘big company’ resources needed to sculpt the way for small businesses to succeed.”

And that is Ken’s mandate exactly... **enable small businesses to succeed.**

Forget today’s adversities -- they are the **tonic of opportunity**. E-commerce is only in the top half of the first inning, one man out and a man on first base. In the 1920’s, there were hundreds of car companies. Most died. But the car remains a vital part of our lives. E-commerce will be exactly like that, except 100 times more vital.

We are now playing by the proven rules of business. What better timing for **MYSS! 2002?** Every section has been updated, and hundreds of new pages of valuable content added. Ken’s revelations and seasoned strategies are “must do” for any business that hopes to “make it.”

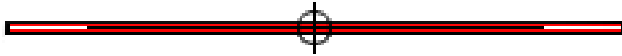
This new edition, unlike the first, does not OVERdeliver... it **OVER-OVER**delivers. I am truly amazed. My advice to you is to do what SureFire Commerce is doing. Harness Ken’s brilliance and insight to guide your business. Good luck to you -- I hope to see you in the winner’s circle soon! And to Ken...

I look forward to our next cup of coffee!



1. How to Use MYSS! 2002

This book has many special features to enhance your reading experience.



1.1. Links to Spots within MYSS! 2002

You know how sometimes you read something in a book, and you say, “Now where the heck did I read about that?”

Well, **MYSS! 2002** has **internal links**... links that take you from one part of the book to a related section. So you can easily find and re-read a topic. These links appear in **blue** and are underlined.

Usually, clicking on such a link will take you to a relevant listing in [the Index](#) -- this is a separate file, labeled **Index.pdf**. From there, you can link through to relevant discussions. Go ahead, click on [the Index](#). (To return here, click in the left or right **margin** of the page -- more on the **Back** function later.)

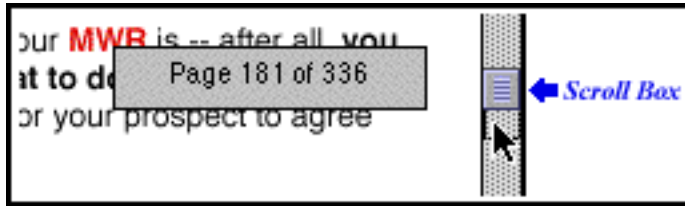
Occasionally, clicking on an internal link will take you **directly** to another spot in the book. For example, suppose the book mentioned [the Foreword](#). Clicking on [the Foreword](#) will send you directly there because there is no reason, in this case, to send you to the Index.



1.2. Navigation Features

MYSS! 2002 makes navigating easy. Here's how to move around the book...

- **Scroll Bar** -- click on the Scroll Box in the Scroll Bar and drag it **down** or **up** to rapidly move forward or backward through the book. You will see the page number appear when you click on the box. Release it when you get to the desired page...



Clicking just **below** or **above** the Scroll Box will **advance** or **reverse** a part-of-a-page at a time.

Clicking on the Scroll **Arrows** (at the bottom or top of of the Scroll Bar, **not** shown in illustration) will **advance** or **reverse** the page one **line** at a time... holding an Arrow down will scroll the page continuously.



- **Arrow Keys** -- Pressing the **m** or **i** cursor key **on your keyboard** will **advance** or **reverse** the book one page at a time.



- **Table of Contents** -- Click on any numbered heading **in the book** to go to the **Table of Contents** -- this is a separate file, labeled **TOC.pdf**.

When you are in the Table of Contents (TOC), click on any heading to jump to the corresponding part of the book.

Try it now by clicking on the heading for this section ("**Navigation Features**"). It will take you to the the appropriate part of the **TOC** in TOC.pdf. To return **here**, just click on the **appropriate heading** in the Table of Contents.

[**SIDEBAR**]

When you have more than one **MYSS! 2002** file open at the same time, you can **also** manage them via the **Window** menu in your Acrobat software...



- **Index** -- **MYSS! 2002** has an index. It is a separate file, labeled **Index.pdf**. There are two ways to access it...

- Click on blue underlined links in the book. This will usually send you to the relevant listing in the index. Try it now for [MWR](#). (To return here, click in the left or right **margin** of the page -- more on the **Back** function below.)
- Click on the **page number** (bottom right corner of each page). This will send you to the first page of the index. On the bottom of that page, you will see [the alphabet from a to z](#). If you are looking for “**media**,” click on the [m](#) link. This takes you to the first page of the **m**’s in the index. Scroll until you find “**media**.”

After you find the desired topic in the index, click on any referenced page number **to link directly** to a relevant discussion. Each page **number** is preceded by a **letter**. This indicates **which volume** (PDF file) of **MYSS! 2002** contains that particular discussion...

- **m.** -- Main Volume -- **MYSS! 2002.pdf** is the file that you are **now** reading.
- **p.** -- Product Volume -- [click here to open Product.pdf](#).
- **t.** -- Traffic-Building Volume -- [click here to open Traffic.pdf](#).
- **s.** -- Store Volume -- [click here to open Store.pdf](#).

So, for example, let’s say that you see “[t.142](#)” following a topic in the index. Clicking on “[t.142](#)” will hyperlink you straight to page 142 of the Traffic volume. No fuss, no muss.



- “**Back Buttons**” -- The entire left and right margins of every page are giant, invisible “**Back buttons**.” Click in either margin to **trace back** to the previous page you were on, even if you were in a different file. Click again to trace another page back.

When you click in a margin, it turns black, and when you release the click, off you go! Here’s what it looks like...

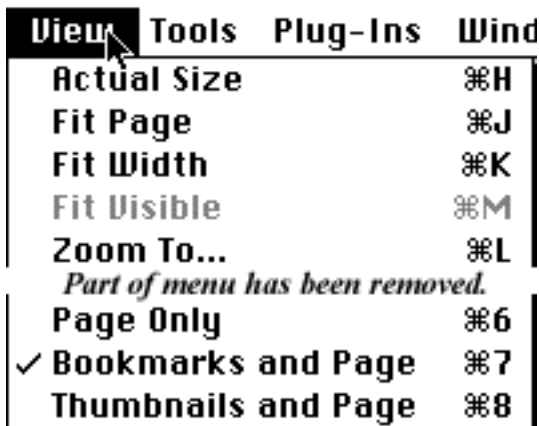


This feature is especially useful after linking to another part of the book. Once you read that material, **you'll likely want to return to your point of origin.** Clicking in either margin sends you straight back, so you can pick up where you left off.



- **Bookmarks** -- This is useful for those with larger monitors. If you have a smaller monitor, you will likely find that it chews up too much “monitor real estate.”

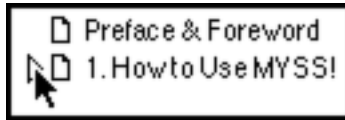
Under Acrobat's **View** menu, change from **Page Only** to **Bookmarks and Page**.



A set of bookmarks will appear in the left margin. We'll use the original **MYSS!** as an example. Here's what the bookmarks for the first two chapters looked like...



The triangle to the left of “1. How to Use **MYSS!**” means that there are “sub-bookmarks.” Move your cursor **over the triangle**, like this...



Then **click on the triangle** to expand the bookmarks under that chapter. Click again to shrink them all back down, then again to expand them...



Now... here's the whole point of bookmarks. Move your cursor over the “**Links to the Web**” bookmark until it turns into a “hand with pointing finger,” then click...



Clicking on **Links to the Web** sends you to that section. Click on **any** bookmark to leap to the beginning of any section of the book.



- **Straight Page Jumps** -- At the bottom of your Acrobat screen, you will see...



Click on it. Then, in the window that pops up, simply enter the page number that you want to jump to. Then click “OK.”



1.3. Viewing Features

[Click here to open a preference window](#) -- in this window, **uncheck** the box beside “**Open Cross-Document Links in the Same Window**”. **Why?**...

MYSS! 2002 links across its many PDF files. This is best done by opening each such link in a **new** window, and **not** in the same one.

Now, still in the preference window, set the **sharpness**. Would you like the text of **MYSS! 2002** to appear **smooth** like this?...

Your Web site either makes the sale, or it doesn't.

... or **sharp** like this?...

Your Web site either makes the sale, or it doesn't.

If you prefer the **smooth** look, **check** the box beside “**Smooth Text and Monochrome Images**.” Otherwise, leave it **unchecked**...

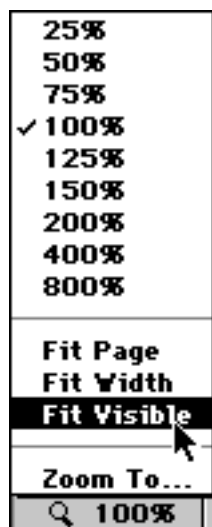
You can also set **magnification** and **page display layout** in the window above, **or...**

- **Magnification** -- Generally, the best **magnification** to view **MYSS! 2002** is **100%**. But if you want to adjust this, look down **to the bottom** of the Acrobat software's screen. You'll see something that looks like this...



Click-and-hold on it.

You'll see it snap open to...



Then **enter or select the magnification** that you prefer.

If you have a small monitor (15-17")...

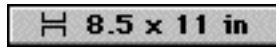
To make the words as large as possible, **maximize MYSS! 2002's** window so that it takes up **the whole monitor screen**. Then click and choose "**Fit Visible**" (as shown above). Experiment with different settings.

If you have a large monitor (19" or greater)...

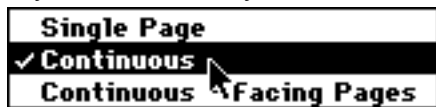
Maximize MYSS! 2002's window so that it takes up **the whole monitor screen**. Then click and choose "**Fit Page.**" This fits one entire page into the vertical dimension of **MYSS! 2002's** window (convenient for reading). Experiment with different settings and window sizes, as well as page display layouts (next)...



- **Page Display Layout** -- Just to the **right** of the magnification setting, you'll see...



If you click on it, you can choose between the following page layout options...



Single page -- displays one page in the document at a time.

Continuous -- arranges the pages in a continuous vertical column for easy scrolling.

Continuous - Facing Pages -- arranges the pages to appear side by side. This is only a good choice if you have a **gigantic** monitor.



Single Page layout



Continuous layout

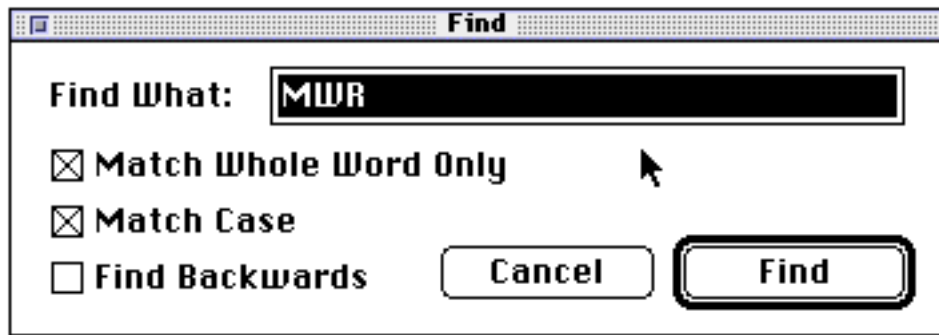


Continuous-Facing Pages layout



1.4. Search Features

To find a word, hit either **Control-f** (Windows) or **Command-f** (Mac) to bring up the Acrobat Find window...



In the example above, you are searching for **MWR**, (abbreviation for **Most Wanted Response**).

Since you are looking for exactly **MWR**, you click “Match Whole Word Only” -- if you wanted to catch any word with **MWR** in it (ex., **MWRs**), you would not click this box.

Because **MWR** is abbreviated with capital letters, you ask it to “Match Case.”

Finally, you decide to look for **MWR** starting from the front of the book, instead of from the back, so don't check “Find Backwards.”

Once you're done, hit the **Find** button.

If you'd like to find the next occurrence of **MWR**, just hit either **Control-g** (Windows) or **Command-g** (Mac). You'll go to the next **MWR**, without having to pop up the Find window again.



1.5. Print Features

You can print this document in the usual fashion. Please respect [the intellectual rights attached to this book](#). Do not make copies for others.



1.6. Links to the Web

Links to the Web appear like this...



Make Your Site SELL!

<http://myss.sitesell.com/>

To hyperlink to the URL, open a connection to the Internet. Then click anywhere **on the graphic**, on the **black title**, or on the **blue URL** to go there. **But first, MYSS! 2002** needs to know which Web browser to use.

[Click to open this preference window](#) -- then...

- Click **Browse** (for Windows users) or **Select** (Mac users). In the window that pops up, **find your browser, select it**, and click **Open**.
- See “**Connection type**”? “**Standard**” is fine if your browser is not offered as a choice. And ignore the other settings -- the default selections are OK.
- Then click OK.

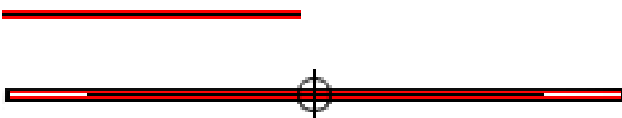


1.7. Sidebars

A **sidebar** is a side note that relates to the main discussion, but which breaks the flow of the main thought. So I “tuck it away” to help the flow. It appears like this...



A **sidebar** is a side note that relates to the main discussion, but which breaks the flow of the main thought. So I “tuck it away” to help the flow. It appears like this...



2. Introduction

No matter what you offer on the Web, **your site must SELL!**

Are you selling digital goods like software, videogames, or infoproducts (like this book)?

Perhaps you offer world-class consulting on your special area of expertise?

Do you sell freezers to the Inuit people (to store the ice you sold them), or other hard-good widgets?

Are you simply selling the image of your company?

Or are you just thinking about selling through a Web site?

Maybe you're looking to expand regional sales into global distribution?

No matter **what** you want your Web site to sell, this book shows you **how...** like **no** other book ever has.

When you use the experience-proven strategies in this book, you will attract motivated, targeted customers to your Web site. **Then you will sell them.** Period.

If you already have a Web site, this book (**MYSS! 2002**) will show you how to convert it into a killer sales machine.

If you don't have a Web site, but are planning one, terrific! No errors to correct. **MYSS! 2002** will show you how to convert a blank piece of "digital paper" into a **strong site that SELLS!**

[**SIDEBAR**]

From here on in, whenever you read the word "**product**," please understand that I use it to include hard goods, digital products, professional services, Net auction items, and even knowledge-based consulting skills... in short, **whatever you're selling**. The principles of **MYSS! 2002** are universal -- they work, no matter what you're selling on the Web.



2.1. Why You Need MYSS! 2002... Today

No Web presence yet? Or just starting the process? Here's the good news...

Not all companies sell on the Web. But their numbers are growing -- and quickly too! Many surveys show that **most businesses** who have yet to establish a Web presence intend to do so soon. Those who don't...

Stand to lose out on a big piece of what is fast becoming a rather substantial pie!

Other studies show that **consumers** have already started a serious shift towards buying via the Web.

Recent survey headlines by respected companies support this developing trend...

- Despite a lack of venture capital investments and some high profile failures, the North American Internet Retailing segment is on pace to surpass \$29.3 billion, a 75 percent increase over last year's revenue (Gartner Group).
- Sales either closed (or influenced) online will reach \$830 billion by 2005 (Jupiter).
- By 2005, U.S. online retail sales will total \$269 billion, or 11% of U.S. retail sales (Forrester).
- Business-to-business commerce will experience astounding growth over the next five years, rising to \$6.3 trillion in 2005 from \$336 billion this year (Jupiter Research).



Better still...

The Net is **just starting to hit its stride!** The expansion from a primarily North American-based phenomenon to a world-wide one is beginning in earnest. People are taking to the Web in droves. Every man, woman, child, and teenager is wholeheartedly embracing the Web.

Everywhere.

For them... it's information, access to a world-wide market, and products they can't get locally.

And for you?...

An eager and increasingly expanding marketplace. It's a classic win-win situation. See for yourself...

- European Internet users are increasingly comfortable with e-commerce (Net Value).
- Russian e-commerce revenue is set to increase nine-fold in the coming year (International Data Corporation).
- Indian commerce revenues are set to rise from \$75 million to \$254 million by the end of next year (eMarketer).
- Online shopping is popular in Belgium... giving the country an e-commerce market worth \$309 million (Insites).
- Internet sales in Scandinavia will account for more than 10% in the main online retail categories by 2005 (Jupiter).



Bottom line?

This mass movement **will dramatically alter the way the world buys and sells just about everything.**

Which all boils down to a simple, but dramatic, conclusion...

If you're not selling like crazy on the Web soon, you are toast. And it's your competition who will be doing the toasting.

... And if you're **not** part of a large company, this is **the opportunity of the millennium**, especially if you're just an "average Joe."

Because as long as bandwidth remains tight and for as long as the Search Engines remain affordable, you are on an **equal footing** with Microsoft. Really.

Yes, the Microsoft site has thousands of pages. Yes, your site is a lot smaller and you're an unknown...

But when a visitor hits your **Home Page**, **you** own the screen. You have the same initial opportunity to grab a visitor and send her down a pathway to a sale.

But the time to act is NOW!

Don't dare delay any longer! Seriously! Already the Search Engines are making a discernible shift towards "pay-per-listing", or "pay-per-inclusion" rankings. What I predicted in the first edition of **MYSS!** is coming to pass...

... the barriers to e-commerce are slowly rising.

But you've still got time if you hurry and get started. **Large or small, grab this opportunity and start selling now.**

Seriously. Do it!



2.1.1. **Already** On the Web?

Right now, at this very moment, someone is browsing your Web site. It's make-it-or-break-it time.

Do you know why most sites fail? It's because they are developed with either the wrong mindset... or **no** mindset at all.

Web selling is about selling one customer at a time... **one-to-one selling**... you and the customer together talking about her needs and wants. Web selling also has two important features to consider...

1) the customer sought you out -- this is a big positive.

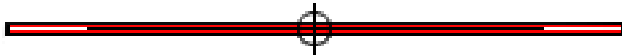
2) there are a million other guys who want a few minutes from her as well. And since you are just a "virtual vendor," the customer can click you away in a second... without even feeling bad about it! This is a huge negative.

Empty whatever concept you have in your brain about Web selling and replace it with the above. **Do not go any further until you can visualize you and your customer together, with that big positive and that big negative firmly in mind.**

Ready? Great! Let's continue...

During your one-to-one meetings, you will meet all kinds of customers. Some will almost be pre-sold and immediately deliver your [Most Wanted Response \(MWR\)](#).

Other people will have zillions of questions and head down all kinds of side paths and tangents. A skilled salesman never loses track of the ultimate goal -- getting the **MWR**. **This is exactly what your Web site must do, and will do, once you read and use this book.**



2.1.2. Just **Thinking** About It?

Selling on the Web is an exceptional and exciting business opportunity for E-V-E-R-Y-O-N-E...

- Very affordable start-up investment
- Low promotion costs
- Low staffing/operational expenditures
- Simple to automate
- Work at own pace (solo marketers)
- Worldwide customers, easy to reach
- Easy and inexpensive to test, lowering risk
- Quick to generate income.
- Easy to measure customer response and effectiveness of advertising
- Multi-dimensional. More on this [below](#).

So stop thinking -- there's nothing to think about.

Do!

Your competition is already passing you by. As a communication medium, the

Web outranks Gutenberg's printing press, Marconi's wireless, and Bell's telephone... all rolled together. Entire industries sprang up, and others disappeared under those steamrollers of revolution.

The Web will wreak similar havoc to the business landscape over the next few years.

It doesn't matter what your business is, or what you think of the Web, or whether you're worried about ruining conventional distribution channels, **get your business on the Web and make your Web site SELL ASAP...** or sooner.

If you can't see an obvious way to sell on the Web, **your competition will.** And you'll be the one who gets the worm's eye view of the steamroller!

And "what's in it for you" as an individual?

You will never again see such a low risk, high reward opportunity -- a true chance to grab the brass ring without betting the farm. **If you have any kind of expertise, or hobby that can be turned into a business, or idea for a product to sell...**



... stop thinking and DO!

In five years, when the typical surfer zooms at a thousand times the speed of today, when Search Engines are no longer free or affordable, the entrepreneurial dream will be far harder and more expensive to reach.

Get going!



2.1.3. Save a Bundle!

Okay, if you bought this book thinking that **MYSS! 2002** stands for "**Make Your SITE SAVE**"2002...

... then this section is for you! 😊

Sure, we all know that the Internet can make you money. Heck, you're reading the

best resource for doing just that! But the Internet represents a fantastic savings opportunity as well.

Need to recoup some of that start-up cash? Here's how to do it...

- **Recruitment** -- Access an extremely targeted, educated work force by advertising on your site. If you're running a business requiring individuals with specialized skills, this is the route to go!
- **Customer Service** -- Your "1-800" numbers cost you a bundle, as does the staff required to operate them. It's time-consuming and inefficient. One-on-one customer service can be virtually eliminated by an extensive **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQs) section on your corporate Web site. For more extensive help requirements, allow users to download PDF manuals and/or put "how-to" info on your site.
- **Employee Training** -- Use your Web site to provide staff with the educational resources necessary to remain knowledgeable -- post lectures, tutorials, new software, bulletins, lessons -- anything! Save the expense of costly person-to-person seminars.
- **Cost Cutting** -- Send e-mail to eliminate the need for costly long distance phone calls and faxes. E-mail documents to clients and business partners, and reduce your monthly courier bills!
- **Increased Efficiency** -- Using e-mail means your clients have documents in minutes, not the hours or days it takes with even the best courier companies. The faster you get documents to and from clients, the faster the job gets done, and the happier your clients are! Happy clients = great business!



Don't tell me you need more reasons for a Web presence?

Sigh! You're insatiable! 😊

- **Keeping Your Clients** -- People like to surf. Yup, hardly the most profound statement you're likely to read in **MYSS! 2002**, but an important one at that. If your offline customers can't deal with you online, you risk losing a percentage of them to other competitors who offer the convenience of Web shopping and ordering.

- **Brand Yourself as Modern** -- “What’s your Web site address?” is a question that you can answer proudly... “My Web site address is www.mycompany.com.” Rather than... “Uh, umm, we don’t have a Web presence at this time... mumble, mumble.”

Seriously, Folks, a Web presence is the sign of a company that's “**hip.**”

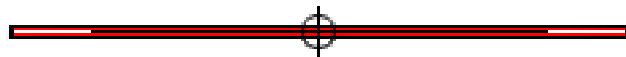
- **Product/Company Visibility** -- Even a modest professional Web presence can dramatically increase your company’s visibility, introducing it to a world-wide market.

- **Shopping Alternatives** -- Show your clients you’re in tune with their needs and desires by enabling them to acquire your products/services at a time that is **convenient to them** -- even if it's 3 A.M. and you’re asleep.



See? You’ll actually lose money by not establishing a Web presence **NOW!**

You really have no excuses!



2.2. E-commerce is Alive and Well!

“The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.”

-- Mark Twain, 1835 - 1910



No doubt about it.

Internet start-ups and “dot-com” businesses have gone **from media darling to...**



... media monster.

And yet, here is **MYSS! 2002** insisting that you can **still build a successful online business** -- without a degree in marketing, piles of start-up cash, or venture capital connections.

I bet you're thinking... "Hey, Ken, what gives?... Didn't I just read about the NASDAQ plummeting? About dot-com companies folding by the truckload? About companies that had previously raised tons of joint venture capital suddenly finding the cupboard was bare? What about multi-million dollar online ventures like Boo.com falling flat? Everywhere I turn, I seem to be reading something about some dot-com venture gone awry. And you're telling me I can run my own profitable Internet biz? C'mon Ken, what's up with that?"

First of all... great questions! 😊



Now, the answers...

Yes, the NASDAQ has plummeted, and dot-coms are failing, but that doesn't mean the Net's not a great place for your business.

Huh?

Okay, okay, gimme a minute and I'll explain...

The media loves BIG stories. Much, much, more so than they love little stories. That's why you're more likely to hear about the spectacular downfall of some huge multi-million dollar venture than the quiet successes of thousands of small mom-and-pop businesses. It's sensational. And an exciting story like that sells more newspapers and magazines.

Also...

The Net ushered in a new gold rush. The media was ripe with stories of exploding profits, spiraling share prices, and unprecedented earnings. This triggered one of the more base human desires...

Greed.

Greed spurred on the ensuing stampede of fortune-seekers to the Internet, and turned the minds of savvy marketers into mush. That same greed motivated venture capitalists to put buckets of money into new companies that were nothing more than smoke and mirrors.

With that said, you've got to ask yourself...

Is it really all that surprising that greed, little or no business plan, gross mismanagement, and a brand-new marketing medium add up to disaster?

Not really.

It was these same companies that focused entirely on building **marketshare**. They forked out buckets of money to acquire customers at any costs. And marketshare means nothing unless it generates **revenue**.



Bottom line?

Investors got tired of seeing their money going out the door, without any of it coming back. And when they called in the chips?...

CRUNCH... SMASH... TINKLE!

There goes the NASDAQ!

But guess what? To those "in the know," the crash was inevitable. Companies were so over-valued, they had only one place to go. Down.

As the Net goes through more growing pains, you're likely to see adjustments here and there. Don't worry about it. All you need to know is...

MYSS! 2002 is about revenue -- getting the sale (i.e., **mastering the BIG 3**, building relationships with customers, **SELLING** to your customers).

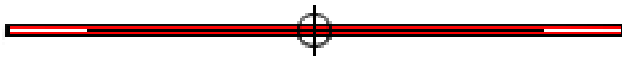
MYSS! 2002 is a book for **mercenaries** -- not **dreamers**. **I want the sale. You want the sale.** With the tools in this book, you'll get the sale.

Yes, the Net is still a great place to take your business, provided you do your homework, and have a solid business plan. Working a niche market? Outstanding! That's where the greatest opportunities lie!

Absolutely... e-commerce is alive and well.

Now...

Go get 'em!



2.2.1. It Doesn't Take Lots of Money!

If you listen to the stuffed shirts talking from their 30th floor mahogany-paneled executive offices, you'd think a decent e-biz can't be started for less than \$50,000.

Not true!

A profitable mom-and-pop e-biz can be up and running for significantly less than \$1,000. Of course, if you really **want** to spend \$50,000 to get started, plenty of people will happily take your money! Seriously, you don't need much to begin.

The basics of [HTML](#) are simple to grasp. Sharp-looking, effective Web sites are easy to build. Web hosting is becoming more and more competitive. Various third party options are available for credit card processing so you won't need a big bank deposit for your merchant account. Free "store" software makes selling multiple products a breeze. Cut and paste applications allow even technophobes to simply implement complicated programming feats on their sites. Low cost advertising options are springing up all over the place.

All of these facilitate your smooth entry into e-commerce.



There is a potential fly in the proverbial ointment, however. [Search Engines](#) (SEs) are slowly switching to a "[pay-per-inclusion](#)" model. How will this affect you?

SEs are crucial to the success of your e-biz. **You must be listed in their databases in order to generate substantial traffic. And traffic is the life-line of your business.**

Ignore Search Engines at your peril. Pay-per-inclusion only adds an extra few hundred bucks to your start-up costs. It's well worth the investment.



Getting started on the Net is becoming easier and easier. Barring the SEs' gradual move towards paid listings, it's also becoming cheaper. Things are improving on an almost daily basis. There are just so many more options available now than they were when I first wrote **MYSS!**.

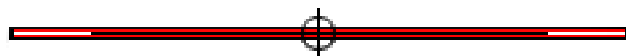
What are the absolute necessities to get started?...

- A HTML editor (preferably a [WYSIWYG](#) one)
- This book (congratulations, I see you have it already!) 😊
- A [graphics editor](#)
- Own domain name, plus hosting fees
- The odd "how-to" book for technical issues
- A business plan.

Yes, your own successful Internet business is as practical now as it was when I first wrote **MYSS!**. In fact, it's even more so.

Luckily, you have an **edge...** an unfair advantage. You have...

... **MYSS! 2002.** 😊



2.3. MYSS! 2002 is For Everyone

I make only one assumption about **you**, dear reader...

You want your site to **SELL**.

If you don't know "what" you want your site to **SELL**, read no further. **But if you want your Web site to SELL a product, service, brand, or image**, this book will provide the resources you need to prosper... no matter **who** you are or **what** you do.

For example...

For the one-person-show netreprenuer, MYSS! 2002 is an invaluable total-package guide to sales success. Of course, if you are reading this in your home office, sitting in your shorts with your feet up on your desk... when you read words like "sales department" or "marketing people," simply read "**you**" instead.



Or perhaps you have a **specialized role at a mid-to-large company**. Want to become **invaluable** to your company? **MYSS! 2002** will help you **fill the information gap** between the "propeller-heads" and the "suits."

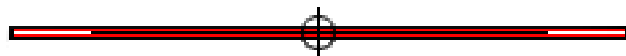
[**SIDEBAR**]

The roles of sales versus marketing in a sales-oriented Web site are light-years apart. [You will see why later in this book.](#)

Whether you are launching your first product on your own, or working for a humungous multinational, the information in this book **will** make you a **Web sales expert**.

Want your site to **SELL?**

Simple solution. Start reading...



2.4. Jump the Tech Ropes...

[Earlier](#), I provided you with a short list of the bare essentials needed to get your own e-biz going. If you're a technophobe who read that list in horror, please take note...

MYSS! 2002 assumes you have **zero** technical knowledge. Don't know [HTML?](#) Doesn't matter. It's not necessary to have any sort of programming knowledge to get the most out of this book. **MYSS! 2002** is **not** intended to teach you HTML, [javascript](#), or any other kind of techie stuff.

[SIDEBAR]

However... If you **are** a do-it-yourselfer, we'll tackle the best way to get you started with the technical stuff in the next couple of sub-chapters. Prefer to get the **big picture** first? Just [skip ahead!](#)

Nowadays, it's the techies and designers who tell business people how to do their sites. This is wrong. They don't necessarily understand your business, your products, or your customers.

(Of course, **if you're a techie or designer**, this book will shoot you a quantum leap forward -- and help you understand the needs of the biz people who write your checks!)

When you finish this book, you will know what you want your Web site to do.

You will have the power and knowledge to **direct techies and designers to get what you want...**



... a Site that **SELLS!**



2.4.1. HTML -- Getting Started!

HTML stands for “**Hypertext Markup Language**” and it's the main programming language lurking behind all those millions of pages floating up there in cyberspace.

The basics of HTML are quite simple. Once you learn the basics, you will understand how Web pages work.

It's important that you purchase a good HTML editor -- preferably a **WYSIWYG** one. This will allow you to build attractive, functional Web pages without spending a lot of time learning the finer points of HTML programming.

Please don't waste your time learning complicated techniques. **MYSS! 2002** is about selling on the Web by focusing on your customer's needs, establishing a **MWR**, and writing powerful sales copy. It is **not** about flashing whirligigs and beautiful graphics that only serve to distract your customer. Concentrate on the basics!



Let's get you pointed in the right direction, so you can get up to speed on Web page programming.

Here's a great book that provides a solid starting point for beginners who have no programming experience. It will teach you all you need to know as quickly and as painlessly as possible...



Sam's “Teach Yourself HTML 4 in 24 Hours” by Dick Oliver
MacMillan Computer Pub, ISBN 0672317249

Peachpit Press publishes the “Visual Quickstart Guide” series which teaches effectively and efficiently...



HTML For The World Wide Web by Elizabeth Castro
Peachpit Press,
ISBN 0201354934

There are tons of great **HTML** learning resources on the Net. Here are a few. If you feel the need for more, surf over to your favorite Search Engine and type “HTML tutorial” into the search box...



The WDL

<http://www.stars.com/Authoring/HTML/Intro/>



Webmonkey

http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/authoring/html_basics/



Sizzling HTML Jalfrezi

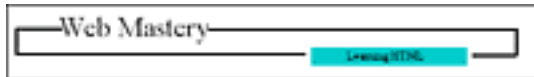
<http://www.jalfrezi.com/>



HTML - An Interactive Tutorial For Beginners

<http://www.davesite.com/webstation/html/>

Here's an index for finding HTML learning resources on the Web. A handy site...



Learning HTML - HTML Tutorials

<http://www.devry-phx.edu/webresrc/webmstry/lrntutrl.htm>



Building your Web pages using a HTML editor will make your life much easier. These programs **eliminate** the need for complex coding, so you can concentrate on the “look, feel, and copy” of your page. It is, however, to your benefit to have a rudimentary knowledge of HTML, because as good a job as these programs do, it's often necessary to “**tweak**” **some of the HTML manually**. Check out...



Allaire HomeSite

<http://www.allaire.com/products/homesite/>

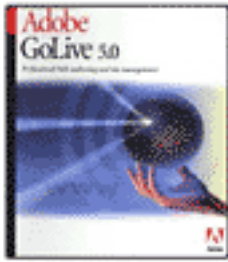
Growing in popularity are the **WYSIWYG** editors.

Pronounced “whizzy whig”, (no, I kid you not!) and short for “**What You See Is What You Get**,” these programs allow beginners to build complex pages by simply “dragging and dropping” onto the work area. Presently, they are the most popular (and also the most expensive) editors available.

Purists feel that these programs generate too much extraneous code, and the best pages should be hand-constructed. Possibly. But you're not hand-building a Rolls-Royce here -- all you need is a Chevy. And these will work just fine for that.

Most of these companies offer free trial downloads, so be sure to try before you buy!

Adobe has discontinued its popular Page Mill (although you can still find it around) and replaced it with this product, in order to compete directly with Macromedia's Dreamweaver...



Adobe GoLive 5.0

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

Microsoft... love 'em, or hate 'em, here's their editor...



Front Page 2000

<http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage/>

The most powerful and expensive of these three, **Dreamweaver** is considered the cutting edge...



Macromedia Dreamweaver

<http://www.macromedia.com/software/dreamweaver/>



Don't have the finances to purchase an editor? Like to do a little experimenting first? **Arachnophilia** is a freeware editor that does a pretty decent job and is simple to use...



Arachnophilia

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

Other shareware and freeware editors are available at...



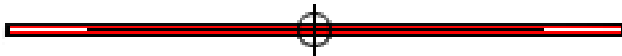
Tucows

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



Let's move from these HTML resources to the next important element...

Graphics!



2.4.2. Graphics For "Do-It-Yourselfers"

If you're dreaming about a flashy Web page, with lots of animated [gifs](#) and stunning image maps...

Finish reading **MYSS! 2002**, and then come back here!

Seriously! I'm not kidding.

Amazing graphics **don't make sales**. They increase page loading time, so your visitors arrive (if they even bother to wait) impatient and irritated. Even if your graphics are especially compelling, all they do is distract the customer from making the purchase.

Not good!

The most important thing on your Web site is the **TEXT!** Forget about the graphics.

All your Web page needs to be is clean-looking, neat, attractive, and functional...

"The definitive work on making any Web site sell!"

MAKE YOUR SITE-SELL!

[by Ken Evoy M.D.](#)

[become an affiliate](#) | [contact us](#) | [world's most...](#) | [order now](#)

Master the **Big 3 of
product, site-selling,
and traffic-building,
and there's simply **no way to fail.****

Your Web site either makes the sale, or it **doesn't**.

Ninety-nine out of one hundred sites **don't** get the order.

We blame that on suspicious, scared Web-consumers.

Wrong.

Make Your Site SELL! is about joining the
one in a hundred who **sell, really sell,** on the Net.

Make Your Site Sell!
<http://myss.sitesell.com/>

Another great example...

Ultimatefatburner.com
Real Answers, Real Solutions, NO DIETING!
Tue Jul 10 10:59:04 2001

Green Tea Extract -- A Powerful Weight Loss Ingredient!

More and more often, you'll find green tea (or green tea extract) included in the compilations of many of the more popular weight loss supplements today. (You may [buy Green Tea](#) by itself as well!) And why is that?

Several reasons! :-)

Specifically, and most importantly, green tea extract often replaces the caffeine component of the standard ephedrine - caffeine - salicin (aspirin) fat burning stack. That makes it a decent quality fatburner in and of itself. However...

If that's all green tea did, this would be a pretty short article. Luckily, it provides additional benefits -- far and beyond what plain caffeine could do. First, it's a powerful anti-oxidant. Yes... just like vitamin C and beta-carotene are! But researchers have suggested that the active ingredient (called epigallocatechin gallate -- I kid you not!), may be up to 200 times more powerful than vitamin E as an oxidant.

But wait... that's **still** not the best part!

Green tea may have use as a glucose regulator -- meaning it slows the rise in blood sugar following a meal. It does this by slowing the action of a particular digestive enzyme called amylase. This enzyme is pivotal in the breakdown of starches (read carbohydrates), that can cause blood sugar levels to soar following a meal. This is pretty exciting stuff -- along with a chromium, and possibly a vanadyl supplement, green tea might be the missing link in proper glucose management.

Personal experience? Lately I've been supplementing with the Canadian formulation of MuscleTech's Hydroxycut (the US version does not contain any green tea), which contains over 900mg of green tea extract per serving. It's too early to tell how effective this is as a fat-burner, but in general, I find that blood sugar levels seem to be stable, cravings are minimal, as are the jitters

Ultimatefatburner.com

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

Simple, simple, simple!



Do you need a stunning logo for your Web site?

Once again, it's not necessary!

Your logo doesn't need to be elaborate. Visit the following examples. These are the top 6 "e-tailers" and their corresponding logos... (Source: PC Data Online)



Amazon.com

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



Ticketmaster

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



Pets.com

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



Barnes and Noble

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



Drugstore.com

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



CDNow

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

See anything **spectacular**? I sure don't. **Simple. Easy to read. Functional.** And that's all your logo needs to be. You don't have to be a graphics expert to create a satisfactory logo.

[**SIDEBAR**]

Please, if you're a newbie, don't be intimidated by all this stuff. Constructing a simple, attractive logo/banner is well within the grasp of a beginner.

If the idea of constructing your own logo scares you to death, hire a professional, or try **CoolText.com's** online logo generator. Chances are you can come up with something you can live with!



CoolText.com

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

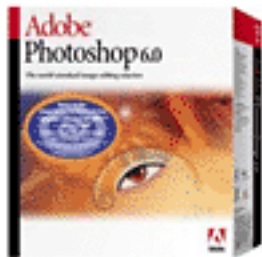
If you're on a tight budget, GotLogos will create your logo for a mere \$25...



GotLogos

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

The first step is to find some graphic software. Hmmm... where to start? The mother of all graphics programs is **Adobe's Photoshop...**



Adobe's Photoshop

<http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop/main.html>

Its power is undisputed. Unfortunately, it's also rather expensive, tough to learn, and particularly user-**unfriendly**. If you're familiar with Photoshop, or feel like a challenge, by all means use it.

If you just want to bash out some decent graphics for your site without spending a year learning the finer points of graphic design, the following programs are simpler to use, cheaper, and in some cases, arguably just as powerful...

A recent issue of PC World Magazine ranked **PhotoImpact 5** a "best buy" in the "image editors" category. Yes, even against the mighty Photoshop...



Ulead's PhotoImpact

<http://www.ulead.com/pi/runme.htm>

Fireworks is designed specifically for Web graphics, and integrates seamlessly with their WYSIWYG editor, Dreamweaver...



Macromedia's Fireworks

<http://www.macromedia.com/software/fireworks/>



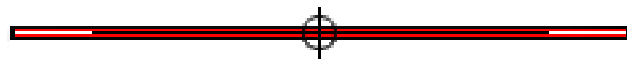
Jasc's Paint Shop Pro

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



At this point, you have the tools to build your logo and graphics. You're almost set!

It's time to discuss banners briefly...



2.4.3. Banners, Ahoy!

In general, I don't recommend putting banners on your site. No one clicks on them, and they hurt your site's credibility. However, there may be a special situation where you require a banner. Suppose...

...You're implementing an [affiliate program](#). In that case, you **will** need banners for associates to display on their Web sites.

Yes, banners are ineffective. No, most people won't even look at them.

Do I hear you asking... "Why use them at all?"

Good question! Here's the answer...

When you're faced with a choice between an affiliate member throwing up your banner or doing nothing at all, you're better off with the banner. Even .5% is better than nothing.

Sure, your "super affiliates" know the importance of [PREselling](#) your product -- but for the vast majority, posting a banner will be the extent of their participation. (A banner advertising campaign is completely useless, as you'll find out [later](#).)

You have two choices when it comes to banner ads...

1) Contract the job out to professionals...



Bannerworkz

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



Lounge Lizard

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

Animation.com offers a very handy service. You can choose your banner, headline, or button according to your price (prices range from \$1.99 to \$125) and customize to your specifications. In order to download the finished version (unpaid graphics retain a "watermark"), you pay with your credit card...



Animation.com

<http://www.animation.com/server/bannershop/affiliatesite/pwbannergallery.asp>



2) If you're on a shoestring budget, you may wish to attempt building your own...

Difficult? Nope. Simple static banners are still within the realms of what a beginner can accomplish. But, and this is one **BIG** but...

Be forewarned!

Banners still remain an important "branding tool." **If your banner looks terrible, customers will assume the same of your company.** Your banner is your virtual billboard in cyberspace. Make sure banners look decent. If not, save up for a professional job, or leave well enough alone for the time being.

Want to give it a try?

Building a static banner is easy. Best of all, you have several options...

Your best bet is to simply use a generic template, and customize it with your own text. Some potential sources...

Creative Connectivity has a page full of templates. Download them to your computer (right click with your mouse and choose "Save Image As..."). Use your graphics editor to add your own text. This takes a little more effort, but a graphics editor will usually do a better job of adding customized text than an online service...



Creative Connectivity
<http://www.crecon.com/>

Quick Banner is a free service that provides dozens of templates and lets you customize banners online...



Quick Banner
<http://www.quickbanner.com/>

Media Builder offers a free banner generator as well...



Media Builder
<http://www.mediabuilder.com/>



Your other option is to build the banner from scratch in a graphics editor. Just decide on the dimensions, and build a single **gif image** to those specifications.

Unless you're a pretty competent graphics designer, here's what I'd suggest...

- **Use riveting text -- and don't use too much of it!**

- **Keep it simple. Very simple!**
- **Make sure it's easy to read, with one uncomplicated, legible font.**
- **Finish with a call to action -- i.e., "Click Here!"**
- **Keep file size to a minimum.**
- **Be honest with yourself! No one wants to admit their "golden goose" is an "ugly duckling."**
- **Get a second and third opinion from people you know will tell you the truth.**



Animated banners are simply a couple of **gif images** strung together by an animator program (not a difficult process). Use a [graphics editor](#) to build a series of gif images. Then use the "wizard" function of an animation program to string them together. The animation program displays each image after an allotted period of time so the banner appears to be animated. However, it's merely a series of images displayed one after another.

The best animated banners are very small -- only a few frames/images are used. This is essential if you want to keep file size to a minimum. It's very tempting to get carried away, so be careful with your experimentation.

Here are two animation programs to research...



Ulead's Gif Animator

<http://www.ulead.com/ga/runme.htm>



Jasc Animation Shop

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

(Free with Paint Shop Pro)



Although there are services that will let you build free animated banners online, I've yet to see one that produced the kind of results I'd put on my Web site. Bottom line for animated banners is...

- experiment with building your own.
- save up for a professionally done one!

Oh yes, and...

If you're joining a banner exchange program, make sure you know **all** the dimensions -- in pixels, and kilobytes. There's nothing worse than spending hours getting it "just right" to find out you've exceeded the kilobyte restrictions.

Phew! Just one last thing, and you'll be ready for anything...



2.4.4. Site Design

All your site really needs to be is clean, simple, and well-structured. It does not have to be fancy. It does not need to be complicated. And it certainly does not have to be expensive, despite what the pundits say.

But it must not look like a dog's breakfast. **Your credibility will go...**



... bye-bye!

The best way to recognize good site design from bad is to do some surfing. You will know when you have found a good page, and its opposite. How?

Just pay attention to your feelings as you surf. If you find yourself frowning or saying, "What's going on?" a fair bit -- sit up and take notice. Ask yourself... "What's the problem here?... Where do things fall apart?"

Identify the problems, and make sure not to repeat the same things yourself. In fact, anytime your surfing is anything less than seamless, take a good look at the offending site and determine why.

Or, you can always visit the master [\(more on this great site later\)](#)...



Web Pages That Suck.com

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



Back to your research...

Have a look at what the pros are doing. Chances are their pages are pretty simple, too!

Remember, **people use the Net to find information**. Information is contained in text. Compelling text is 1,000% more important than fancy design. After all, if a fancy page has no substance, it delivers no value.

On the other hand, your Web site **IS your store front**. It **IS** a reflection of your business, the quality of your product, and so on. Imagine driving by a brick-and-mortar store with a big crack in the front window, letters missing off the sign, and badly in need of a coat of paint -- what would you think? Would you stop to browse?

Not likely...

So be sure that your Web site looks professionally done. I repeat -- that does not mean you have to spend a bundle to have it built. **A clean design with a simple layout is all that's ever necessary.**



If you're in need of a professional Web site designer visit...



Yahoo!

[http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Design Arts/Graphic Design/Web Page Design and Layout/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Design_Arts/Graphic_Design/Web_Page_Design_and_Layout/)



Guru.com

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



Instant Work

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



When designing your page, here are a few things to remember...

- **Keep page size as small as possible.** That means using a small logo, and images only if absolutely necessary. The best sites on the Web load in under 6 seconds on a 33.6K modem. No one will wait 30 seconds for your page to load. **FAST!** That's the key!

- **Keep the look and feel consistent throughout the site.** Nothing says “unprofessional” more than a different colored background for every page.
- **Don’t get cute.** Keep background colors to a white or off-white color. Stick with basic fonts in black.
- **K-I-S-S!**
- **Leave lots of white space, and don’t overload the page.** Let it breathe! People scan Web pages, so splitting paragraphs up into bit-size chunks allows your visitor to absorb more!
- **No animations, fancy gadgetry, or javascript effects.** Let’s face it -- there’s some pretty cool stuff on the Web. And, yes, it is fun to play with. But don’t be tempted -- your sales site can’t be self-indulgent. You have to think “customer” every step of the way! Customers want information.
- **Always, always, always test your pages on at least the latest versions of Microsoft’s Explorer, AND Netscape’s Navigator.** You’ll be surprised at the differences -- especially at the way they render text. For example, selecting a font size of “1” for your page works wonderfully in Explorer. Visit that page in Navigator, and you’ll need a magnifying glass to read it.

(We discuss usability issues, and navigation [a little later.](#))



Bottom line?

Relax. Focus on your visitors. Don’t try to impress anyone with your new Web building skills. **Build with one, and only one, mindset in place...**

... **To SELL!**



2.4.5. Finding a “Techie”

If you’re a netpreneur, you’re probably trying to do it all yourself -- heck, most of us have a dozen “how-to” books cluttering up our work spaces at any given time. Today, perhaps, your work plan includes the basics of javascript. Tomorrow, it might

involve CGI and Perl. And so it continues.

In fact, at any given time a netrepneur **may feel like...**



... a circus juggler!

But try as you may, you really can't do it all yourself. There comes a time when you need a **professional** -- and you need her **NOW!** So how do you go about finding your "techie?"...

Two ways...

1) Through personal networking -- Ask friends or associates with a site. Phone local non-competitors and ask who they recommend. Visit a local university or college campus. Inquire if any of the pros might be interested in helping you out on a part-time basis. If not, ask for the brightest and most promising student. Post a "help wanted" ad in the cafeteria.

Scour your brain for anyone in the biz who may be able to help you. Make a list, and pick up the phone. There's a gold mine of resources out there!

2) Use one of the many online services springing up to address that very issue...

Search for the professionals you need, review their credentials and get feedback from previous employers. Contact professionals who are online.

InstantWork tells you how...



Instant Work

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

Guru.com provides a fantastic service. It allows gurus (techies) to **post listings** indicating their **area of expertise**, and rate of pay. There are gurus of all types, shapes, forms, and sizes. From management, marketing, advertising and legal professionals to Web development and creation specialists, you can find them all here! Do a “power search” of the site to locate the “tech support” you need...



Guru.com

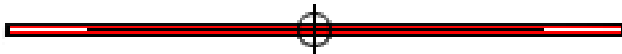
<http://www.guru.com/>

Guru is highly competitive! I’ve seen graphics professionals advertised for as little as \$10 an hour. Since all listings are **visible**, techies **compete** amongst each other for your dollars. It’s a buyers market!

Of course, the best part is that it doesn’t matter where techies are in the entire world, since most work can be done over the Net!

Do a search, identify your techie, drop them a line, make a deal...

... And then you’re sailing!



2.4.6. Miscellaneous Webmaster Resources

So, **you’ve flexed your...**



... programming muscles, and you’re ready to move on to bigger things!

Here are two online resources if you want to explore new avenues, or spice up your pages -- **a little bit**. Again, I must stress this -- don’t get carried away...



BigNoseBird.com

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



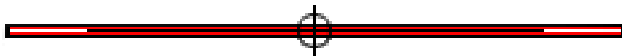
Java Boutique

<http://javaboutique.internet.com/>



Web Developer.com

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



2.4.7. Site Build It!

I have a little secret for you, there **IS** an easier way to build a site...

It's called **Site Build It!**, the ultimate e-commerce value bundle.

Don't like learning curves? No technical inclination? Short on time? This is **your** tool. Simple. Powerful. Intuitive. And best of all...

Site Build It! is completely automated. It's largely server-side (no huge applications slowing down your computer) and everything is done for you at the touch of button. **Site Build It!** will literally save you weeks and weeks of time.

The goal is to oblige you only to think. To create content -- great copy. Content that **PREsells** your visitors, and gets the click to your sales site, or the affiliate programs

you support. And earns income.

Site Build It! frees you up to execute the important stuff.

Everything else... FTP'ing, writing code, <META> tags and keyword density, optimization, and Search Engine submission... is handled by **Site Build It!**.

Just select a template and color scheme for your site, choose "Select this Style" and your entire Web site is built. In seconds...

The screenshot shows the 'Style: High Tech' interface. On the left, under 'HIGH TECH', there is a 'Select Color Scheme' section with two radio buttons: 'Black/Red' (selected) and 'Navy/Grey'. To the right is a preview area titled 'HIGH TECH EXAMPLE LOGO' showing a grid of colored squares and a headline 'Headline in Here' with placeholder text. Below the color scheme selection is a text input field labeled 'Create logo for your site:' with a red note '(max. 22 characters)'. At the bottom are two buttons: 'Preview' and 'Select this Style'.

Or...

The screenshot shows the 'Style: Sports and Recreation' interface. On the left, under 'Sports and Recreation', there is a 'Select Color Scheme' section with two radio buttons: 'Red' (selected) and 'Navy'. To the right is a preview area titled 'Sports and Recreation' showing a grid of colored squares and a headline 'Headline in Here' with placeholder text. Below the color scheme selection is a text input field labeled 'Create logo for your site:' with a red note '(max. 22 characters)' and the text 'Diet Supplement Review' entered. At the bottom are two buttons: 'Preview' and 'Select this Style'.

Or...

The screenshot shows a web design tool interface for creating a website. At the top, a dark blue header bar contains a question mark icon and the text 'Style: Health & Beauty'. Below this, the main workspace is divided into two columns. The left column has a white background and contains the text 'Health & Beauty' in a large serif font, followed by a section titled 'Select Color Scheme' with two radio button options: 'Blue/Yellow' (selected) and 'Cyan/Grey'. The right column has a purple and yellow background and contains a 'Health Fitness and Beauty' header, a 'Headline in Here' section, and three paragraphs of placeholder text. Below the main workspace, there is a white bar with the text 'Create logo for your site:' followed by a text input field containing 'Diet Supplement Review' and a red note '(max. 22 characters)'. At the bottom, there are two buttons: 'Preview' and 'Select this Style'.

Or many others!

And the HTML? The <META> tags?

No problem.

Just enter your text into the form fields, and **Site Build It!** will write all the code for you...

?

Page Information

?

File Name

http://www.diet-supplement-review.com/

test-page

.html

?

Page Title:

Your Site's Title here!

?

Keywords:

Your Site's Keywords here!

?

Description:

Your Site's Description here!

?

Put this page on your Home Page navigation?

Yes

Special warning -- click here.

To insert a block here, choose block and click INSERT-->

Insert

?

Headline

Block #1

Delete this Block

Text

Your First Headline -- or <H1> tag

Alignment

Left

Size

1

To insert a block here, choose block and click INSERT-->

Insert

?

Text

Block #2

Delete this Block

Special warning -- click here.

Text

Wow! This is easy. No HTML, no <META> tags... no nuthin'.

Just type your text in and , PRESTO, it all appears magically in your selected template. Easy...

And very KEWL!

Alignment

Left

My favorite part about **Site Build It!**?

It's an equally powerful tool for beginners, professionals, and seasoned Webmasters. As you will see... the most exciting part of **Site Build It!** lies not in its ability to automatically generate Web pages and code (though that certainly is great, especially if you're a beginner). Rather it's the incredible potential of the **SBI!**

Manager tool to effortlessly locate niches and income opportunities.

The **SBI! Manager**, the client-side part of **Site Build It!** (software that runs off your computer), automatically locates the most profitable niches and keywords related to your theme or topic, so you may focus on building the most effective, profitable Web site possible.

A complete discussion on the **SBI! Manager** can be viewed [here!](#) For more on **Site Build It!**, which includes the **Site Build It! Manager** tool, and the features listed above...



Site Build It!

<http://buildit.sitesell.com/>

[**SIDEBAR**]

Site Build It! is in full expansion mode. In the near future, it'll be growing to include a number of very exciting e-commerce modules. Examples?...

1) A Digital E-commerce module -- if you've ever thought about creating and selling an e-book, now's the time to started writing. **Site Build It!** will allow you to sell and fulfill exactly the way SiteSell.com sells **MYSS! 2002!**.

2) An E-zine MailOut component that will allow you to automatically take subscriptions and allow you to do mailouts (HTML and /or text) to your opt-in list!

And that's just the start! Keep your eyes peeled for new and exciting functionality!

Okay...

We've covered the **basics of building a Web site**. We know where to **find** people to help us with the stuff we just can't figure out for ourselves. And we know where to go for extra help.

Now... let's get back to **building a site that SELLS...**



2.5. The Big 3 to Succeed on the Web

Launching a Web business is far simpler than a real-world business. To succeed in a Web-based venture, you only have to succeed at three points, **each one directly under your control...**

- 1) develop a great **product**
- 2) write a Web site that **SELLS** with deadly effectiveness
- 3) attract targeted customers (i.e., **traffic**) to the site.

If you succeed at all three steps, your Web-oriented business has to succeed. Period. There are simply no other variables.

Of course, the catch is that **you must succeed at all three!**

I knew that my **product** was going to be of high quality. I had to learn how to make a site that **SELLS**, and **then** figure out how to attract targeted traffic to my site.

The **focus of the main volume of MYSS! 2002** is on making your site **SELL!** However, I want you to have the **entire package...** everything you need to win on the Web, from **product** to **sales site** to **traffic-building**.

So I have included **three additional volumes**. They cover the other two pieces of the 3-part puzzle (**product** and **traffic**), **as well as** online store-building.

"That's great," you say. "**But how do I succeed at The Big 3?**" Glad you asked!...



2.5.1. How to "Nail" The Big 3

Become customer-crazed! Excel at **The Big 3** (product, site, traffic) by being fanatical about her. Make your #1 objective to be... "**Improve the life of my customer!**"...

- Develop a **product** that **exceeds** your customer's needs and wants, one that overdelivers.

- Write a **site** that tells her what she wants to know -- in other words, write your site for her, not for you.
- Attract only those people who want or need your product. By understanding and focusing on your customer, by targeting her needs and wants, you'll know how to cause her to find you.

And continue this customer-care attitude well **after** the sale. Go above and beyond. Follow-up customer support and communication is the key to developing a **long-term** business.

OK, let's boil it all down...

Be customer-crazed, every step of the way. The rest is just details... 😊



2.5.2. First, The Product

Of **The Big 3** for success, **product is perhaps the most controllable**. You either have a great product or you don't. If you don't, dump it and get a new one... a great one.

And don't try to get away with selling a bad product on the Web. First, of course, it's just not ethical. Your life will be a misery of e-mail bombs and people spreading the word. And it just doesn't spread any faster than on the Internet!

Take your time identifying and developing the best [product](#).

Build a solid foundation for your online business .



2.5.3. If I Can, **You** Can!

I am a Canadian physician who formerly **taught and practiced...**



... emergency medicine at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. **I knew very little about the Internet and the World Wide Web.**

I realized early in my medical career that doctors were doomed to be slaves to the government in our socialized medical system. I still wanted to practice emergency medicine, **but as a hobby that I loved.**

Before becoming “Web-sessed,” my wife and I designed toys and games. We sold 23 of our inventions to large companies around the world, generating millions of dollars in royalty revenues along the way.

So, thanks to toys and games, medicine **is** my part-time hobby that I still love...

However, like a lot of other people, I became fascinated by the Internet. It’s the digital Wild West. **Right now, everyone has the same chance to successfully market a product on the Web.**

As a result, I started writing a computer program for myself called PennyGold. I had already developed a successful strategy for investing in junior mining companies (this “occasional hobby” grew an original \$5,000 experimental stake into more than \$150,000).

I gathered all my loose-strewn notes and rough database... and converted that chaos into the “ultimate penny mining stock software.” Originally intended **for my own use**, I planned to use the software and the Internet to generate more high-potential stock candidates.

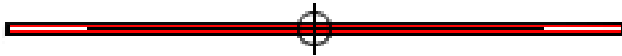


While learning about the Internet, I realized that the Web was really the **ultimate high-density marketplace**. What do I mean?...

Manhattan can sustain high-niche retail stores because millions of people are on

one tiny island. Well, with the Internet, you have tens-and-soon-hundreds of millions of people sitting right on your desktop!

I figured that if this software product was of interest to me, **it would be of interest to others on the Web**. So I decided to market my **product...**



2.5.4. Next, Make a Site That **SELLS!**

OK, you've developed a great product. And let's assume for a moment that you are attracting targeted traffic to your site. **What's the difference between success and failure?...**

Your Web site! It's the "make it or break it" step.

I realized that I would have to convince people to buy PennyGold. And I knew that fancy graphics would not do that. But words would...

Before designing/writing my PennyGold Web site, I set about reading books on copywriting, writing direct response letters, and Web marketing. I surfed through countless commercial Web sites, looking for the strongest common elements that worked.

Over time, I tried just about everything that looked or sounded reasonable -- I kept what worked, and dropped the rest.



Like most things in life, there's an **80-20 formula**. Most of what I tried was a waste of time. I boiled the whole process down to doing a small number of things perfectly.

This trial-and-error process developed a tight battlefield-tested system that works... and will work for you and save **you** the 24 month learning curve!)

The **net result** for PennyGold? The **site increased its sales rate tenfold**, from 0.1% to 1% of all visitors, an incredible feat when you consider the doubtful nature of the product. Let me explain...

There is simply not a harder product on the Web to sell than PennyGold. People have grave doubts about penny mining stocks. Here's the problem...

PennyGold really does work... **but the consumer did not know that.** As a matter of fact, my potential customer had severe doubts when he first hit the site. You see, only **after** customers bought and used it, did they truly realize how PennyGold **over**delivers.

Despite that **huge disadvantage**, and despite the fact that we were **unable to offer a free trial download** (we limited sales to 1,000 copies, so we couldn't give this info away), we increased our sales rate by tenfold (**despite steadily increasing the price from \$197 to \$447**).

The Web consumer is a sophisticated...



... doubting consumer. I had to develop a Web site that would overcome the following problems...

- expensive sale
- dubious investment arena
- from an unknown person (me)
- hard-to-convince audience
- without even the benefits of a trial download.

Phew! Whatever you're selling, your product will be easier to sell than PennyGold was... far easier. PennyGold forced me to become a battle-tested expert in **making sites with SALES POWER.**



It doesn't matter whether you work at Microsoft or out of your spare room (while in your pajamas), **MYSS! 2002 will fire up your Web sales.** This book covers it all -- how to...

- write powerful, compelling sales copy

- build a tight, easy-to-use, easy-to-navigate site
- design convincing testimonial and guarantee pages
- structure a powerful pathway, from the Opening Page to the Closer.

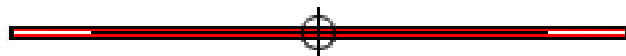


But **MYSS! 2002** doesn't stop there. It's the **complete package** -- an invaluable tool for **anyone...** netrepreneur, experienced Marketing V.P., Director of Sales, Chief Techie, etc.

To complete the job, MYSS! 2002 provides an overview on such things as...

- shopping cart software and e-commerce solution packages
- setting backup responses, including how to set up and run a newsletter
- how to accept payments -- all the options!
- how to constantly experiment your way to large sales increases, month after month
- using e-mail to close the sales
- the critical secrets of great after-sales support
- analysis of great sites that sell
- advice from other entrepreneurs succeeding in the real world
- and on and on...

Believe me, when you finish reading this **MYSS! 2002**, you will **know** how to make your site **SELL!**



2.5.5. Finally, Attract Targeted Customers

Once you've got a great product, and a killer sales site, it's time to bring **targeted, motivated** traffic to your sales machine...

There are hundreds of books related to Web sales -- I own 'em all. I also subscribe to every imaginable Web marketing/promotion and Web sales newsletter and e-zine.

You know what? All the books and e-zines teach you that "if you bring more people to your site, you'll get more sales."

And this is true, of course... **unless your site barely sells at all.** If you can only convince 1 visitor out of a million to buy your product, you're wasting all that good traffic.

That's why I focused **first** on designing/writing a site that is **SALES-effective... and then...**

... developing traffic for PennyGold.

I include everything I know about dragging visitors to your Web site in the [Traffic-Building Volume](#) of **MYSS! 2002**. This volume concentrates on **what works** so that you don't fall into chase-your-tail traps.

You'll discover how to build targeted traffic **in the most time-and-money-efficient ways possible.** It shows you how to get the best "bang-for-your-buck" **offline**, as well.



In this additional volume, I devote special attention to the [Search Engines](#)...

... the single most important traffic-building method of all!

This special volume shows you all you need to know to attract motivated, interested customers to your site... cleanly, simply, deadly-effectively... **and ethically.** You will build traffic in such a way that even the most sensitive, stringent Search Engine won't object.

Actually...



... they'll love the way you do it.

I had originally planned to cover this topic in 40-50 pages. But the pages grew, as I continued to outline the most current and critical strategies available. In fact, the Traffic-Building Volume is so crammed with essential information, that I just couldn't edit it down. It's a book in itself, and as one "beta-reader" remarked...

... "it alone is worth five times the price of the entire book!"

Most beta-readers thought I was nuts to include this valuable resource as an additional volume. But I wanted to complete the **Big 3** package (product, site-selling, traffic-building) in order to give you **everything you need for Web success**.



Here's a quick look at just a few of the traffic-building topics...

- **Search Engines (SEs)** -- It amazes me that 90% of what you read about keywords and SEs is **wrong**. When I ["VIEW SOURCE"](#) the Web pages of 99% of all Web companies, I am stunned to see how badly they structure their pages.

The SE chapters discuss in detail how to generate keywords and how to use them to drive targeted traffic to your site. Forget the "theory" -- this is full of current **nitty-gritty "how to" info**. I even include an example of a Search Engine-optimized page, HTML and all!

I guarantee that most of you are **not** doing any of these techniques. Master this info and you will join the 1% who know how to work **with** the SEs to build traffic.

Others topics include...

- **Theme-based ranking** -- This is the future of Search Engine rankings. Get ahead of your competition by planning for theme-based ranking now!
- [Pay-Per-Click Search Engines](#) -- Work the fringes to build tons of targeted traffic to your Web site for only pennies a click!
- **Link popularity** -- This is something to be aware of but it's not a priority.
- **Yahoo!, LookSmart, and The Open Directory** -- The growing importance of the directories means you need to know how to obtain a great listing. I'll show you how!
- **Other online and offline traffic-building winners** -- Again, hard experience and

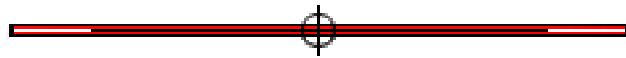
original experiments will show you how to build traffic online and off.

- **The absolute time-wasters** -- Save yourself months of poorly spent time. I explain why these are boondoggles for any product.



From **great product**, to a **site that SELLS**, to bringing **targeted traffic** into your site, you will be in **complete control** of your Web destiny.

Master the Big 3 of product, site-selling, and traffic-building, and there's just no way to fail.



2.5.6. PennyGold As a Site Example

Examples bring life to the points I make in **MYSS! 2002**. Many are drawn from around the Web. Many come from my own PennyGold site...

Please don't misunderstand the intent of the PennyGold examples. PG is sold out -- so I'm not trying to tempt you to buy it. The point is to illustrate real-world examples, often explaining what went on during my own trial-and-error experimenting, what worked and what didn't... **and why.**

So, please, when you link to the PennyGold site from this book, just check out the example **and then come back here.**



Funny thing about the PennyGold site... it looks like a terrible site to **most** people. Why "most"? Because most folks have no interest in penny mining stocks.

From the very first word, down to the last compressed gif, the PennyGold site was designed only for people who might have been interested in junior mining stocks. To them, the site was **pure gold.**

I once struck up an e-mail correspondence with a "Web marketing expert." Now this person truly knows what he's talking about -- I respect his work highly. One day, he e-mailed me with all his criticisms about the PennyGold site...

- long, scrolling pages
- “cheesy” [MIDI](#) music (ouch, that one hurt)
- no easy access to the Order Page from every other page
- etc., etc., etc.

His e-mail was sincere, and I respect his understanding of the Web. So I replied to each and every point, explaining how they had all been tested (for example, [orders fell by 70%](#) when we stopped the music for two weeks!).

I also explained that the site was netting about \$1,000 per day (our only expense being the site hosting fee)... from a product that should be just about impossible to sell (expensive, questionable, unknown author, etc.).

The bottom line never lies!



To his credit, he wrote another of his typically terrific columns. It started like this...

Just when I thought that I knew it all, along comes this guy with long scrolling pages and lots of other things that we experts consider to be “mistakes”...

He explained about all the “mistakes” (and why they were really **not** boo-boos), all in a tone that made fun of himself. **The article was so funny...**



... I almost split my gut. After recuperating, I wrote back to him...

You looked at the site through the eyes of a Web expert looking for mistakes. Take another look at it, this time through the eyes of someone interested in aggressive forms of investing. You’ll see a whole different site! :-)

I aim the PennyGold site purely at the heart of my target customer... the aggressive investor with an interest in penny mining stocks. Everyone else will exit quickly. And that’s OK with me -- I know that I could never change their minds.

Should you review the whole PennyGold site on your own, you will see **many** places where I **broke the rules** of **MYSS! 2002**. At first glance, the PennyGold site may even strike you as a bad effort that could not possibly be an effective sales-generator.

But you'd be wrong. **Why?...** Two reasons...

1) The site **targeted** a small, well-defined group of investors. I had crafted the "sales copy" purely with my target in mind. You, dear reader, are probably part of the "everyone else" who has **no interest** in penny mining stocks -- you may not find the copy appealing, or even interesting!

2) We were **not** trying to sell as many copies as possible... we were only selling 1,000. It was important that they fell into the right hands. So the site had a **second important function...** to weed out the "get rich quick" junkies, the lazy, and those who were not smart enough to use it well. Sometimes I had to **break the rules** to do that.

For example, as you will see, I did **not** provide access to the PennyGold Closer Page (the Order Page) from every major page on the site. That's because I wanted to be sure that the visitor read, at a minimum, my Opening Page, and an important weed-out page just before the Closer Page.



Here's the bottom line... Aggressive investors with an interest in penny mining stocks invariably thought and still do think that PennyGold is an awesome site. Everyone else sees an irrelevant, boring site. So, if you don't see the power of the PennyGold site...

Look again, this time **through the eyes of my target customer**. There's much more to the PG site than meets the eye. I'd hate for you to miss the point...

The PennyGold site has taught me all I know about selling on the Web. I hope to share that with you. Please remember this about the site...

Nothing is there by accident -- there are **no unintentional mistakes** (well, one actually -- we'll discuss it later).

And the proof is in the pudding -- the PennyGold site SOLD! 😊

[**SIDEBAR**]

I also draw examples from the **MYSS!** site, and the **Sitesell.com** family of products. The SiteSell.com sites illustrate pure sales sites. The products are cheaper, and much easier to sell. The pages are full of sharp, tight copy that **SELLS**. **And they don't break the rules like the PennyGold site did.**

In **MYSS! 2002**, almost all of the original PennyGold examples remain. Why?

The two sites are so different in **so many ways**.

PennyGold sales were generated mainly from free Search Engine traffic, and most pages on the site were written to rank highly for targeted keywords. Of course, PennyGold was a much tougher sell requiring much more work to verify the validity of the product.

SiteSell.com works in a completely opposite manner. Sales come mostly from affiliates who have already pre-sold visitors. And because we don't compete with our affiliates (it would be unethical), none of SiteSell.com's pages are optimized for the SEs.

As you'll soon see, even for two vastly different products such as PennyGold and the SiteSell brand line, the basic principles remain the same... and always will.

After all...



... "If it ain't broke..."



2.6. Join the **1%** Who **SELL!**

OK, let's summarize...

To succeed in a Web-based sales venture, you only have to succeed at three levels...

- 1) develop a great product.
- 2) write a Web site that **SELLS!**
- 3) attract targeted customers to the site.

All Web marketing and sales books focus on the third level -- building traffic. Why? What's the point of receiving millions of visitors per day if no one's buying?

Instead, your initial order of business is to **develop a site that SELLS! So...**

First, offer a product that will sell on the Web. Some products just don't cut it. **MYSS! 2002** will help you **evaluate** your current product(s) and develop new ones that are **sales-appropriate** for the Web.

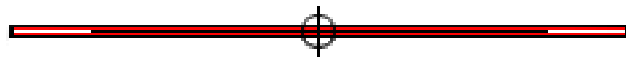
Second, make the sale an almost inevitable outcome. The function of your Web site is to sell your product, **or** to generate a lead toward a sale. To increase sales, simply **increase** the percentage of visitors who **buy**. Not very complicated, is it?... And very do-able.



It's critical to keep the following in mind while designing your site... **everything you do must be geared to increasing the percentage of visitors who buy.** Ninety-nine percent of Web marketers just don't think like this when they design their site. You will.

Build a tight, sales-oriented site that **climaxes** irresistibly at your Closer (Order) Page.

Then, **and only then**, is the final piece easy to fit into the Web-sales puzzle... **building traffic.**



2.7. Get the **Most** Out of MYSS! 2002

The best way to get quickly on the cutting edge of Web sales is to simply read this book, from front to back. **MYSS! 2002's** pages have been designed for rapid,

easy-on-the-eye, on-screen reading.

If you're a total neophyte to Web sales, this front-to-back, **zero-to-hero** attack is the fastest way to become a Web sales pro.

If you **already** have some experience, use the “**read what you need**” approach...

Each chapter has been written to stand on its own. Scan the [Table of Contents](#) -- I guarantee that **MYSS! 2002** covers whatever you need to know about Web-selling. Use it to solve your most pressing problems. For example...

If you feel that the words on your site lack **sales-generating punch**, read the chapter on [how to write words that sell](#). If you're having trouble **converting interest into sales**, then jump to the sub-chapter that reviews a [checklist for quadrupling your Conversion Rate](#).

[SIDEBAR]

If you **also** want to “read paper,” here's what to do...

- Print out a chapter.
- Drink-of-choice in one hand, pen and book in the other, **settle into a...**



... nice comfy chair.

- As you read, circle **the links** that interest you. Return to the digital version, and click on the circled links to check them out.

No matter how you use **MYSS! 2002**, start with a quick peek **at the last three sections** of Chapter 20. That's where I strip the entire book down to the bare essentials...

- **11 Steps to a Site that SELLS!**
- **The Top 6 Rules in 17 Words**
- **The Bottom Line**

Please [skip to the back now](#) and read the last three sub-chapters of **MYSS! 2002**, then return here...

...
...
...

OK, back already? Super! Now that you know where we're going, **let's go!...**

... It's time to...



3. Most Wanted Response

Once your prospect has reviewed your Web site, don't leave him hanging. This is not a TV commercial... He must **do** something... he must **respond**.

What do you **most** want your visitor to do? We call this visitor-must-do action the **Most Wanted Response (MWR)**.

The **Most Wanted Response (MWR)** is **the single most important part** of your entire Web site. If you do not set one for each product (or product line), there is almost no point to your site taking up bandwidth, if you want your site to **SELL!**

Let me put it another way... **your Web site exists to get the MWR.**

[**SIDEBAR**]

I labored over what to call the **MWR**. I easily spent more than a full day on this term. Why would I waste a day on a name? Because it's that important!

I changed from KEY RESPONSE to #1 RESPONSE to BUSINESS-BUILDING RESPONSE to FIRST RESPONSE to PROFIT-MAKING RESPONSE. I tried terms with words like ACTION, MUST-DO, REACTION, PRIMARY, TOP, etc., etc., etc.

But, when I boiled it all down, I simply asked myself the following questions about my own PennyGold site... **What Do I Most Want My Visitor To Do? Why does the PennyGold site exist?**

Well, that was simple... "I most want visitors to buy PennyGold."

Now, Ken, apply a name to that. Not a slick-but-vague slogan. A clear name that focuses everyone on the **#1 goal for their sites...**

Most Wanted Response (MWR).



3.1. Set Your Most Wanted Response

Before you write your first word, before you worry about site design or architecture, before you worry about graphics or your Table of Contents...

Set Your **Most Wanted Response**.

Why must you do this before anything else? Hey, great question! I'm glad you asked...

Once you set the **MWR** for a product (or product line), you will design that entire part of your site towards **getting it**. Every word you write, every graphic you include, every form you design, will be chosen to steadily increase your odds of **getting the MWR**.

“**Getting the MWR**” becomes your overriding goal. **Setting the MWR** focuses you totally. If you don't set your **MWR**, there is no way to design an effective Web site that **SELLS!**

Right now, **think about your MWR...**



... What Do You **Most** Want Your Visitor To Do?

Do you want to make a direct sale? You can sell almost anything, from infoproducts to services to country inn (or Hilton) reservations.

If your product is too difficult to sell straight off the Web, craft your **MWR** appropriately. If you sell a \$10,000 piece of software, offer a free download for a 30 day trial as your **MWR**.

Are you an **OEM?** Or are you selling a service? Generate a lead as your **Most Wanted Response**. In this case, you may decide to focus your site on convincing your prospect to **fill in a form** with name and contact information, requesting to be phoned by a sales person.

Even when a direct, off-the-Web purchase is not the **MWR**, **you are still selling**. You are still trying to make your customer “buy” your **MWR**, not the product (at least, not immediately). Even if your **MWR** is to give away a freebie, you have to sell that freebie (just as hard as if you were selling the product itself).

Maybe you want your visitor to subscribe to your free newsletter, or enter a contest (super for building a database), or request a free report or any other desirable freebie you can dream up. All are nice ways to build a mailing list for ongoing direct

e-mail marketing. (As we'll see later, these are more likely to be [Backup Responses](#).)

Or perhaps you want your site to support your retailers (resellers) -- in that case, get your visitors to print and clip coupons for discounts at retail. Or maybe you just want your prospect to request sales materials (printed matter, CD-ROM, whatever) by regular mail.



With a little creativity, it really doesn't matter what your business involves. **Set a good MWR.**

What makes a good **MWR**? Hey, another great question!...

First, it must be reasonable, given the product that you are selling. If you are selling a \$10,000 piece of software or your personal consulting services, you are unlikely to generate a direct sale from the site. Your **MWR** is to **generate a lead**. You will make the sale later, person-to-person.

Second, it must be "measurable." You must be able to measure the effects of changing your Web site. If you make an important change, how can you tell whether your site's better, if you don't have a way for your visitor to respond?

What if you added 43 fantastic testimonials from happy customers? How will you know what effect that has had, if you don't have an **MWR** that you can **measure**?



Here's another example...

Let's say you double the traffic to your site. Whoops! The number of **MWRs** is the same. This must mean that the extra traffic was non-targeted. They were poor prospects. So if you spent money on this marketing effort (ex., banner advertising), it was not money that you should spend again. How would you ever know this if you were unable to measure **MWRs**?

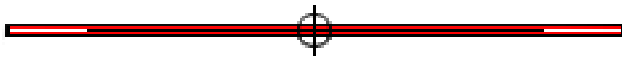
If you don't set a hard, measurable **MWR**, how the heck will you know when you're doing the right thing?

Third, the method to submit the MWR must be a good fit for your customer. If all of your business comes from Europe and your offices are in Canada, providing a

1-888 order line is **not** a good fit (1-888 does not work for overseas calls). But a [form](#) that your customer fills in and submits directly from the Web page is perfect -- it's fast, free and immediate. This kind of Web-based form is called a **Response Form**.

Fourth, it must qualify your visitor. Obviously, a direct sale certainly weeds out tire-kickers. But if your goal is to **generate leads** for your million-dollar bridge suspension joints, you'll design your **Response Form** to qualify your lead (as we'll see in the next section).

OK, now that you've **set** the **MWR**, let's **get** it.



3.2. Get Your Most Wanted Response

If you sell many product lines, each starts with its own [Opening Page](#), has its own **pathway**, and ends in its own **MWR Closer Page**. Once you have **set** your **MWR**, every single word and graphic builds to **getting** it.

The **MWR Closer Page** must **close** the sale. Although we will discuss the [Closer Page in more detail later](#), suffice it to say that you must figure out the best way to **make your visitor deliver the MWR**.

The exact mechanism of getting the **MWR** depends on...

- what exactly the **response** is
- the nature of your **product**
- the nature of your **customers**.

For example...

If your **MWR** is to get the **direct sale**, how do you want them to buy?...

- Do your visitors complete and submit a basic [Response Form](#), after which you phone to process the order (useful for high-end, low-volume products like PennyGold)?

- Or do they also include full credit card info (on the **Response Form**) via a [secure server](#), after which the info is processed automatically (useful for low-priced, high volume items like this book)?
- Do they simply call your 1-888 order line?
- Do they snail-mail you with a check?
- Or all of the above?

Let's look at the 1-888 option. Inbound telemarketing is **measurable**. If it is clear that they are calling the Order Line, it also **qualifies** the responder. The particulars of your business will determine whether you should use a 1-888 number or a regular long distance line to handle inquiries.



Another example...

If you are selling those \$1million expansion joints for bridges, generating a lead is a reasonable **MWR** -- you certainly won't sell many joints straight off your Web site, no matter how great you make it. So your **MWR** is to **generate a lead**.

Let's use this example to review what a good **MWR** should be...

... reasonable (✓)

... measurable (✓)

... good fit (✓)

... qualify the visitor (✓)

Ask your visitor to complete and submit a **Response Form** asking you to contact them with more information. Make it clear that a sales person will call.

Submitting a **Response Form** is **the most reasonable** (✓) way to generate a lead. It's easily **measurable** (✓). It's a **good fit** (✓) for your customer, especially if a good deal of your business comes from overseas (which is likely).

And [you can tailor the form to qualify](#) (✓) [your customer "just right"](#).

Remember... **set, then get.**

———— [**SIDEBAR**] ————

[Review the basics of designing a form that works.](#)



3.3. **MWR** Doesn't Apply to **You**?

Perhaps you think that the **MWR** doesn't apply to your business? Well, maybe that's true...

... if you don't have customers!

Otherwise, no matter what your business is, you not only can, but **must**, design an **MWR**, one that is appropriate to your product and customer.

There's never a good enough reason to have a site that serves as a mere TV commercial. **Think... What is your site's Most Wanted Response?**

What's that? You provide off-shore tax avoidance structures for the well-heeled? First, understand your target market. In this case, it's likely to be the tax attorneys of the rich. Build a site that proves your competence to them... beyond any shadow of a doubt.

Perhaps you close with this simple **MWR**...

"Please call me (514-555-1212) to discuss establishing your clients safely offshore. I will be happy to provide you with a list (and phone numbers) of customers whose estates I have moved out of the grasp of voracious governments."

Of course, you will prepare a **telephone script** that qualifies those who respond by calling you. But you get the idea...



What's that? You sell hamburgers and your name is McDonald's? Simple, get your visitor to fill in a coupon to sign up for McDonald's news... and receive a coupon for a discount on new food introductions!



You're GM? That's easy. Let your customer design his own car -- model, colors, options, etc. Offer him a 2% discount for printing out that perfect custom-mobile and bringing it to his nearest dealer within 30 days.

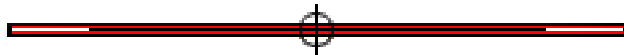
Still arguing about this? You say that printing coupons isn't measurable? What if you get your visitors to fill out a form requesting such a coupon. Your autoresponder e-mails back a "secret" URL, with the customer's name and a unique serial number on it. All your customer has to do is print it!

Conclusion?...

No matter what your business, you must design an appropriate **MWR**. **A Web site without an MWR is like an amusement park without rides... what's the point?**

[SIDEBAR]

A **MWR** may not always directly involve a sale. If you've got an independent rock band, for instance, your **MWR** might be to get your visitor to download a MP3. Your goal is to build grass-roots support -- people who will buy your record that will be released some point in the future.



3.4. It's Not Just the Number, It's the Rate

You actually want to track two numbers...

1) MWR -- On a weekly basis, record the number of **Most Wanted Responses** generated from the site.

2) Conversion Rate (CR) -- Use [log file analyzer software](#) to track the number of visitors (or get your techie to do it). Divide the number of **MWRs** by the number of visitors to get the **CR**. The **CR** is the percentage of **visitors** that your Web site converted into **responders** -- it's the **percent** of visitors who will deliver your **MWR**.

Now you really have a way to...



... measure and interpret results!

For example... let's say you improve your [offer](#) on the **MWR Closer Page**. If your **CR** doubles, you know you have a winner. Or, perhaps you doubled traffic to your site? If your number of **MWRs** doubles, while the **CR** remains constant, your traffic-doubling efforts have been a success. [More on the CR later on.](#)

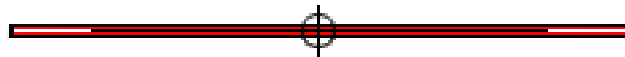
[**SIDEBAR**]

Future Now has a handy conversion rate calculator on-site...



Future Now

<http://www.futurenowinc.com/ccrcalculator.htm>



3.5. Respond to the **MWR**... Fast

Whether it's a 1-888 call, an e-mail inquiry, or a **Response Form** submission, what is your "respond to the **MWR**" process? Assign someone to respond, and respond **well**, to each **MWR**.

What is your response time? In this digital age, people expect a response within 24 hours. **Beat that by responding same day.** If you can respond in a quality way **within an hour**, you've arrived! Your prospective customer will be impressed... **the first step** to cementing a longer-term relationship. **Never, ever, ever make a customer...**



... wait!



4. It Starts With Product

If your product delivers poor price/benefit ratios or is inappropriate for selling on the Web, **quit wasting your time. Quit wasting your visitors' time. Don't sell via the Web.**

Develop a good product that is appropriate for the Web. It's not only the **right** thing to do... it's the **smart** thing to do.



The **Product Volume of MYSS! 2002** provides the crucial information you need to start you on the road to success. It covers...

1) Great Products that SELL on the Web -- This section discusses the highest sales-potential categories. Topics include...

- Best digital & knowledge-based goods
- Hard goods
- What's selling now

2) 16-Point Product Evaluation Checklist -- Is your product appropriate for sale on the Web? Find out how to evaluate, and re-position, your products for the Web.

3) How to Develop Your Own Products -- If you control your product, you control everything.

4) Bad Products -- Why Bother? -- With endless opportunities out there, why do it wrong? Repeat sales are the key to success. You don't get repeat sales if you sell bad products.

5) Setting the Price -- Your pricing decision can make or break you...

- How and why to price **high**

MYSS! 2002... It Starts With Product

- How and why to price low

6) How to Test A Product, Free! -- Need a quick and free way to test-market your product on the Web, free?

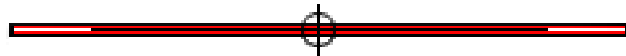
Be confident, before you launch a full rollout.



Bottom line?

It all starts with a great product. Your business success depends on it!

[Click here to open Product Volume.](#)



5. You Can Write to SELL!

Words are the most powerful drug used by mankind.

-- Rudyard Kipling



The written word is your most powerful tool -- it will make or break your effort to persuade your visitor. The right words will turn your **visitor** into a **customer**. A single wrong word will drive her to a competitor, never to return.

Read the preceding paragraph again. It's extremely important to your long-term success.



Here's the **biggest** mistake currently being made on the Web today...

People with sales-oriented Web sites are spending tens of thousands of dollars on graphics and gizmos. Not a penny is being spent to craft effective, eye-ball-riveting copy.

Each sentence, each paragraph, each headlined section, must keep the reader's interest high. It must all build towards getting the **MWR**. Review your copy with this in mind.

Bottom line? **It's the words that sell, not the pictures.** Doubts? Try this experiment...

STEP 1 -- Go to any sales-oriented Web site.

STEP 2 -- Imagine the site without any graphics. Could it **sell**?

STEP 3 -- Imagine the site without any words. Could it **sell**?

You're right... it's not rocket science. Choose the right words... **words that SELL!**



[SIDEBAR]

Make Your Words Sell! is SiteSell's **Net Copywriting Manual**.

Notice, dear reader, that I said "Net Copywriting." Most copywriting courses on the

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Web today are simply a regurgitation of existing material written for the brick-and-mortar world, repackaged and rebundled.

But... the Net works much differently than the physical world. As a result, copy for the Net should reflect this.

Make Your Words Sell! shows you how to write great copy for your Web site, your e-mail, your autoresponders... even your Web store.

MAKE YOUR WORDS SELL!

Make Your Words Sell!

<http://myws.sitesell.com/>

Subscribe to the **Netwriting Masters Course** by sending a blank e-mail to twms@sitesell.net.

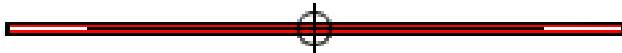


5.1. **Know** Your Customer

You will read “customer-oriented” or “write for your customer” or “put yourself in your customer’s shoes” over and over in this book.

To be customer-oriented, **you have to know your customer...** seems reasonable, right?

Let’s start with a wide-angle customer view, and then narrow down until we understand your particular target market.



5.1.1. So **Who** Is on the Web?

In the original edition of **MYSS!**, I quoted [CyberAtlas](#) as saying...

“As more people get online...



... cyberspace begins to look more like Earth.”

How right they were!

So what are the greatest changes to the online population? The latest trends?

Well...

Women are fast becoming the new Internet powerhouse, making up more than 50% of online users in North America. The elderly are taking to the Web in droves, as are lower income families. Teenagers, college students -- heck, everybody is jumping aboard.

Worldwide, rapidly falling computer costs, increasing availability of inexpensive Internet access, and advanced user-friendliness are causing a boom in new subscribers. In fact, **International Data Corporation** reports that the year 2000 was the last year where the majority of surfers were North American.

This also means that a growing number of online sales will occur outside of North America -- over 50% in the next couple of years! (Source: IDC.com)

And as for sheer numbers?...

Between 350 - 400 million... and growing daily!



Look at these headlines...

“The latest report from Between and MT&T indicate half a million new users go online each month in Italy.”

“The number of people accessing the web in China is continuing to skyrocket, reaching 16.9 million, according to China Internet Network Information Center.”

“Increasing PC penetration and improved, cheaper telecommunications services

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should see Internet penetration in the Asia-Pacific region tripling to 233 million over the next three years.”

“... just over 27 million people, or 1 in 5 of the total Japanese population, now have Internet access.”

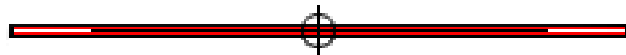
“Nasscom estimates the number of people using the Internet in India expected to rise to 23 million in 2003.”

(Headlines courtesy of NUA and e-Marketer)



This raises the question...

Now that the majority of Internet users are outside of North America, how will you attract and effectively market to this increasingly diverse Internet population?



5.1.2. Language -- The New Internet Barrier

The worldwide Internet community is growing rapidly.

And obviously...

The number of people accessing the Web whose first language is not English is also growing rapidly.

Doesn't it make sense to at least consider allocating some resources to provide basic support in different languages -- especially if you plan to sell to an international market?

I can almost hear you thinking...

“The international language of business is English, and I don't see the point in implementing expensive multi-lingual sites just to attain a tiny extra percentage of market share and revenue.”

Well... You are partly correct. English **is** the preferred language of business -- both online, and off.

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[SIDEBAR]

Presently, Web site languages break down like this...

- English 68% (214 million pages)
- Japanese 5.85% (18.335 million)
- German 5.77% (18 million)
- Chinese 3.87 (12.1 million)
- French 2.96 (9.26 million)

(source: Vilaweb.com)

But the Net wasn't designed just for business people. It's also used by ordinary folk, just like you and me. Ordinary folk who don't speak a zillion languages, but still want to **BUY**. Don't you want to keep them happy? Sure, many people **may** speak English, but most will appreciate being addressed in their own language. Not only that, this courtesy improves your business image.

It shows that you care enough to make the effort. **More importantly, it also gives your customers the impression you maintain a local presence.** Who do you think they'd rather buy from -- a local company, or some faceless corporate giant 5,000 miles away?



Let's see how a big company deals with the language issue. **Dell**, for instance, caters to international users. Dell offers visitors the opportunity to choose their country from a drop-down menu on the first page of their site...



Dell

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

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Here is an example of Dell's Chinese site...



Dell (Chinese Version)

<http://www.ap.dell.com/ap/cn/zh/gen/default.htm>

See how Dell can still sell me a computer, even if I'm only fluent in Chinese?



But most of us aren't Dell, right? Who can afford a network of fully functional, multi-lingual sites? Obviously, it's no small feat to establish this sort of presence on the Web. Is language support really feasible for those of us who have small businesses?

There's so much to consider in order to answer that...

1) Does your product or service have broad-based appeal?

Selling high performance intake manifolds for small block Chevys? The best roller rockers and performance cams for the Dodge 318 c.i. motor? Then you probably won't need to worry much about incorporating a Chinese version of your Web site.

2) Are your products or services likely to require much, if any, technical support?

How complex are your products? Could any support concerns be addressed by a simple FAQ page translated by software like [Babelfish](#)? Or will you need to have support staff fluent in various languages?

3) Do you have the resources available to research and implement the protocols of International Trade Laws? State restriction laws? Taxes and Duties? Free Trade Zones?

If you're going to sell internationally, you'll need to do some basic research first. For example, some computer products that use encryption keys have shipping restrictions to some countries. Shipping such products to a "denied person", restricted country, or "specially designated national" could incur fines up to \$100,000 from the United States Treasury or State department.

So there's no point in implementing multi-lingual support and giving visitors the impression that you sell internationally, when in fact you can't, or don't.

4) Can you afford to offer support in multiple languages?

For small companies, language support staff may not be an option. Unfortunately, software translation packages can be embarrassingly inaccurate.

5) Can you afford to research the foreign customs and cultures?

There are huge cultural differences from region to region, worldwide. For example, Scandinavians detest a sales effort. "Sales" is almost a dirty word. It takes a very different approach to cut through this! Culture is more than just language -- it's the way you do business, address people, present yourself, and even build your Web site. If you're going to sell internationally, you must know as much as you can about your potential customers.

6) Are the people in your targeted countries receptive to online buying?

In North America, we're pretty receptive to online buying. This is not the case everywhere! In the U.K., for instance, some customers view online ordering with great skepticism, having been bombarded by the media with horror stories of negligence, never-arriving goods, etc.

Remember that while North Americans are protected by the **Fair Credit Billing Act**, which now limits liability for unauthorized credit card use to \$0 ([more details later on](#)), other country nationals may not have this luxury.

Before you start anything, confirm that the people in the country, where you want to do business, will buy online happily. Don't assume that they will... and don't rely on market surveys!

7) Can you afford to set up a fulfillment house overseas?

If you're selling downloadable software, you're laughing. If you're selling hard goods, shipping overseas via Fedex is not a viable option. To make a profit, you'll need to set up a fulfillment house overseas, and ship your product over in bulk. If you don't intend to ship overseas, there's not much point in language support.

8) Do you have the resources in place to monitor orders from overseas?

Some countries are notorious for fraudulent orders, and may require additional diligence to ensure you don't end up with the short end of the stick. One way is to refuse shipment until payment has been received. Or use an [online escrow service](#)...

9) Is it worth your while to implement language support?

Review your [log files](#). How much activity does your Web site receive from other countries? Is it enough to justify the expenditure of language support?

10) Does your merchant account allow you to receive international orders?

Prepare yourself for an hour of pure drudgery, and read that merchant account from top to bottom. Make sure your bank has no problems processing out-of-country orders.

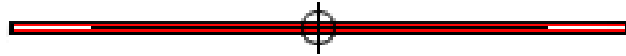
11) Don't forget a [currency converter](#)!

Another "no-brainer." Your customer doesn't want to know what it costs in your

currency -- she wants to know what it costs in her own. If she has to leave your site to figure this out, she may never return. Want the sale? Get one!



Obviously, you have many factors to consider. But a language solution, especially in its simplest form, doesn't need to be complex...



5.1.3. Web Page Translation

Depending on your product and target audience, you may need to implement at least the **bare minimum of language support** in your product FAQs. For this, software-based translation may be sufficient...

But... and this is another very **BIG** "but"...

Automated translation services have **extremely limited value**. They are notoriously unreliable, and may make you vulnerable to various social gaffes.

The "moral of the story" here?

A computer program doesn't have a human's **judgment** for the right word. Use translation software, if you wish. But also have your most important pages reviewed by someone fluent in that particular language. Be sure that the program is conveying your message properly.

With that in mind, let's review our translation options...

1) Basic language support -- software translation of FAQs, optimally reviewed by a language professional. Use if your needs are extremely basic, or if you're limited financially.

2) Language support staff -- hire on-staff language pros. Not an option for small businesses.

There is one more to consider...

3) Third Party Language support -- contract out the job of translation to outside sources.

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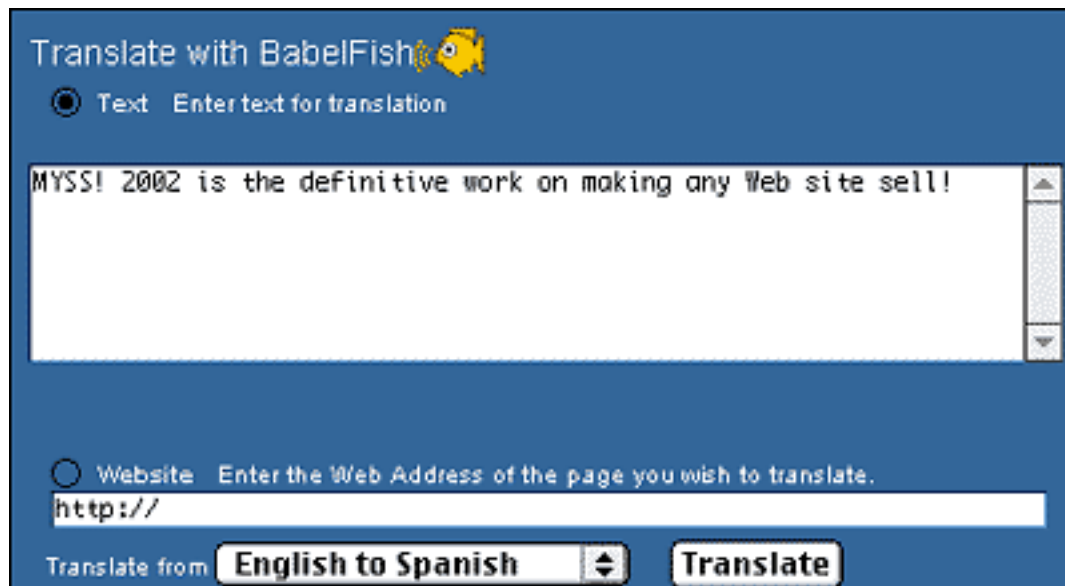
Now that we know our target, let's go shopping...



Babel Fish

<http://babelfish.altavista.com/>

Altavista's service, **Babel Fish**, provides a software-driven translation service. It allows you to enter text directly and translate into a colorful variety of languages, or select a Web address URL to be translated...



Altavista offers the BabelFish translating service directly from their results pages...

[Asian Translation Service](#)
Asian Translation Service - Translation, Interpretation, Typing, Editing, Transcription, and Proofreading service for Thai, Chinese, Korean,...
URL: <http://www.asiantranslation.com/> • [Related pages](#) • [Translate](#)
[Additional relevant pages from this site](#)

Altavista.com

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



Systran provides the software that powers Altavista's Babel Fish, and a similar free translation service is provided on their site...

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Systran

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

Systran offers several versions of their translation software -- the Systran Professional Standard sells for about US\$250...



Systran Professional Standard

<http://www.systransoft.com/ProStandard.html>



Need part-time language support staff? A virtual assistant may be just what you're looking for!

Virtual Assistants are dedicated online professionals that will work with you in almost any capacity, if and when you need them. Finding someone fluent in several languages may be just the route to go...



Staffcentrix.com

http://www.staffcentrix.com/vasoho_howdo.html



Or, you may wish to contract the job out to language professionals...



Softran Worldwide Translation Services

<http://opus.autoroute.net/~softran/>

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American Translators Association

http://www.americantranslators.org/tsd_listings



Cts LanguageLink

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

Alex Eames has put together a great resource site, designed to help translators on the Web...



Translatortips.com

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

Trusty Yahoo! will ferret out the best options for your translation needs...



Yahoo!

http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Business_to_Business/Translation_Services/Web_Site_Translation/

Or...

http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Business_to_Business/Translation_Services/

Language support... or no language support...

That is the question.

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Is it something your business needs to implement? Remember, the Internet **IS** a global marketing medium. And there are tons of hungry buyers outside of North America.

So give it some thought. There's no "right" or "wrong" answer on this one -- just what's best for **YOUR** business!



5.1.4. International Trade Issues

Unfortunately, a complete synopsis of international trade issues is beyond the scope of this book. However, I'm more than happy to point you in the right direction for starting your own research!

Research Free Trade Zones and more...



Global Business Directory

http://www.ceemail.com/free_zones.html

The University of Michigan State's **International Business Resources on the WWW** is a great spot to find regional statistics, trade leads, government resources, and international trade information...



International Business Resources on the WWW

<http://ciber.bus.msu.edu/>



U.S. Government Trade Site

<http://www2.usatrade.gov/website/website.nsf>

Export Restriction Laws -- receiving orders from Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North

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Korea, Sudan or Syria? Better visit here first...



U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Export Administration
<http://www.bxa.doc.gov/>

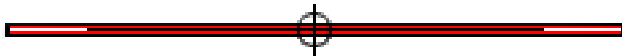


U.S. Department of Commerce
<http://www.doc.gov/>



FindLaw
<http://www.findlaw.com/>

And, as usual, there's a ton of information available in [Ralph Wilson's Research Room](#).



5.1.5. The Woman's Wide Web

Welcome to **WWW...** "**Women's Wide Web!**"

Four years ago, surfing the Internet was a mostly male pastime. Not anymore! As the song says... "The times, they are a-changing!"

Current stats indicate...

- Slightly more than 50% of online users in the U.S. are women.
- Women are one of the largest growing segments of online users worldwide.
- Women will outnumber men by a 3 to 2 margin as early as 2003.

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- 75% of women Net users have yet to shop online, compared 50% of male users.

(Sources: Cyberdialogue, PeopleSupport, Jupiter, Media Metrix)



The growing number of females on the Internet is something that has been ballyhooed by the media lately, but it really shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone.

Today's woman is...



... exceedingly busy.

After all, she has her kids, marriage, career, family, health, and household to worry about. For today's woman, time is more precious than ever.

Okay, folks, let me ask you a question for a change. Ready?

Can you think of one way a working woman can save time, shop, play with the kids, and do the bazillion other things she does during the average day? Exactly -- she can use the Internet!

You get an "A". 😊

And that's exactly what she's doing! After all, the Internet represents the biggest advancement in time-saving convenience since... electricity?... the microwave oven?



In fact, a recent study indicated that in North America, at least **63%** of those who shop online more than **once per week** are women. (Source: PeopleSupport)

That's not surprising. Women have traditionally been in charge of **80% of household purchases**. They control **75% of household finances**. They buy cars,

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stocks, houses, appliances, and they start businesses.

Am I making my point here? Women **buy...**



... a ton of stuff!

Shopping on the Net is only an **evolution of this family household tradition.** And guess what? You can expect to see a continuing number of women turning to the Internet for shopping, once familiarity with this new medium has been established.

If you're a merchant, this certainly sounds great! But, surprise, surprise, there is a problem!

Women expect different things from their Internet experiences!



So... what do women want from their online experiences?

Waiting for a joke?

Well, you're not going to get one. Not this time. I'm deadly serious here.

If you want to remain successful on the Net, you must address **the needs** of an increasingly **female Internet population...**



... or you're dead!

Yup, there's quite a difference between a man's shopping habits, and a woman's.

Guys, do you groan inwardly when your wife or girlfriend asks you to come shopping? Women, do you sigh when your husband or boyfriend asks you to

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accompany him to the hardware store?

So why all the groaning and sighing?

Because men and women **shop differently**, and have **different expectations** of the shopping experience. Why should things be any different on the Web?



Want an example?...

Most women love to browse. They try stuff on. They banter with the clerks. They search high and low for deals. They ask the sales staff for help and opinions.

And the men?

Most of them go marching down aisle number 4, buy the first thing they see, mumble a few unintelligible words to the clerk, and go marching out again.

Okay, okay...

This is **supposed** to be funny. And without a complete analysis of the “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus” series, what is the main point here?

Men focus on transactions, and women focus on relationships...

Differences...

We’re all aware of them. Yet many merchants fail to address these differences online. And that’s unacceptable.

So let’s get back to the question I posed earlier... **What do women really want from the Internet?**



Women's lives are hectic. If your Web site can improve and simplify life, that’s a big plus. Help her save time? An even bigger plus.

The biggest plus of all? **Provide solutions** to the hurdles of everyday life -- and do it with a smile! 😊

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And how do you create a Web site that does that? You address the demands placed on women by their work, family, household, and marriage!

Today's woman walks a tightrope...



... provide her with a net!



At this time, here's what women are buying online...

- Books 64%
- Cds 60%
- Computers 57%
- Health and Beauty 42%
- Toys 41%
- Women's clothing 39%
- Children's clothing 31%
- Videos 28%
- Magazines 27%
- Small consumer electronics 26%

(Source: Ernst & Young)



Alright then...

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We know women want Web sites that will make their lives easier. And we know women have different shopping expectations.

Now let's translate this into some practical applications...

- **Simplicity.** Easy navigation.
- No gizmos. Just **highly usable** sites.
- **Great service and information.**
- Clearly posted **privacy and security policies**
- **Long term relationships.** (Guys, does this sound familiar?)
- Accessibility to a **variety of items on a regular basis at one particular place.**

To sum it up, women want **customer-focused service...**



...with a smile! Not an unreasonable request.



Okay, let's take this one step further...

What's the most popular e-commerce destination for women today? I'll give you three guesses, and the first two don't count!

It's...



Amazon.com

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

(Source: Ernst & Young)

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No surprises here! After all, Amazon is the **master** at delivering superlative service and navigation, building relationships, as well as providing an extensive product inventory. ([We'll look at Amazon in more detail later on.](#))

But for now, a quick visit to Amazon.com to see how the "best in the biz" does it!

Notice...

The site is designed for **function**, and for function only. No flashing whirlygigs, no glitzy logo, no unnecessary javascript -- nothing fancy at all. It's extremely easy to use. The privacy policy is in plain view. Want to buy? One click is all that's necessary. Nothing on this site detracts from the visitor making the purchase -- it's absolutely seamless!

Make a purchase, and Amazon immediately begins building a relationship with you.

Perfect! Amazon knows exactly what women want. You can do the same thing on your own site.

Have a look at other top e-commerce sites for women, and see why they're so popular...



Barnes and Noble

<http://bn.com/>



CDNow

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



Drugstore.com

<http://www.drugstore.com>

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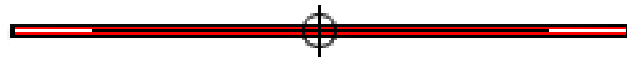
JC Penny

<http://www2.jcpenney.com/jcp/default.asp>



Bottom line on the new demographics? Don't sweat it! Providing great customer service, easy-to-navigate Web sites, simple design, trouble-free ordering and long term relationship-building is what **MYSS! 2002** is about.

Follow the advice in this book, and you'll make anyone -- man, or woman (what the heck, we'll even sell to Martians) -- happy to do business with you!



5.1.6. Access Speed -- Yes, It's Still Slow

If you live in North America, you may have fallen victim to the "broadband" myth. Yes, even though you may be seeing broadband services advertised on TV and discussed in the media, less than 10% of North Americans have broadband access.

Too many companies are jumping on the high speed bandwagon far too quickly. They're building complicated sites and clogging up valuable bandwidth with applications like Flash and Shockwave.

BIG mistake!

Believe it or not, the Net is still...



The majority of Internet users are equally divided between access speeds of 33.6K

and 56K -- definitely not laser speed.

Also, Internet access is NOT cheap outside North America and broadband is not widely-available (or even in existence, in some cases).

How do you think your international visitors are going to feel if they have to wait 3 minutes for your Flash-heavy page to load up? It's costing them real money to surf. They want information -- fast. They don't want self-indulgent Web pages.

As appealing as it is, widespread consumer access to broadband technologies is **at least** two to three years away.

What's the lesson?

The Internet is an information medium. If people want a broadband experience, they'll turn on their TVs. **Build for speed.** Remember that more than 50% of the total online population now resides outside North America. Optimize for the 33.6 k modem.



Consider this...

- 9% of US customers have broadband access
- Only 27% are willing to pay US\$40 a month for the service
- By 2003, 33% of Internet users will have broadband access
- The Internet backbone is not currently big enough to support the growing amount of high speed users
- By 2003, 27 million subscribers in the United States will have broadband access
- 2.5 million households have broadband access at home -- but 20 million use broadband at work
- Only 1/4 of the US population is actually wired for high speed access
- It will take up to 2004 before 42% of all US households will have some kind of broadband connection

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- Fiber optic lines make DSL lines a no-go -- copper wire is required!

(Sources: Netsmart America, Jupiter Research, Yankee Group, Cahners In-Stat)

Bottom line?

Keep things optimized for low speed dial-up customers. No fancy gimmicks. At least for the next few years. Then it'll be time to review the statistics again, and see where we stand -- but for now... slow down!



What about **WAP**, the wireless access protocol?

Forget it!

WAP has **SO** many problems it's just not worth worrying about. Not yet, anyway! Even in Europe, which has the benefit of one wireless standard, and boasts some of the highest cell phone penetration in the world (as high as 60% in Sweden, Norway, and Finland), people aren't using it.

There just isn't any consumer demand -- so don't be fooled by the hype.

Stats and research indicate that although WAP will start slowly, it will explode in popularity as access speeds, technology, coverage, and the phones improve.

What does this mean?

It may be time for the really big guys to start spending some money and gaining some experience. But this technology is definitely "not ready for prime time." And especially not for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

So for the time being, 99% of your customers are going to come from the PC and Mac based Internet.



Don't believe me? Here's just a small list of the problems with WAP...

- Navigation is difficult
- The screens are too small

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- Access is slow -- 9.6 bps, less than the slowest dial-up modem (14.4bps)
- Limited online content
- Pay per minute pricing
- Internet phone sites are difficult to navigate
- Phones need special technology
- Security Standards have yet to be addressed
- Different programming protocols are needed
- Spotty and inconsistent coverage, particularly in the United States
- Impractical, unusable, and unfriendly!

So... make the PC and MAC based Net your only focus for the next couple of years.



5.1.7. Attitudes To Web & Shopping

The [GVU's 9th WWW User Survey](#) measures attitudes and behaviors of people using and shopping on the Web. Although a few years old, the results still have **direct relevance** to making your site **SELL!**.

Let's look at some of the data...

• Problems Using the Web

- takes too long to download pages (65%) -- **53% of respondents reported that they had left a Web site while searching for product information simply because the site was too slow.**
- broken links (56%)
- finding new information (46%)

- finding known information (28%)
- organization (24%)
- **Most important technology used online** -- users found the following technologies indispensable...
 - **E-mail (94%)**
 - **WWW (91%)**
 - Java/Javascript (30%)
 - Chat (24%)
 - Audio (21%)
 - Video, Digital signatures, Net Phone, Net Fax, 3-D, Push (all under 10%)



- **Community** -- 45% of respondents become more connected to people like themselves. Experienced users (over 4 years online) are most likely to feel connected (52%). People feel more connected with others who share their hobbies (44%) and professions (33%).
- **Falsification of Information** -- 49% never provide false data when registering with a Web site, which unfortunately means that 51% do, at least some of the time. 25% falsify about a quarter of the time, while **5% routinely provide false information.**
- **Willingness to Pay Fees** -- people **don't** want to pay fees. Here's why...
 - They feel that they can get it for free from other sources (45%). So, if you

want to charge for access, **unique content is critical**.

- They are already paying to connect to the Internet. They don't want to pay anything else "because it should be for free" (33%).

• **Reasons for shopping on the Web** -- percentages for personal shoppers and professional buyers are significantly different, so I include both here (personal shopper first).

- convenience (78.4%) (76.1%)
- no pressure from sales persons (66.4%) (57.5%)
- saving time (64.2%) (62.4%)
- vendor information (60.7%) (75.2%)
- availability of reviews and recommendations (30.8%) (42.9%)

• **Products Sought on the Web...**

- computer hardware/software costing **more** than \$50 (78%)
- computer hardware/software costing **less** than \$50 (73%)
- books and magazines (72%)
- travel arrangements (68%)
- music recordings (63%)
- investment choices (40%)

Except for investment choices, respondents are more likely to seek information through the Web rather than newspapers and magazines, or even direct mail. Information about investment choices was equal to print news media.

• **Type of Information Web shoppers search for...**

- detailed information about products and services (86%)
- price comparison (80%)
- availability of products and services (78%).



- **Searching behavior** -- Web users take about 10 minutes to find what they are looking for. They succeed about 60% of the time (numbers improve with years of experience). They tend to give up after 15 minutes of futility.
- **Web Ordering** -- 76% have ordered a product or service by filling out a form on the Web. **This figure has grown dramatically over the years!**
- **Purchases on the Web** -- An increasing number of people are making purchase decisions based on information gathered from the Web.

And they're doing it with increasing frequency. One-third are purchasing this way 1-2 times a month, more often among experienced Web users. Most purchase decisions are the result of intentional searches, also increasing with experience.

Growing numbers are regularly paying via the Web, indicating increased confidence.
- **Spending on Web Purchases** -- The largest percentage of respondents who made purchases over the Web in the last six months spent between \$100-\$500 (33%) and a group almost as large spent more than \$500 (30%). The amount spent increases according to the number of years a person has been on the Web.
- **Opinions on Providing Credit Card Information** -- 55% **don't** consider providing credit card info as the major obstacle for making purchases on the Web. 61% **don't** consider it more risky than providing the same information over the phone. Of course, that means that 45% and 40% are on the "wrong side" of the fence.

Neither lower prices nor higher quality of products had much bearing on the respondents' **willingness** to provide credit card information over the Web. The major factor is **reputation** of the vendor (76%). Respondents were most likely to provide credit card information using a **secure transmission** over the Web (81%).

• **Reasons for Not Purchasing over the Web**

- credit card security (79%)
- disclose personal information (77%)
- lack of trust in online merchant (48%)
- cannot see or feel merchandise (65%).
- shipping and handling charges (55%)
- ordering process is too complex (21%)
- too time consuming to place orders (20%)
- difficult to find products (23%)
- only 2% have actually have had a credit card number stolen

(Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers)

• **Reasons to Abandon a Web Store**

- could not find what they were looking for (56.4%)
- site disorganized or confusing (53.7%)

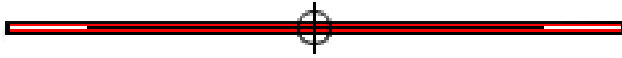


- pages were too slow to download (53.1%).

The percentages above are for personal shoppers. They are even higher for professional users (62%, 61%, and 60%, respectively), for the Net-savvy, and for

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those aged 21-50.



5.1.8. An Informal **Top 10** Web Activities...

According to Jesse Berst, who wrote a terrific column at ZDNet...



YOUR TOP 10 FAVORITE WEB ACTIVITIES

<http://www.zdnet.com/anchordesk/whoiswe/top10things.html>

... these are the top 10 Web surfer activities (in reverse order, #1 being the **most** popular)...

- 10) Online shopping**
- 9) Play Games**
- 8) Investing/Making Money**
- 7) Chat and similar “social” activities**
- 6) Travel**
- 5) Downloading Software**
- 4) Learning Something New**
- 3) Managing Your Career/Finding the Job You Want**
- 2) Reading News and Sports**
- 1) Using the Search Engines**

Jesse’s Top 10 activities were drawn from the GVO WWW User Surveys, and were very relevant when **MYSS!** was first published.

Inquiring minds want to know...

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Have there been any significant changes in the activities of the “average surfer” since then?

Yup! And it's good news for **MYSS! 2002** readers...

There's a growing trend toward online shopping...

- by the end of this year, 29% of people that go online will purchase a good or service
- by 2003, 38% of people that go online will purchase a good or service
- not only are more people buying online, the average transaction size is increasing as well
- much of the forecasted increase will come from online shoppers outside the United States.

(Source: IDC.com)

More reasons to get building a “**Site that SELLS!**”!



To finish this section off, let's look at the top 6 uses of the Internet for small businesses, courtesy of the 19th annual Dunn and Bradstreet Small Business Survey. (As above, they are ranked in reverse order, #1 being most popular.)

6) Sell/Market Products

5) Purchase Goods/Services (personal use)

4) Purchase Goods/Services (business use)

3) Personal Research

2) Business Research

1) E-Mail

Translation?

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Transactions are where it's at! Of all sorts. Business-to-business, business-to-consumer, all will continue to experience growth. And that's a good thing!



5.1.9. Your Customer's Mindset...

How do your surfing customers **feel** when online?

They are all in a hurry. Their browsers are slow. **Their bandwidth is slower...**



... **Their trigger-happy fingers are poised** over the mouse, just dying to get to the "**next site.**"

Surfers, generally, have **low attention spans.** They have some idea of their quest but they are easily distracted along the way, due to the link-link-link-what-the-heck-was-I-looking-for-anyway nature of the Web.

The whole wide world awaits... right at the end of their clicking fingers! So many Web sites... so little time!

What does that mean to you?

One wrong step, and you'll lose your visitor, usually forever.

[SIDEBAR]

So how long do you have? The best-built e-commerce sites on the Web load up in 6 seconds or under on a 33.6k modem. But you'll probably get away with 10-12. And don't think that a surfer's patience will rise with increased broadband access. It won't. It will just increase the benchmark for fast-loading sites.

Translation? **You'll have even less time before people lose their patience.**



5.1.10. Where is Your Target Coming From?

Know how your customers find your Web site. This info will give you an idea about the **mindset** of your arriving visitors.

Is it due to **previous knowledge of you** or an **offline advertising/promotion of your URL**? These people are extremely targeted, buy-oriented customers. They may already be offline customers of yours.

Or is it from Search Engines (SEs)? They are coming to you because they looked for info related to what you offer. As a result, they are targeted and open-to-buy **if you say the right stuff**.

But you've got to sell them about yourself and your product. Aim directly at **persuading** these people to stay on your site. **This is a critical group.**

[**SIDEBAR**]

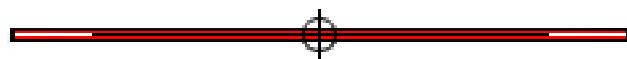
As soon as you have a site that gets some traffic, you'll have one more important tool... the **referrer fields of your log files**. Run your log files through a **log file analyzer** to learn **what sites** your visitors originate from, and **what keywords** your visitors enter (in the Search Engines) to find you.

The site of origin tells you whether your visitor arrives via a Search Engine or from a "regular" site (for whatever reason -- advertising, a product review, etc.).

The keywords give you an idea of your prospects' level of interest, as well as the kinds of benefits they seek.

Do visitors come for the freebies or the entertainment? Maybe they found out about the free stuff through a newsgroup, or by searching for "free newsletters." These is your "least-likely-to-buy" group. You may convert them through your efforts, but **don't target them**. It's the SE group that you have to persuade. Refine that group's "big picture" mindset according to wants and needs.

How your customer finds you is a strong indication of what kind of customer he is. Be a good detective and solve the mystery.



5.1.11. Write for your Target's Personality Type

Aim the design, language, look and feel of your copy to the **dominant personality type of your target market**. Is your typical customer outgoing and friendly, a marketing/sales type? If so, you can afford a more promotional tone of language. Or is she logical, analytical, introverted and thoughtful? If so, she perceives promotional language as dishonest, money-grubbing hype!

As you write your site, feel the emotions and mindset of your typical customer. **Adjust the words and tone to fit that person**, not you.

I can't begin to tell you how important this is. Don't write to SELL yourself. After all, you're already "sold."

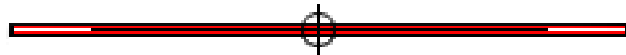


For more information on selling to personality types, here are two terrific books...

- **Targeted Selling**, by Mike Godfrey, published by Prentice Hall, ISBN 0-13-456799-4



- **The Art of SpeedReading People**, by Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger, published by Little, Brown, ISBN 0-316-84525-6



5.1.12. How & Why to Thumbnail Your Target

OK, you understand the personality type of your typical customer. Time to flesh out the details.

Let's develop a "thumbnail sketch" of your target. Who **is** your customer? What are his wants and needs and worries?

Understand what makes him tick. Only then can you figure out what **gain** you can offer, or what **pain** you can cure.



Let's use a **baby boomer thumbnail** sketch as a starting point...

- 30-50 years old
- money concerns -- mortgage and other debts, children's university, retirement
- want everything for their children -- health and wealth
- unsure of their job and/or unhappy at their job
- tight for time, pressured, stressed
- out of shape, getting overweight
- looking for ways to improve wealth and health and self
- want to get out of the rat-race before they become their parents!



If you have a product that addresses one or more of these needs, and that is [appropriate for Internet sales](#), keep this thumbnail sketch firmly in mind as you design and write your site. Elaborate on the points that fit with your product and what it delivers.

Here's a possible scenario. Your product is a book on time management. You'd emphasize...

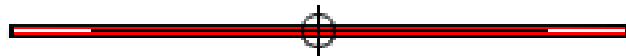
- the great feelings of being in control, of freeing up hours per day
- more productivity at work (i.e., promotions and pay increases)
- time to go fishing with the kids
- finally have the time to get back into shape
- and most important of all... time to just sit down and relax.

Take a moment now, and develop a thumbnail of **your customer.** Do it for each **market segment** if your product has more than one kind of consumer. For example, a weight-loss product might appeal to both athletes and the obese. Develop profiles for **both** of them -- their needs are far different.



Bottom line? **Understand your customer before you keyboard your first word.**

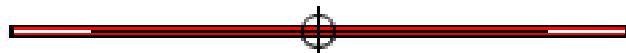
Your site **lives** for these people!



5.2. Crash Course... Write to SELL!

Formal writer's training is not necessary. **Knowledge of your product's benefits, and your customers' needs, however, are critical.**

Let's quickly educate you in the basics of good sales copy. Then you can make the decision to hire, do it in-house, or do-it-yourself.



5.2.1. Powerful Tools of the Trade

Strong, active, and tight sales copy is **10%** art and **90%** hard work. Here are the copywriter's equivalent of hammer, drill, and saw...

Kill all tired, passive verbs, floppy adjectives and 6-syllable nouns.

What do I mean by active and strong? Well, which is stronger?...

"The cat was run over by the truck."

OR...

"The 10-ton Mack pancaked the kitty."

Use strong, active, emotion-charged verbs (do not use anything derived from "to

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be"). Activate the sentences -- **pump** action into them. **Rivet** people to their monitors. Make every line **snap**.

Your visitor can leave you, and will, with a single click of the mouse. You must rivet your reader's eyeballs to the monitor.

Learn how to write **riveting copy...** or hire someone who can. If you hire, ask candidates for references, credentials, samples of work, and c.v. (focus on training, past employers, and online experience).

Even if you hire a copywriter, you must still be able to evaluate her work. Ultimately, whether you write it yourself or not, **you're responsible.**



Use **hot** words (within the tolerance level of your target), especially in your headlines...

- free
- profit
- new
- now
- secret
- easy
- save
- guarantee
- today
- first
- how to
- amazing

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- facts you should know
- discover
- do you...
- Yes!

... And the hottest word of all...



Use short words. The average person reads at about a grade six level. You are not trying to impress your peers with a pedantic, university-level paper. Even if your reader has a high I.Q., she is in a hurry -- **everyone** on the Web is impatient and in a hurry! Make your copy as clear and as easy as possible to understand. **Keep it simple -- write the way you would talk.**



Build short paragraphs. Just put 2 or 3 short sentences together. No paragraph should extend more than 3 or 4 lines. Make the occasional paragraph just a single line... it drives a point home...

... like this!

Put a space between the paragraphs. This little “white space” lets your page breathe. It looks much easier to read. Break up the work of reading as much as possible, and you will have a happy customer who reads what you have to say... right to the end!

Write clearly. If you have any doubt as to whether something is hard to understand, **it is.** Make it better.



No jargon! Don't use language that is specific to your industry, unless you are sure that even newcomers will understand the lingo. Don't use sayings that are specific

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to your country, if your customers are international. Stay away from slang, and be especially careful if you're going to use humor on your site!



Use fresh, surprising, neuron-tingling concepts. Use the most colorful language you can, without disturbing the flow. Use similes, analogies, metaphors, quotes -- have a bunch of reference books ready!



Be punchy and interesting, not dull and scientific. Surprise and engage her -- don't be predictable or boring. Don't worry about appearing "professional." The only thing that relentlessly matters is what your customer wants -- the benefits.



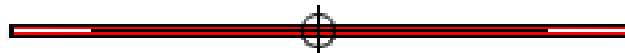
Ellipses, dashes, and other **unconventional punctuation** can all convey a nice informal sense and help the flow.



Make Your Words Sell! is all about using the power of the "**right**" words to get the sale. There are still marketers out there who believe flashy "Web wizardry" and complicated Web design positively influence consumer spending. But they are way off the mark. Words make the sale, not graphics! **MYWS!** shows you how to become a **great e-persuader...**



Make Your Words Sell!
<http://myws.sitesell.com/>



5.2.2. Benefits, Benefits, and **More** Benefits

Don't focus on what **you** want -- **get into what your customer wants**, and especially into what he **needs...**

Stress customer benefits throughout. Make your sales copy so customer-benefit-focused that your visitor **wants** to read on.

Add excitement and rouse emotions. Emotion sells -- use words that convey feelings. Speak to your customers' emotional interests.

Help your customer **imagine** using the product. Paint a picture -- let your customer see, hear, touch, taste its benefits. Fill him with good feelings -- **make him feel like a...**



... king.

In short, **dramatize the benefits** -- if he can feel the payoff, he'll buy. If you can't generate these good feelings, your chance of a sale (if that's your site's **MWR**) plummets.



To succeed, stress benefits. Strong benefits include...

- making money/saving money -- "How would it feel to be making an extra \$1,000 per month? Wouldn't that take a lot of the pressure off?" Boy, you got my attention!
- romance/sex -- No-brainer on the Internet!
- health/ease pain/lose weight
- better/younger appearance
- more leisure time/save time/save work -- anything that improves efficiency or saves time
- pride of accomplishment -- need for approval or recognition/popularity
- happiness/relaxation -- brought about by such things as travel or hobbies
- greed -- not just money, but any other desire to enhance or increase one's possessions, such as collecting
- eliminate worry/doubts/risks/embarrassment

- exclusivity -- humans have a need to belong
- basic needs, such as food, health, shelter, security, safety -- address the fear of losing them, or the desire to enhance them.

Analyze the above universal human needs and relate them to your product.



The importance of benefits applies to you, no matter what you sell. **For example...**



... you sell lightbulbs and you're thinking, "Whoa, what a crock! I just sell lightbulbs!" **Wrong!** You sell light. More importantly, you sell the benefits of light. What are these benefits? Well, in this example, I'm not the expert in lighting -- you are. But I'll give it a stab...

First, lighting lets you see.

Second, both the fixture and the light cast by the bulb have an aesthetic, or decorative function.

Third, beside "gain," lights also cause "pain" -- the cost of the bulb, the cost of electricity and the bother of replacing.

So, if you aim your copy at these key benefits that matter to your customer, you'll have an interested visitor. But if you talk about your light bulbs and your company, you'll die like all the other light bulb companies!



5.2.3. Hot Copy **SELLS**, but...

Hopefully, I've hit you over the head with the importance of writing **hot, active copy**. Are you ready for the **BUT?**

But.. **don't cross over into bad taste or low credibility.**

This advice reminds me of old Casey Stengel, the legendary NY Yankees manager, who walked out to his pitcher in a tough, bases-loaded situation. What did he tell his trembling hurler?

MYSS! 2002... You **Can** Write to **SELL!**

“Don’t give him anything to hit... but don’t walk him either!”

So... write hot, active, benefits-oriented copy... but don’t cross the “credibility” line. Present the benefits of your product **strongly, but honestly and credibly**.

Only **you** can be the judge -- you are the person who knows the target market. If your customer is the VP of Technology at a high-tech company, he will have a lower tolerance for aggressive sales copy than will a stock speculator.

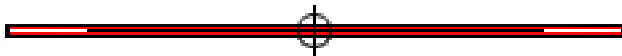
As your customer reads your copy, **he is evaluating you**. Maybe not consciously, but he is. If your customer decides you’re a huckster, well... *hasta la vista!*

Let’s take an extreme example. Have you ever responded to those e-mail pitches?...

Make BIG MONEY... \$5000 Per WEEK, Starting TOMORROW!!!
Make \$124,000 in just 90 Days!!

Of course not! Just not believable.

Your #1 goal is to persuade the truly interested, targeted customer to deliver your **MWR**. People respond best to strong, active, benefit-oriented copy. **But you must tailor that copy to the tolerances of your target.**



5.2.4. The **You : Me** Ratio

The higher the “YOU” to “ME” ratio in your copy, the better.

Other than establishing you and your company **at the right time** (in the “About Us” and “Product Features” sections of your site), focus on using **YOU** as much as possible. **Appeal straight to your customer’s selfish needs, not yours. Tie your offer to his needs.**

Using “YOU” also helps write in an active (vs. a passive) sense. For example, instead of “Headlines throughout North American newspapers have...”, say “You’ve seen the headlines. You know what’s happening.” See?

Or get even **more active** and **use commands**. Since you have set the “you” tone from the beginning, commands are acceptable. “Fill in the form and e-mail me” is far

better than "This form can be completed and e-mailed if you are interested."

[**SIDEBAR**]

Do a search on your site for "We, us, our". Then repeat for "you, your, yours." If the latter does not outnumber the former 5 to 1, you're in trouble. **You can never overuse the word "you."**

5.2.5. Building a Long Term Relationship

Selling successfully on the Web is **NOT** about arm twisting and coercion.

It's about **building...**



... relationships.

Long term relationships. It's about letting your customer know you **really** care about them... it's about delivering on your promises... it's about delivering outstanding service...and it's about giving **AND** taking. Just ask Amazom.com. They know all about it!

Let your client know you're there for them -- long term! They'll be much more likely to do business with you.



5.2.6. Turn the Info-Pyramid **Upside-Down**

Journalists start their articles with the conclusion or summary. They follow with the most important supporting facts. They finish with all the background details.



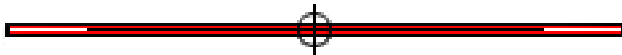
... This style is known as the inverted pyramid. It allows readers to get the most info in whatever amount of time they are willing to spend.

On the Web, where reading is painful, the inverted pyramid is even more important than it is for newspapers. Visitors are in a hurry... many will read only the top part of an article. If they have not learned enough, or if they are not interested...

...bye-bye.

Interested readers will scroll through the whole story. But you have to give them the goods up front, in order for them to decide to stay and investigate you and your products.

Use the inverted pyramid in all of your Web writing.



5.2.7. Never Waver, Never Stray

Make your site a single, coherent, consistent statement that...

1) addresses directly **and only** the type of person who likely will be interested in buying your product. Don't try to "convert" people who are unlikely to buy. If you try to be all things to all people, you'll be "nuthin' to no one."

Never waver from your target market.

2) develops a consistent **personal image** which builds a rapport with your visitor. Decide what that image will be and carry it throughout the site, even extending to your e-mail replies.

Never waver from yourself.

3) builds relentlessly towards getting the **MWR**, ending with a call to action that tells the reader what to do.

Never waver from your goal.



5.3. Make Each Page SELL!

Each, and every, page must **SELL!**

Start each page with a...



...**grabber**. Write a **benefit-laden opening paragraph** that sells your prospect on continuing deep into the page. (We'll talk about a very special case, [the opening paragraph of the Opening Page](#), a bit later.)

This opening line must answer the question that **every** visitor has as they reach a new page...

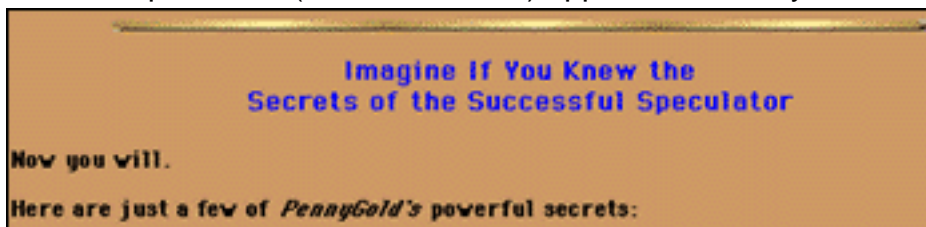
“What’s in it for me? Why should I spend my time reading this page?”

The remaining copy **must deliver** on the promise of the opener. We have already discussed the basics of writing good, hard, active copy. Stick to these guidelines, always aimed at the personality of your visitor.

So, you've got a great opener. And your copy sizzles. Two final **tricks of the trade** will polish each page into a sharp, shiny selling tool...



- **The Headline** -- The headline is the larger, different-colored type that separates major sections of a page. It pulls your visitor from one section of a page to the next. The example below (headline in blue) appears on PennyGold's Opening Page...

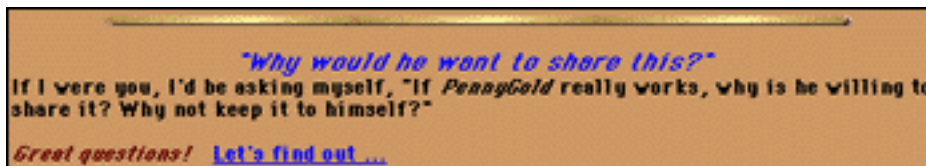


And of course, the opening page for this book...

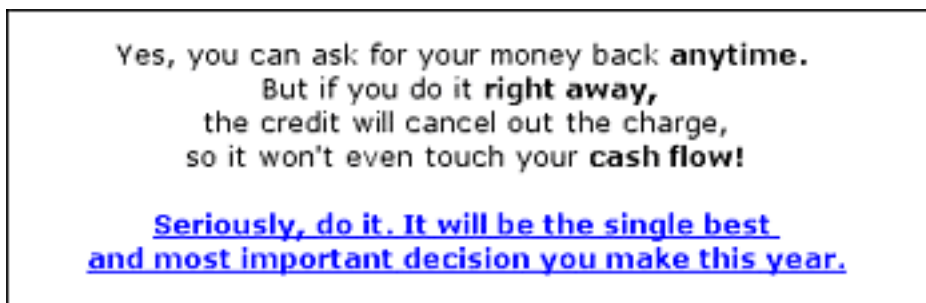


- **The Joint** -- The joint is the end of one page that leads to the beginning of the next. It pulls your visitor through your site **in your preferred order**.

The example below is the joint that pulls the reader from PennyGold's **Opening Page** to the next one...



... and this example pulls a visitor on to **MYSS!'s** Order Page...



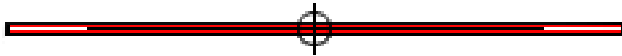
Headline and joints must promise benefits and keep the visitor moving.

Headlines move your prospect to the next section of the same page. Joints move her on to the next page. **Good joints create predictable flow.**

In short, **each page** must...

- **first**, pull the reader into the contents
- **then**, deliver the desired info, short and crisp
- **finally**, make her want to click to the next page.

Now let's look at the details of writing compelling headlines and joints...



5.3.1. The All-Important **Headline**

How can I tell you headlines are important without SCREAMING? I can't...

HEADLINES ARE IMPORTANT! HEADLINES ARE CRITICAL!

Headlines account for as much as 90% of the effectiveness of your site. Ten times as many people read the headlines as read your body copy. If you don't use headlines or if you have poor ones, **you lose 90% of your site's sales potential.**

Strong, hard-hitting, benefit-laden headlines keep the reader **motivated and moving**. Hitting your customer's "hot buttons" motivates him to read more.

Headlines break up an endless string of paragraphs into readable sections -- this makes it easy to continue. Craft lots of them. Use them to divvy up your paragraphs into small, logical, building blocks of text. **Headlines make the reader's job easy.**

Arrange the sections such that the page builds to a climax. The headlines must draw your visitor in, deeper and deeper. **Headlines make your reader's progression irresistible.**

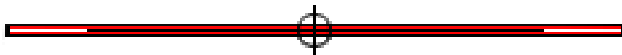
Think of your headline as **an ad for the words that follow**. It has to pull the customer into the copy. So stress strong benefits. Make powerful, tangible, customer-serving promises.

An effective headline is important for many reasons...

- Attracts attention, making your page easily scannable
- Communicates a strong benefit

- Appeals to the self-interest of the reader by answering, “Who cares? So what? What’s in it for me?”
- Sets the tone
- Organizes the material, dividing it into logical text blocks.

Here’s how to write exciting headlines that **absolutely no one** can resist...



5.3.2. How to Write Headlines that Hit

To write headlines that hit, identify your product's benefits. Phrase them to push your customers' hot buttons. Well-phrased benefits bring out emotions. People **act** due to their emotions. Then they **justify** their decisions by using logic.

So... **write down all the benefits** of your product. Then select the most meaningful ones. **Use strong active verbs** (ex., slash, chop, stagger, etc.) to create powerful headlines with emotional impact... headlines that push your customer's hottest button!

For example, if you were writing a headline for a book called, “How To Form Your Own Corporation Without a Lawyer for Under \$75”...

“Wage Your Own Personal Tax Revolt” or “Build Your Own Ultimate Tax Shelter” would be great, benefit-laden headlines.



First, a few **do's**...

- For each headline, write 10 before choosing the perfect one -- never accept your first stab at a headline.
- Stir an emotion. Get the reader excited or fearful or protective. Appeal directly to basic human needs and desires. Motivate to continue reading.
- Use the present tense, or the imperative, which is far more emphatic. Use “you.”

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- Use verbs which are vital and strong. Use short words that create images or pictures. Eliminate most adverbs and adjectives.
- The headline must stand on its own. Your visitor must understand it, and foresee where the following text is likely heading.

Here are some good examples (blush) from the SiteSell brand of products...

**You -- yes, you -- can write
a profitable e-book!**

Presented by [Ken Evoy, M.D.](#)
Author of **Make Your Site Sell!**

Make Your Knowledge Sell!

<http://myks.sitesell.com/>

And...

**Know Your Perfect Price™
in 50 Minutes**

"Why is the Perfect Price™ so important?" That depends on whether you are **considering** a new product concept, **launching** a new product, or managing **existing** ones...

Make Your Price Sell!

<http://myps.sitesell.com/>

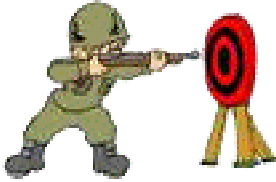


A few do not's...

- Avoid headlines that **only** create curiosity. Be benefit-driven, or the reader will feel deceived.
- Do not try to be "catchy" or "cute," unless that will work with your target market. "Catch phrases" call attention to the copy itself, which is distracting. Make the

product the “hero,” not the copy.

- Don't worry about what non-targeted visitors think of your headline. You are not writing for them -- you're not after them. **Focus...**



... on your target.



Here are a few more tried and true suggestions...

- Start with “Now” or “At last” or “Announcing” or “Finally” or “How to” or “Why” or “FREE!”
- Ask a question that begs to be answered
- **Make only believable promises** -- don't get carried away with hype.
- Use upper and lower case letters (typical Title style), NOT ALL CAPS (which screams).
- Do not vary appearance -- maintain a consistent color and size across headlines and sub-headlines
- Sometimes, where appropriate and for extra credibility, put a headline **inside** quotation marks (ex., “The Most Powerful Word Processor Yet”)
- Challenge the reader -- for example, in PennyGold... “Only for Investors Who Want to Use Their Own Brain.”

Finally, hit benefits, hot buttons!

Should I say it again... na-a-a-ah, you've got the message. Now, here's how to write **joints** that pull prospects like herring in front of a cat's nose...



5.3.3. Joints --- The Key to Visitor Pull-Through

See how the **preceding** teaser sentence, followed by an ellipsis (...), with a promise of great success (joints that pull like herring in front of a cat), pulled **you** quickly into this section? That's how to make the end of one Web page "joint" into the next.

The joint is the end of one page that leads to the beginning of the next. It is the most important tool that you have to lead your visitor through your site **in your preferred order**.

End each page with the need for the reader to click. Make her click to the next page -- use **questions** or **ellipses** ("...") or **incomplete sentences** that beg to be finished... whatever it takes to get her to click through to the next page with curiosity, excitement and enthusiasm!

The end of a page is a danger spot where people may decide to leave. A good joint keeps your visitor in the site. It keeps her moving towards the **MWR Closer Page** (your Order Page, if the **MWR** is a direct sale).

In a sense, a joint is a "**call to action**" that pulls your visitor onwards. **Basically, your "MWR" for each Non-Response page is to make your visitor click to the next page.**

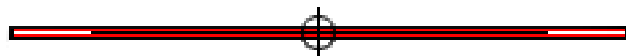
Each page must fit together and build into the next. Each must do its part to compel the prospect to **deliver** the ultimate goal, **the MWR**.



Up to this point, we have used the word "joint" to mean that critical zone **between** pages, the end of one page that leads into the next.

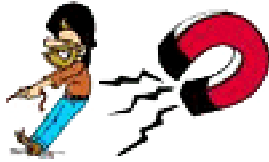
But joints also exist **within** each page. Let's call these "**small joints**." The role of small joints is to pull the reader through, **from one paragraph to the next**.

The "how to" for making small joints is the same as for developing full, inter-page joints. Let's see...



5.3.4. How to Write a Magnetic Joint

Joints must keep your visitor **on site**. They must **pull him through as irresistibly...**



... as a giant magnet.

Here are a few more tried and true joint-building suggestions...

- End paragraphs with ellipses (“...”), which leads the eye into the next paragraph. Start the other end of the joint by finishing these thoughts, **with impact**.
- Ask a question that begs to be answered, especially one that implies big benefits.
- For small joints, start paragraphs with “And,” “But,” “So you see”, “However.”
- Use connectors like...
 - “What’s more...”
 - “And that’s not all!”
 - “Better yet...”
 - “So that’s why...”
 - “And not only that, but...”
- Finish a page with a **teaser lead-in** to the next one.

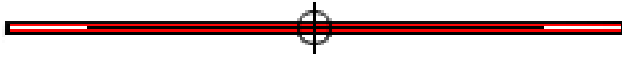
• **Don’t leave his progress to chance.** At the bottom right of every page, **clearly lead your visitor to the next page**. Include an arrow button pointing to the right!



Remember, **each paragraph** must deliver the reader **to the next paragraph...**

Each **block** of paragraphs (headed by a headline) must deliver the visitor **to the next block**.

Each **page** of copy must deliver your customer to the **next page**. Clicking to the next page is your “most wanted response” **for that page**. **It’s the joints** that pull your reader through all the “click-somewhere-else” **danger points**.



5.3.5. Measuring the Effectiveness of Your Page Joints

Are you successfully drawing visitors through your site?

A quick look at your [log files](#) will tell you.

Of the people arriving to your site, how many are pulled through your page joint to the next page (or stage)?

Remember, you’re always going to have some people leave long before they hit your page joint. Not a big deal -- they’re simply not interested in what you’re selling. So you’ll never hit a 100%. **But weed, prune...**



... and chop! Experiment to increase that percentage as high as possible!

Better still, work diligently on those visitors that have **qualified** themselves by clicking through your first joint. They are interested. Can you keep them that way? Are they moving on to your next step -- i.e., clicking through the **next** page joint? If they are, great! If not, why aren’t they?

Test, test, and test some more.

Then, when you’ve finished testing...

Yup, you got it. Test it again!



5.3.6. Summing It All Up

Build logically from your opening “grabber” paragraph. Use small joints and headlines to pull your visitor from one section of text to the next. Finish the page with an irresistible click to the next page, which leads...

... into the next page, and so on, until...

your visitor gives you that **MWR** that you want so badly.



5.4. The “Write” Tone

The Web is a “faceless” place. Prospects don’t know your product/information. Their starting mindset is that the product/service is probably bad. And most potential customers are not as interested as you are in the subject matter. They worry about poor quality, credit card scams, etc.

Write **as if you were talking to a good friend...**



... as if your customer was sitting across the table from you.

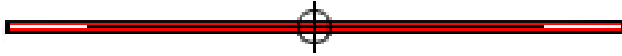
Think about this for a second. When **you’re** surfing the Web, don’t you feel like most sites are talking **at you**, instead of **to you**? Talk **to** your customers, just as surely as if you were looking straight into his eyes.

You are working one-to-one. So personalize your Web site.

While being friendly and personal, cover the following ground with your customer...

- create a desire for the product
- develop a thorough understanding of its features
- convince your visitor that it will deliver as promised.

Build confidence by being clear, straightforward and friendly.



5.4.1. Turn Your Visitor Into Your Friend

Make your copy one-to-one, conversational, friendly and personalized. Write copy that is sincere, honest and believable, customer-oriented (benefit-packed) and friendly. Let your own personality shine through in your writing... assuming you have a pleasing personality, of course. 😊

Make it feel like there is someone on the other end of that Web page listening and anticipating what the visitor wants to know. But don't cross the boundary and get too cute.

Work from the mindset of **what your customer wants to buy**, not what **you** want to sell. No easy task, but critical.

Ignore good grammar when you have good reason. You're not trying to write a university-level thesis. As a matter of fact, that pompous-style writing is fatal on the Web. Write like you talk... sentence fragments are fine. Really. Just fine. See?

Make your visitor see real people who they like and trust, not a corporation or a salesman. Your customer must get a strong feel for your personality. If they get a sense of "friend" instead of "big company that wants to make money from me," you're half-way home. The tone of your site sells **you** first, and then your product!

If your site is cold and impersonal, your customer won't like you. And if that happens, **it's going to be a long, uphill battle.**



Before you can write like this, you have to...

- **Know your customer. Yes, this again!** The "right tone" for an aggressive investor is substantially different than for a V.P. of Manufacturing for a high-tech hardware company. Remember, your target market is not the entire group of Web surfers. Narrow it down to who **your** customer is, then choose the appropriate bond-building tone.

- **Sincerely believe in what you are selling** -- or forget it. If you don't believe in your product, it will show. Believe in your product and it will shine through.

But no matter who your customer is, **a friendly "I-wrote-this-just-for-you" tone is right for the Internet.**



5.4.2. Become a Story-Teller

People love to read stories. Stories have a friendly one-to-one feel. They draw the reader in.

And stories can be a potent way to **communicate a benefit**, especially when it is found in a consumer [testimonial](#). For example...

"My feet used to scream in pain after 12 hours working on my feet in the Emergency Room. In the morning, I'd lie in bed with my feet up on the wall, trying to reduce the pain. I was taking high-doses of anti-inflammatories. But now, thanks to AIRCUSH, my little doggies purr like kittens (whoops!). AIRCUSH cured what I thought was a hopeless situation."

Isn't that a lot better than, "Use AIRCUSH shoes and your feet will feel great!"?

So...



... become a story-teller.

Story-telling is a powerful, credible, and nicely informal way to **SELL**.



5.4.3. **Don't** Make These **Friend-Losing** Boo-boos

A single careless error can destroy a lot of good work...

- **Don't offend.** For example...

- Use non-sexist language.
- Don't be US-centric, unless the rest of world is **not** in your market.
- Don't use slang or regional dialects.
- **Don't rush it.** Only when they like and trust you, will they buy. Be patient and optimize the experience of all visitors. Convince them through your tone and content that you want them to be satisfied -- gain their confidence slowly but surely.
- **Use humor carefully**, and only if you really know your visitors. If you have any doubt, drop it, especially anything that could be accidentally or remotely offensive.



5.5. Cut, Chop, Axe, & Prune

Be as succinct as possible. Reading from computer screens is 25% slower than paper. On top of that, your reader is time-pressured. Therefore, the whole online info-gathering experience puts an impatient knot in your viewer's gut.

So get to the point...



... Chop every useless word.

Once you have chopped viciously, go back and cut out some more. No matter how tight you think it is, **“the copy can always be tighter.”**

Present in tight, short bursts of info. As long as your visitor is learning quickly, she will sense progress and satisfaction... and will therefore keep moving forward through your site. Call it the “Potato Chip” school of writing. If each chip is tasty and rewarding, pretty soon your visitor will have munched the bag.



And there's a side benefit to merciless honing...

You will have more than a tight, clean, fast-moving site. It will stand out with a calm, classy look and feel. This professional image translates directly to your product.

So... keep pushing, polishing, improving your writing... until it's perfect. Go for **effectiveness** rather than cuteness/cleverness. Edit until you feel that the **MWR** is inevitable. Then go away for a week.

Come back and read it again through your customer's eyes -- is it still good? It should glide smoothly from point to point. Do you feel increasing excitement as you approach the **MWR?...** "Gee, this really is a great offer."

Now read it again, **aloud** this time, and to a friend. Do both of you find it exciting and motivating? Are there places that you trip over, that sound wrong?

Bottom line... Does it sell you? If it does, you're ready to [test with a harder audience](#).

[**SIDEBAR**]

Animations distract from reading **your brilliant text**. If you fall in love with an animation, do the following... read a couple of paragraphs with your hand covering the animation. Then read two other paragraphs with the animation in plain view. Once you see how distracting they are, get rid of the whirling gizmos. If you have to have one, make the animation subtle and useful.



5.6. Never Underestimate The **POWER** of Words

You've labored long...



... and you've labored hard.

MYSS! 2002... You **Can** Write to **SELL!**

And you've built what you believe is one of the best gosh-darned sites on the whole Net. It's easy to navigate, and simple to understand. You ask for the order, you provide verifications, testimonials, and a great product. Success now rests on...

The number of people coming to your site, and the percentage of those people that will buy. That's your **CR** -- **Conversion Rate**.

What I have discovered by simple experimentation is that even the smallest changes in page copy can make a big -- no scratch that -- a **GIGANTIC** difference in your **CR**. Just simple things. Tiny, insignificant things...

Things like words. You may think your page is the best it can be -- but it can almost always be better.

[Later in the book](#), I discuss how I had to tweak, axe, prune, and chop the page copy to double the subscription rate to **SiteSell's e-zine**. It took a lot, and I mean **a lot**, of work. I had to return to the drawing board more than a few times.

Learning the proper sales-copy techniques from a professional copywriter can have an incredibly positive affect on your sales strategy, depending how well you...

- Create compelling, gripping headlines
- Stress the powerful benefits of your product
- Upsell
- Provide incentives to buy
- Illustrate the uniqueness of your product
- Price your product

Selling site-security software? What sounds better?...

[Buy now for \\$139.95!](#)

OR...

[Enjoy Peace of Mind for less than \\$12.00 a month!](#)

Now who the heck wouldn't pay \$12 a month for peace of mind?

MYSS! 2002... You Can Write to SELL!

See what I mean?

Presentation and words.

That's it, that's all!

[**SIDEBAR**]

Unfortunately, only a small amount of this book can be dedicated to effective copywriting. If you need help getting the **right** words onto your screen, **MYWS!** is for you!...



Make Your Words Sell!
<http://myws.sitesell.com/>



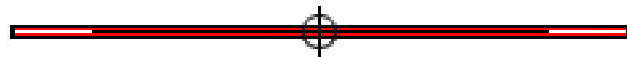
5.7. The 3 Rules for Words that **SELL**

Let's summarize it all into three simple rules that you won't forget...

Rule #1 -- Get into your visitor's ego. **Give her what she wants, not what you want to give her.**

Rule #2 -- It's the words that **SELL**, not the pictures.

Rule #3 -- There is no Rule #3. Re-read #1 and #2.



6. Build Trust & “Likeability”

Web surfers are extra-skeptical. **Your visitor will constantly ask herself...**

“Is this true? Are the claims valid? Is the product any good? Are the people/company trustworthy?”

Trust & “likeability” are intertwined. You don’t like someone if you don’t trust him. And, at least on the Web, you don’t trust someone if you don’t like him.

Maximize your customer’s confidence in you. Actually, make your buyer more than confident... make her “like” you and trust you.

Remember always that your customer must trust...

- the **quality** of your product. If your customer doubts this, you’re dead... even if she likes you!
- the **validity** of information. Your content must be rock-solid and unchallengeable.
- **you and your company.** You have competitors. Your customer must feel that **you** can be trusted with her credit card and that you “know your stuff,” and that you will stand behind your product.

And here’s the most important point of all...

The smaller you are, the more time you must spend on building trust. After all, you don’t worry about Coca-Cola or Microsoft. Do you?

So how do you build trust, using only electrons and without the benefit of a face-to-face? Glad you asked...



6.1. It Starts With Look & Feel

Your customer must like and trust you, before she will consider buying from you. The look and feel of your site is the beginning of this process.

Your Web pages build your store’s ambience. If you already have a site, take

one big step back and look at the overall impression.

Is it a distracting, confused mess? **Or is it professional and organized, yet warm and inviting?** Does it make you feel good? Do you trust this store?

Now ask that same questions of friends, colleagues, and favorite customers, during unscheduled, informal test sessions. Ask them to be **blunt** -- tell them you need the truth, not compliments.



This look and feel of your site goes a long way to getting the sale... **or losing it.** The **first impression** as your Home Page loads will drive people away before they even start reading... if the look and feel is all wrong. Or it will allow them to settle into a comfortable place where they will enjoy reading your message.

Shopping at your store must be a pleasant, rewarding, convenient and safe experience. Your site should transmit that... **immediately and throughout** the site.

The overall design (colors, fast-loading graphics, layout, fonts, copy layout) sets the table. Design can develop a warm, trusting feel... or a sterile, cold one... **or a multi-national, big-company presence...**



...or a hucksterish “I’ll steal your credit card and run it to the max in a minute” feel.

And it’s not just graphics and design...

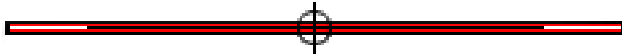
Remember the [write to sell](#) techniques? Every word must address “look and feel,” too! If you write like a lawyer, that’s the sense they’ll get. Is that what you want?

If your site is up, scan the copy of your first two pages. Look for a conversational, friendly tone... do you “talk” to your customer? Do so! For example, tell her your story... reveal a bit about yourself, why you got into the business, what drives you, etc.

Let’s sum it up...

Offline, customers get a strong look and feel by “being there.” But your Web-prospect can’t get that from **physically** meeting you and touring your operation.

So your Web site has to do it. A Web site is a mirror to the soul of a company. A solid, friendly, professional look and feel starts building confidence... starts developing trust and likeability. A whirling, loud site does the reverse.



6.1.1. Two Tasty Examples



Your visitors want info, enough info to make a buy-or-not decision. **Make that info-gathering process as light, even entertaining, as possible** (within reason, given the tolerances of your target market).

Unless entertainment that “blows their minds” fits with your product and target market (ex., you sell video games), don’t feel that you have to entertain with all the bells and whistles that the Web can offer.

But don’t just write **words**, either.

Gratuitous entertainment takes your visitor’s mind off the task at hand. And it will slow the delivery of your information drastically.

Presenting info in a light and breezy manner (as light as your product will allow, that is) in an appropriate setting is critical.

See the **Ragu site** for a colorful example of information delivered via relevant entertainment...

MYSS! 2002... Build Trust & "Likeability"



Ragu (Mama's Cucina)

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



See **HotHotHot** for another top-notch look and feel. It features...

- excellent **hot colors** for the text and links
- complementary background color
- sizzling, stylish (but very simple) graphics.

Nothing complicated.

Just effective at building a unique-and-appropriate look and feel...



HotHotHot

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

Your product may not be as “easy” to have fun with... it may not even be appropriate. But **you can always make the copy quick and easy to read**. And the overall **look and feel** can always be appropriate and stimulating to the eye and mind. **In short...**



... make it tasty!



6.2. Join the **Big Leagues...** Get Your Own Domain

Which looks more like a serious Web business?...

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

OR...

<http://www.masterlink.net/websites/web57177/~pennygold/>



Do **not** use your Web host’s domain name. Domains are cheap -- if you don’t have your own, it is absolute proof that you are smaller than “a little guy.” **So...**

You must have **your own domain** and **it must be perfect...**

- **short and sharp** -- **Sitesell.com** is just so easy to remember. Other good ones include... Google, Amazon, Yahoo!
- **easy to convey** -- Stay away from hyphens and tildes (~) and underscores (_), if at all possible. The best test is... “Can you spell it on a voice mail and be understood?”
- **not easily misspelled** -- You take a chance if you register “toyzz.com” because “toyz.com” is already taken. Best of all would be “toys.com,” of course. Let’s take the voice mail test one step further... can you say it on the phone **without** spelling it,

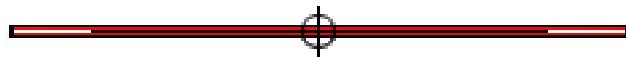
and the recipient **still gets it right?**

- **easy to remember** -- A potential visitor hears about you from a friend or on the radio, but has no pen to write it down -- will he remember the URL?
 - **unique, descriptive, and "you"** -- It must be appropriate for the theme of your site, yet be broad enough to diversify into associated products.
 - **solid, classic** -- Your URL is the first thing anyone notes about your digital biz. Start the good impression right away.
 - **totally lower case** -- If you mix upper and lower case, people will have a harder time remembering the URL. And since much of the Internet is based on [UNIX](#), which is case-sensitive, you'll be headed for all kinds of errors if you mix case in an attempt to be cute. Stay lower case.
 - **contains your keyword for a slight ranking boost** -- Some SEs may give a slight ranking advantage to those sites that contain their most popular keywords within their domain name. Continuing with the "toys" theme -- if you specialize in wooden toys and trains, get it all into your domain name. As in...
- woodentoys.com
 - wooden-toys-and-trains.com
 - wooden-toy-trains.com



The best domain names are simple, catchy, and fun. They don't necessarily **have** to mean anything. But they stick like glue to the inside of your customer's brain cavity.

Ready for your own domain name? Let's go...



6.2.1. Wwww.yourcompany.sex?

Now that I have your attention, the answer is...

Nope! 😊

‘Fraid not. As appealing as it may sound (grin), your first choice for a domain name still remains...

... “dot-com.”

It has a solid grip on our psyche. Think of the Web, and you think “dot-com.” That’s just the way it is. More importantly...

“Dot-com” is what your visitors will automatically type into a search box. They’ll think... “yourcompany.com”, and type that into their browser window. If you don’t show up... well, you’ve got some PR work to do. Because they won’t think to type in a different name extension -- they’ll just move on!

Okay, dot-com is your first choice, but what about other extensions?...

Second choices are...

- dot-net
- dot-org

Arguably not nearly as powerful as “dot-com”, but will do in a pinch. I would recommend these extensions only if the word you’re registering is critical to your business -- otherwise, find a dot-com variation, and register that instead.



What about the new domain name extensions?

Yes, **ICANN** has finally released the new top level domains. They are...

- **.name** -- for personal Web sites
- **.pro** -- for professionals of all shapes, forms, colors, and sizes
- **.museum** -- uhhm, I dunno, perhaps museums?
- **.aero** -- airlines
- **.coop** -- cooperative businesses
- **.info** -- any Web site

- **.biz** -- any Web site

So there you have it, the new top-level domains. Feeling a little let down? Yeah, me too... nothing very exciting, I'm afraid. Certainly nothing that is going to usurp "dot-com" as our first choice.

How long do think it will be before people become familiar enough with these new extensions to use them? Hard to say, but it won't be the near future in any case.

Bottom line?

"Dot-com" wins the day!



6.2.2. Hunting for the RIGHT Name

As you read this, the chances of successfully attaining the first domain name you think of is becoming exceedingly rare. **But don't panic.** If your first choice is taken, try it with the ".net" or ".org" suffix. Then, try small variations or abbreviations of the name -- you'll probably still be able to find something close.

If you're not feeling too creative, there are some fantastic resources available for domain name generation -- and I'll bet you'll find something you love in no time...

Ready? Let's go hunting for domain names! Here's a great idea! Search for domain names by keywords -- type in some words relating to your site, and **Nameboy** will spit back a list of suggested names -- available, for sale...



Nameboy

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

And **Register.com** offers...

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Domain Fast Find

<http://www.register.com/DisplayFastFind.cgi>

Kudosnet's “Popular Domain Name Finder” allows you to enter keywords and then presents you with domain name suggestions based on actual search strings...



Kudosnet Technologies Inc.

<http://secure.kudosnet.com/domain/popular/>



Homepage Names.com

<http://creator.homepagenames.com/>

Whois.net lets you search for domains that were not renewed...



Whois.net

<http://www.whois.net/searchD.cgi2>

And **Brand Fidelity** takes a different approach...



Brand Fidelity

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

And of course, you can always go **shopping** for a domain name. Hey -- this is the Net, right?

[**SIDEBAR**]

Before you spend an arm and a leg on the domain name of your dreams, **consider how many people will actually type "yourcompany.com" into a browser window to find you?**

If you're Dell, or Cisco, or Pepsi, or any other nationally or internationally recognized company, **that's how most people will find you.** In this case, having "yourcompany.com", makes good business sense.

But if you're running a small business out of your basement, nobody is familiar enough with your company to type your domain name into their browsers. They'll find you by clicking links at Search Engines, in directories, and from other sites that link to you. So it really doesn't matter what your domain name is! Your main concern here is to keep the name short, snappy, easily spelt, and memorable.

Domain names are for sale at...



eBay

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



Afternic.com

<http://afternic.com/>

And...



Great Domains

<http://greatdomains.com/>



What's in name anyway?

Some of the most popular sites on the Web today have names that mean **nothing by themselves**. It's only through powerful branding and advertising that they assume an identity, and entrench themselves in our minds.

Let's ponder **Google** for an instant. It's certainly a **great word**, but can you tell me what the heck it means?

Any idea?

Assuming you'd never heard of Google, what would you presume they did (or sold) on the basis of such a name? My mind summons up visions of a new children's toy, perhaps something based around the ever popular "Slinky." Perhaps a new Pokemon character?

Bzzzt! Wrong! Google is a **premier** Search Engine.

The point here? Glad you asked!

Google is a great sounding word.

It's **memorable**, **catchy**, and **fun**. It means, as far as I can figure, absolutely nothing. The closest I can find to it in the "**Concise Oxford**" is "googly" (a cricket term) and "googol" (ten raised to the hundredth power). Google's power is in the way it rolls off your tongue, and sticks in your head!

Now...

Guess what your homework is?

Yup, that's right, make a list of five to ten other great sounding memorable names, and study the list carefully. Then, it's time to go searching for your own domain name!



What's all the hubbub about these new **67 letter domains**? You may have heard that registering a gigantic domain name packed with your most important keywords will rocket your site to the top page of any relevant search on the engines.

Well, you heard wrong, friend.

Long domain names that contain your keyword, when considered as part of the whole "**Search Engine Ranking Mix**" will not shoot you to the first page. On the whole, they'll have **very little effect**.

And here's a little tidbit I managed to wheedle out of two engineers at two major Search Engines (can't reveal their names because they could get into trouble). One does not even look at the content and the other laughed and said...

"It's so small. But if you really wanted to get that so-small edge, just register a subdomain, and **put your keyword in the subdomain**. For extra measure, put it in the HTML file, too."

So, if I wanted to load up a URL with "diamonds" for example, I might use a subdomain URL like...

http://diamonds.sitesell.com/diamonds.html

Clean and simple!

A 60 letter domain name is a **big negative**.

After all, how many letters are there in Yahoo! or Google?

I rest my case!



Various experts have suggested some other problems with the 67-word domain names. Seems some browsers will actually have difficulty reading them properly. And some engines won't index them. Moral of the story? Short and simple.



One last thing...

What about registering domain names with dashes?

If both versions of a 3-or-more-word domain are available, I like using the dashes because they make the word breaks more obvious to the eye. Also, the engines usually treat dashes as a space. So it may be more likely to “see” the entire string as separate words.

Others feel, however, that the engines don’t seem to care one way or the other. So use dashes if it helps readability. For example, which is easier to read...

pricing-on-the-net.com or... pricingonthenet.com?

Generally, do not use dashes if your domain name has only two words in it. See how “netpricing.com” and “cyberpricing.com” don’t really need the help of a dash?

Do use dashes (even if the domain only has two words) if the non-dash version is already being used by someone else. But be sure that you are not violating anyone’s [trademark](#).



Here’s another thought... If you expect 99% of your traffic will come from online sources like links, directories, and Search Engines, it doesn’t really matter. People will find you by clicking a link, and not by typing your domain name into their browsers.

Bottom line? Dashes are fine. Domains are cheap, so if possible, get both variations of the name.



Let’s say Matt and Mike want to take their existing brick-and-mortar bbq business online.

They register the domains [mikeandmattsbbqhut.com](#) and [mike-and-matts-bbq-hut.com](#).

As you see, that first domain name is not easy to read. But it doesn’t matter. Since Matt and Mike’s offline customers know them as “Mike and Matt’s BBQ Hut,” that’s what makes most sense for them to enter into their browser windows.

If either Mike or Matt had to explain the domain name was "mike" **dash** "and" **dash** "matts" **dash** "bbq" **dash** "hut.com", it's likely customers would give up.

But if visitors came across the site via the engines, **mike-and-matts-bbq-hut.com** will work best. In the interest of brevity, **the-bbq-hut.com**, or **bbqhut.com** would be better. The downside is their customers won't be able to guess it!

Judgment call. You'll have to decide what's more important -- your business name, or something shorter and simpler.



6.2.3. Registering Your Name

OK, got the **perfect** domain name? Let's hope it's still available! **Here's how to find out...**

Go to Better-Whois.com. This page not only tells you whether a domain is taken, but who owns it. More importantly, it searches through **all** the domain registrars, an incredibly important feature since the deregulation of the domain registration business...



Better-Whois.com

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



The fee you spend registering your domain is minimal, and it's the best money you'll ever spend. Here's why...

1) You look like a serious business. Without a domain, you raise a big credibility question in every customer's mind, regardless of your site and product quality. **And you'll have a more professional e-mail address...** sales@yourdomain.com garners more respect than hte8349@aol.com.

2) If you switch ISPs, your URL and e--mail address will remain the same. This is critical. Let's say that you're using your ISP's domain name in your business URL -- when you change ISPs, you'll lose a heck of a lot of time just to get back to where

your were before...

- You have to **re-submit** your Web pages to all the Search Engines.
- You **lose** the thousands of visitors with bookmarks to your site.
- You have to **tell everyone** about your new e-mail address.

Ouch!

3) It becomes your brand, your very own proprietary name, which no one else can have. If you’re just starting out, this may sound a little academic. Trust me, it’s not. **For this reason, it’s worth taking the upfront time to choose “the perfect domain name.”**

4) Once you have your own domain, you can get full log files which [you can analyze](#).

Domain name registration has become a highly competitive business -- presently, names can be registered for as low as \$13.95 a year! As long as your registrar is reputable and accredited by **ICANN**, there’s really nothing wrong with a cheaper option! **Avoid problems and register the name yourself** -- it’s not hard.

Use **ICANN** to get a full list of accredited registrars...



The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

<http://www.icann.org/registrars/accredited-list.html>

Who has the best price? Find out here...



Domain-Price-Wars.com

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

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Registrars... ranked, and rated...



DomainNameBuyersGuide.Com

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

Network Solutions, the standard registrar...



Network Solutions

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

Or, you may wish to use cheaper alternatives...



TotalNic Discount Registration Services

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



000 Domains

<http://www.000domains.com/>

(You won't find these guys listed at ICANN -- they are a division of **Tucows**, which is listed!).

If your **ISP** registers your domain, tell them to name **you** as the **administrative and billing contact**. Follow-up and make sure it's been done properly.

[SIDEBAR]

If you decide to use **Site Build It!** to build your Theme-Based Content Web site, you won't need to worry about finding a registrar. It'll be done directly through us...



Site Build It!

<http://buildit.sitesell.com/>



6.2.4. The Multiple Domain Game

Lately, everyone and his uncle are in the domain registration business. The hype and pressure to go out and register a zillion domain names has been overwhelming.

Relax... **it's not necessary to own the rights to every permutation and combination of your domain.** And forget about domain name speculation! A quick visit to eBay will give you an indication of the demand for highly priced names... NONE! Most people, who find their first choice has already been registered, look for a variation, not a trip to the local bank for financing...

"Honey, we need to borrow \$45,000 for a domain name -- would you just co-sign this, please?" I think not!

So... take your time. Find the one good word that fits your business plan.



Unless you plan to build [Theme Based Content Sites](#) that funnel traffic to your pure sales site, you don't need multiple domains. So many companies start a new domain for each new product. Mistake. Pick one name and build your brand. I'll use SiteSell.com as an example...

At Sitesell, when we launch a new product, each one gets its own subdomain -- for example, let's look at **MYPS!** and **MYWS!...**

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Price With Complete Confidence...

MAKE YOUR PRICE SELL!

log-in | become an affiliate | contact us | world's most... | order now

Know Your Perfect Price™ in 50 Minutes

"Why is the Perfect Price™ so important?" That depends on whether you are **considering** a new product concept, **launching** a new product, or managing **existing** ones...

Considering a new product concept? Not sure if it will fly? Imagine if you could know how much people would pay. You'd **know** if this new idea was worth pursuing... or **not** (think of the dollars and time saved).

Make Your **Price Sell!**
<http://mysps.sitesell.com/>



The Simple Art of e-Persuasion

MAKE YOUR WORDS SELL!

Presented by Ken Evoy - Author of Make Your Site SELL!

become an affiliate | contact us | world's most... | order now

What Do YOU Sell? Want to Sell More?

Selling software on the Net? Infoproducts? A service? Million dollar cables for suspension bridges? If you want to sell **more**...

Use the right **words**. Because **words** sell, not graphics. If you have any doubts, try this simple experiment.

Take a look at this...

Make Your **Words Sell!**
<http://myws.sitesell.com/>



A subdomain has the same importance as a regular site. But it's far more powerful in one way -- it keeps "sitesell.com" front and center. **That's the brand.** Multiple

domains for different products dilute the brand and **create uncertainty** in your visitor’s mind.

Not good! Uncertain visitors don’t buy!

Bottom line on domains? Relax...

You only need one for the business itself. Choose carefully because it’s an important part of building your brand. Make sure it’s available as a trademark before registering it. Register other domains only if part of your traffic-building strategies include [Phase 3 Content Sites](#).



6.2.5. Checking Trademark Status

Don’t build your house upon a foundation of sand! I’d guess that 99% of entrepreneurs register and build their businesses around a domain name without first verifying its trademark status.

Big, big, boo-boo. If someone owns the trademark, it’s time to get those “court-going” clothes to the dry cleaners. That’s where you’ll be headed. At the very least, you can expect the use of your domain to be suspended. If your domain is too close to the trademark, you’ll lose it. Bye-bye, e-biz.

Here’s a great free place to check on the trademark status of your domain...



MarksOnLine

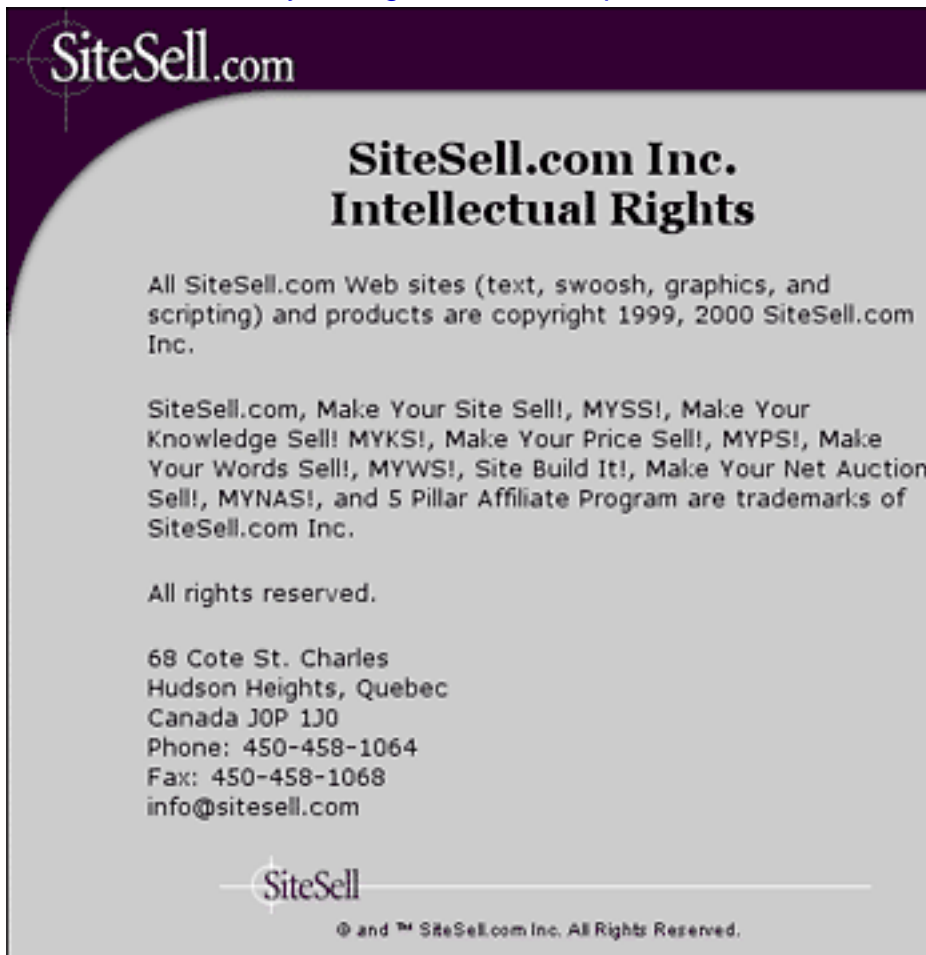
<http://www.marksonline.com/>

[SIDEBAR]

I talked to Alex Chaux, VP Business Development. I really like what MarksOnLine are doing.

I use them for new product naming, too. While you don’t **have** to register a trademark for your new product names, you must make sure that your name does not violate someone else’s trademark. Or you’ll be s-o-r-r-y!

Once you see that it's trademark-clean just put a **TM** on the name, and add a trademark notice in your legals. For example...



In general, there's no need to spend the \$1000-\$2000 necessary to actually register the trademark. Of course, if you're a larger company, or this is an extremely important project and you have the disposable dollars, registering it gives you that extra bit of protection.

But in general, you'll be on the right side of the 80-20 rule if you check for free.

Other places to check...

NameProtect provides an amazing free service. It will notify you if competitors register variations of your domain name -- even names that contain your domain name. Best of all, NameProtect will also keep you updated on current U.S.

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trademark activity that might affect your ability to effectively use your domain or brand name. Cool!



NameProtect.com

<http://www.nameprotect.com/freemon.html>

On top of all this, NameProtect also provides a great trademark search -- search across Federal and Canadian trademarks, domain and company names for possible conflicts...

<http://www.nameprotect.com/cgi-bin/FREESearch/search.cgi>

Everything you ever wanted to know about trademarks, and probably a little more. Your one-stop trademark spot...



GGMARK

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

For those of you in the States, you can search, apply online for a trademark and check the status of your trademark...



U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

<http://www.uspto.gov/web/menu/tm.html>

International Trademark Association links to government trademark resources in Australia, Canada, Europe, Japan, Hungary, New Zealand, United States, and the United Kingdom...

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International Trademark Association
<http://inta.org/basics/tmsrchng.shtml>



Professional Legal Assistors
<http://www.biz-usa.com/trademark.html>



6.2.6. Copyright Protection

OK, the good news first...

All your creative materials on the Web -- whether it be writing, video, graphics, music, art -- **is automatically protected by copyright.** Yes, even if you don't have a copyright statement on your Web site.

Alright... so what's the bad news?

It's extremely difficult to enforce, or even detect any copyright breaches or violations on the Web. So it's always a good idea to include a **minimum** number of copyright statements on your page just to give those “would be thieves” a little reminder that you are serious about protecting your work.



Something like this supplies the basics...

Copyright(c) 2003, by John Smith, All Rights Reserved.

If you wish, you may want to add an additional statement to protect your text, graphics, and HTML.

If you ever discover your copyright is being violated, send an note demanding your material be removed from the Web site **"yesterday, if not sooner."**

No response? Contact their Web hosting company. Web hosting services are not interested in hosting sites that infringe copyright. They assume a legal responsibility.

Do you think Web hosts want that headache? Definitely not. Expect them to act swiftly -- by forcing the thief to remove your material, or... if necessary, by removing the offending site from their server.

[SIDEBAR]

Need help finding an offender's Web hosting company? Do a Better-Whois search...



Better-Whois.com

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

A good resource for copyright rudiments, as they pertain to the Web...



The Copyright Web site

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

Another helpful copyright resource...



United States Copyright Office

<http://www.loc.gov/copyright/>

Yedidya Melchoir publishes a great e-zine dedicated to all things legal on the Net. Informative and detailed, this e-zine is well worth the subscription....



Cyberlaw Informer

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

If you're concerned that material is being stolen and illegally duplicated off your Web site, load your document into this handy Search Engine. It will scour the Web for any violation...



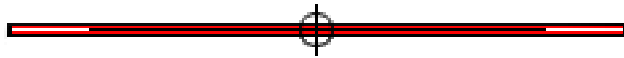
Digital Integrity

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



Again, stick to the good old "80-20" rule.

A basic copyright notice like the [example above](#) should be sufficient for most people.



6.3. Win **SALES** With Valuable Content

Content is information that is of value to your visitor.

Good content builds credibility prior to hitting your **MWR Closer Page**. It establishes you as an expert, that you know what you're talking about. Isn't that who **you** would want to deal with?

Outstanding content, where your customer learns something new or receives some other benefit, can make your customer like you so much that she **wants** to pay you back. If you can develop that **frame of mind in your prospect...**



... open a new corporate bank account. Your first one won't be big enough to hold all that income! 😊

Your visitor has probably visited 10 or 20 sites in a Web session before stumbling upon yours. Guess what she's learned from them. Zip... a lot of useless, overworked tidbits. Don't do the same.

Stand out! Build some truly valuable content into each pathway that leads towards your **MWR Closer Page**. The content must not just be info about your product -- it must be content (related somehow to your product) that is of **value** to your visitor.



You must weave content with product tie-in seamlessly. If you are too heavy on promotion, the information feels overly commercial. If you provide good content in a separate part of the Web site, many users will take the free good stuff and bypass your pitch. **Weave it together, but do it just right.**

For example...

The PennyGold site weaves the broad outlines of the strategy right into the sales copy, **but not so much that they don't need the main product.** As a result, the reader is thinking...

"Wow! That makes a lot of sense. What a clever idea. I never thought of that."

Slowly, the reader comes to realize that I know what I'm talking about. And she's **feeling good** about learning something about a little known and poorly understood investing arena.

By the end of the site, **she's contemplating...**

"Phew! This is great! And I've checked out all the proof, so I know it's for real. Geez, I know so much that I could probably even try it myself without buying PennyGold. But there must be an awful lot more important info in the book. And the software tool sounds fantastic. The price is cheap when you compare with how much time and money I'd lose doing my own trial-and-error."

Yup, I'm not far from getting another order. So...

Give your visitor something that she did not have before she came to your site.

If you accomplish this...

1) You will have a happy customer as she reaches your **MWR**, one who thinks nice thoughts about you... one who figures that she owes you something in return. Sure, not everyone thinks like this, but most folks are pretty decent sorts.

2) Your customer may not actually buy, but she will be a **shoe-in to subscribe** to your free newsletter that provides more of that great info! Eventually, a good number of these people convert into paying customers. Anyone who won't provide her e-mail address to subscribe is simply not a prospect.



Let's expand upon the above sentence... Give your visitor something that she did not have before she came to your site. That "something" does not have to be knowledge in the form of words on a **static** HTML page.

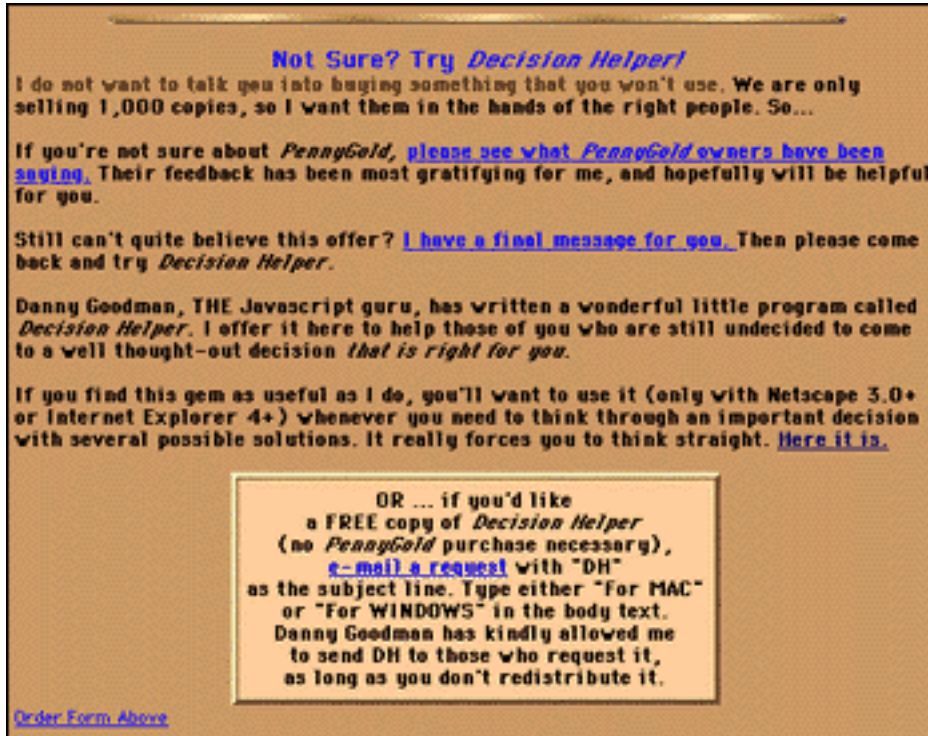
While content is information that is of value to your visitor, the actual **type** of content will vary widely depending on the type of products you market. Here are just a few possible formats...

- **pictures** -- Especially for some of our baser instincts. Great pictures on-site, more behind the curtain (after the purchase). Just like verbal content, give away some great stuff, but not so much that they don't need you.



- **software** -- Javascript is a great way to provide special functionality on your site, **now** that the base versions (4+) of Explorer and Netscape both interpret it well. You can even offer that software, **free**, to visitors who request it for their own use on their own computer, when offline. Talk about a **double content bonus** -- first on **your** site, then on **their** computer. Your visitor is really going to love you!

For example, on the **Order Page** of the PennyGold site, **after** the ordering process, we offered a Decision Helper javascript. The visitor could either link to DH and use it on-site. Or she could request a copy to use on her own computer...



Not Sure? Try *Decision Helper*!

I do not want to talk you into buying something that you won't use. We are only selling 1,000 copies, so I want them in the hands of the right people. So...

If you're not sure about *PennyGold*, [please see what *PennyGold* owners have been saying](#). Their feedback has been most gratifying for me, and hopefully will be helpful for you.

Still can't quite believe this offer? [I have a final message for you](#). Then please come back and try *Decision Helper*.

Danny Goodman, THE Javascript guru, has written a wonderful little program called *Decision Helper*. I offer it here to help those of you who are still undecided to come to a well thought-out decision *that is right for you*.

If you find this gem as useful as I do, you'll want to use it (only with Netscape 3.0+ or Internet Explorer 4+) whenever you need to think through an important decision with several possible solutions. It really forces you to think straight. [Here it is](#).

OR ... if you'd like
a FREE copy of *Decision Helper*
(no *PennyGold* purchase necessary),
[e-mail a request](#) with "DH"
as the subject line. Type either "For MAC"
or "For WINDOWS" in the body text.
Danny Goodman has kindly allowed me
to send DH to those who request it,
as long as you don't redistribute it.

[Order Form Above](#)

Try Decision Helper

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#DH>

[A bit later in the book](#), I'll show you how this powerful technique closes the sale!



- **forums or chat rooms, etc.** -- This is a powerful way to create a community. For example, if you are selling high-end fly-fishing equipment, maybe you could start a super little “fishing lure” chat group, or “great places to fly-fish” group. Visitors sharing info with other visitors is a terrific (and cheap) way to build valuable content.



- **reports** -- Offer a [free report](#), one with truly high-value-content. Let your customer know that, from time to time, you'll send other terrific reports, too. This will “allow” you to occasionally e-mail special reports which, of course, seamlessly blend truly valuable content with a subtle sales push.



- **if you sell a shareware MIDI player** -- How about offering (for free download) the most popular jazz, rock, blues, and classical [MIDI files](#) of all-time? Of course, offer a subscription to your “MIDI file of the month, free in your e-mail box!”



- **lots of great information or news** -- This not only educates your customer, it convinces her that you know what you’re talking about. Supply this in an ongoing manner via a subscription to your newsletter. We did this on our PennyGold Web site. It was a very powerful way to build up a solid, targeted mailing list.



- **“sample of the month” mailer** -- For sites that sell hard goods, why not offer a subscription to a monthly sample of your products? Charge just enough to cover mailing and handling costs. (Geez, hard goods are a pain, aren’t they?)



Get creative -- content **SELLS!** There’s no end to the number of ways that you can offer outstanding, original, valuable content...

... and turn visitors into customers.



Selling through content is **vitaly** important. In fact, content forms the very backbone upon which the effectiveness and success of a [Theme-Based Content Site](#) is measured.

We’ll discuss a [Theme-Based Content Site](#) in the [Traffic Volume](#), so don’t worry about it for now.

Um... where was I? Oh yes, content....

Visit SiteSell’s corporate [Home Page](#) and find the left-handed navbar which offers our SiteSell University Masters Courses and Feature Articles. The articles quicken

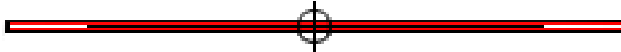
the pulse of visitors and encourage sign-ups to our e-zine. The Masters courses are extremely viral. They give us repeat exposure, and provide the opportunity to make referrals to our other sites.

Of course, there’s a line that can easily be crossed -- offer **too much** content, and you’ll never get the sale. So be careful! But in general...

Content...



... is king!



6.3.1. The Information Balancing Act

If you happen to be selling a well-respected, recognized brand, providing a ton of product information isn’t nearly as important to you. **After all, with recognized brands, people know exactly what they’re getting.**

A Sony PlayStation, or a Sharp digital camcorder, for example, maintain perceived quality when purchased directly from the Web. And I’d venture to guess most folks ordering respected brands online have already examined similar products in their physical form at a brick-and-mortar location elsewhere.

On the other hand, if you’re selling a relatively unknown or new brand of product, you need to offer your visitor **the option of viewing any and all pertinent info, should she require it.** Your visitor is not familiar with your product, so you can’t afford to make any assumptions. Be sure to include all the specifications, features, and warranties that customers may overlook when buying a familiar brand.

There are two very important reasons for this...

- **People tend to go with what they know.**

Sure, maybe you really have created a better, lower-priced product than the leading brand, but nobody knows that. At least with the leading brand, a consumer knows there will be no surprises. So educate and re-assure your customer with your

information.

- **A sale is only a good thing if your customer is happy.**

If your customer knows without a shadow of a doubt what she’s getting, the chances of a return are minimized. Why would she return it? You explained what it was, what it did, and how it worked with such sparkling clarity. She decides she can’t live without one, and clicks “Order Now!”. A great-quality product arrives to her doorstep in a timely fashion. Return? What return? 😊

The moral here?

Don’t overwhelm your customer, but give her the option of an **in-depth product analysis and overview, should she want it!**



6.4. Unique Ways to Use Photos

A photo personalizes things. But don’t make this a boring, gratuitous head-and-shoulders shot. That reduces you to a “talking head” status.

If you’re selling health foods, show a shot of you and your brother doing something in your so-clean-you-could-eat-off-the-floor factory. Or maybe a shot of your happy, clean-scrubbed and neatly uniformed employees, serving customers in the “real-world” retail operation.

Make your visitor **feel** your business. **Use photos to pull your prospect off her computer-bound chair and into your place of business!**

Photos of you and your team are great likeability-builders. When they see you, you are no longer a concept. You are a real flesh-and-blood human being, just like the **person** who is reading about you!

You have employees, computers, an office building. **You’re a genuine serious business...**



... not some crazed 14 year-old working out of the corner of his bedroom. (If you **are**, ignore this section!)



Work the photos in naturally. They must **fit** the context.

Examples...



- ... a shot of a school tour through your factory
- a photo of you receiving “Vendor of the Year” from Toys ‘R Us
- a picture of your Manufacturing V.P. laughing with an assembly line worker
- a photo of you and your wife in an article from a major business newsmagazine...



The Toy Biz

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/100toysROB.html>

Done right, photos add to the “look and feel” -- they build credibility and likeability. Done wrong, they feel gratuitous and out of place.



6.5. Prove It!

What can I say? We live in a “Oh Yeah? Prove It!” kind of world. It’s up to you to do just that. Include **all available evidence** to prove how great your product is.

The PennyGold site was the ultimate “must prove” example. PennyGold really **was/is** a great tool. Due to the nature of the product, I knew that everyone would be full of doubt. And the PennyGold site suffered from another huge disadvantage...

I couldn’t offer a free trial download. PennyGold contained a digital book and software. The **information** contained in the book was proprietary and was where the true value laid.

So I knew that I would have to **prove** my case, **beyond any reasonable doubt**.

It is not enough to just offer the actual evidence -- **make every piece of proof verifiable**. Of course, only one in a hundred visitors would actually cross-check the proof. The other ninety-nine thought, "No way he would offer that evidence if it wasn't true. All I have to do is pick up the phone or e-mail to check." **Which accomplished the goal!**



Here are just a few of the methods that the PennyGold site used to prove its case in a verifiable manner...

1) **Don't just say** that PennyGold averaged a 108% return from 1991-1996 -- **prove it**. Users downloaded a database of every transaction, even with scans of confirmation reports from my broker. They could even call my broker to make sure that this is **the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth...**

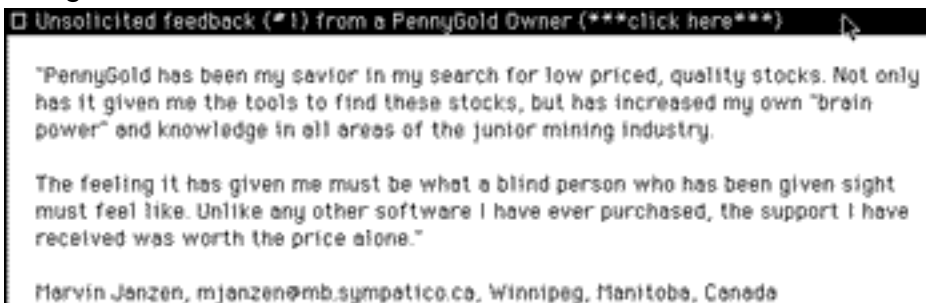
Download PennyGold Tracker for Windows (4.4 meg) -- this version contains scanned confirmation reports for every PennyGold trade.
Download PennyGold Tracker for Windows (1.4 meg) -- same application and data, except no confirmation reports (which is why it's only 1.4 meg).

Download PennyGold Tracker

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/downloadtracker.html>



2) Offer **testimonials**. Not those fake blusterings by "A.K., Phoenix, Arizona." Include **real names and e-mail addresses** so potential customers can contact them... "Hey, did you really say that? Do you still like PennyGold? How are you doing with it now?"...



PennyGold User Feedback

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/PGuserfeedback.html>

MYSS! 2002... Build Trust & "Likeability"

And from a previous **MYSS!** site...



Make Your Site Sell!

<http://myss.sitesell.com/>



3) Open yourself to investigation by your users. In my bio, I gave contact info so that visitors could...

- get a true sense of me as a stable, successful person in my community, one who likes to teach others
- verify that I really did go to McGill University med school
- cross-check at the hospital where I used to work and teach
- reach the major newspapers to be sure that the articles I show on the Web (about our successful toy business) are real
- e-mail or phone successful people who I have taught (something that I love to do).



The Who & Why of PennyGold

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/100.html>

Bottom line? Document all claims "ad nauseum" -- make the documentation **verifiable** by your customers. **If you're good, prove it... beyond all reasonable doubt.**

[**SIDEBAR**]

If you sell software or some other digital product, you have a unique advantage -- **the 30 day free trial download.** If your product is great, you'll succeed.

This is such powerful evidence, that it actually reduces the amount of proof that you have to offer on your Web site. Of course, still include some great reviews, but you don't have to go to the same lengths. For example...

The Web site **for this book** is much, much smaller, for two reasons...

- lower price point
- **trial download** -- I have full confidence in my product, so I expect **5 Pillar Affiliates'** use of the trial download will complete the sale.

Compare the difference in the two sites yourself...



PennyGold

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>

And...



Make Your Site SELL!

<http://myss.sitesell.com/>



6.6. Explain the Incredible

Most of us have long since stopped believing in Santa Claus. We all know there's no such thing as a "free" lunch. Everything costs money. C'est la vie.

What's the point here?

Fantastic claims aren't going to help your business.

For example...

I recently read an article about a well-known Internet marketer who tried a little experiment. He tried to give away money on the Internet. He couldn't do it -- really, I **am** serious!

And why couldn't he?

Nobody believed him. I mean, how can anybody just give away money? Secondly, he advertised in places that have very little credibility -- FFA links pages, free classified ads, etc. Finally, he wrote an ad full of caps and explanation points. You've seen the ones...

MAKE MONEY -- 64,000 IN TWO WEEKS!!! INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY!! BUILD YOUR
DOWNLINE NOW!!! NOT A GET-RICH SCHEME!!!

Interestingly enough, the marketer fully intended to reward each response to the ad with \$100. All a visitor had to do was contact him. No one did.



What's my point?

You may have a great product that delivers great benefits. You may have a product about which you can honestly make incredible statements. But here's the problem... if you make it sound **too great**, you'll have some difficulty getting people to believe you.

In short... **don't make your product or offer sound...**



... too good to be true.

For you see...

People expect to pay for a product. **They expect to pay more for an exceptional product.** They do not expect anything for free. If you can sell your product for less, people will want to know why.

Here's a good example of what I mean...

- 1) Teds-widgets.com sells their widgets for \$39.99
- 2) Bobs-widgets.com sells their widgets for \$37.99
- 3) Bills-widgets.com sells their widgets for \$36.99
- 4) Eds-widgets.com sells their widgets for \$11.99

Who's the clear winner here?



If you guessed number 4, Eds-widgets.com, you're wrong.

Why?

If you're out-and-about surfing for a new widget, it doesn't take long to find that the going rate is around \$38. After all, that's what the most popular and respected stores charge. When you stumble across Eds-widgets.com, and find that their price is nearly 70% lower than their competitors' tags, do you buy?

NO. Why not?

The difference in price is unbelievable. You know the only way a merchant could sell a widget at that price would be to offer a vastly inferior quality widget -- and you immediately distrust any offer that sounds too good to be true.

But what if Eds-widgets.com **really does** offer superior quality widgets for 70% less than their competitors' prices? Then they'll have to explain EXACTLY how they do it... to an exceedingly dubious audience.

Maybe they'd start by saying...

"Join us as we take you on a step by step journey through the

Eds-widgets.com manufacturing process in order to give you a better understanding why we can deliver a superior quality widget for less.”

And what would this include?...

- a step-by-step tour through the entire manufacturing process
- the highly trained labor force
- the quality of the raw materials
- the quality control standards
- the state-of-the-art machinery
- a comparable list of features
- a list of verifiable testimonials
- justification for the low price

Something like...

“Things are different here at Eds-Widgets.com...

And that’s why we sell our Widgets at 70% less than our competitors. You’re probably wondering how we can do it...

Well, not only do we ship products directly from our own warehouse (our competitors use fulfillment services), but we also manufacture the widgets here as well. Because we eliminate several middlemen, and directly oversee quality control at our own manufacturing plant, we can pass significant savings on to **you**, our customer.

And, of course, our widgets come with the same warranty and guarantees that all our competitors offer.”

Isn’t that better? Now would you buy?

Eds-widgets.com took the “incredible” and made it “credible.”

Remember...

It HAS to be believable!



6.7. Specifics Are Reassuring

Stress specifics, **not vague generalities.**

Want to publicize your great number of satisfied customers? Don't say...

"We have many happy customers from all over the world."

Instead say...

"As of Feb. 28, 2002, 13,569 customers, people from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, happily hop on our pogo sticks."

Don't write...

"Fast Service, Satisfied Clients, Satisfaction Guaranteed."

Replace that with...

"All orders shipped same day. 3,900 companies use and love our widget. [Click here for the list.](#) If you aren't totally satisfied, return our widget within 30 days and get 100% of your money back. No questions asked."

(Naturally, when they click on the list of widget-users, you even include contact names and e-mail addresses of customers -- who have given their permission.)

Remember, **prove it!**



What happens if you speak in the same old vague generalities as everyone else? Your visitor won't even remember that she visited five minutes after leaving you.

Say things in original **and specific** ways -- people will sit up and take notice.



6.8. R-E-S-P-E-C-T Privacy!

How companies will or won't respect their privacy has become a major concern for the online customer in the new millennium. A couple of well-publicized breaches of trust by previously reputable companies have only helped to fuel the growing skepticism...

- Americans say they are more concerned about security and privacy online than they are about health care, crime and taxes. (Harris Interactive)
- "Retailers may not be aware of how important the privacy issue is to consumers, and how it can negatively affect their bottom line." (Christopher Kelley, analyst, Forrester Research)

Hopefully, most ethical e-merchants know the importance of respecting their clients' info (if not, this is their wake-up call).

Unfortunately, it's a case of a few rotten apples spoiling the whole bunch. And, it doesn't help when the rotten apples **happen to be...**



... really **BIG apples**. The media loves to latch onto stories that emphasize the negative aspects of online shopping.

Nevertheless, the privacy concerns of your visitors are critical.



Here's an interesting statement...

- Although online customers are very concerned about their privacy, very few actually inspect the policies of the sites they visit. (Source: ZDNet Interactive Week)

The number who do is dismal... 0.04%.

So if a measly 0.04% of visitors click on privacy links, does this mean the online population is lazy?

Hardly.

Almost always, the Policy Page turns out to be a page(s) of boring, incomprehensible legal jargon. It seems like the policy was written to discourage people from actually reading it. Does anyone really want to wade through an entire chapter of "heretofore's" and "theretowith's"?

And, obviously, the use of a 5,000 word document to bury a policy of selling e-mail lists and spamming is **absolutely unacceptable**.



Here's another somewhat startling statement...

- Customers happily frequent stores and use services that admittedly sell e-mail addresses and personal information. (Source: Jesse Berst's Anchor Desk)

Does this make any sense at all?

Not really. But it appears customers are willing to accept this as the "cost of doing business" online, at least if you are **a large and reputable merchant**. For smaller businesses, new to the customer, it is likely to be different. Visitors aren't going to take the chance with you.

So what to do about this rig-a-marole?

Be honest. If you're going to sell e-mail addresses, say so in plain sight, and in plain language -- if you run a small business, without a large-scale brick-and-mortar presence, I recommend that you **don't** do this. However, whatever you do, **don't ever flip-flop on your decision**.

[SIDEBAR]

Online giant Amazon.com made an incredible goof by reversing a previous decision that it would not sell or exchange e-mail addresses or personal information -- not a smart move from a usually Net-savvy company.

And your privacy policy?

Sure, you have to keep your lawyers happy with a billion words of legalese. But why not include a user-friendly version as well? This version could sum up the basic points in a simple document...

- We do not sell e-mail addresses.
- We will use your e-mail address to contact you about product updates, but you may opt-out if you wish.
- We respect your privacy and security and use SSL encryption technology.
- If you slip and fall on the way to pick up our package at the post office, we can in no way be held responsible.

Then, include a link to the full legal version. **Give folks the facts up front.** They'll appreciate it!

[SIDEBAR]

If you're interested in catching up on the latest privacy violations, or are interested finding out what can be determined about you just by your ISP address, here's your one-stop-spot...



Privacy.net

<http://www.privacy.net/>

6.9. Certification Boosts SALES

If you are a small, unknown operation, selling a rather expensive product, consider joining the **Better Business Bureau**, both locally and online. **TRUSTe** is a newer purely online credibility-builder that is gaining recognition by online consumers. There are a few other certification bureaus on the Web, but none have the reputation of the **BBB**.

With **BBBOnline**, you display their **logo** on your Web site. It links to their site (a

weak point for you -- always dangerous to link your customer out). When a customer clicks on the seal, the *BBBOnline* site responds with a page of information about your business. In order to be a member of *BBBOnline*, you must also be a member of your **local** BBB.



BBBOnLine

<http://www.bbbonline.org/>

Like *BBBOnline*, you display the **TRUSTe**'s “trustmark.” You must agree, in writing, to certain principles. Visitors who click on the trustmark can view your individual privacy statement...



TRUSTe

<http://www.truste.org/>

Very similar to **TRUSTe**...



ePublicEye

<http://www.epubliceye.com>

Since **registering with more than one would be overkill**, *BBBOnline* seems like the one to choose at this time.



6.10. More **Confidence-Builders**

Looking for more ways to build **trust and likeability**?...

- Write in a friendly, one-to-one, open and honest **tone of voice**.

- Make your **testimonials** verifiable (full names, phone numbers, e-mail addresses).
- Offer a strong **guarantee**, one that makes **your reader say...**



... “WOW! They must be confident!”

- **Tell a story from the third person viewpoint.** When someone writes about you, it’s more credible.
- Add any other audits, attestations, etc., as appropriate.
- **Personalize your site for repeat visitors.** Your techie can set a [cookie](#) for each visitor. Track each visitor (by following the cookie), and record preferences. You can even ask her for preferences. If this applies to your business, your repeat visitor will start to feel at home at “your place.”

[**SIDEBAR**]

Site personalization is a hot concept today. I discuss it in much greater detail a little [later!](#)

For smaller, entrepreneurial efforts, in particular...

- An [About Our Company Page](#) becomes important for establishing credentials. **Tell your story -- open yourself a bit to your reader.** In my bio, I tell my personal story so that users can know me as a stable, successful person in my community, one who likes to teach others. And I make it all [verifiable](#), as well.
- **Include key contact information** at the bottom of every important page of your Web site. This must include a permanent fixed postal address, phone and fax numbers, even a 1-800 number. Most people won’t use these to contact you, but they do prove you have a certain minimum amount of substance.
- [Use a secure server](#) for online ordering. It shows respect for your customers’ credit card worries (even though they are unfounded). **It’s better to offer a secure version of your own domain for ordering** (ex., “secure.yourdomain.com”), rather than a [third party secure server](#). This establishes that you have “**big company**”

capability, and that a third party does not need to enter into the picture.

- **Avoid "spam signals"** -- tricks tend to signal deceit. If the title of your **Home Page** is "penny stocks, penny stock, stocks, penny stocks," this may help with the SEs, but it sure delivers a spammy opening message to your potential customers.



6.11. **Never** Mislead... Not Even a Little

There are varying degrees of dishonesty...

- 1) The flat-out lie
- 2) Exaggerating... or promising... or misleading, so that your **visitor thinks that...**



... your product is bigger than it really is! It's easy to fall into this trap. After all, you want your visitor to buy from you, instead of your competition.

- 3) While not lying or exaggerating, you withhold certain aspects that "might kill the sale." The result, of course, is that you sell your product, but to someone who would **not** have bought it if he had known the whole truth.

Let's cut to the chase on this issue. Don't do #1, or #2, or #3. **Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.**

Of course, write to sell. Present your case in the best way possible. But never mislead. **If your product's not good enough to survive the truth, drop the product.**

Here's a subtle example from the **VeriSign Web site**, a company whose business is based on **trust and authenticity...**



The banner features the VeriSign logo on the left. The main text reads: "Access your FREE copy of the guide, *Securing Your Web Site For Business!*". Below this, it states: "This FREE guide outlines the steps needed to secure your site to protect sensitive information, authenticate users and secure sessions." It then lists three bullet points: "Accept credit card numbers for online transactions—safely", "Encrypt communications with users", and "Authenticate your website." To the right is an image of a blue spiral-bound book titled "Securing Your Web Site For Business". At the bottom are two red buttons: "Access your free guide now!" and "Learn more about Server IDs now!".

At one time, their Web page offered a **FREE** guide, using language like “When you request your free guide.” They even showed a picture of a real (non-digital) book.

When you clicked **Access**, you didn’t access. Instead, you had to fill out a detailed form to proceed. Normally, you would not offer this info, but hey, you’re going to get some kind of download, maybe even a real book, right?

So, you completed the form. Finally, when you clicked through, what did you get? Straight, regular Web pages! Now they didn’t actually **promise** a nice, slick PDF download or a hard copy, but they sure led you down that garden path, didn’t they?

Don’t get me wrong! **The info was very helpful.** But the tricky way of getting personal info left a bad taste in my mouth. And I probably wasn’t alone. Others must have felt the same way as well.

[SIDEBAR]

Verisign has long since removed these offending pages from its index -- having no doubt been flamed by irate customers.

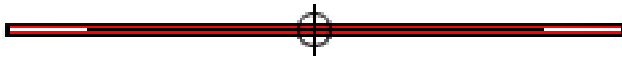
Never mislead... ever.



6.12. 15 Sales-Killing Ways That Erode Confidence

Here are just a few of the most popular ways to completely **erode** trust and likability. Follow them to the letter and turn your visitors into **cringing, distrustful, non-caring individuals...**

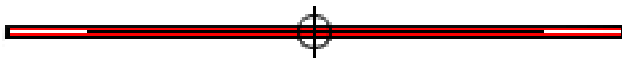
... at least until they leave your site. 😊



6.12.1. Don't Hype Your Friends

Stress benefits, but do not use overly promotional language. You must keep the tone **appropriate for the mind of your target market**. Too much hype (to suit the taste of your target market) will turn your Web customers off.

After all, **you don't hype your friends. Do you?**



6.12.2. Quit Talking... Let Your Visitor Play, Too

Besides the **MWR**, involve your reader in other ways. Get your customer to send in a form to subscribe to a newsletter. Or to answer a quiz. Or enter a contest. Or take a personality inventory test.

This **is** the Web, after all. **Involve your visitor...**



...don't hog the floor.



6.12.3. Mistakes... Sure Sign of a Sloppy Company

I seriously doubt any company with major typos and bad grammar, don't you? Spell-check and grammar-check all copy. Then proof-read it.

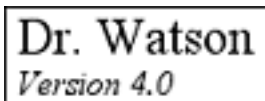
Netmechanic offers a spell-check service you can test drive at...



NetMechanic

<http://netmechanic.com/maintain.htm>

Dr.Watson offers spell-checking, along with several other features, all of which are free...



Dr.Watson

<http://watson.addy.com/>

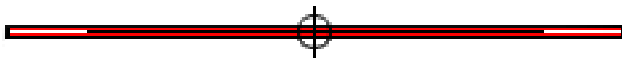


6.12.4. Missing Graphics -- Amateurs Only

Missing graphics look sloppy and amateurish. Nothing worse than seeing...



Gr-r-r-r-r-r!

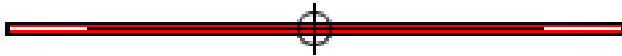


6.12.5. Outdated Info... Are You Still Open???

Out-of-date info shows inattention, which is just as fatal as typos. **Seriously** outdated info also makes your visitor wonder how active your site is, and whether you're still open for business. You make things even worse if you advertise it with

"Last update" notices.

Do not put "last update" messages up. If you do, establish a maintenance schedule to change the date every 2 weeks. Then do it, **even if the info does not need to be changed**. Past dates make the site look old, even if the info is "evergreen."



6.12.6. Guest Books, Tired & Tacky

Guestbooks are a tired and tacky way to secure an e-mail address. In the old days, people used to innocently and proudly sign guest books. But now they guard their e-mail addresses carefully.

Offer something of value to your customer in return for his e-mail address, and don't do it in a guest book format. For example, give a free subscription to an e-zine that offers solid, relevant content.



6.12.7. Scrolling Marquees -- "Look What I Can Do!"

Scrolling marquees are strictly "amateur night." They take forever to read and the movement is annoying when you try to scan the static text on the rest of the page.

Stick to business.



6.12.8. "Under Construction" -- Who Isn't?

All sites are constantly "works in progress." If you aren't ready for Web traffic, keep your site on a hidden location until you are. **These signs are only put up by "small guys"...**



6.12.9. “Site of the Micro-Second” Awards

Don’t put them up. No one cares about what awards your site has won, unless...

- it’s a really **major** award that lends true credibility to your company

OR...

- it’s a **four-star review** of your product!

Instead of inviting your visitor to link to some bogus award-giver, replace this with **you**-focused (i.e., benefit-laden) info that the customer **will** appreciate.



6.12.10. “Download Netscape” (or Explorer) Button

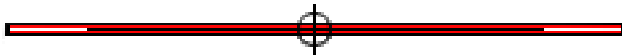


... Who are you in business for? Yourself, or Microsoft?

Out of the millions of Web sites out there, there are only **two** which should have these buttons on their sites. **Guess who?**

Right!

If you're **not** Netscape or Microsoft, these buttons make you look small and self-serving. If you're not paid to put them on your site, drop them.



6.12.11. Don't Keep Asking for a Cookie!

[Cookies](#) are invaluable to a commercial Web site. They can be used in...

- shopping cart software
- password-protected, [CGI](#)-driven dynamic sites
- log file analysis software.

They are especially useful to [personalize your site](#) -- they differentiate the **first-time** visitor from the **repeat** visitor.

For example, when someone returns to your site, you could welcome them back, and let them know what's been updated since they were last there.

Amazon keeps track of the books you buy. Next time you return, it offers others in a similar vein (much the way your friendly neighborhood bookseller would do).



Cookie details are beyond the scope of this book. If you do use them, tell your techie not to ask for a cookie more than once. Some people are (needlessly) scared of cookies -- they configure their browser to warn them when you try to bake a cookie in their computer. It's annoying for visitors to get that warning several times.

Think of your visitor as your mom -- if she tells you "no cookie," **don't ask again** -- just set the site to run without the cookie.

You know...

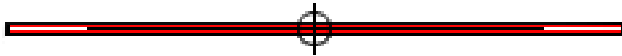


... she'll only get angry if you keep asking!



6.12.12. Hit Counters -- Who Cares? So What?

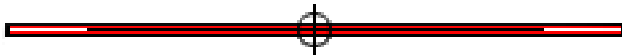
Never, never, never put a **hit counter** on your site. Strictly bush league and no one believes, or even cares about, the numbers. [More on this later.](#)



6.12.13. Arggggh! The Dreaded Blinking Text!

I can't believe this is still being done.

Blink... blink... blink... blink...annoying, isn't it? You won't get the sale, but you may get a bill from the disgruntled viewer who heaved his monitor from the balcony of his fifth floor apartment. Please, be nice to your customers, and their eyes. Don't use **blinking text!**



6.12.14. Splash Pages

Ah! Splash pages. They are prime examples of what happens when the **tech people design the Web site, and not the marketers.**

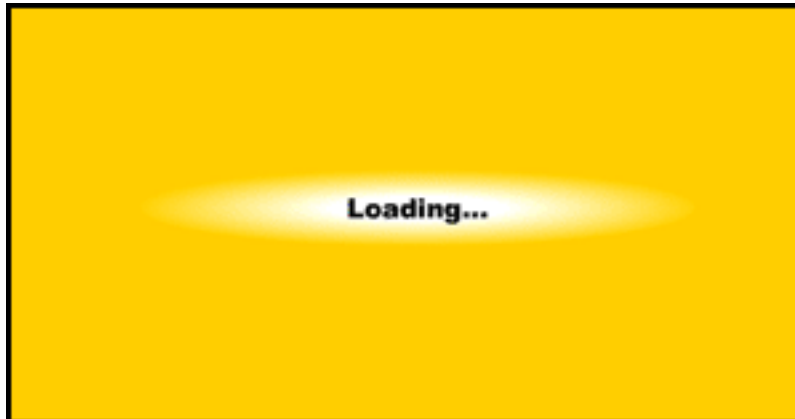
A splash page is a **media-rich** (usually [Flash](#)) **entry page**. It serves no useful purpose -- it's there only because it's sooo “kewl.” It stands between your visitor, and your Web site, adding “friction” to the selling process. For the 9% of North American surfers who have broadband Internet access, this isn't a problem. As for the other 91% of us, well...

It makes us angry... “How dare you waste my time”? Click! Bye-bye!

BIG mistake!

Here's the typical splash page... a visitor must wait ages (on a dial-up) while it loads, in order to make her decision about the content (and many won't wait)...

MYSS! 2002... Build Trust & “Likeability”



...

...



IPC Computers
<http://www.ipc.ca/>



And another prime example...



Dreamstop

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



Even if you're one of the people who actually likes splash pages, you're going to have to view the same animation, over and over, everytime you visit the site.

Boring!

Web sites with splash pages combat this problem by placing a “Skip Intro” button on the first page, so you don't have to view the animation, unless by choice.

My question is... if you're going to give the visitor the option of skipping the page altogether, **why bother with it in the first place?**

It looks like the splash page...



...is more like a “smash” page!

Oh yes, and another thing...

Search Engines don't like splash pages either -- they can't index them. They don't index graphics, image maps, or [Flash](#). They index text, and text alone. So if you're counting on significant traffic from the engines...

Skip the splash page!



6.12.15. Not Too Sticky!

“Web Page Stickiness.”

“Stickiness” is a term meaning pretty much what you think it means...

Yup, stuff that keeps visitors coming back to your site over and over. In most cases, this term is used by marketers trying to sell you (or give you) message boards, guest books, free Web-based e-mail, streaming news feeds, games, greeting cards -- anything that will keep visitors at your site longer. And, of course, bring them back later!

But there's a problem here... stickiness is not always the answer!

Don't make your Web site...



...too sticky...

Or your visitor becomes so immersed in the “goodies” that he will miss your sales pitch. Your site becomes distracting and unfocused. There's just so much to do, and so much to see... click, click! Sure, maybe “stickiness” does bring your visitor back, but is he just interested in the free eats? Does he have any intention of buying? Does he even have any idea what you're selling?

Have a look at the **MYSS!** Web site again...



"The definitive work on making any Web site sell!"

MAKE YOUR SITE-SELL!

[by Ken Evoy M.D.](#)

[become an affiliate](#) [contact us](#) [world's most...](#) [order now](#)

Master the **Big 3 of
product, site-selling,
and traffic-building,
and there's simply **no way to fail.****

Your Web site either makes the sale, or it **doesn't**.

Ninety-nine out of one hundred sites **don't** get the order.

We blame that on suspicious, scared Web-consumers.

Wrong.

Make Your Site SELL! is about joining the
one in a hundred who **sell, really sell**, on the Net.

Make Your Site Sell!
<http://myss.sitesell.com>

Nothing sticky about it at all. But there's nothing distracting about it, either. On the **MYSS!** page, all your attention is focused on one thing, and one thing only -- my sales pitch. If **MYSS!** isn't for you, do think message boards, a couple of cool online games, and a guest book would change your mind?

Nope!

And most importantly, by implementing a totally "un-sticky" site, I know that every visitor to the **MYSS!** site has received my sales message. If they don't buy, it isn't because they missed the message in a confusing jumble.



Now don't get me wrong, "stickiness" is not always a bad thing.

Ralph Wilson's "[Wilson Web](#)" site is a great example of a "sticky" site.

In Ralph’s case, “stickiness” -- in the form of constantly-updated, cutting edge, Net marketing information -- keeps visitors coming back for more and more. In this case, the “stickiness” is in **direct relation** to his **MWR**. And what’s that?...

- selling memberships to his paid newsletter and his own e-books
- increasing page views to maintain banner advertising revenue
- generating sales for the products he represents.

The very nature of the “stickiness” on Ralph’s site not only verifies the status of a return visitor as a potential customer for his affiliate products and newsletters...

It also means that she’s **already** an income-generator! Why? Because she is generating advertising revenue in the form of page-views.

Check out how it works...



Wilson Internet - Web Marketing Today

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



Moral of the story?

Unless you can seamlessly integrate stickiness into your Web site, and directly relate it to your **MWR...**

Don't bother!



7. Make Your Site Usable

You cannot antagonize and influence at the same time.

-- J.S. Knox



Usability is **the ability of a person to use something**. It is not fancy graphics, or Shockwave, or any other bell or whistle.

If you want to **antagonize** your potential customer, make your site hard to use.

Did I hear you ask, "Why would I ever want to do that?"

I don't know. **But a whole lot of sites sure seem to!** 😊

According to [GVU](#), the top three surfer complaints about the Internet are...

- **slow page downloads**
- **broken links**
- **trouble finding info**

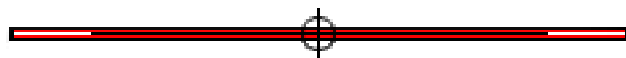
Of course, that's just **the Top 3**. There are hundreds of usability issues. And they all have one thing in common -- **they're all preventable!**

Poor usability indicates a company that is more concerned with **its own** business objectives than with the **needs of its customer**. By empowering Web site visitors to do what **they** want, you will be able to persuade them to do what **you** want.

But to do that, you've really need to get into your customers' heads (how they think) **and** shoes (how they act on your site). Here's **how you should do it...**



Navigation is an important usability issue. It is so important, in fact, "it" insisted on having **its own chapter**. 😊



7.1. Your Server as **Pizza Delivery Car**

Your visitor wants info the way she wants pizza... so deliver it crisp, fast, and hot. To do that, your “delivery vehicle” needs to be **reliable**, and it needs to be **fast**.



7.1.1. Get a **Fast, Reliable Vehicle**

Make sure that pizza gets there. And deliver it hot.



...**The first issue is reliability.** If your car breaks down, your customer doesn't get the pizza at all! **And you don't get the sale.** So make sure that your car is **mechanically sound**...



... And have a **back-up** vehicle -- if the first hits a tree, the second saves the day!



...**The second issue is speed.** If the car is slow, or traffic is heavy, the pizza will be cold. **You don't get the repeat sale!**

So your delivery vehicle must be both reliable **and** fast... if the pizza is to get to your customer, piping hot!

(I'll be back right after I return from the fridge...)

If you are running your own server, make sure that your techies are maximizing

reliability and speed. Here are the major issues to review with them...

- hardware reliability and speed (CPU, disk drives, etc.)
- bandwidth connection vs. expected traffic
- network card
- operating system
- memory (RAM)
- back up arrangements.



If you're a large company, you're already dealing your Web site to the world via your own server.

If you're not, **you might be tempted by such advantages as...**

- total control -- get what you want, when you want it
- great flexibility -- you can customize everything you'd like
- tie in the site to your company's computer systems.

But consider the disadvantages, too...

- 24 hour dedicated, T1 connection is extremely expensive
- expense of dedicated computer(s) and server software
- must employ full-time techies who know...
 - how to set it up and maintain it
 - how to make it hack-proof
 - lots of other specialized techie skills (ex., database hosting)
- staff on-call 24 hours per day

- requires expensive techie skill sets
- expensive hardware and software.



Not sure whether you need an in-house server? The larger your Web site, and the more traffic you generate, and the more people you hire to run and market the store... the closer you are to going in-house.

Bottom line? **If you're not sure, use a third party Web host service.** When you **do** need to go to your own server, you'll know it, and you'll have the ability to do it.



If you plan to use a third party to host your Web site, you're still at Square 1... shopping for that fast, reliable vehicle. **Let's go shopping...**

[SIDEBAR]

Whether large or small, **Keynote** offers an interesting service, *Perspective*, that measures the speed of your Web site from 35 cities worldwide. You'll know how fast visitors receive your pages. Compare your Web site's performance and failure rates to your competitors, or to (on average) 40 important business Web sites. Take advantage of their one week free trial at...



KEYNOTE *Perspective* Free Appraisal

http://www.keynote.com/services/services/perspective/free_appraisal.html



7.1.2. What to Look for in a Web Host

There must be zillions of **Web hosts**, and the number is growing every day. Choosing the wrong host is one of the worst mistakes you can make. And moving to another one is a major pain!

So let's get it right the first time! Here's the quick way to narrow the list...



1) 24x365 support -- 24 hours/day, 365 days per year live-human support. They must offer free unlimited technical support (by e-mail and, ideally, by phone). Test this before you sign up -- e-mail them a tough question. If you don't get an answer within 2-3 hours of calling or e-mailing, look elsewhere.

2) Guaranteed availability -- Your site must be up **99+%** of the time, or it will cost you more than your monthly ISP fee. Ask each potential ISP for a written guarantee on availability. They must have a clear strategy for achieving their targets. There should be a significant penalty in place for exceeding allowable downtimes.

The next two steps involve sites that are already on your **potential** Web host. You can often find a server's **hosted** sites by exploring its Home Page. If not, ask it for at least 50 names, then **choose 5**.

3) Fast connection speed -- We have already seen how important speed is. Don't be dazzled with all the techno-jargon ("redundant T3s," etc.) -- simply **see for yourself**. Browse through the 5 sites and note how quickly they are delivered. Test them at different times of the day. To be really thorough, get three friends from different corners of the continent to do the same. **Compare** with other sites (**not** hosted by your potential Web host) **at the same time**.

4) Experience counts -- **Phone** the 5 sites and ask how long they have been with this Web host, about the quality and speed of support, how often it goes down or slows down severely.

5) If you choose to use a large, national Web hosting company, they should offer **peering and mirroring**. ISPs with peering (multi-homing) have more than one high-speed backbone. Your site gets delivered by the fastest speed available, and if one backbone is down, your site still gets delivered via one of the other backbones.

An ISP that "**mirrors**" puts your site on several servers at different locations. This acts as a back-up and improves accessibility and connection speeds internationally.

Once you've got it narrowed down to a few fast and reliable servers, find the

one that can deliver your needs. First, make a list of your needs from the following...

- **virtual domain** -- You will want your own domain (www.yourcompany.com). Either register it yourself at [InterNIC](#), or get your Web host to do it. They must **do it in your name and name you as the administrative contact** -- your domain **is** yours, after all.

Does this seem too obvious? There are many immoral ISPs who put it in **their own** names, which can cause you huge headaches when you want to switch providers (which is why they do it, of course).



- **e-mail and autoresponders** -- It should offer at least 5 e-mail POP accounts, and one catch-all account which picks up anyotheraddress@yourdomain.com. These help you organize e-mail to your company, and also enhance your image. And if [autoresponders](#) are important to you, make sure your Web host offers them.
- **secure server** (SSL provided) -- This is a **must** for credit card sales. And your Web host must not only be secure **to accept the incoming** credit card info, it must **also** be able to **transmit that data** from its computer to yours in a secure way -- usually via PGP-encrypted e-mail.
- **real-time verification** -- If you want to clear credit card transactions via real-time verification and authorization, the Web host must offer CyberCash or a comparable service that is compatible with your merchant credit card's processing protocols.
- **data transfer** -- The busier your site, the more data it transfers. Most commercial sites transfer less than 1 gigabyte (Gb) per month. So any server offering 2 or more Gb per month will almost surely cover your needs.

If you expect high traffic (be realistic), request "unlimited data transfer." For those that offer it, check the small print -- they likely qualify this against what will "compromise their system." If so, get them to put that level in writing.



- **storage space** -- You probably need less than 10 megabytes (Mb) of storage space on your server's hard disk... unless you are selling 8 Mb software or digital books, of course! But leave room to grow.
- **access to Raw Log Files and/or online stats** -- This is a **must**.
- **unrestricted FTP access** -- You must be able to manage and modify your site, with no limit to the number of site updates or to the times of access.
- **access to personal CGI bin** -- This is where your techie installs the **CGI scripts**. Verify that your host offers a large number of off-the-shelf CGI scripts and does not charge more than a minimal installation/configuration fee to install them (or zero if your techie installs). You must be allowed to run your own custom CGI scripts.



- **shopping cart software** -- Depending on the number of items you'll be selling, you may need this. The Web host must either offer a shopping cart solution that meets **your checklist of needs**, or it must be willing to host the software solution that **you** have chosen. **Don't choose a Web host whose shopping cart does not measure up.**
- **database support** -- If you have a large catalog sales site, or if you offer data retrieval from a large bank of info, you will need this capability.
- **bells and whistles** (ask your techie) -- Streaming Audio/Streaming Video (Real Audio/Real Video), Java Virtual Machine, Chat Software, FrontPage Extensions, Platform Preference (UNIX, Windows NT, Mac OS), telnet access, Web-Based Control Panel (makes management of your site easier).
- **payment methods** -- It should offer credit card or monthly/quarterly/annual billing.
- **Web development services** -- Not a must, especially if you are happy with who you are currently using.

Once you've made your list of needs, e-mail it to your Web hosting finalists. Ask if they can deliver. Choose the one who responds fastest and best. If their answers are poor or slow at this time, **it will only get worse after you sign with them.**

Trust your instincts. If you don't feel comfortable doing business with an ISP, look for another. **You must have a good working relationship with your server.**



Other tips...

1) Keep your own **back-up copy of your site** on your hard disk. Do not rely on your Web hosting company's promise of back-up. **This is critical** -- failure can compromise your entire Web business.

2) Be very careful about using **new start-up companies** with little experience or financial base.

3) **Location** of the server -- Some experts feel that it's best to choose a **sharp, small local server** that has come to your attention via word-of-mouth. Of course, the large national outfits have obvious advantages, too. **If you can get a fast, reliable connection and top-notch, free support, location is simply irrelevant.**

4) **Price** -- You may think it strange that I have not talked about price yet. **There's a good reason for that...**



... It's not important! I laugh when people strain over whether their Web host charges \$15, \$50, or \$100 per month. **What the heck difference does it make?** It's all peanuts compared to what a real store costs in the real world, and it's nothing compared to how important your Web biz is!

Services with unusually low prices often don't deliver on reliability and support. **If you find a fast, reliable, supportive Web host who keeps you on the cutting edge, it's worth its weight in gold.**

With that said, it's important to note that Web hosting has become an increasingly competitive field. **But don't hesitate to pay a little more for a superlative service -- it's well worth the extra money!**



7.1.3. How to Find the Best Web Hosts

Got your list of needs? Here's how to find the host that **best meets them...**

The List is a comprehensive listing of ISPs...



The List

<http://thelist.internet.com/>



Hostindex - "The Web's Largest Hosting Directory"

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



ISPcheck's Web Hosting

<http://www.ispcheck.com/shared/>



HostSearch

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

For those on a tight budget, **Doteasy** supplies free Web hosting (with shared I.P. addresses) -- without banners...



Doteasy

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

Finally, if all else fails, check your Yellow Pages (surprise, surprise). It's still a good source for Web hosts near you.

[SIDEBAR]

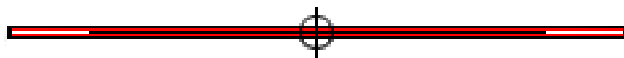
Once you've narrowed your hosting options down to a few suitable applicants, here's what to do. From each hosting company, acquire the name of at least one happy customer, and that person's Web site URL. Then it's off to...



NetMechanic

<http://www.netmechanic.com/monitor.htm>

NetMechanic's service monitors server performance. Everything you ever needed to know about server hosting, plus a ton of stuff you don't. You'll get a pretty technical overview of how the site/server did. Just look for the rating -- poor, fair, excellent. That's all you need to make your decision.



7.1.4. How to Make Sure Your Site is **Up!**

Whether self-hosting or employing a third party Web host, use a Web-based "server checker" to **make sure that your site is available for browsing**.

NetMechanic's Server Check (<http://www.netmechanic.com/monitor.htm>)

accesses your site every 15 minutes, 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. It answers important questions about your Web server, including...

MYSS! 2002... Make Your Site **Usable**

- Is my server up right now?
- Can users get through to my site?
- How does my server compare to others on the Net?
- What can I do to tune my server's performance?

Similar services include...



Keynote

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



AlertMeFirst.com

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



WebAssure

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

Or for do-it-yourselfers, Bentoni sells a CGI script called **PLUTO**, which will monitor your server...



Pluto's Server Watchdog

<http://bentoni.com/PLUTO/>



7.1.5. Get a Fast Driver (Web Designer)

OK, the car is solid and fast. And you have a back-up. Time to find a driver who knows the city and can put the “pedal to the metal” -- someone who can deliver that pizza **hot**.

The “driver” for your Web site is **your Web designer**. Here are the signs of a **slow driver**...



... and how to speed him up...

Heavy, elaborate graphics, lots of Java and Shockwave, scrolling marquees, gratuitous animations are all sure ways to lose your visitor. **Your visitor wants info, delivered clean and crisp. That's all.**

Worse still, while designers are still wowed by moving stuff, it seriously distracts your visitor from what's important... the words. **And it's annoying -- your visitors can't concentrate on the content!**

All that bandwidth-sucking “designer stuff” slows the delivery of your site miserably. Designers get easily distracted by new and cool technologies -- don't let your designer do it just “because he can.”



Of course, your designer will deny all this, saying how important your image is, etc., etc. But when you hear “**cool**” or “**hot**” or “**hip**”... you'll know that you've left Biz-Land and entered Designer-Land. Remember, your visitors **want info**, not “cool.”

“Usability research shows that page download has to be faster than 10 seconds for users to keep their attention on the site,” says Jakob Nielsen, **THE** Web page usability guru.

So compress graphics maximally, even if you have to give up a bit of quality in the

image (you'll notice, but your visitor won't). Maximum total download of any page should not exceed 30K, preferably 20K.

[**SIDEBAR**]

Remember to exclude cached images from your download calculations (i.e., if you're loading a graphic on page 2 that should already have loaded on a previous page, don't count it -- it will come in via the browser's cache on the user's hard disk).

Designers have 24-bit, full-color displays, and hate to design for 8-bit, 256-color monitors. But that's what you have to make sure they do. Small graphics, small number of colors. No customer looking for info is wowed by a slow-loading but beautiful graphic.

Graphics and animations don't make the sale... they kill it... unless you're selling video games.

If your visitor wanted high bandwidth entertainment, she would turn on the TV! Just give her the info that she is looking for... and make it sharp and neat.

Make your site customer-driven, not designer-driven. Remember these two facts about your customers...

1) They want enough info to make a stay-or-leave, buy-or-not decision. They are not "surfers" -- they just want info, and they want it **fast, fast, fast.**

2) Not every one is surfing with the newest and coolest browser. Some are still using browsers that interpret text, graphics, forms and tables, some basic javascript (be careful here), and nothing else.

Until 2003, you should target your Web design for the lowest common denominator, in this case versions 4 of **Internet Explorer**, and **Netscape**. Use restraint with the plug-ins -- they're still not completely standard with all versions of browsers.

Design your site to hit the above two points. A highly "usable" site will not win any "Cool Site" awards.

But it will sell...



Site Build It!
<http://buildit.sitesell.com/>



7.1.6. Designers, Put the Pedal to the Metal

Using the Web is painful, so you must reward users. In the old days, programmers used to pride themselves on how much functionality they could jam into a few K of code.

Now, of course, hardware has advanced so much that programmers are sloppy and could care less about how fat their applications become (12-15 megabyte downloads for the Explorer browser?!).

Unfortunately, many Web designers are **already** fat and sloppy... the only problem is that we still live with limited bandwidth. You must design within these severe constraints and reduce your visitors' pain.



Research has shown that users need response times of **less than one second** for optimal info-gathering. Of course, that's impossible, for now and the next few years. **Your goal should be ten second downloads** -- that's the limit to keep people's

attention focused while waiting.

The Web user requires at least **T-1 speed** to work well, but the proportion of people **with this bandwidth** is actually decreasing. Of all the links in the chain (user's connection, bandwidth throughput of the server, server's connection to the Internet, the Internet itself, user's browser and computer), it is the user's connection speed that is the bottleneck.

Info-seekers beg for speedy downloads. If your attitude is "let's just give them better design and they will be happy to wait for it," you are doing your client a disservice.

The challenge of Web design is not to see how much you can make your client's site **DO** -- it's to see how much you can make it **SELL**.

Bottom line? Put the pedal...



...to the metal! Design your Web pages for speedy downloads -- this must be your #1 consideration.



What's the single most important thing you can do to achieve this?

Hey, you always ask the right question at just the right moment!...

Give the visitor a screenful of useful information to read... immediately. Here's how...

1) Provide all the data that browser software needs to draw the top of the page fast. Include WIDTH and HEIGHT attributes for all [tables](#) and [graphics](#). If you don't provide these specs for the browser, it has to download the graphics and lay out the tables, **and then** flow the words onto the page!

2) Use the [inverted pyramid design](#), with strong, interesting text to hold attention. This keeps your visitor's attention nailed to the screen while your graphics and tables download.

3) Put *only* a small logo and navbar at the top -- do not take up the critical “first screen” with huge corporate or product logos, fancy graphics, tables, etc. **Fill it with riveting copy.**

4) Use interlaced gifs! These will load up in sweeps, gaining clarity with each passing. In the meantime, your visitor has something to look at other than a blank screen.



Other important speed tips...

- **Keep graphics to a minimum.** Small graphics, creative use of color in table cells, and a well-designed style sheet (linked, not embedded) with creative use of fonts will present an attractive and professional, yet speedy, page.
- **No multimedia effects**, unless there's just no other way to make a point.
- **Cut down on the complexity of your tables** (especially the top table, if it is visible and complex). Split information into several tables.

[SIDEBAR]

Experts in the SEO (Search Engine Optimization) field have expressed the concern that engine spiders may have difficulty making their way through piles of excess table coding to index the page text.

The best way to get around this is to be sure a spider has some text to index before it encounters any complicated table coding.



- Links to a directory should include the final slash in the URL when embedded in Web pages -- this avoids a [redirect](#) from the server (ex., <http://www.sitesell.com/> -- not <http://www.sitesell.com>)
- Employ a server that supports [HTTP keep-alive](#). This saves the overhead of establishing a new TCP/IP connection for every “hit,” which cuts latency dramatically, dropping response time by 50%! This is pretty standard nowadays.
- Use [ALT](#) tags for images (a **must** if your graphic is a **link**) -- this doesn't make your page faster, but it does show a lot of respect for those who crave speed by surfing with “graphics off.”

Final note to designers... take pride in **how fast** you can get a page to download, rather than **how cool** it is. That's the true mark of a pro.



7.2. The #1 Usability Principle...

Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.

-- Albert Einstein

In all things, the supreme excellence is simplicity.

-- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Anything that **reduces** your visitor's workload **increases** the chance that he stays on your site. **Keeping it simple** reduces your customer's work. Throughout your Web site design process, hold this thought above all else...

Keep It Simple, Stupid.

"Yeah, yeah," you say, no problem. But here's one final quote on the topic...

There is nothing quite so complicated as simplicity.

-- Charles Poore



It takes work (that your visitor won't see) to make your site **transparently simple...**

... simple to read, navigate, understand, and buy.

Assume that everyone who visits your site is not only new to your site, but new to the Web. Make it brain-dead simple to use your site.

Surfers are a frustrated, ready-to-click somewhere else breed. Simple sites not only make your users happier in their comfort and success, they are also more stable and less error-prone. The more elaborate your site, the more likely something goes

wrong... a broken link, a javascript error, an incompatibility with an older browser... and your visitor gives up.

Complexity increases your visitor's workload. Don't do that! **If you can do something, anything, to reduce your customer's work, do it.** Two examples...

- If your customer needs Adobe Acrobat Reader to read your digital book, **provide the direct link to it** (<http://www.adobe.com/Acrobat/readstep.htm>).

- When you put an e-mail link, **include the actual address in the link**, like this... [E-mail Ken at kevoy@sitesell.com](mailto:kevoy@sitesell.com), and not like this... [E-mail Ken](#). Some browsers are not set to pop up an e-mail window when someone clicks on the link. By including the address right on the page, a visitor can copy and paste into her e-mail software. And if your visitor prints the page, she'll see it.

Sure, these little things take some time now. **But you'll be rewarded for it later.**



7.3. Make it Readable, then Scannable

Your visitor is reading your site on his computer screen. It's **painful** to read on a screen, compared to paper. **And he's in a hurry.**

Bottom line? Make your pages **highly readable, then scannable.**

This is so basic, it's amazing how many companies get it wrong. What do they do? Glad you asked!

They use white on a black background, like this...

**A full screen of this can drive your nuts,
and looks amateurish.**

Or they...

Or just as bad, they camouflage the text into the background, so you can hardly read it!

Oh, sorry, couldn't read that?

Or just as bad, they camouflage the text into the background, so you can hardly read it!

So -- **use dark text on white or off-white background.** Period. Your designer should either specify the background color in the [HTML coding](#), or supply a slightly textured light-colored background graphic (unifies the site nicely). If you use a background graphic, make **100% sure** that it does not impair readability -- not even slightly.



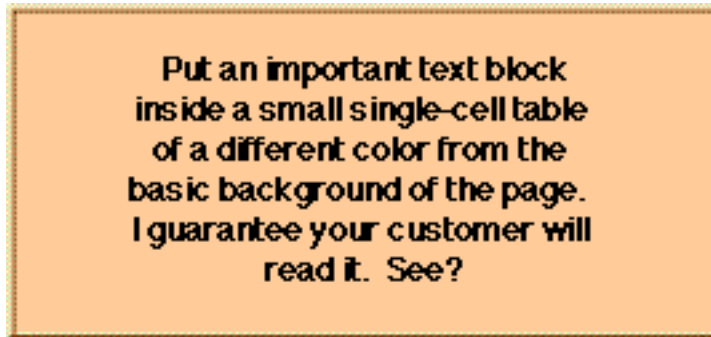
Now that it's readable, **make it "scannable."** Web surfers don't read every word -- **they skim**, looking for the important stuff. They pick out [keywords](#), sentences, and paragraphs of interest while skipping over the rest.

Use lots of headlines, laden with keywords and benefits, to **divide the copy into logical groups of text.** Divide the groups with an attractive horizontal line (about 50-75% of the width of the text block, not the full width) above each headline.

Highlight your most important concepts -- **bolden**, or **use a second sharp color** (in bold) **for the really important stuff.** *But don't italicize -- its jaggedy look is too hard to read on screen. See?*

Don't underline text for emphasis -- your visitor will mistake it for a link. They'll click on that "link" several times before they conclude that it's broken (or realize it's not a link). **If you want to underline text, it must also serve as a link.**

Put an important text block inside a small single-cell [table](#) of a different color. **I guarantee your customer will read it...**



Use **bulleted (or numbered) lists** and **horizontal lines** to increase scannability.

Be aware of your "word count." Never-ending text is extremely discouraging. Cut by 50% and then cut again. **But cut only fat -- keep the good stuff!**

Once you have chopped the "filler," **your reader will acquire useful information at a faster pace.** Deliver that info via short, active words, arranged in short paragraphs, with lots of headlines, and **readers will scroll to follow you forever.**

Contrary to what many "experts" say, if you write well, your page does **not** have the equivalent of the "fold" in a newspaper. Your visitors **will** scroll, so don't feel forced to link-break a page just to keep the page short. If the page belongs together, keep it together -- your reader will scroll **if you deliver the goods.**

Make sure your visitor doesn't miss your critical points -- design for readability, then scannability!



7.3.1. Long Scrollers ➡ What to Do

If you have a long scrolling page, **try to break it up, but don't force it.**

Look for long passages of text that are nothing more than detailed background information, or only of interest to a minority of readers. Split these sections off into **separate dead-end branches** (once in a dead-end side branch, the visitor's only navigation option is to continue in the branch or return to the main path).

Tighten up the copy as much as possible. Use short, active, words, arranged in tidy, easy-on-the-eye paragraphs. But **don't...**

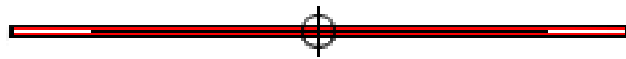
- chop out good content just to shorten the page
- break a page into two, just to make it shorter.



If a page would suffer from breaking it, simply divide it into a series of smaller sections by using attractive horizontal dividers above sharp, interesting headlines. Much better than breaking the page with a “**continued on page 2**” link.

Scrolling keeps people in mental touch with the content more than a link. Linking causes a delay that breaks the rhythm and momentum of the page. **So don’t break a page up just to cut it down to a single screen.**

If your copy rivets the reader, he’ll scroll right to the bottom.

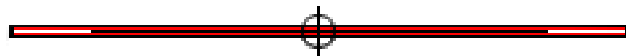


7.3.2. The Optimal Size for Text Blocks

Control the size of your text block through the use of [HTML tables](#). Do not let your page expand to fill the size of the monitor. Why?

People hate to read wide lines of copy (progress feels too slow). Even if your entire audience has 21 inch screens, don’t exceed copy blocks of 500 pixels.

Optimal is 400-500. Anything more is just too painful to read.



7.3.3. How to Use Lines, Bullets and Other Mini-Icons

Use bulleted (or numbered) lists because...

- they are easier to scan
- they invite the eye
- they break up the page.

Isn't the above bulleted list better than...

"Use bulleted lists because they are easier to scan, they invite the eye, and they break up the page"? The **HTML List tag** can deliver black bullets instantly, no graphic necessary. But...

- **Bright, graphical bullets add extra emphasis...** use a small colored ball, arrow, or pointer to bullet your lists.

- But don't overdo it and cross the line into bad taste.

- Use them only for special purposes, and use only one, low-K graphic. Once it is [cached](#), it will load quickly for the rest of the visit.



Use horizontal lines to separate major blocks of text into more readable chunks. The **HTML HR tag** loads a black horizontal divider instantly. Your HTML guru knows how to vary the width, thickness and color.



Or use a graphic horizontal line. It should be small, definitely under 2K. Use only **one** line graphic. Once cached after its first download, it will load quickly for the rest of the visit. If the line is well designed, there's no need to have different sized lines -- your HTML wizard just codes in the dimensions.

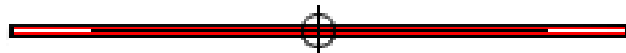


Graphic bullets and lines add spice to your page, unify the look and feel of the site, and they don't cost much in download time, especially after the first download.

While we're on the topic of mini-icons, sharp "**New**" or "**Updated**" markers will highlight new info that you want your visitors to see. You can also use "**Sale**" or "**Bargain**" or "**Special**."



Again, **not too many per page** -- don't start looking crass.



7.4. Do Your Links Clink?

Links are, of course, the very essence of the Web. **Use them well.**



7.4.1. Link Rot... The #1 Sales Killer

There's no excuse for broken links --- they're just plain sloppy. **Sloppy = fatal.**

Why anger your visitor with a link that goes nowhere except to the [dreaded 404 "page does not exist" message?](#)

Test every link on your site, either manually (browse through your site online, clicking every link) or with Web-based link validators like **NetMechanic**, or **JimTools.com's Link Checker**.



NetMechanic

<http://www.netmechanic.com/maintain.htm>



JIMTOOLS.com

<http://www.jimtools.com>

Bigger Web sites may require more robust solutions. Check out...



LinkScan

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

And...

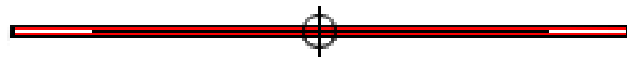


WebAnalyser

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



And **never delete pages that are out-of-date** from your site. Links to these pages (from [Search Engines](#) and other sites) will often live well after you delete a page. Why deliver a 404 message, when you could instead give your potential customer a page that contains a brief update and a link to the relevant part of your site? Or you can even get your techie to use a [redirect](#) to automatically send someone who visits a “dead page” to the correct “live” page on your site!



7.4.2. Links in the Copy... What to Do

Your copy should have very few links within it, only those absolutely necessary to provide some background info, details, etc. Let's call these **Content Links**.

Each Content Link **branches off** the main pathway, therefore leads your customer **away** from your **MWR**. So these [side-branches must dead-end](#), which means that your visitor's only choice is to return to where she started from on the main pathway.

Even if you do side-branch effectively, if you put **many** links in each paragraph of text...

- you destroy the natural flow of the case that you are building
- you distract your reader to the point of crazed insecurity
- you destroy the intent of the navigation structure of your site. Each branch has the potential to lead your visitor off the main path that heads towards your **MWR Closer Page**.

Each **Content Page** should basically be a stepping-stone in a path that leads towards the **MWR**. Except for the TOCs and the navbars, **limit links in the copy to only the most necessary**.

And where you absolutely must include links in the text of your pages, **don't embed them in the copy, where they are likely to be missed...**



7.4.3. Embedded Links, A Big No-no!

Embedded links -- Don't bury links in the contents of a paragraph on your site. Make them stand out.

The **better way** is to do it like this...

Embedded links -- Don't bury links in the contents of a paragraph on your site. Make them stand out.

The **best way** is to do it is like this...

Embedded links

Don't bury links in the contents of a paragraph on your site. Make them stand out.

See how the third version is impossible to miss?



7.4.4. How to Fool-proof the Destination

Short, vague links...



... create uncertainly in your visitor. It slows him down. He either won't click it because he doesn't want to take a chance and waste time. Or if he does, and it's not what he expects, he's peeved. **Peeved visitors don't buy.**

Include enough text in the link for the user to be certain where he's going.

Your reader should be able to scan the text of your links and predict the info at the destination. Links with cryptic or obscure language have three possible outcomes...

- 1) Visitor gets lucky and gets the info he hoped for.
- 2) Visitor wastes time and has to back up to continue, or worse, decides to go to another site.
- 3) Visitor decides not to take the chance and just continues with the rest of that page (a link is useless if it's not used).



Besides wording the links well, **consider javascript or link titles to add extra clarity as to contents of the destination...**

- 1) **simple javascript** -- to add clarity to any link, just put the following inside the **HREF tag...**

```
onMouseOver="status='Sends you to our ISDN modems.'; return true;"
```

This will put the following message into the **status bar** of any javascript-enabled browser... "Sends you to our ISDN modems."

- 2) **link title** -- put the following inside the HREF tag...

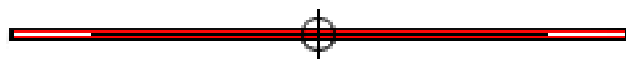
```
TITLE="Sends you to our ISDN modems."
```

You will see this message pop up right over the link (instead of in the status bar) as you pass your mouse over the link. This only works on newer browsers.

- 3) **content-predicting javascript** -- as a mouse pointer glides over the link, text "pops up" to tell the visitor exactly where she's headed!



Bottom line? **Make every link's destination crystal-clear.**



7.4.5. 8 Ways Links Can Cost You

Links, if used badly, can hurt you where it counts most... **in the pocketbook**. Here's how...

1) [Image Maps](#) -- These are bad ideas. Since they are created as a **single graphic**, problems arise...

- Designers often forget to include visual clues that show where to click in order to link somewhere. It's best to make the clickable areas look like buttons, or offer other visual cues.
- Image maps, although "beautiful and cool," rarely make the destinations of links clear.
- There's no way to provide for text-only browsers, so you must also include text links nearby, adding to the clutter.

Don't use image maps. You can accomplish the same graphic appeal by assembling many smaller images, which has many advantages ([see discussion on how to build a navbar](#)).



2) Multi-line links in a TOC -- Since a link is underlined, if your link in a TOC spans three lines, many users will mistake it for three different links. Like this...

[Outer Mongolian Airlines](#)
[International Reservations](#)
[Ordering System](#)

Many visitors will click each line ([Outer Mongolian Airlines](#) and [International Reservations](#) and [Ordering System](#)). Know how they feel when they keep going to **the same page over and over?**...



... Confused and frustrated!

3) Ambiguous “in-house” or “trade” terms -- Never assume your visitor understands terms that you use “in-house,” even if they’re standardly used in the trade.



4) Link that is confused with another -- Each link must stand apart from the others. Your visitor must never look at two links and say, “H-m-m-m. Either of these **could** take me to where I want to go. I wonder which is which?”

Your visitor smells a time-waster coming! Even if he guesses right, the indecision has already hurt your customer’s momentum.



5) Non-standard link colors -- You risk confusing your visitor if you deviate from the standard [blue unused link](#), [red activated link](#) and [purple used link](#). Stick with the basics. If you have a strong design reason to do so, make sure that the used link is less bright than the link that has not yet been followed.



6) Reliance on graphic links instead of text links -- If you use graphic links, make it clear that the graphic is a link (ex., looks like a button), and make the destination clear. If it’s not clear that it’s a link, put a border around it, so that the border changes color when the link is activated and has been followed (the border will follow the usual color conventions for links).



7) Linking OUT -- This is a huge mistake. Why lead your hard-earned customer to anywhere else? Want to know what’s even worse than regular linking out?...



8) Linking out to your designer -- Why in the world would you want to tempt someone out of your site right off the front page (which is where these links usually appear)? Not to mention... it’s **proof-positive that you’re small fry**. When was the last time you saw the name of an ad agency on a TV commercial?



7.4.6. The Bottom Line?

Your visitor must see and immediately understand your links.

She must understand the destination of every link... meaning she must be able to predict what she will get.

Make a link pay off and your visitor will be happy. Otherwise you will quickly antagonize, then lose her.



7.5. 13 More Usability Ways to Kill Sales

Many sales-oriented sites sometimes appear to want to **drive sales away**. Here are just a few more examples to reinforce the point...



7.5.1. Frames -- Netscape's Curse to the Web

Frames, originally a Netscape innovation, simply have too many drawbacks for a serious, commercial site. They...

- have a busy interface
- can't be bookmarked
- give Search Engines trouble
- add to download time because each frame is basically a whole new page
- are tricky to print
- impair navigation and confuse visitors (the URL in the location bar does not

change)

- waste precious screen real estate with multiple scrollbars
- are incompatible with early version browsers that don't support frames.

The most common "reason" to use frames is to provide a **Table of Contents**. If you want to have a Table of Contents in the left margin, simply use a two-column [TABLE tag](#), with the left column set fairly narrow. Put your TOC in the left column.

Is there a **good** reason to use frames? For special functions -- like music maybe, as I did for PennyGold? Many Web designers will argue on this point. But if Amazon.com and 90% of the Fortune 500 don't use frames, they must see things the same way.



7.5.2. The Agony of Browser-Specific Sites

Some companies actually develop multiple sites, each optimized for a different browser. This is high-work, low-reward. Don't get caught up in this quagmire -- it's hard enough to maintain a single site.

Unless you have a very **skewed** audience, assume that everyone uses a browser that is at least 2 generations below the "cutting edge" one. Then design a single version of the site for this lowest common denominator.



Presently, this would mean designing for Netscape 4 or Internet Explorer 4. There's not enough people using more primitive browsers to worry about them (sorry Netscape 1, Lynx and Mosaic). And if you throw in designs that **require** Netscape (NN) 4.7 or Internet Explorer (IE) 5.5, you will lose a good number of people who **will** be using NN4 and 3, and IE4 for awhile.

However, it's OK to use advanced features that are simply **ignored** by the more primitive browsers -- for example, stylesheets. Netscape 2 can still deliver a regular page, since it just passes over this feature in the HTML coding.



7.5.3. Not Cross (-platform, -browser, -spec's)

Boy, did your site ever look great on your designer's top-of-the-line Mac with 21" millions-of-colors monitor and T1 connection (or possibly even shown to you off a [disk mirror](#)), browsing with Netscape 4.

But how did it look for Windows users (different colors, even different brightness), using Internet Explorer 3 (whoops! there goes some of that javascript)?

How about on a 28.8 connection? Ouch, those graphics take forever, all of a sudden!

A majority of your visitors **still have 15" or smaller monitors, with 256 colors.** Browse your site on a small monitor, for both Mac and Windows. **Within 10 seconds...**



... there must be enough text visible on that first small screen to grab the reader. If your corporate ego (i.e., your logo) fills that **first screen**, people won't wait the 30 seconds it takes to load... they'll hit the Back button on their browser, and be gone!



Here's the bottom line, **minimum cross-torture-test...**

Find six friends/colleagues with different platform-browser configurations. Test your site for Netscape 2, Internet Explorer 3, and AOL3 **browsers...**

... on both Mac and Windows **platforms.**

Testers should ideally have a **minimal monitor-modem set up** (15" monitor/256 colors, with a 28.8 or 33.6 connection).

[SIDEBAR]

While there's **no replacement** for a thorough, "real-world" test as outlined above, here's a quick and easy way to rough-check your site...

Bobby is a Web-based public service that analyzes Web pages for their accessibility to people with disabilities as well as their compatibility with various browsers. It's outstanding. They even offer a downloadable **JAVA** version of Bobby so you can test the copy of your site that you keep on your own computer (you do, right?)



BOBBY

<http://www.cast.org/bobby/>

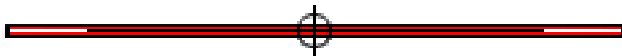
Give testers a **complete list** of things to observe and do on the site. Ask them to note the speed of each page. If you have built in special javascript or other functionality, they should check to see if it functions as intended. They should also write down anything that "looks wrong," even if something is not on your list.

Testers should also check it with "load graphics" turned off because 10-25% of Web surfers surf with **load graphics turned off**. This group is only looking for info. If you believe this trait fits a good percentage of your target market, test your site with "graphics off."

[SIDEBAR]

And one more thing... don't forget to **re-test with major new browser releases as they come out -- just a quick run-through to make sure that all is OK**. When I was playing around with the Web site for the first edition of **MYSS!**, I finally got around to downloading IE4 onto my Mac machine, and guess what?

It messed up all my headlines, putting them on the same line as the first line of the following text (it had changed the way it interpreted the **HTML** from the previous version). Looked terrible. It was a simple cleanup, but I had left it like that for months, without knowing!



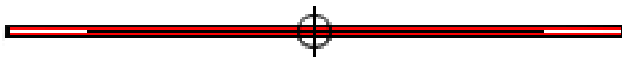
7.5.4. Requiring Plug-Ins Will **Plug Sales**

If you include any technology that requires a plug-in, you will lose people. Your customer wants info on your product -- she does not want to leave your site,

download a multi-megabyte plug-in, figure out how to configure it, call tech support when that doesn't work, etc., etc., etc.

PDF (Adobe's wonderful Acrobat Reader), **RealAudio**, and **Shockwave** are the most common offending plug-ins. Don't get me wrong -- I love the technology behind all of these. Obviously, I love Acrobat -- I published this book with it!

But I would never put up a PDF Web page **until at least 90% of all browsers have the PDF plug-in. Same goes for any plug-in.**

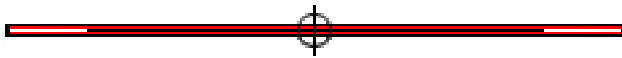


7.5.5. Long, Messy URLs

Ever see one of those URLs...

`http://somebody_else's_domain.net/this_name.com/is_so_long/_forget/~it.html?`

Usability starts with making your URL **easy to remember!** [Get your own domain.](#)



7.5.6. Use of Full-Text Search Engines

Full-text SEs **confuse** most visitors and, according to some usability studies, actually **decrease** the odds of your average visitor finding the info she seeks. **Why?**

Well, it turns out that most Web surfers often aren't sure...

- what the heck...

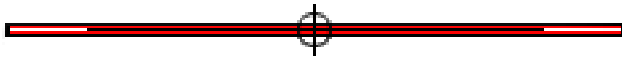


... BOOLEAN is.

- what part of the site is being searched
- why they get crazy, irrelevant results, or useless listings. This happens often. When it does, guess **who** they get peeved at?

This will only get worse before it gets better, because the newer waves of Web users are less and less techie-oriented. So...

Does your business have special circumstances (ex., catalog store with millions of products, like Amazon.com) that absolutely require a Search Engine? If not, **don't confuse** your potential customers... forego the onsite Search Engine.



7.5.7. Orphan Pages... So **Now** Where Do I Go?

Never trust your visitor to hit his browser's **BACK** button. **After all...**



...**some users barely know** how to turn on their computers.

Always provide at least one button to navigate somewhere. Otherwise, he may very well navigate back to the Search Engine... and then to a competitor.



7.5.8. No Link to MWR Closer Page on Every Page

You never know when you say **just the right thing** that triggers the desire to buy (or trigger whatever your **MWR** is). Provide access to your **MWR** on every page of your pathway, from **Opening Page** onward.

While your **#1 goal** is always to trigger the **MWR**, keep a **general contact avenue** open. List **contact info** at the bottom of every page (street address, telephone, fax, e-mails).

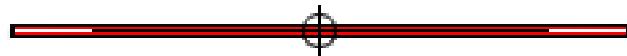
If you have a large company, design a “**Contact us**” page with general contact information (general corporate address, phone number, and e-mail address, **AND** names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of key people).

Then put a [dead-end link](#) to that page on the bottom of every important Content Page.

--- **[SIDEBAR]** ---

This may sound unbelievable but on several occasions I have left a Web site wanting to buy, but was unable to do so. I searched high, and I searched low, but for the life of me, I couldn't find the order page.

How many visitors are going to be motivated enough to actually search for your order page? Most will just leave. This is Web-selling 101, heck, this is a Web-selling preschool lesson... **Don't make it difficult to buy from you!**

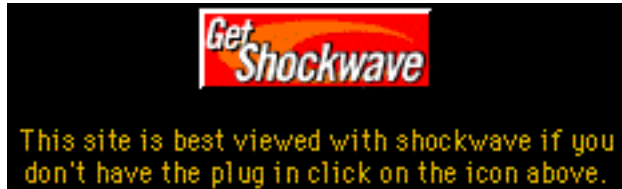


7.5.9. “Best viewed with Explorer 4+ and Shockwave”

What's the message here?...

This site has been optimized for MSIE 4.0 and Communicator.





If the visitor has “what it takes” (i.e., the required software and plug-ins), why bother wasting his time, making him look at the above graphics?

If he doesn't, you literally will drive him away. Your visitor comes for info, not to download something that he has already decided he doesn't want yet.

Who wants a sub-optimal experience? And who wants to waste his time downloading the plug-in, then going...



... ballistic getting it to work right?

“Hey! Do ya wanna sell somethin’ to me, or what?”



7.5.10. The Deady Horizontal Scroll Bar

Here's something your visitor should never see...



More and more pages nowadays significantly exceed 800 pixels. For most people, who use 15"-17" monitors, this triggers the dreaded horizontal scrollbar.

The total width of your Web page should not exceed 750 pixels. This allows plenty of room for your 500 pixel copy block, with plenty of room to the left and right for table margins.

Why not 800, since that's the width of the lowest common denominator, the 800 x 600 screen? Three reasons...

- it's good to leave a little breathing room
- allows for Microsoft's Explorer Bar (in IE4) on the left side of the browser window
- the width of your copy block should not exceed 500 pixels ([best reading width](#)), so you just don't need it to be any wider.

A horizontal scrollbar is a sure sign of a designer who works on a 21" Sony Trinitron monitor -- she has forgotten (or never knew) that many of your customers are on a 15", 256-color monitor.

People hate to scroll horizontally -- this is a sure way to alienate, and lose, your visitor. If you're lucky...



... she'll blame the monitor.

But don't count on it!



7.5.11. The Dreaded 404 File Not Found

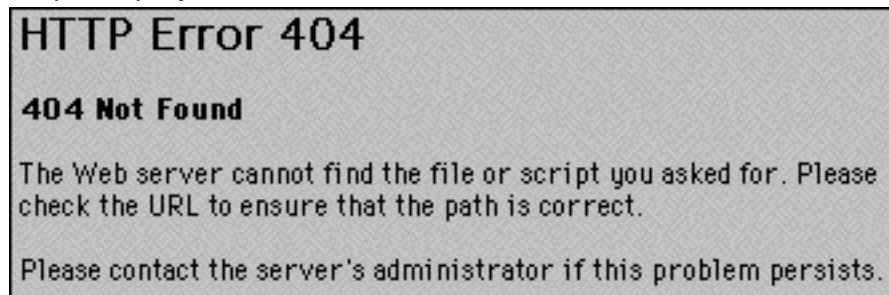
Visitors to your site will enter a wrong URL fairly often. Here are a few of the most common reasons why...

- typos
- you dropped a page, but your visitor had bookmarked it (if you drop a page, [leave a page that directs your visitor appropriately](#))
- hit a page listed in a Search Engine that you have since taken down.

When that happens, would you like them to see this charming message?...




Or perhaps you'd like to treat them to the famous 404 code...



Instead, get your techie to put up a nice page with your usual logo and background, and a message like this...

Sorry, you have asked for a page that doesn't exist. Please [click here to go to the Site Map](#). You should be able to find the page that you want over there. Thank you, and sorry for the bother.

It shows...

- you care. 
- your site is regularly maintained
- it's not the equivalent of a cyberspace ghost town.

[SIDEBAR]

Sometimes it's possible to lose track which pages have moved, changed, or been re-directed elsewhere. Even if you are the most careful and conscientious of Webmasters, it's inevitable that there will be a broken link somewhere on your site. Worst of all, you may never find it! It could even be a old link from a Search Engine, a link partner, or inactive affiliate member.

So what to do? Ask your techie or your Web host about a **".htaccess" file**. That's right, a "dot htaccess" file. What does this file do? It will tell your server...

"Hey, if a visitor gets a 404 message anywhere on my site, please re-direct them

immediately to http://www.yourcompany.com/selected_page.html"

Excellent! Never worry about another 404 message again!



7.5.12. Popping Up New Windows Like Daisies

If you have a special reason to force your visitor's browser to make a new window (HTML code [TARGET=VIEW](#)), it had better be a very special reason!

Otherwise, you risk all kinds of sales-losing confusion. Click on this [TARGET=VIEW](#) link for a full discussion of the problems, including real-life problems from the PennyGold site. It was a mess that I got myself into, and that I chose to live with.

But never again will I pop up all those...

 ... *&#@!^% daisies!



7.5.13. The Impersonal Pre-Fab

If you are in charge of designing a Web site for a large company with many divisions and product lines, do not use the "pre-fab" approach.

This involves a construction/navigation template which is given to various departments to complete. The techies then assemble all the individual department templates into a finished Web site.

The resulting hodgepodge is guaranteed to confuse visitors.

Design from the ground up, according to the particular circumstances and organization of your company. Your site will have a unified look and feel with one central focus... **to get the sale!**



7.6. Test, Test, then Test Some More

If you and your Web designer have done a good job, your site will look almost “too simple.” **High-usability is, by the very definition of usability, invisible to the user.**

But a low-usability site is **very, very visible**. It’s frustrating and time-consuming. Test with target customers who have never seen your site and you’ll understand. But test with yourself and the site’s designers and you’ll be misled. At a minimum, use employees who don’t know the site.

Unless you are very aware, you will design Web sites with your own objectives in mind, rather than your customers’ needs. And you will base decisions on common-sense design rules. Even the best-intentioned companies fall into this trap. **But company-focused sites mean...**



... the death of sales. And conventional “common sense” design rules can mislead -- the Web is unlike any other medium, and **many of the old rules don’t apply.**

So here’s the bottom line. **Visitors will rarely use a site as anticipated.** Test your site with users who have nothing to do with creating it.

[SIDEBAR]

What are the customer’s problems with shopping online?

Most surveys show that privacy and security concerns are first and foremost in the customer’s mind. After that, it all comes down to a matter of usability issues -- bad navigation, confusing layout, and incomprehensible shopping cart software are only a few. The customer wants to buy, but gives up in frustration when repeated attempts to do so end up in failure.

Here is what gets me...

Because of the press even the tiniest amount of Internet fraud receives, you may have a difficult time convincing some customers that shopping online **IS** safe.

Although you can do much to convince visitors all is well at your site, you may not be able to totally overcome their preconceived bias. You can, however, do a lot about the second problem -- usability, navigation and the like. It's all totally within your control. It doesn't have to be a problem.

The moral here?

Design for the lowest common denominator. Imagine...

Grandma gets a brand new computer, an Internet connection, and a copy of "The Internet for Dummies" for Christmas. Up to this point, a calculator was the most complicated piece of machinery she had. With some help from the grandchildren, she painstakingly writes out the steps necessary to get online, and within minutes she's surfing for the very first time! And wouldn't you know it? **BINGO!** She arrives at your site. My questions...

Can she buy from you? Would she buy from you?

Remember, **not everyone is totally immersed in the online world.** Everyday, everywhere, people are surfing for the **very first time.** Remember that when you design your site!

Three words...

Lowest Common Denominator!

When testing, **eliminate bias.** Take the testing out of the hands of those who designed it. The developers of any site have too much bias to test objectively. The Web designer(s) should attend, but not run, the test. **It takes a long time to realize that your visitor is not an idiot because she navigates it "wrong."**

The most important observation period is the tester's first 5-10 minutes on site. Anyone will "figure it out," given enough time and motivation. But how does she do during the first 5-10 minutes? If there is hesitation or failure, **the failure is yours, never the tester's. Actually, here's the best attitude...**



...Hope your testers crash!

It's the only way you can **improve** your site. So **be nice**, and **help** your testers. Ask

what the problem is, but **do not debate or explain -- just take notes.** If your tester is shy about expressing problems, just tell him to say “problem” whenever confusion or failure arises.

At most companies, “testing” means showing the site to the V.P. of marketing. If he or she likes it, then it’s OK. But some companies are waking up and performing usability testing.

And it doesn’t have to be expensive. If you’re a large company, recruit a few junior sales people to test the site. If you’re a small company, ask a few friends (dumber ones, and preferably in the target market) to come by and test the site.

Odds are that you would be terribly embarrassed or upset if you ever sat down and watched the actual experiences of your visitors. **You would realize how your site has been silently killing sales, day in and day out.**

Matters that you felt to be crystal-clear would confuse the heck out of your visitors. You’d find them getting lost down pathways. There’d be countless unforeseen “user mistakes,” which translate into lost sales opportunities.

But then you would fix them. **And then you would SELL more.**



7.7. And If It’s Not ★★★★★ Usable...

If your site’s not usable, it’s frustrating. **And if it frustrates...**



... Your visitor **will not buy** from you!



7.8. Links to Usability Gurus

There are a few people out there who do “get it”...

Jakob Nielsen is **the** usability master...



Alertbox: Jakob Nielsen's Column on Web Usability

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/>

Here's a great article by him...

Writing for the Web

<http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/>

And Jakob's book is a **must read!**...



Designing Web Usability, By Jakob Nielsen

New Riders Publishing

ISBN 156205810X

Available from Amazon.com

Terry Sullivan's site is superb...



All Things Web

<http://www.pantos.org/atw/usable.html>

Sun offers a wealth of useful information, using their site as an example...



Sun's New Web Design

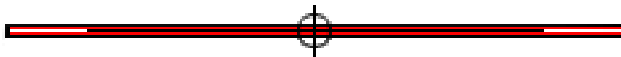
<http://www.sun.com/980113/sunonnet/>

These usability experts offer an excellent book for sale, and also hold regular seminars...



User Interface Engineering

<http://world.std.com/~uieweb>



8. Navigation

... Where **Am** I??

If your cybernaut-visitor doesn't know where he is, nor how to get **where he wants to go...**



... he does know one thing... **how to get out.**

Anticipate your visitor's navigation needs and meet them.

First ask yourself, "What information does my customer want and need from this Web site?" Organize it so that you can deliver that info at the right time, in an intuitive fashion. Build it according to your customer's needs, not yours.

Then, **and only then**, design a **clear, simple navigation structure** that puts your visitor on the right path.

There is no single best navigational structure. Web sites vary from single-path, single-product companies, to multi-billion dollar companies. But the principles are all the same.

Awkward, doubt-inducing navigation loses visitors. Your visitor is only a click away from finding out "who's next" on the Search Engine findings. Optimize your customer's experience. Give your visitor a sense of steady progress. He should be able to drill down straight to his target.

Make your navigation structure **clean, sparse, consistent, and obvious...** in other words, simple-and-clear-to-use. It must be consistent across all pages -- never change the format.

Every time you force a potential customer to search, navigate, decide, think, or otherwise use his browser's controls, he may leave your site instead.



8.1. Points of Reference Help to Build Context

Everyone likes to know where they are. **When you're in...**



... **Disneyland**, you like to have a point of reference. If you're in Fantasyland, you check the map to see where that is, in relation to the rest of the park. Then you look for landmarks to see where you are within Fantasyland. These **points of reference** keep you oriented and help you navigate through Disneyland.

The Web is much the same, with a major difference. On the Web, you can suddenly fly over to some other site, plunk down right smack in the middle, unaware of where you are. **Without the correct points of reference**, you could be in Frontierland... or in **Tokyo** Disneyland!



So **build context**, in the form of points of reference, into your site. Here's how...

1) Company name, small logo, background, and overall look and feel should stay consistent throughout the site. This ties all your pages together.

2) Within each page and across all pages, the headline type must be consistent in font, size and alignment. Use a modest, classic font throughout, both for headlines and for text. If you use sub-headlines, use a visibly smaller size font to show that it is a sub-section of the major headline with the larger sized font.

3) The TOCs and navbars should present the hierarchy organization in a clear and consistent manner. The user should be able to gather where he is by looking at the navbars. Then it is just a matter of clicking to some other major section of the site, or proceeding through the pathway as he heads towards your **MWR Closer Page** for that product.

Apply...



... the “parachute test” to every page of your site...

“If a visitor parachuted straight onto this page, say from a Search Engine, would he know where in my site he was, and where to go next?”



8.2. The **Anatomy** of a Web Site



... In med school, we learned zillions of body parts. Luckily, in Web school, we only have to learn five...



8.2.1. Content Page -- The Guts

Content Page -- delivers content which meets the needs of the visitor and which increases your chances of getting the **MWR**.

A Content Page is either part of...

- the **main pathway** that runs from the **Opening Page** to the **MWR Closer Page**

OR...

- a **dead-end side-branch** off the main pathway.

If a Content Page is on the direct pathway heading towards the **Closer Page**, we call it a **Content Pathway Page**.

The main goal of a **Content Pathway Page** is to deliver your prospect to the next **Content Page**.



8.2.2. Link Page -- Link Only

The **#1 job** of a **Link Page** is to link to other pages via “collections of links” that are organized into structures called...

- **Table of Contents** (graphic and/or text-based)

and

- **Navbar.**

Think of **Link Pages**...



... as **central hubs**. They direct your visitors down the spokes (pathways) that your visitor wants to take. The purpose of a Link Page should be to explain the link options in a customer-focused fashion, **not** to sell.

The main goal of a **Link Page** is to provide clean, clear navigation.



8.2.3. Opening Page -- **Grab** their Attention

The **Opening Page** is the **first** page in the pathway towards the **MWR**. The main job of this page is to stop your visitor in his tracks, dazzle him with benefits, and pull him further down the pathway.

Since an **Opening Page** is the first page in a pathway, it will also do double duty as a **Link Page**. It provides navigational aids (a Table of Contents and/or a navbar)

to...

- key pages in its pathway
- the Link Pages of the LEVEL above it (for larger companies, [as we will see in a bit](#)).
- The main goals of the Opening Page are...



... to **STOP** your visitor from clicking elsewhere

- interest him in your product, and
- deliver him to the next Content Pathway Page.



8.2.4. MWR Closer Page -- Get the Order

MWR Closer Page -- the **last** page in the pathway towards the **MWR**. This is very simple. **The only job of this page is to...**



... **get the order** (or whatever the **MWR** is).



8.2.5. Pathways -- Lead Your Customers

A pathway is composed of an **Opening Page**, one or more **Content Pathway Pages**, and a **MWR Closer Page**. It is not a strict, “can’t escape” pathway. The user still has navigation choices...

But if you do it right, he shouldn't use them very often!

[**SIDEBAR**]

If you were to compare the **MYSS! 2002** site to the PennyGold site, you'd find two long pathways, each structured in a completely different fashion. Have a look for yourself...



PennyGold

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>

And...



Make Your Site Sell!

<http://myss.sitesell.com/>

What do you find?

PennyGold's long pathway was broken into several pages, each one addressing a specific concern, or making a certain point. Reason? PennyGold was a tough sell. Potential buyers were savvy, critical, and tough. Made sense to split the copy up.

And what about the **MYSS!** site? Or any of the SiteSell products?

Here the **entire sales copy** flows to a "call to action," the Order Page. The copy itself is probably just as long, but to break the flow for the sake of short pages would be a mistake. Every time you force people to click, you'll lose a percentage of them. Besides, for those too impatient to read super-long copy, we include an abbreviated version...



Make Your Site Sell!
<http://myss.sitesell.com/>

And of course, the page copy is interspersed with our [navbar](#), where a visitor can choose any one of our [Backup Responses](#), as well as our [MWR \(Order Page\)](#)...



... just in case she should want to deliver a response **before** she reaches the end of the page.

See how the two pages differ?

OK. Now that we've got the terminology straight, let's see how to build a proper navbar and Table of Contents. Then we'll take a quick peek at how to use a left margin. And finally...

... we'll be ready to assemble all this **into a rock-solid navigational structure.**

[SIDEBAR]

There's really no better way to understand the importance of **good navigation**, than by viewing **bad navigation** "live in color" on the Web. Any time that you're surfing, and suddenly find you're having difficulty finding what you want on a site, anytime the pathway seems "skewed" -- **sit up and take note!** Find out what they're doing wrong, and then...

Vow to never do the same thing yourself!



8.3. How To Build a Navbar

A **navbar** is a horizontal row of links intended to aid navigation. Here's a classic -- Amazon.com's navbar from the past ...



The text you see in Amazon's navbar was actually **part of the graphic**, and that's the way it should be. If you wanted to spice it up a bit, you could include a small icon above each text. But don't use some cool, artsy squiggle that's hard to figure out. Your visitor doesn't want Picasso -- **he wants clear direction**.

The combination of simple icons and text makes your links' destinations as clear as possible. [And you can include other techniques](#) to add to the "predictive value" of any link.

While most would think of a navbar as a set of **graphic** links (as above), it can also mean a horizontal row of text links, commonly called a **text bar**. Here's an example...

| [Home Page](#) | [Products](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Order](#) |

[SIDEBAR]

I like to think of navbar as being horizontal (text or graphic) and Table of Contents as vertical (text or graphics). It makes more sense to me as I think about a site. But others might see things differently.

A good navbar accomplishes the following...

- **provides links to key areas**
- **downloads fast**
- **functions just as well with graphic-loading turned off**
- **tells your customer where he is** by highlighting that section in the navbar.

[SIDEBAR]

It's a good idea to **inactivate** the highlighted button, since clicking it would only send him right back to the same spot. This wastes time and can confuse or frustrate. Instead, pop up a javascript alert -- "Sorry, you are already here."

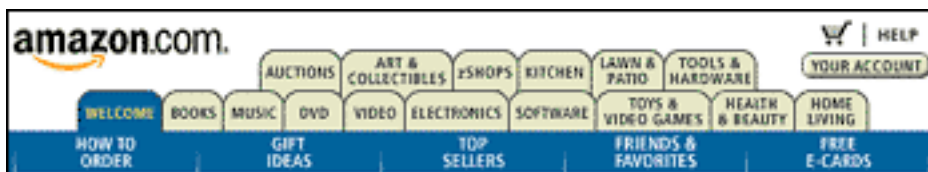
With the above four functions in mind, it's clear that **we must use a "modular approach"** -- build your navbar with individual buttons, one for each link. **It should not be one large image map.**

If you used an image map...

- each navbar on every page would have to be a completely different graphic (due to the highlighting function). A large image map means a **big download each time your visitor hits a new page**. But in the modular approach, once the first set of small buttons has loaded into the browser's cache, it only has to load **one new GIF** (the highlighted GIF) per new page.
- you would be limited to a single ALT tag for the entire image. If you build your navbar with several smaller buttons, you can include an **ALT tag** for each.
- you'd be limiting the chances of a deep crawl by some of the Search Engine spiders that do not support them!



Are there exceptions to the "image map rule"? For the answer, let's take a look at a more current Amazon navbar. Here it is...



Amazon.com

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

Looks fine, right? Okay, let's re-visit, but this time with the graphics "off"...



Whoops! What happened here?

This image doesn't **give any indication** of the many and vast choices that lie within the store. For anybody surfing with graphics off, this navbar is about as useless as... well, never mind.

Yup, Amazon is using an image map, and there's the single "**ALT**" tag I was just talking about -- "**Welcome to Amazon.com**" up in the left hand corner.

So why is a company as "Net smart" as Amazon **using an image map**?

Amazon doesn't make mistakes. It evaluates options, and makes the **most practical decision**.



Obviously, Amazon felt it was both easier and more practical to use an image map than jamming 23, count 'em, 23 visitor options into a relatively small space, and still keep page load time down to a **minimum**. Using an image map (simply a single image with coordinates plotted onto it), also means Amazon will have much greater control over the look of its page, especially when it's being viewed and interpreted by many different browsers.

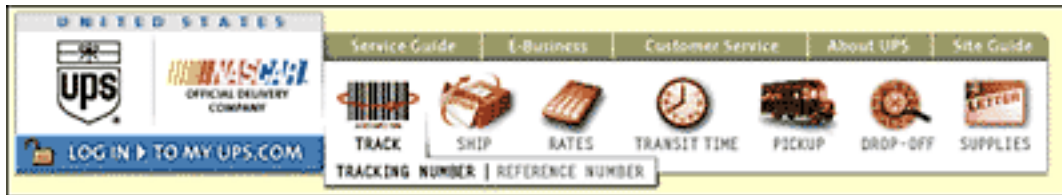
Luckily, Amazon has two other things going for it...

- 1)** Average Internet access speeds are gradually increasing, meaning that **less and less** people will be surfing with their graphics turned off...
- 2)** Hey -- this is Amazon.com, arguably one of the best places online to buy anything! So maybe, just maybe, visitors will consider turning their graphics back on to visit the Amazon site...

What's the lesson? **Evaluate your options carefully, and use an image map only as a last ditch resort!**

Let's look at the **UPS** navbars from their site (<http://www.ups.com/>) as an example that pulls this strategy together.

See how **TRACKING** is highlighted...



And how **RATES** is highlighted. Note how UPS does not make you guess what-in-the-world that graphic is -- they add the **RATES** text underneath to clarify the destination of the link...



Now we're in **DROP-OFF**, right?...

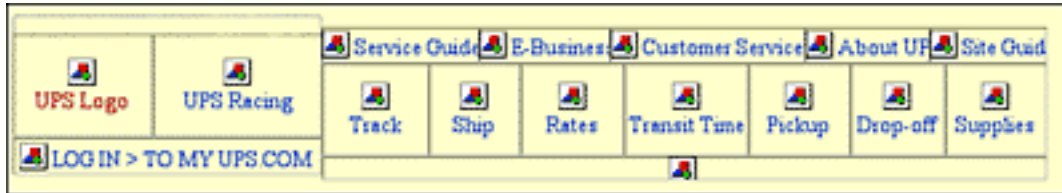


Sure UPS, you can **PICK-UP** my parcel anytime...



... but only because that's one well-organized Web site.

One last graphic from the UPS site... this time to do a little deconstructing. It's the same navbar as the last one above, except that this is with **graphic-loading turned off**...



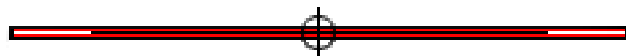
OK, so what do you see?...

First, this is not **one** big graphic, but rather it is **seventeen little graphics**. That way, after the navbar loads once, only one new small graphic (highlighted to reflect that location) has to load for each new page. This is much faster.

Second, even though the graphic-loading is off, good use of [ALT tags](#) allows you to understand the destination for each link. No wasted clicks here! If the designer had used a large image map, she could only use one ALT tag, making the navbar useless for those with graphics turned off. That would force her to add a [text bar](#), which would add clutter to the presentation.

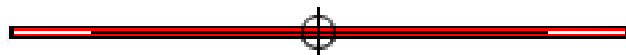


Finally, **follow the Rule of 7**, if at all possible... **each navbar should have no more than 7 links... 9 max**. Otherwise, your customer misses stuff in all the clutter.



8.4. How to Build a Table of Contents

A **Table of Contents (TOC)** is a vertical column (or two) of links intended to aid navigation. It can be either **text-based** or **graphic-based**...



8.4.1. Text-based TOCs

Text-based TOCs are especially useful for **smaller, one-product sites**. Two great places for them...

- the left margin

- at the end of the Opening Page's copy (when the opening page is also the Home Page).

Most **Table of Contents** are a boring compendium of meaningless words... or worse, vague graphic symbols. They do nothing to inspire exploration and purchase. But that's not the way you'll design **your** TOC.

Each text link must be crystal-clear and stress benefits -- basically, it should be a **headline**. Each headline in the TOC must stress a benefit to the reader, or at least relate directly to the reader. Each link should be so tasty that your visitor can't wait to visit them all.

Pull your reader into relevant major sub-sections. Think **Table of Headlines**, rather than just plain-old **Table of Contents**.



TOC in left margin -- Use this when you want your viewer to see the whole layout early during the visit...

<p>The Success Clinic</p> <p>A Breakthrough Discovery</p> <p>A Solution That Works</p> <p>My Guarantee To You</p> <p>Permission To Succeed Chapter One</p> <p>The Seminars Book Em</p> <p>Testimonials</p> <p>For The Media Questions</p> <p> Success Counseling</p>	<p>Do you feel like you're going through life with one foot on the brake and one on the gas?</p> <div><p>Have you ever said to yourself, "If I'm so smart, how come I can't get out of my own way?"</p><p>John Gray, Ph.D., author of <i>Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus</i>, says: "Noah has created a remarkable system that transcends positive thinking and other motivational techniques to help you achieve success. Using humor and down-to-earth language, his book offers a step-by-step approach to help you create the life you want and deserve."</p><p>Cheryl Richardson, featured on Oprah Winfrey's "Life Makeovers" and author of <i>Take Time For Your Life</i>, says: "Finally, someone gets to the bottom of why people keep themselves from the success they desire. Noah not only names the REAL cause of the 'fear of success,' he shows you how to overcome the problem once and for all!"</p><p>Jack Canfield, co-author of <i>Chicken Soup For The Soul</i>, says:</p></div>
--	---

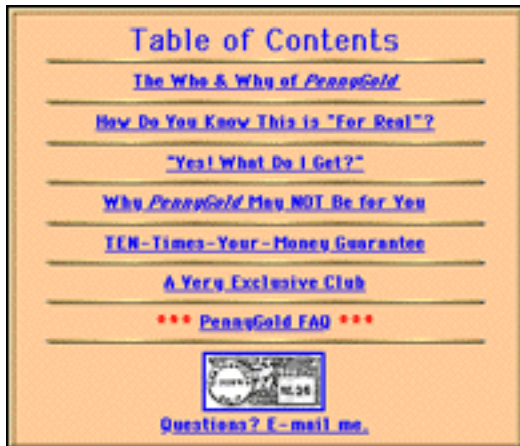
Do You Have Success Anorexia?

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

(We will be using this site again later on in the book to demonstrate another important point.)

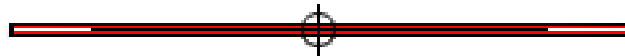


TOC at the end of the copy -- Use this format if you only want to show the links **after** your visitor reads what you have to say on the first page. I prefer controlling matters in this fashion...



PennyGold

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>



8.4.2. Graphic-based TOCs

If you prefer, deliver a graphic-based TOC. This works especially well for larger companies whose **Home Page** is purely a **Link Page**...



Ford Motor Company

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

Honda uses a combination of graphic and text-based TOCs on its corporate site...



Honda

<http://www.honda.ca/>

If graphic-based, your TOC should follow all the same rules as laid out for navbars. It definitely must have text descriptions (of the links) built right into the graphics -- nothing worse than a vague collection of obscure graphic symbols, unsupported by any textual explanations. **The destination must never be in doubt.**



8.4.3. The Rule of 7

Just like for the navbar, **follow the Rule of 7**, if at all possible... each TOC should have no more than 7 links, 9 max. Otherwise, your customer will be overwhelmed by choices, and will certainly miss some important pages.



8.5. Uses for The Left-Side Margin

The left margin is a 70-100 [pixel](#)-wide margin on the left side of the Web page. It provides designers with loads of navigational flexibility.

Design it with the [Table tag](#), not the [Frames tag](#).

Here are just a few uses **for the left margin**...

1) For small companies...

Use it as a main navigational aid, either as a text-based TOC (as demonstrated in the previous section) or as a graphic-based “vertical navbar”...

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[Meal Replacements:](#)
[Myoplex](#)
[Labrada Lean Body](#)
[Cyoplex](#)
[Trenin/CLA](#)
[Xenadrine RFA1](#)

Diet Reviews

[Dr. Atkins Diet](#)
[Harry Sears' "The Zone"](#)
[The Protein Power Diet](#)

What The Heck Does This Stuff Do?...

[Ma Huang](#)
[Guarana](#)
[Green Tea](#)
[Chimax\(HCA\)](#)
[Sida Cordifolia](#)
[Synephrine](#)
[Yohimbe](#)
[Essential Fatty Acids](#)
[Ephedrine](#)

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Need real answers and real solutions to YOUR weight loss dilemma?

Welcome to Ultimatefatburner.com!

Product Showdown:

You've probably heard how using a high-quality meal replacement in your diet may accelerate weight loss and increase lean muscle mass. Today we'll put the most popular meal replacements head to head and review them for taste, quality, and price...

The contestants...



[Read Myoplex, Labrada, Cyoplex Review...](#)

Featured Product:

Touted as North America's top-selling weight loss aid, xenadrine rfa-1 has been flying off the shelves everywhere. Inquiring minds want to know...



Is Xenadrine really all that revolutionary?

[Read more about xenadrine rfa-1...](#)

Ultimatefatburner.com

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

2) For small or large companies...

Use the left-side margin as a secondary navigational aid for **dead-end side-branches**. A conventional horizontal navbar handles the important stuff...



Mazda

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

3) For large companies...

Use it both ways.

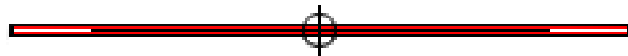
Make it an important navigational aid for deeper levels, when you just don't want to add another navbar...



SiteSell.com Corporate Home
<http://www.sitesell.com/>



Phew! We know the five body parts. We can build and use a navbar and a Table of Contents. And we've got some good ideas on how to use the left side margin. **We're ready to assemble...**



8.6. A Rock-Solid Navigation Structure

You can't go wrong with the following -- a simple rock-solid navigation system...

If you are a one-product company, your Home Page is also your Opening Page. It likely does double duty as a **Content Page** and as a **Link Page** (perhaps your only Link Page).

Your Home Page **Table of Contents** (HP TOC) provides your visitors with links to the important **Content Pages** that lead to your **MWR Closer Page**, and to a few other key sections like the SiteMap (see below), FAQ, Special Features of this Site, etc. Don't include every page, just the ones that you really don't want your visitor to miss.

A good example is the my old **Home Page** for the original edition. I put a graphic-based navbar up top to set the basic pathway. I put **special functions** (like my FAQ and newsletter subscription) into a text-based "Table of Contents" in the left margin. Each of these link to simple one-page [dead-end side-branches...](#)



Make Your Site SELL!
(Old Version)



If you are a large multi-product company, you will need a second, and maybe a third LEVEL of **Link Pages**. Your Link Pages will become the **skeleton** for the body of your Web site. The Content Pages will **flesh** it out.



LEVEL 1

Since the **Home Page** is the first LEVEL, let's call the Table of Contents on the Home Page the **L1 TOC**.

Your L1 TOC links to **LEVEL 2 Link Pages**, each of which is a major logical division of your site/company (of which “**Products**” would be one, with others like “**Investor Relations**” and “**In the News**”). Determine those divisions according to your customers’ needs, not your company’s.

What does your customer want to know when she hits your Home Page?

Organize that info into groups that make it easy for her to find what she seeks.

Organize according to the info that she needs, **not** according to the hierarchies of your company.

Once that’s done, give each division simple, descriptive names. Your visitor must understand where she’s going when she clicks -- no creativity here, please!

Repeat this process as you establish each LEVEL below this one...



LEVEL 2

Each LEVEL 2 **Link Page** contains a **Table of Contents (L2 TOC)** that links to an **Opening Page** for each of the major subdivisions of that division.

It would **also** include an **L1 navbar** that **summarizes** the **L1 TOC** -- this allows easy-quick navigation back-to-and-through the higher LEVEL.

What do I mean by “summarizes”?...

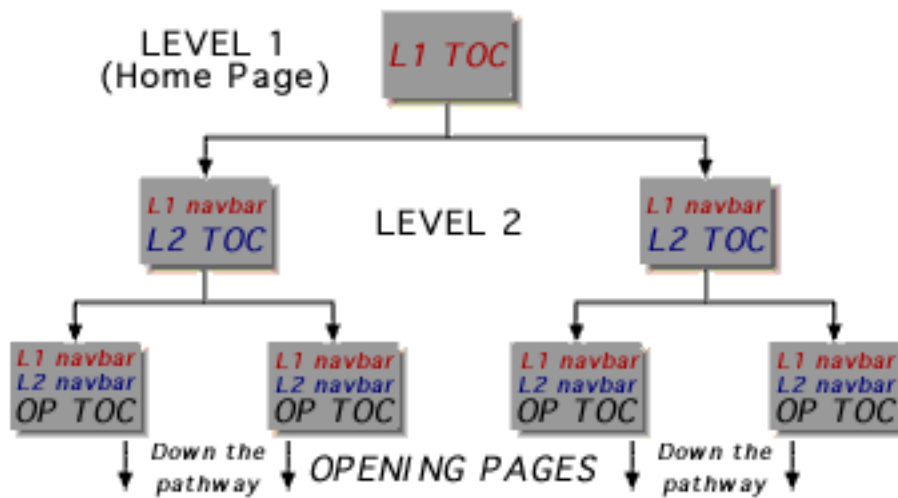
Put only critical links in the navbar, including a link back to the Home Page itself. The navbar also delivers a contextual reminder of the visitor’s location (**by highlighting where the visitor is**).

For example, each link on an **L2 TOC** for **Products** sends the visitor to an **Opening Page** heading down a pathway for each product line.

The **L1 navbar** highlights **Products** on each **Opening Page**, reminding the visitor of her location.

Each Opening Page contains its own **TOC**, which links to the important pages **in the pathway**, including the **MWR Closer Page**. Of course, the **Opening Page** also includes the “hit them with your biggest gun” copy to “hook” your visitor with benefits.

Here's a visual aid...



Put L1 and L2 navbars at the **top** and **bottom** of each **Opening Page**. Put it at the top so that your visitor gets a quick “lay of the land.” Put it at the bottom **to use**.

From the **Opening Page**, it's straight down the pathway to the **MWR Closer Page**. **Every** pathway should end with some kind of **MWR**. You're not there to just show pictures of your products.

And this is true even for non-product pathways. For example, if it's a pathway for Investor Relations, convince potential investors to subscribe to your newsletter, “Insider InfoBytes, hot off the digital press and straight to your e-mail box.”

Another non-product example...

If you have a major pathway for **Tech Support**, you could provide a pathway that drills down to the answer. Finish the pathway with a **Response Form** -- ask the visitor to enter the problem and to rate how well the online Tech Support answered it. If you get a poor rating, answer it manually and improve your online tech support! It's more work upfront, but once all the common problems are nailed, your tech support costs will drop dramatically.



OK, an example to clarify this...

Your **Link Page** for **Products** is at LEVEL 2. On that page, you have a text TOC

that headlines your many exciting product lines, say ISDN Modems, Ethernet Products, and Party Balloons (just seeing if you're paying attention).

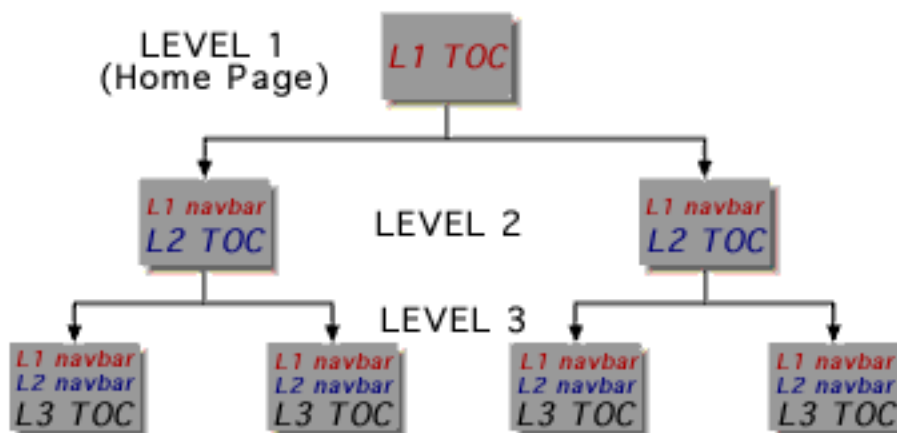
Each headline in the TOC links to an **Opening Page** of a pathway for that product line. Let's say your visitor clicks on "ISDN Modems"... She arrives at the ISDN **Opening Page**. She would now see an **Opening Page TOC** for ISDN MODEMS. The links in this TOC would be the highlights in the pathway that head towards the **MWR Closer Page**.

The **Closer Page** might have **two** different **MWR Response Forms**, one for resellers and one for end-users. The reseller fills in a "Call me, I'm interested" form -- i.e., she becomes a lead. The consumer enters her town and asks where the nearest reseller is. The database kicks back the answer in a few seconds.



Try to avoid adding a third LEVEL. It starts getting pretty hairy. However, depending on your size and how your product lines are organized, it might be unavoidable.

Your product lines alone may even need to be sub-divided into a third level, each starting with an L3 TOC. In this case, the links in an L2 TOC would link to a third level of **Links Pages**, again with its own TOC (the L3 TOC). The links in the L3 TOC would send your visitor down the pathways towards the **MWR Closer Pages**.



By showing a navbar for each LEVEL, with highlighted buttons, you provide a way for your visitor to **rapidly jump** to other areas with a minimum of clicks. And your visitor **always knows where she is**.

Obviously, for larger and larger companies, you will customize. But this structure will form the foundation.

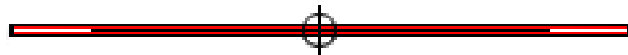
And no matter how big you are...

Don't ever use an L4. Do your best to stay within 2 LEVELs. You must be able to send your visitor to an **Opening Page** for a product line pathway by no later than a third level. **Try to do it in less.**



The progressive TOC/navbar format provides for clean and rapid drill-down by your customer. It also effectively orients the visitor. And if they ever “lose their way,” it provides an easy way back. They can quickly jump back to the L1 or L2 TOC to orient themselves at the desired level.

It provides the **perfect simple-yet-flexible blend** that a rock-solid navigational system requires. **No... that your customer requires.**



8.7. How to Use Links on Content Pages

A good pathway makes the user **feel** like he has navigational control, but he basically follows the pathway that **you** want.

Call it **pseudo-autonomous navigation** -- “you can go anywhere you want, as long as it's to my next page.” They may stray off onto a **dead-end side-branch**, but those who wander soon get back on the main road to the **MWR Closer Page**.

Permit your customers to wander, but design the site so that they **want** to stay on the main path, **or get back to it as quickly as possible (help them do that via dead-end side-branches)**.

Content Pathway Pages should have **few** navigation options in general, especially if the goal is for your visitor to deliver an income-generating **MWR**. If the purpose is to move your visitor on to the next page in such a pathway, then provide **few options** (next page button, previous page button, a prominent link to the **MWR Closer Page**, and an **Opening Page** button).

For example, here were the only navigational aids on PennyGold's **main Content Pathway Pages...**



As you can see, PennyGold included buttons to the other **key pages** in the form of a navbar. A text-based Table of Contents under that provided links to the...

- **Order Page** (actually went to a pre-Order Page)
- **Subscription Page** for PGOLD XPRESS (my [Backup Response](#))
- **FAQ** (which was an important sales tool for PennyGold).

Finally, I encouraged customers to call me directly, but not on my 1-888 line -- that cost too much, and it took too much of my time. Anyone who personally called long distance **qualified himself** as seriously interested.



On the SiteSell.com product sites, navigation bars and links are all the same (only the colors change). Notice how each and every link is directly related to our **MWR?** No matter what one you choose, you're one step closer to our goal!



The goal of a **Content Page** might **not** always be to get an income-generating

MWR. Let's say it's to provide **online help**. In this case, you might also want to include the **higher level navbars** at the top and bottom of each page to encourage quick-jumping into other, more profitable areas of your site.



The final kind of link is the **Content Link** -- i.e., links that occur **in the actual copy** of the page. These usually provide details and background information... in short, side issues. Structure them as **dead-end side-branches**, to make sure that your customer returns to the **main path**.

Need a reminder about a **dead-end side-branch**? It's a branch off the main pathway **that goes nowhere**. It allows no linking to anywhere else in the site. **It's main goal is to deliver...**



... the fruit of knowledge that your visitor seeks, then make him return to the main trunk of the tree.

Each page of a dead-end side-branch allows you **only** to move to the next page of the side-branch (if there is one) or back towards the main pathway. There is **absolutely no other linking...** no navbars, no TOCs.

Keep these clean and simple, and get your visitors **back** to the main pathway... leave no room for straying or distractions. **Your visitor was on a path towards the MWR -- get him back on it!**



Once your visitor has clicked into a branch, he has only three options...

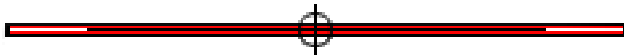
- 1) Hit the **BACK button** on the browser.
- 2) Click a **NEXT button** to move on to the next page on the branch (if there is one).
- 3) Click a button that will send the visitor back to the **exact spot** in the page of the pathway from which he left.

Good use of dead-end side-branching allows "keeners" to drill as deeply as they like to get more info. It **also** allows the time-pressured, "bigger picture" visitor to get the

basics and stay on the freeway heading towards your **MWR**.

Here's how to design a dead-end side branch...

- 1) Simple page, with same look and feel as the rest of the site, but no left margin, etc.
- 2) Provide the expected content.
- 3) Add a NEXT button in the bottom right, and a PREVIOUS button in the bottom left.
- 4) Dat's it, dat's all.



8.8. Meandering = Lost Sales

Once you've put your visitor on the right path, **here's a sure fire way to lose her...** fill the path with lots of low-payoff links. Too many sites bog the user down in a variety of useless clicks... do this once too many times, and she's gone... probably to your competitor.

Each "need to click" is a possible...



... **EXIT point**. So get your visitor to the **MWR Closer Page** ASAP.

Since each "need to click" can lose your visitor, make the **page joints** irresistible to follow. Do it right, and you can pull your visitor along a nice tight pathway, while giving the illusion of navigational freedom.

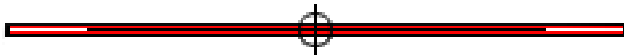
What information does your user want, at each step of the path? Provide it... **now**. Don't waste her time with anything else. **Don't let her lose her focus**.

Once the benefits are clear from the **Opening Page**, lead your visitor to your **MWR Closer Page** in as few clicks as possible, **straight in to your MWR Closer Page**.

Start each page with a grabber headline-and-text, right at the top of the page (so even the smallest screen will see it). This pulls the reader through to the bottom of the next page (with the help of more headlines, as needed), until the next joint... which, of course attracts your visitor through to the next page.

Done properly, **your visitor wants to stay on the main “best way to go” path**, or get back to it as quickly as possible. **Every link pays off**, building a clear sense of progress... a sense that she has come to the right place... **with an increasing desire for your product.**

Finally, **provide a short cut link to the MWR Closer Page on every high-traffic page.** Whenever, your customer feels like ordering, let her!



8.9. Keep the Browser's Navigation Functions in Mind

The browser has in-built navigation functions. Some of them can disrupt your carefully constructed navigational system.



- 1) **Back Forward** -- These buttons shoot a Web-surfer to the last visited page (**Back**) or the next (**Forward**) in a sequence of visited pages.
- 2) **History or “Go” menu** -- Provide access to any page visited during a session.
- 3) **Bookmarks or Favorites** -- This function saves specific pages for revisits later.
- 4) **Color-coded hypertext links** -- Unvisited links are one color and visited ones are another. This works for graphic links, too, if you code a border around them. This lets your visitors know that they've “been there, done that.”
- 5) **Status bar** -- as the user passes the cursor over a link, the destination URL appears at the bottom of the browser window.

Here's how to work with, and work around, those buttons...

1) The Back and Forward buttons -- In each page of the pathway, you should put the following at the bottom of each page...

- in the bottom right corner -- a right-pointing arrow and text should indicate that your visitor will move to the **next page in sequence** (**Opening Page** and **Content Pathway Pages**).
- in the bottom left corner, a left-pointing arrow and text should indicate that your visitor will move to the **previous page in sequence** (**Content Pathway Pages** and **MWR Closer Page**).

Do this in such a way that your customer does not confuse your pathway sequence buttons with the Back and Forward browser buttons -- **they are not the same.**

2) The Go menu -- Not much you can do about this. The Go menu really allows the user to randomize his visit to your site. All you can do is build a magnetic site that pulls him through in order, keeping that clicking finger away from this menu. But if he does “hyperlink” to some remote corner of your site, the context that you have built into your navigational aids should cue him as to location, and should show him how to get back (or hopefully he hits the Back button!).

3) Bookmarks -- Generally not used much **in the course of a visit**. And since it's a bookmark, the user knows where he is going (I hope). A neutral feature, as far as site navigation is concerned.

4) Color-coded links -- Don't change the Web standard color-coding system. This definitely helps our navigational efforts.

5) Status bar -- If you use a little javascript, [you can tell them what the link is about](#), instead of just giving the URL. This is a nice way to improve the predictability of a link.

Remember that your visitor may choose to use the five basic navigation features while cruising your site. **Take that into account when designing your navigation system.**



8.10. Other Navigational Aids

Let's discuss some other ways to help visitors get around your site...

- **Site map**
- **Index**
- **Drop-down short cuts**
- **Site search engine**
- **FAQ**
- **Help**
- **“What’s New”**

Yes... FAQs, Help, and What’s New sections are really just specialized ways to point your readers to information.

Alternate Navigational Systems should generally be grouped together into a “**Special**” section, which should be listed as a link on the **L1 TOC** ([see discussion on Cisco below](#)). Occasionally, they integrate well into others parts of the site (ex., short cuts, “What’s New” sections, or Help).



A Site Map is basically a humungous text TOC that provides the viewer with a total picture of the entire Web site. Most visitors either don’t, or can’t, form a mental image of where they are in your site.

Site Maps help them form that picture. They orient your visitors, and give them a good idea where links will lead. The larger you are, the more important this is (not needed at all for a simple, one-product site).

Here’s an example from PennyGold...



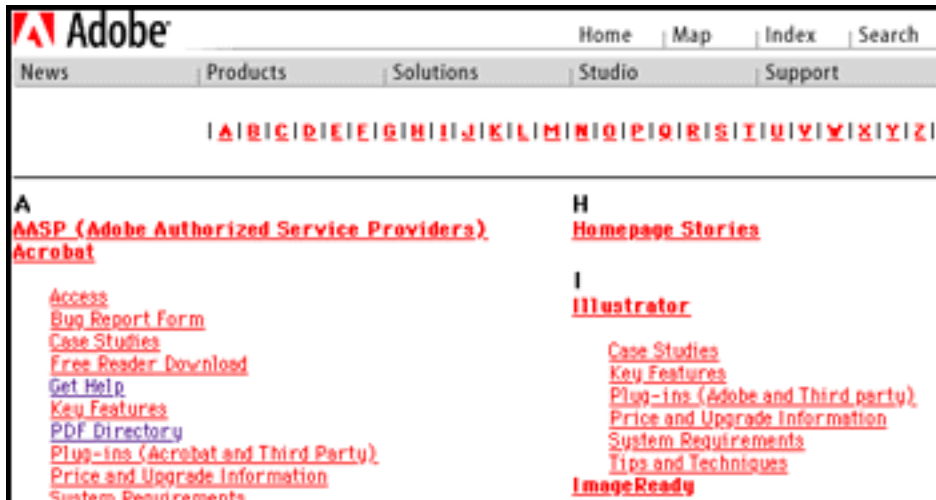
PennyGold Site Map

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/SITEMAP.html>

Don't include **all** of your site's contents on the Site Map -- provide to L3 of the **Link Pages**, as well as the **Opening Page** and the **MWR Closer Page** for each product pathway.



A **site index** is much like a **book index**... an alphabetical listing of all the important concepts, with a link to the appropriate Web page for each. The best way to explain is to show you an example...



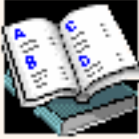
Adobe's Index

<http://www.adobe.com/misc/siteindex.html>

Site indexes are assembled **manually** by professional indexers -- yes, human eyes review a site and create the index. The result is far superior to a site Search Engine -- clicking on a topic in an index brings you to the **relevant Web page, every time**.

Large, info-intensive sites should use indexes as a navigational aid. It's amazing that more don't -- this is a seriously under-used navigational option. For more info...

The American Society of Indexers includes an excellent article on...



Indexing the Web

<http://www.asindexing.org/indfaq.shtml>

... And **Kevin Broccoli**, a professional indexer (he indexed **MYSS! 2002** and our other e-books) offers some great information on Web-indexing...

WebsiteIndexing.com

WebsiteIndexing.com

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

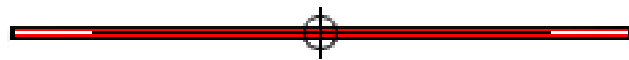


Drop-down menus make great short cuts. They permit visitors familiar with your site, or who know what they want, to jump to the exact page they need. Either design a special page for short cuts, or integrate drop-down menus into your existing navigation structure... or both!

The Cisco example demonstrates [a great use of drop-down menus](#).



[Site search](#) and [FAQ](#) are discussed elsewhere. **Help** and **What's New** are self-explanatory (and usually not necessary -- I mention them just for the sake of completeness).



8.11. Special Content Sections

You may have a section that is so radically different that it needs its own unique navigation system -- for example, **a long pull-down menu**. Consider this as a special sub-site that stands on its own and "breaks the rules."

But within that sub-site, still use all the major navbars to set the context, and to provide your customer with the ability to move back to the mainstream site.

It is generally best to avoid deviations from the pattern, if at all possible.

A consistent, repeating, “no tricks or exceptions” structure is always best.



8.12. Simple Structure + Clear Pathways = Never Lost

If you build your site according to the above navigational concepts, your site will offer the following to your customer...

- **simple, visualizable, hierarchical organization**
- the **flexibility** to jump to other areas at different levels
- the ability to **progress or backtrack** along a pathway
- a **clear contextual model** that tells your visitor where he is at all times.

It all boils down to caring about your visitor and his experience. Frustrate him, and he's gone. Confuse him and he'll leave.

Always remember, K.I.S.S.!



At certain times, you will be tempted to provide more flexibility. The cost is more clutter and confusion. **Balance the two carefully.** If you have any doubt, don't add the flexibility.



8.13. Cisco as Example

Let's look at Cisco's Web site for an outstanding implementation of a clear pathway.

If a big, complicated, \$6 billion company allows its users to drill down so effortlessly, you certainly can, too...

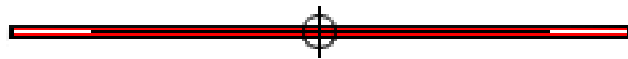


Cisco Connection Online

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

[SIDEBAR]

Life moves quickly on the Net. Design and text for Cisco's site may have changed by the time you read this.



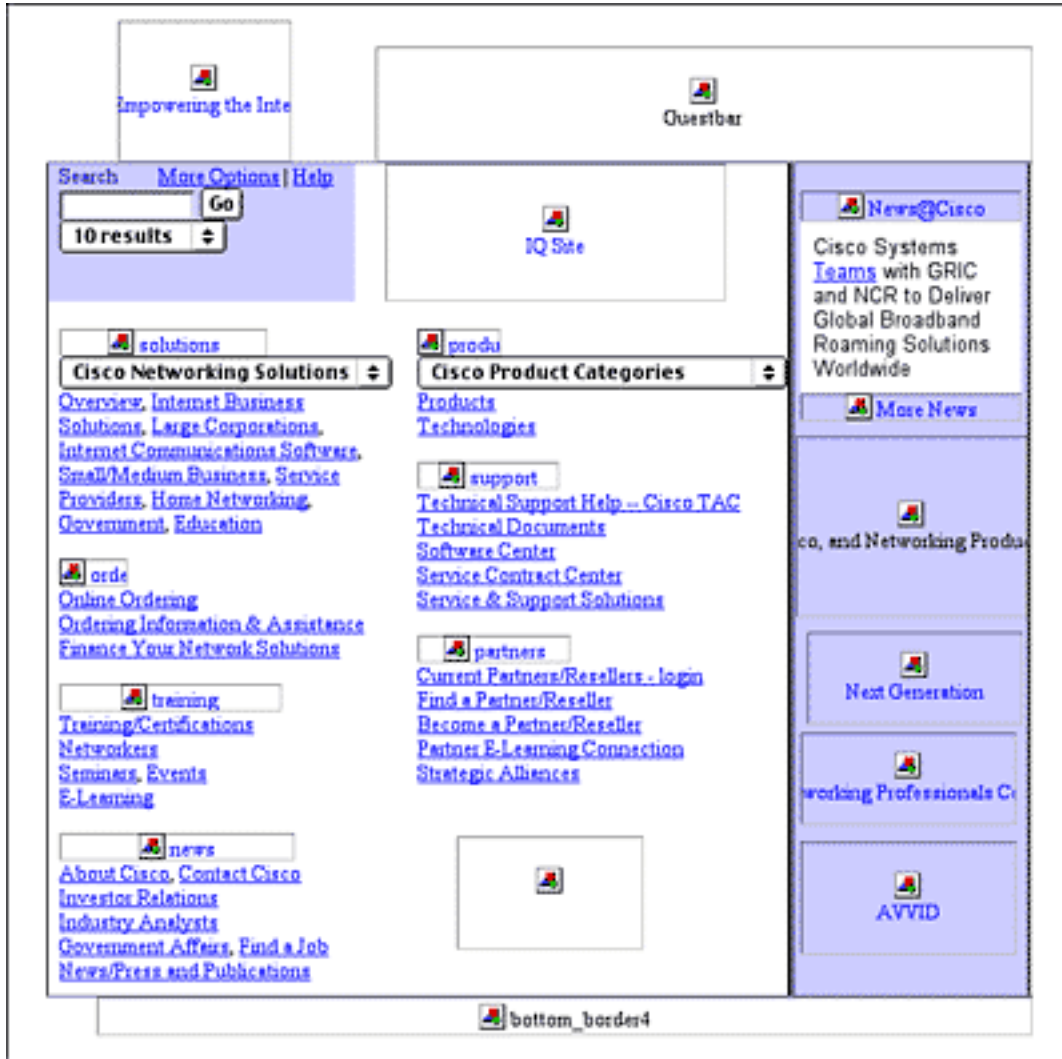
8.13.1. Table of Contents -- Outstanding!

On the **Home Page**, Cisco has reverted to a "table-based" **Table of Contents**. Here it is, first with the browser's graphic-loading turned **ON**, then turned **OFF**.

Graphics Turned ON...



Graphics Turned OFF...



As you can see, each graphic has an accompanying “[ALT](#)” tag, which clearly indicates the title of that particular section.



Did I say all? Oops! The “guestbar” is an **image map**. Compare the two shots -- see how the “How to Buy,” “Login,” “Register,” “Map/Help,” “Countries/Languages” are **invisible** if you happen to be surfing with the graphics off? There is no way for you to know that active links exist there...

Big mistake... unless, of course, Cisco happens to know that most of its customers surf with their graphics turned on. This is likely since a large majority of their

customers are corporate engineers with fast access and powerful computers.

And look! The bottom center image is missing an "ALT" tag! Sloppy, sloppy! Unknown destination -- and your customer sure as heck doesn't want surprises when he's surfing.

[SIDEBAR]

Cisco used to use a "graphic based" **Table of Contents...**



But Cisco had a problem. Although this earlier page was simpler, cleaner, friendlier, and less cluttered... there's just **no way** you could get a grasp of exactly how much Cisco could do for you from it! Cisco's new page crams a ton of information right into the **top level domain page** -- just so you don't miss anything.

Sometimes, you simply have to make a trade-off. The odds are that the corporate heads wanted faster access, which means a flatter, broader nav system with tons of choices on the Home Page. Regular customers might not put up with that much clutter.

The comparison of these two pages illustrates a valuable lesson... Design your navigation with your **customer** in mind. If you make a mistake, your customers will tell you. Listen to them!



8.13.2. Navbars -- Whoops!

On subsequent pages, Cisco always provides this TOC as a horizontal navbar at the **top** of each page. Here's a cut-down version (missing Partners, Corporate, and Training)...



See how it summarizes the Table of Contents from the Home Page?



On the **Home Page**, they also provide this navbar...



... which raises a problem. They are obliged to carry this extra navbar (on the top and bottom) of subsequent pages (adding links to Home, Feedback, and Search along the way, and eliminating the "Countries/Language" link). I split the navbar to make it easier to read...



This adds clutter throughout the site.

The best way to handle "special functions" is to group them all into a link called "Special Site Features" in the Home Page TOC. Then just call it "Special" in the summarizing horizontal navbars (in lower levels).

But that, of course, has its own tradeoff -- **the extra click**. But in this case, the extra click is the lesser of the two evils.



Another surprise -- they use an **image map navbar**. Unfortunately for Cisco's graphics-off visitors, here's what it looks like...



So where do I click? This is why a [modular navbar](#) is more effective.

The image map format is probably why Cisco **doesn't highlight the navbar to indicate a visitor's location**. Cisco partially sets the context. In the example below...



... we are in the **Technical Assistance Center** sub-section, of the **Service and Support** section, of the... whoops!

They don't highlight **SUPPORT** to tell us exactly where we are because that would take an entirely new image map which means...

... longer download time.



8.13.3. Left Margin... a Variety of Uses

Cisco uses navbars as a major site navigation and orientation technique. So when you get to the deeper levels, there's just no room to add another navbar.

Instead, they use **the left margin to add special functions** (that are relevant to that page)...

[Solutions](#)
[Products](#)
[Ordering](#)
[Support](#)
[Partners](#)
[Training](#)
[Corporate](#)

Products & Technologies

Cisco 600 Series Routers



[Home](#)
[What's New](#)
[How to Buy](#)
[Login](#)
[Register](#)
[Feedback](#)
[Search](#)
[Map/Help](#)

PRODUCT FAMILY

How to Buy

All Cisco Products

Cisco 600 Series Routers

Product Literature

News

Cisco Solutions

Service Provider

Enterprise

Small/Medium Business

Cisco Routers

[Cisco SOHO Series Routers](#)

[Cisco CVA120 Cable Voice Adapter](#)

[Cisco 600 Series Routers](#)

[Cisco 700 Series Access Routers](#)

[Cisco 800 Series Routers](#)

[Cisco uBR900 Series Routers](#)

[Cisco 1000 Series Routers](#)

[Cisco 1400 Series Routers](#)

Cisco offers a broad portfolio of customer premises equipment (CPE) which enables service providers and consumers to choose which products will best meet their needs, while guaranteeing investment protection with a smooth migration from what can be deployed today to new world architectures. The 600 series CPE are part of this portfolio offering DSL solutions for the residential and business market.



The Cisco 673 and Cisco 633 are symmetric digital subscriber line (SDSL) products. The Cisco 673 is an Ethernet to SDSL bridge/router and the Cisco 633 is an SDSL data service unit (DSU) for business router connectivity. Additionally, the Cisco 677i and Cisco 677i-DIR are Ethernet to DSL bridge/routers for asymmetric digital subscriber line (ADSL) over ISDN applications in EMEA.

Additionally, the Cisco Business DSL CPE which includes the Cisco SOHO 77 and 827 ADSL routers that support the Cisco ADSL WAN Interface Card, support customer segments including small office/home office (SOHO), telecommuters, small to medium-sized businesses, and corporate branch office markets. With this portfolio of products, which are powered by Cisco IOS Software, service providers can deploy value-added services to increase revenue per subscriber while reducing cost of operations with Cisco management

Cisco Catalyst 600 Series Routers

<http://www.cisco.com/warp/public/cc/pd/rt/600rt/>

See how a third horizontal navbar would only get lost on the top of the page? Instead, they build a vertical navbar down the left column. There's a lot happening on the page, but it still feels clean and simple.



Farther down on the same page, Cisco also uses the left margin as a navigation aid, listing all their Routers in a simple, text-based TOC.

The left margin provides designers with a lot of navigational flexibility.

Get creative.



8.13.4. Let's Go Product-Hunting!

OK, let's go to their “**Products & Technologies**” section.

Click “**Products**” and we jump to...



What do you see?

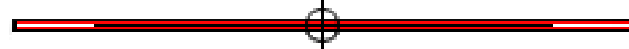
There's a very clean and straight-forward text-based TOC, that just begs a **progressive drill-down** if you're not exactly sure what you're looking for.

(We'll talk about that "QUICK JUMP TO CISCO PRODUCTS" pull-down menu a bit later.)

[SIDEBAR]

When you pass the mouse pointer over each link, a text description "pops-up" in the right hand column. This is the ultimate javascript program that lets the visitor know what she's getting **before** the click.

Check the source HTML to see how they did it...



8.13.5. Drill-Down and Click Again...

OK, click on the **Routers** link (under Product Categories in the **previous** page) and **here's what we get...**

Solutions | **Products** | **Ordering** | **Support** | **Partners** | **Training** | **Corporate**

Cisco Routers

CISCO SYSTEMS

Home | What's New | How to Buy | **Login** | Register | Feedback | Search | Map/Help

[Cisco](#) > [Products & Technologies](#) > Cisco Routers

Cisco Product Categories

General Information

Overviews and comparisons for Cisco Routers.

[Router Selection Guide](#)
[Multiservice Access Solutions](#)
[Access Product Family](#)

Cisco 12000 Series Internet Routers

The Cisco 12000 series Internet router is Cisco's premier high-end routing platform for building IP optimized backbones, and providing edge and aggregation functionality for service providers building high-speed IP+Optical networks.

[Product Literature](#) | [Documentation](#)
[Product Catalog](#) | [Product Support](#)

Cisco 10000 Series Internet Routers

Industry's highest density T1 aggregation IP edge router delivers line-rate performance with advanced IP services enabled.

[Product Literature](#) | [Documentation](#)
[Product Catalog](#) | [Product Support](#)

Cisco 7600 Series Internet Routers

Delivering IP + Optical in the WAN and MAN

[Product Literature](#) | [Documentation](#)
[Product Catalog](#) | [Product Support](#)

Cisco 7500 Series Routers

Cisco's premier high-end platform of data, voice and video routers.

[Product Literature](#) | [Documentation](#)
[Product Catalog](#) | [Product Support](#)

Cisco 7400 Series Internet Routers

The Cisco 7400 delivers high performance and service density in a compact, single rack unit stackable architecture that is

[Product Literature](#) | [Documentation](#)
[Product Catalog](#) | [Product Support](#)

This page is a straight list of each product line. It includes a brief description, with easily visible ([non-embedded](#)) links to the right. This allows you to drill deeper into the site for more info. Very efficient.

The first link is to the “product literature” of **Cisco’s 12000 Series Internet Routers**. Let’s take it!...

Clicking on “**product literature**” of Cisco’s 12000 Series Gigabit Switch Routers takes us to this page...

[Solutions](#)
[Products](#)
[Ordering](#)
[Support](#)
[Partners](#)
[Training](#)
[Corporate](#)

Products & Technologies

Cisco 12000 Series Internet Routers

[Home](#)
[What's New](#)
[How to Buy](#)
[Login](#)
[Register](#)
[Feedback](#)
[Search](#)
[Map/Help](#)

PRODUCT FAMILY

[How to Buy](#)
[All Cisco Products](#)

Cisco 12000 Series Internet Routers

[Customer Profiles](#)
[Product Literature](#)
[News](#)
[Technical Documents](#)

Cisco Solutions

[Service Provider](#)
[Enterprise](#)
[Small/Medium Business](#)

Cisco 12000 Series Internet Routers

[Cisco 12406 Internet Router](#)
[Cisco 12016 Internet Router](#)
[Cisco 12410 Internet Routers](#)
[Cisco 12416 Internet Router](#)
[Cisco 12000 Manager 1-Port OC-192c/STM-64c](#)
[4-Port OC-48c/STM-16c](#)
[Very Short Reach Optics](#)
[DPT Line Cards](#)
[Software](#)

Evolving the Internet @ Lightspeed

The Cisco 12000 Series is the industry's premier Internet routing platform featuring unmatched configuration [versatility](#) and a superior [distributed architecture](#) - a key component of the Cisco [IP+Optical](#) solution that minimizes service provider operational costs and increases service velocity for transport, IP, and value-added [services](#).

With a complete line of [next generation](#) Internet routing products that scale to [OC-192](#) networks and span the service POP and IDC whether located in the Metro, long-haul transit site, or WAN, the Cisco 12000 series delivers the industry's [highest scalability](#), [only guaranteed priority packet delivery](#), [reduced network operations costs](#), and true investment protection.



Unmatched Versatility

Cisco 12000 Series Internet Routers	Switching Capacity	Slots	Configuration
Cisco 12416	320 Gbps	16	Full rack
Cisco 12410	200 Gbps	10	Half rack
Cisco 12406 NEW !!!!	120 Gbps	6	Quarter Rack
Cisco 12016	80 Gbps upgrade to	16	Full Rack

[Page 282 of 802]

Cisco tells us a little about routers, and describes the benefits in a tone of language appropriate for its technically oriented customers. But make no mistake... **they're SELLING!**

The link options available appear in the left margin (it would be nice if they added some sort of javascript destination cues like we saw earlier).



A little farther along is a straight link to each product -- again, with an easily visible **(non-embedded)** link followed by a short description. As you can see, we already clicked on the **Cisco 12016 Gigabit Switch Router...**which takes us to the final product page. There we find tons and tons of documentation about this product family...

Overview

Cisco 12000 Series Gigabit Switch Routers

Introduction

The Internet is rapidly becoming an electronic agent for commerce, entertainment, communication, and information retrieval. New network-enabled intranet applications and powerful desktop computers are driving an exponential increase in network traffic. Service providers and enterprises are rapidly deploying packet-switching infrastructures to handle this tremendous growth in data traffic.

The Cisco 12000 series gigabit switch router (GSR) is the premier routing product family from Cisco designed and developed for the core of service provider and enterprise IP backbones. The Cisco 12000 GSR family includes three models: the Cisco 12008, 12012 and 12016.

The Cisco 12008 has eight slots that can be used to support up to 84 DS3, 28 OC-3c/STM-1c, and 28 OC-12c/STM-4c or 7 OC-48c/STM-16c interfaces.

The Cisco 12012 has 12 slots that can be used to support up to 132 DS3, 44 OC-3c/STM-1c, 44 OC-12c/STM-4c, or 11 OC-48c/STM-16c interfaces.

The Cisco 12016 has 16 slots that can be used to support up to 180 DS3, 60 OC-3c/STM-1c, and 60 OC-12c/STM-4c or 15 OC-48c/STM16c interfaces, with support for 15 OC-192c/STM-64c interfaces in the future.

The Cisco 12000 series GSR products are architected to meet the bandwidth, performance, services, and reliability requirements of today's IP core backbones.

Did you notice how you steadily drill-down to the desired "Content Pages"? Were we ever lost?

Not so far! But the Cisco site is not flawless! Let's go back to the first page in this sub-chapter -- **Cisco 12000 Series Internet Routers** -- and click **"Documentation"...**

Cisco 12000 Series Internet Routers

The Cisco 12000 series Internet router is Cisco's premier high-end routing platform for building IP optimized backbones, and providing edge and aggregation functionality for service providers building high-speed IP+Optical networks.

[Product Literature](#)
[Product Catalog](#)

[Documentation](#)
[Product Support](#)



8.13.6. Lost at Cisco -- Which Way to Go?

OK! Here we are. Everything is OK, right? Well, not really. The problem arises when we drill down further into this list, and then wish to return from whence we came. Let's click on the link to **Cisco 7206...**

HOME CONTENTS PREVIOUS NEXT GLOSSARY FEEDBACK SEARCH HELP

Core/High-End Routers

- [Cisco AGS+](#)
- [Cisco 7000](#)
- [Cisco 7010](#)
- [Cisco 7100](#)
- [Cisco 7202](#)
- [Cisco 7204](#)
- [Cisco 7206](#)
- [Cisco 7200 VXR](#)
- [Cisco 7505](#)

Whoops! When I get there I realize it's not the 7206 model I wanted, but the 7505. Let's click the "previous" button on the navbar...



Oh-oh! The “previous” button does not take me to the **previously visited** page (like I **expected**) but to the previous document in the list (in this case the Cisco 7204 router).



“Previous” and “next” **sound** the same as my browser’s “forward” and “back” buttons. In this case, they don’t have the same function, and now I’m even farther away from where I wanted to be on the site.

When destinations are unclear, your visitor becomes **frustrated**. **Frustrated buyers don’t buy... even from Cisco!**



Okay, now I really have no idea where I am any more. I decide our best bet is to click the “HOME” button, assuming it will take me back to the **Cisco 12000 Series Internet Router Home page...**

[HOME](#) [CONTENTS](#) [PREVIOUS](#) [NEXT](#) [GLOSSARY](#) [FEEDBACK](#) [SEARCH](#) [HELP](#)

Cisco 7204

- [Cisco 7204 Installation and Configuration Guide](#)
- [Quick Reference For Cisco 7204 Installation](#)
- [Cisco 7200 Regulatory Compliance and Safety Information](#)
- [Site Preparation and Safety Guide](#)
- [Cisco 7200 Series Port Adapter Hardware Config. Guidelines](#)
(Bandwidths, Bandwidth Points, and Processor Memory Requirements)

Yikes! It doesn't! It takes me back to the Cisco Documentation Home Page...



[HOME](#) [CONTENTS](#) [PREVIOUS](#) [NEXT](#) [GLOSSARY](#) [FEEDBACK](#) [SEARCH](#) [HELP](#)

We welcome your [feedback](#) on this product.

Cisco Product Documentation

Installation and configuration guides, switch software guides, configuration notes, and more.

10BaseT Hubs	Integrated Access Solutions
10/100 Hubs	Internet Service Unit
Access Services and Access Routers	IP/Voice Products
Aggregation Solutions	Layer 3 Switching
ATM Adapters and Switches	(Catalyst 2940G-L3, 4840G, 4900G-L3, S540 CSR & S510 CSR)
(LightStream, Catalyst S510 MSR & S540 MSR)	Long-Reach Ethernet Products
Broadband Cable Solutions	Metropolitan Optical Platforms
Broadband/Wireless Solutions	(Cisco Metro 1500 Series)
CDM/FDDI Adapters and Concentrators	Multi-Layer LAN Switches
Cisco IOS Software Configuration	(Catalyst 1200 thru 6000 Series, Ethernet Switches)
Cisco Secure Policy Manager	Network Management
Cisco WAN Switching Solutions	Optical Networking Systems
Content Delivery Products	Storage Networking Products
Core/High-End Routers	Telephony Applications and Programmable Switching
(Cisco AGS+, Cisco 7x00 series routers, Cisco	Telephony Signaling Controllers
1x000 series routers, Cisco Optical Regenerator,	(Cisco SC2200, Cisco VSC3000, Cisco SLT, Transpath,
Cisco Optical Network System products)	BAMS)
DSL Products	Virtual Private Networks
FastHub Repeaters	Voice Products
ICM/NAME/SIS Software Documentation	(Access Gateways, CallManager, IP Phones)

Cisco Documentation

<http://www.cisco.com/univercd/home/home.htm>

From here, I have to either drill back through the site to where I was (what a pain!), or hit the "Back" button three times.

Honestly, this is disappointing. The Cisco site looked so good up 'til this point -- no slow-loading graphics, no expensive multi-media. Simple, effective, and organized -- **and never more complicated than CGI, javascript and a database.**

Except for this navigational problem!

So... what needs to happen?

Glad you asked! ☺

Never make navigational destinations any less than **crystal clear**. Don't **assume** your customer can figure it out for himself. You can't assume that just because it makes sense to you, it will for someone else.

Make destinations fool proof -- every place, and for everyone.

Your customers will love you for it!

[SIDEBAR]

See how even Cisco **stresses benefits and features**, even though they already have fantastic credibility. I did notice one more thing... **they don't have a Closer Page**. I guess when you're Cisco, you know that you have the sale!



8.13.7. Or... the Shortcut...

Of course, if we had known that all we wanted from the outset was a couple of **Cisco Catalyst 4200 Series Switches** and a loaf of bread, we could have used that excellent **pull-down shortcut menu**...



Once you know the site, and if you know what you want, “**one-click**” gets you to the correct product page. **A great feature.**

And that leaves only the loaf of bread to fetch. It may take us longer to find that at the corner convenience store! 😊

[SIDEBAR]

Be careful when offering an alternative navigational system. It can cause confusion. Be clear about its purpose. Only use a **second method** when you can identify either...

- a second major target market, one with different needs

OR

- your present target market has developed new needs



8.14. Let There Be Light!

Remember our light bulb example? We discussed the lowly bulb's benefits...

First -- lighting lets you see.

Second -- both the fixture and the light cast by the bulb have an aesthetic, or decorative function.

Third -- beside "gain," lights also cause "pain" -- the cost of the bulb/electricity and the bother of replacement.

OK, time to design a navigational system for your light bulb Web site. Realize that we must meet the needs of **two kinds** of customers...

- **end-users** who light their homes
- **people in the trade** -- renovators, resellers, etc.



For the end-user... let's divide your Web site into the rooms of a house. Discuss the **desired effects and benefits of lighting for...**



... each room. Support this with photographs of well-designed examples (and the opposite). After all, this customer is looking for information.

Explain how **your** bulbs **deliver** the benefits with strong copy. Then finish with your

MWR...

... to get her to enter her city and postal code and click the “**Nearest supplier**” button.

Your database fires back the answer. Result? Happy, motivated customer, and a grateful reseller.



For those in the trade, however... these people are likely **in a hurry**, and they know **exactly what they want**. Offer an alternative navigational system, the Cisco-style drop-down menu. This will allow your customers to drill straight down to the desired product. The discussion on each product focuses on what’s important to them... cost per gross, technical specs, delivery time, etc.

Follow-through with your **MWR** to either complete...

- an Order Form (for existing customers)

or...

- a “New Customer Form” requesting that a sales person call. To increase motivation, ask if the visitor would like to be included in your “**refer-a-customer**” program.



Same product. Two different target markets. Different set of needs.

No matter how you choose to design your navigation, remember this...

Focus on your customer’s needs and wants.



9. The You-Focused Opener

Does your **Opening Page** start like this?...

"Welcome to My Site!"

If it does, it's **bye-bye to your MWR!**

Your customer does not care about **you or your company until he understands what you can do for him**. He hits your site, moving at 100 MPH, with one question... **"What's in it for me?"**

Remember that..



... trigger-happy index finger? Your prospect is time-pressured and looking for any reason to leave you.

He concentrates the most on your **opening headline and sentence**. Make an impact right off the top, while he is curious and interested. At this moment, your target is squarely in your sights -- **fire your biggest attraction guns right away** (tempered with credibility).

Aim straight for the heart of your cyber-target. Bring him to a screeching halt. Make him say, "Whoops! This looks worthwhile. Tell me more!"

Here's how...



9.1. Fire Your Biggest Gun First

Pull out...



...your heavy artillery -- the major benefit to the customer.

Fire it **immediately**, in the **first headline and sentence of your Opening Page...**

Let's assume "Joe Prospect" is hitting your site right now. He is thinking **"What's in it for me?"**

So...

Match your opening message to Joe's strongest motivator, either "pain" or "gain" ...

1) Pain -- most people feel deprived in either wealth, health, love, or happiness. Show people how your product will make a difference. Make it clear that you **understand** your visitor's problem and that you have the **cure for his pain or fear of loss**.

2) Gain -- stress the most important positive benefit that your product can offer, in language that your customer will appreciate.



The **Opening Page** for each product must start by stressing **benefits, benefits, benefits**. Let Joe know how his life will be better because of your product.

Many sites start off like this...

"The XYZ high-tech company is a leader in nano-technological innovation since yesterday... blah, blah, blah, blah, blah... us, we, ours, our founding fathers..."

These are the same people who can't figure out why Joe doesn't buy!

After all...

Who are you most likely to buy from? The pizza shop that leads off with...

"Hot Pizza in 30 Minutes Or Less... Guaranteed."

OR

"Luigi's Pizza Parlor has been making great pizzas for 30 years. We started in Ippawich, Pennsylvania in a little restaurant... blah, blah, blah..."

How about this example?...



Which dentist hits you where you live?...

"If you feel any pain whatsoever, you get your money back... no questions asked."

Or...

"Hello. I am Dr. Brian Dentist. I graduated from Minneapolis Dental School in 1994. I love this job. My whole family has been involved with dentistry. My mom even married one!"

'Nuff said.



Bottom line.

Boil your product down into a short, sharp benefit-laden punch that your customer can't ignore. Open with that.

Whether you use "pain" or "gain" will depend on the nature of your particular product and target market. But, whichever approach you choose, make it tighter and tighter, sharper and sharper. **Hone it until it's razor-sharp... until it's irresistible!**

If your opening headline and sentence answers "What's in it for me?," you'll convert the "I'll just take a quick look" arrival into a motivated visitor. Which means that you're halfway to getting the MWR from your visitor.

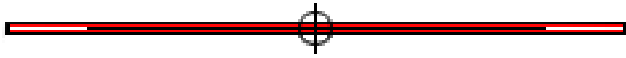
But...If your Opening Page makes him ask...



... "Who cares? So what?"... he's gone.

And just what is your biggest gun?

Easy, it's your **USP...**



9.1.1. The **Unique** Selling Proposition... A "How-To"

Your **Unique Selling Proposition (USP)** is your product's most powerful benefit, combined with a strong, unique aspect of your business. It answers that most difficult question...

Why should potential customers buy **your product, from **your** company?**

Here's how to develop your **USP...**

First, what are you selling? Write down what your product is and does.

Second, what is the benefit to your customer? What pain does it cure, or what gain does it provide?

Third, what is unique about your product?... about you? What makes you stand out from the competition? Keep working on this until you can clearly separate yourself from the field. There must be a convincing reason for doing business with **you**, **instead of your competitor**.

Fourth, summarize the above into one tight, powerful, motivating phrase that will **persuade your customer to do business with you, to trade their money for the benefits delivered by your product**.



As you start to work through the above four steps, you may find this to be a lot harder than it looks. Don't blow it off and give up!... **You must have a USP**. If it was easy, **everyone** would have a great USP! Come up with a tight, sharp USP that **SELLS** your customer.

There's a second benefit to this exercise. **It will crystallize your own vision of what you do!** Write your USP down. Keep it firmly fixed in your mind.



Here's a nice little technique that may help you form your USP... **Ask yourself this**

question...

"If I had unlimited, god-like powers and could grant my prospective customer the biggest benefit I can possibly imagine, what would that be?"

Write down your answer. Sharpen this into your USP.



9.1.2. An Opener that SELLS!...

The best way to show you **how to start an Opening Page** is by example. And since I know the rationale for every word on the PennyGold site, we'll use it.

Ready? **Lets go!.**

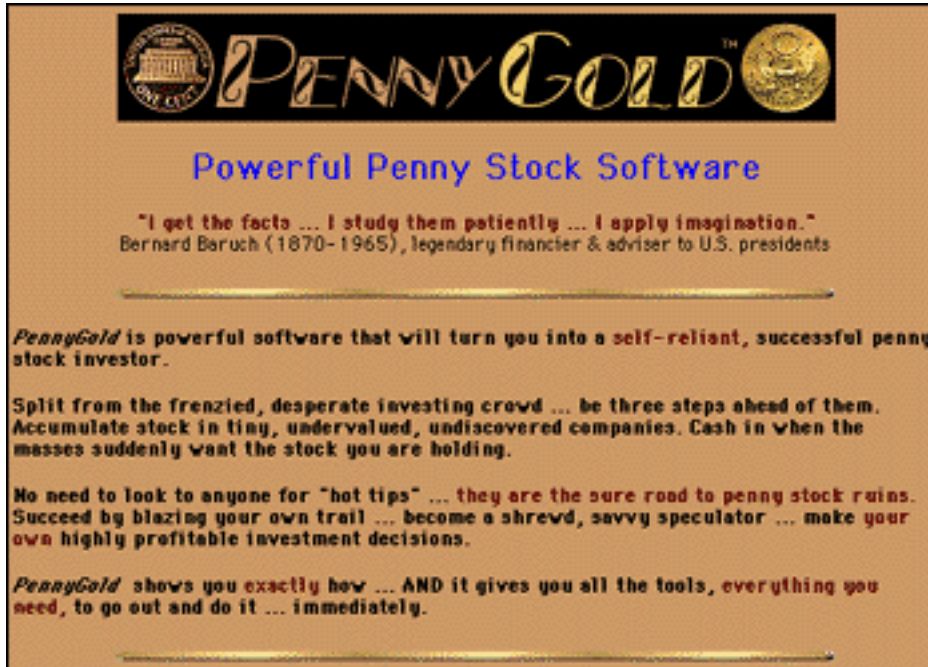
Fire...



... your great, big USP-elephant-gun in the **first headline and sentence** of the Opening Page.

Develop it aggressively and clearly in the next paragraph or three.

For example, on the PennyGold **Opening Page**, I led off with the following opener (copy in blue, comments in black)...



<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pennygold.html>



First, the opening headline...

Powerful Penny Stock Software

Admittedly, nothing brilliant here. Just a straightforward, exact description of the product that stated my USP exactly... PennyGold is software for penny stocks, which is unique.

The benefit was that it was **powerful**, which was **better than just plain old money-making**. It also imparted a sense of power... for investors who normally are powerless, waiting for the recommendations of others, "**powerful**" is a **powerful word**.

I followed that with a quote from Bernard Baruch (1870-1965), legendary financier & adviser to U.S. presidents...

"I get the facts... I study them patiently... I apply imagination."

This previewed what PennyGold is all about. It also added a touch of class, separating us from all those loud, crass penny sites.

Next, the opening sentence...

PennyGold is powerful software that will turn you into a self-reliant, successful penny stock investor.

Clear benefit. There was no need to get too creative over this, because most penny stock sites are “tips services” that just sell the fish. I sold the fishing rod. So words like “self-reliant” hit home immediately.

Split from the frenzied, desperate investing crowd... be three steps ahead of them. Accumulate stock in tiny, undervalued, undiscovered companies. Cash in when the masses suddenly want the stock you are holding.

I didn't say “You can stop feeling frenzied because you'll be above all that.” That would have been too obvious and would have left a bad taste. They identified immediately with the pain, and sensed the opportunity to stop the pain and feel some gain.

No need to look to anyone for “hot tips”... they are the sure road to penny stock ruin. Succeed by blazing your own trail... become a shrewd, savvy speculator... make your own highly profitable investment decisions.

Ditto. Penny stock investors are notorious “hot tip junkies.” I was looking for a good percentage of them **who wanted to rely on their own brains.**

PennyGold shows you exactly how... AND it gives you all the tools, everything you need, to go out and do it... immediately.

All-in-one solution. Aggressive investors are always hunting for the next “sure thing.” It's painful, because it wastes time and money. But PennyGold “cures that pain”... no need to continue that painful hunting process.



See how the Opening Page blended pain and gain? By the end of this first section, if you had any interest in penny stocks, you would have continued into the site. **And if you didn't, I never had a chance to sell you anyway.**

So there's no point on trying to **sneak up on anyone...**



... your cyber-target is squarely in your sights when he first arrives.

Fire your best, biggest gun... right away.



9.1.3. "That's Where the Money is!"

Be willing to lose a certain percentage of visitors right off the bat. Don't worry about not appealing to less targeted visitors.

Decide what's important to your **target market** and hammer on that. Not **everyone** has to go to "page 2"... just **everyone** in your target market.

Don't weaken **your big benefit-gun** by adding in extra messages, with the rationale that if you hold on to less targeted visitors for a few more minutes, you will convert them. By being all things to all people, you will lose your grip on your best prospects. You will lose much more than you will gain.

Focus purely on your high-interest, good-probability visitors.

Which reminds me, **when the famous...**



...stickup artist **Willie Sutton** was asked why he robbed banks, he replied, "**Because that's where the money is.**"

You should do the same. No, not rob banks! **Focus where the money is.**



9.2. Building a Killer Opening Page

As we said, your **opening headline and sentence** must **stop** your visitor in his tracks. It must **grab him and not let go!** **No long, meandering buildups.** You win or lose in your first sentence or two.

Can I stop saying that now, or should I repeat it one more time? 😊

OK, OK, let's talk about the rest of the page...



Put a **small, quick-loading logo graphic** at the top. Either scan in an existing logo or get a graphic designer to design one. Make it classy, and compress it so that it's small -- under 10K.

Don't include the name of your company or product in the **TITLE tag** of your **Home Page**, nor in your **<H1> header tags**. Why not? Because you are wasting valuable **Search Engine** real estate (**more info on this later**). Instead, include the name of your company or product right **in the logo graphic**.

Here's what your customer should see as he hits your **Home Page**...

First -- Opening headline that screams "get in here and read the rest of this site."

Second -- Opening sentence that fires your big benefit-gun.

Even a viewer with a small browser window opened on a small monitor must see these two grabbers before he sees anything else.

Third -- Small corporate or product logo loads about now. It will distract your visitor from the copy for just a moment. But he will then return to...

Fourth -- The rest of the benefit-laden copy on your **Opening Page**. Remember the benefit promised in your big gun? Build upon that.

The balance of this page convinces the prospect that **you** have the solution to his problem. Make it clear that you see and understand his needs and worries. As always, aim straight for your target.

Fifth -- The end of the page, where he sees your navbar and decides to **click to the**

next page.

Know when to end your first page. You can't get **all** the information on the **Opening Page!** Cut and chop until your Opening Page fires your biggest gun straight at the heart of your prospect...

... and **only** that biggest gun.

Make it as long or as short **as you need** to get the essential info across. But not longer.

Once you have your prospect's complete attention, **rely on your other pages to tell the rest of the story.**

[**SIDEBAR**]

Write the rest of your **Opening Page**, and indeed the rest of your site, with the following in mind...

Your visitors will only be there once. If people visit and don't purchase, they are probably **not** going to return later. The Web is an exciting, "show me what I haven't seen yet" kind of place. **Odds are they won't be back.** You only have one shot to make your case and generate a sale -- **make it count.**

Get the order... now.



9.3. "Talk About **My** Lawn, Not Your Grass Seed!"

The following, by two unknown authors, sure understand the evils of the "me-oriented" **Opening Page** and the benefits of "benefits"...

**Tell me quick and tell me true
Or else, my friend to hell with you.**

**Not how this product came to be,
But what the damn thing does for me.**

Was that brilliant piece of poetry too deep for your tastes? 😊

Here's some even shorter prose...



... “Talk about my lawn, not your grass seed!”

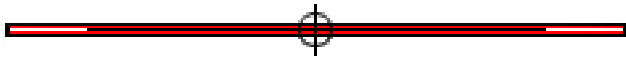


10. Two Critical Sales-Builders

Two special techniques stand tall on the road to **getting the order...**

- **Testimonials** -- There's nothing like happy customers who tell the world how great your product is.
- **Guarantee** -- If you've got a great product and you're sure about customer satisfaction, guarantee it. This puts **your** money where your mouth is.

These two sales-boosting methods are so important that **they deserve their own Content Pages on the pathway to your MWR.**



10.1. How to Make Testimonials **SELL!**

Testimonials carry tremendous weight. Why? Because other people, people just like your prospect, say that you **are** as good as you say you are.

But there's a slick trick to testimonials that almost no vendor uses -- **a technique that will make your testimonials shine...**



... like a beacon of truth.

To have true credibility, a testimonial **must be verifiable**. It must include the real name of the customer, with city of residence and e-mail address (in cyberspace, the telephone number is not so important, so don't bother).

Amazingly, prospects almost never check, but that doesn't matter. They know that they **could** check. And since they **could** check, they know that you wouldn't put those testimonials there if they weren't genuine.

Here are the critical parts of the "**perfect testimonial**"...

- It makes a **specific** statement that is a **benefit** to your visitor, something your

target market understands (“Hey, that’s exactly what I want!”). The very best ones are **real-life success stories** from typical customers -- when others read these, they should think, “Wow! If I can get the same result, it’s more than worth the price!”

- It has an **air of believability**, because the testimonial is **real** (**never** make up testimonials). Clean up horrible typos or misspellings, but **don’t turn a testimonial into a polished piece**. They are much more believable when they are “real.”
- It includes full name, city, and e-mail address.

The key is credibility. Make it impossible for your potential customer to say, “They probably made it up.”

[SIDEBAR]

If you can, address different topics of concern in your testimonials. Of course, you’ll want to have high praise for your products front and center, but why not include testimonials covering the...

- **speed of your shipping**
- **courtesy of your sales staff**
- **efficiency of your support staff -- customer received blinding-fast replies to all her e-mails.**
- **competitiveness of your prices**

If you got ’em, why not use ’em? Folks have several concerns when they buy online. Using different types of testimonials help to boost confidence even more!



10.1.1. How to Secure **Great** Testimonials

On your site, in the documentation that you ship with your product, and in your regular **e-mail newsletter**, ask for “success stories” and “happy experiences.” You care, right? So, of course, you want to hear about people’s experiences with your product.

When someone replies with glowing comments, send them an e-mail like this...

Wow! I live for feedback like this. Thank you for those kind words.

Regarding your comments, if you agree, I would like to use them as a testimonial on the Web Site, as follows...

"PennyGold has been my savior in my search for low priced, quality stocks. Not only has it given me the tools to find these stocks, but has increased my own "brain power" and knowledge in all areas of the junior mining industry.

The feeling it has given me must be what a blind person who has been given sight must feel like. Unlike any other software I have ever purchased, the support I have received was worth the price alone."

Judging from the small number of people who have e-mailed the 30+ people who offer testimonials on the Web site, I doubt if it would generate many inquiries to you, especially because it shares the limelight with the others.

Would this be all right? If there is anything else you would like to add to your quote, please do. I appreciate you considering this.

All the best,
Ken

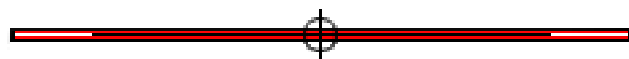
Once you have drafted your letter, it's just a matter of cut-and-paste, replacing the copy of the proposed testimonial into the letter. Does "cut-and-paste" seem contrived? Well, it's not. **You wrote from the heart the first time.** But it would be idiotic to re-write it each time.

Once they OK your request (and happy customers usually **do** add to it!), use it as a testimonial on your site.

[SIDEBAR]

Just getting started and don't have any customers? No problem...

Give your products to people who fit your target market. Ask them for a testimonial, **if they truly like and benefit from your product!**



10.1.2. Get Maximum Mileage From Your Testimonials

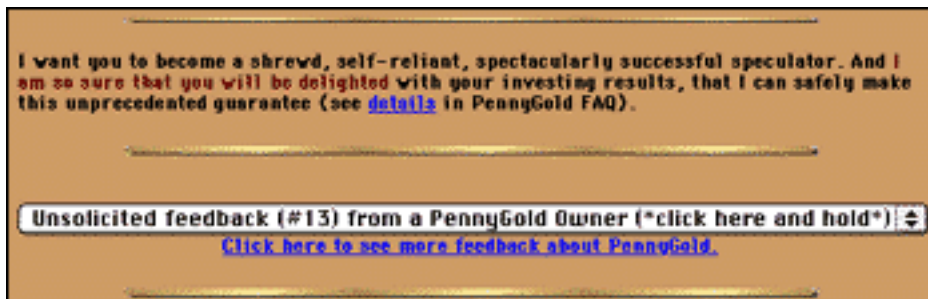
Most sites group all their testimonials onto a page reserved for that function. Then they put a “**Testimonials**” link on their navbar. Big mistake.

Most won’t take the time to link to your Testimonial Page. Clicking costs them a couple of minutes of their lives... and they already know that the comments will be glowing. So what’s the point, right?

But, you know, once you **actually read** a couple of great testimonials, they’re like potato chips -- you can’t stop. **So make sure your prospect reads at least one!**



On the PennyGold site, we used a feature available in the [FORM tag](#) to shrink the testimonial down to a **single line** which could be expanded, pull-down menu-style. **We scattered these “one-liners” throughout the site.** At each testimonial, we also provided a link to our comprehensive list...



Try it yourself at the following URL...

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/500.html>

This allowed us to work testimonials into the copy **throughout the site**. They were repeated, powerful reminders, **yet they didn’t break the flow**.

Use testimonials at strategic spots, to emphasize and support important points. For example, on the PennyGold **Order Page** (my **MWR Closer Page**), we built the case for PennyGold’s value. We supported it with a testimonial saying that it was worth \$3-5,000 (pulled-down menu expanded in screenshot below)...



PennyGold Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html>



When we did our most recent SiteSell.com revamp, we faced an interesting question...

“What do we do about the testimonials?”

Although we had a whole slew of great reviews from top pros and ecstatic readers...

No one was reading them! Seriously -- our log files showed that our **Testimonial Page** was clearly among the least popular pages on our site. Only the “**About the Author**” **Page** was less visited (hmmmmph!)

Now **WHY** would that be? Could it be that readers understand that neither of these pages are going to answer the “**What’s in it for me?**” question they all have. Yup!

The Author page is not critical to get the sale. It’s always a good idea to have an “About Us” page, of course. After all, some people do want to know more about you. Great -- but we still haven’t solved our problem...

“What should we do about the testimonials?”

Testimonials **DO** help get the sale. The big problem is people weren’t visiting the

page. Why?

Because they know exactly what they'll find... a page filled with glowing words. When was the last time you read a testimonial like...

“What the heck is this? My three year old can build a better software program! I wouldn't recommend this product to my worst enemy. Buy it? You've gotta be kidding!”

But what happens when you **DO** read a testimonial? Suddenly you find yourself going... “Hmmmnn, this looks pretty good!” Then you read another, and another, and, all of a sudden, you're **THAT** close to buying the product!



So what did we do? Great question!

On the **MYSS!** site, we **integrated testimonials** into the existing site, making them as **compelling as possible...**



Make Your Site Sell!

<http://myss.sitesell.com/>

We put the “**tasty**” **excerpt** from the actual testimonial in **large red font**. This ensures visitors get some idea of what ecstatic owners are saying about the product, even if they decide **not** to use the “pull-down” menu.

The customer's name and e-mail address in the first line of the pull-down menu let visitors know these are **real, verifiable testimonials!**

Powerful stuff, indeed!

For **Make Your Knowledge Sell!**, we used a slick little slide-show javascript to push “graphic testimonials” into the view of visitors.

Visit the site and run your mouse pointer around to see how it works...



Make Your Knowledge Sell!

<http://myks.sitesell.com/>



Our strategic pricing product, **Make Your Price Sell!**, is immensely valuable to e-marketers who are selling products with some degree of success, and/or who are in product development or pre-launch phase.

For its testimonials, we rely on a selected sampling of strong reviews by **respected professionals**.

They're very simply presented. We even use a wonderful review by Ralph Wilson (wilsonweb.com -- the most respected marketing guru on the Net) as part of our “3 Minute Tour”...

What the Marketing Pros Say About MYPS!

Review by Ralph Wilson, Web Marketing Today

MYPS! succeeds wonderfully at its chief goal: to provide marketers with a scientific tool that will help them set their product's "Perfect Price." For the first time, it makes available to mere mortals the sophisticated analytical tools once only high-priced consultants were privy to.

Review by Allan Gardyne, AssociatePrograms.com Newsletter

If you sell any product or service, you need MYPS! It can save you a lot of money. It can make you a lot of money.

Make Your Price Sell!

<http://mysp.sitesell.com/>



By spreading **testimonials** throughout your site, you...

- ensure that everyone sees at least one testimonial
- provide many links to the main testimonial page
- offer repeated, powerful reminders from happy customers
- tailor the use of your testimonials to support the content, saving your **best** testimonials for the most **important** moments!

SiteSell implements testimonials just a little differently on each site... but they are **all** effective. Experiment with your own testimonials until you get the right "potato-chip" formula.

[**SIDEBAR**]

Repeat the same with any other strong **product reviews** that you may have -- as we did with Ralph Wilson's strong and thorough review of **MYPS!**



10.1.3. How to Get & Use Product Reviews

Product reviews are a special kind of testimonial. It's a testimonial that comes from a trusted, known, professional. If you have a great product review or award, don't be subtle. **Trumpet it.**

If you don't have any reviews, get them. Submit your product to every relevant print and online media. Accompany your product with a brief letter that sells your product, and sells the media on reviewing your product (it must be of interest to **their** target market).

If you have a print media review, scan the review and include it on the Web page. If the scan makes a large (over 10K) graphic, post a small thumbnail graphic on your "Reviews" page, with a link to the full-size review.

If it's an online review, include a link to that review, but do it as a [\(TARGET=VIEW\)](#) link, so that you open a new window. This way, just in case your visitor checks out other reviews on that site, she'll ultimately "come back" to you when she closes that window. **Put a note beside the link, or use a [javascript alert](#) when the link is clicked, that clicking will open a new window, and to close it when finished.**
Or much better...

Don't link out. **Simply "re-print" the review on your own site.** By keeping your visitor **on your site**, you control what she sees and where she goes. You open a potential can of worms by sending a visitor to a review site (she may link somewhere else, or check out reviews of competing products, etc.).



For example, WallStreet E does this extremely well. Loads of great reviews. Each "review link" (in the page below) links to a page on the WallStreet E site, **not** to the reviewer's site. It's well-done. It's credible.

And it keeps the visitor on WallStreet E's site! If the visitor had gone to the Barron's site, she would likely check out the other reviewed online brokers, right? This way, WallStreet E gets the boost from the review, without losing control over the visitor...



WallStreet E, Articles About Us

<http://www.wallstreete.com/press.htm>



However you choose to do it, **the bottom line is...** if you have received glowing product reviews but don't include them on your Web site, marketing is not for you.
Hire someone... fast!



10.1.4. When To Add Testimonials?

So when exactly, do you add testimonials? The short answer to that is...

As soon as you can!

Here's how SiteSell.com uses testimonials for new products...

We start without them. Makes sense, right? After all, nobody's had a chance to use the product yet!

[**SIDEBAR**]

Yes, beta-readers do offer some generous words. But if you feature those on launch day... well, you may face some credibility issues. In any event, it's best to wait until you have a ton of great testimonials to make your selection.

Our protocol for site testimonials is to **wait about 6 weeks**. During that time, we've been blessed to receive wonderful feedback for each product.

Next, we assemble the **best 15-20 testimonials**. We avoid the ones that just generally rave, and look for the ones that hit **benefits** we know are **important to our customers**.

Those are the ones we add to the site. Once we're done, we never worry about them again. We just don't have the time... and we've found that changing testimonials does not dramatically affect the **Conversion Rate**.

So do it once, after you have some major response. Then, forget all about it... except, of course, for major circumstances.

Remember... people won't **visit** your Testimonial Page. But if you put testimonials where they can't miss them... they will read them! And if they read them...

Well, you're that much closer to making the **SALE!**



10.1.5. **Articles** on You, Your Company, Your Products

Whenever a major publication (or even a minor one!) writes about you, your company, and/or your products, **put it up on your Web site**.

While these general-interest articles are not as strong as product reviews, they still come across as an **endorsement** of you, and your products. After all, trained professionals are writing about you, right?

Here's an article about our toy design biz that was written up in Montreal's largest English-language newspaper. Even though it's not related to penny mining stocks, it otherwise establishes me as a successful, credible and stable person (OK, OK -- a lot of friends will argue about the "stable" part!)...



The Toy Biz

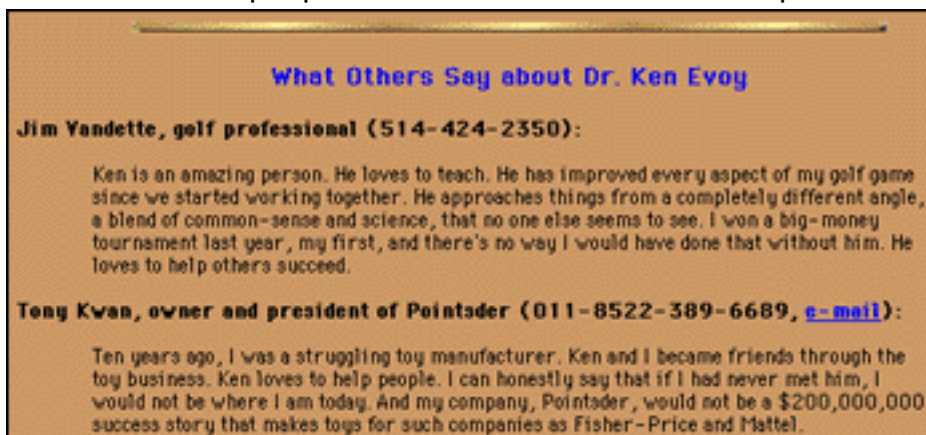
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/100toys.html>

While it's not actually an endorsement by that publication, it sure looks like one!

10.1.6. Using Other Third Party References...

Whenever someone says something nice about you, it has credibility. **Figure out how it can be used to build credibility on your Web site.**

I even put up a page on PennyGold that was half-devoted to "personal character references" from people I have worked with and /or helped...



<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/200.html>

As a matter of fact, if the concept fits, you could even **write your whole Web site from the third party perspective**. For example...

I chose to write the PennyGold Web site from my own perspective. But I could have asked Bob Carrier, my broker, to write about PennyGold instead. All the successful trades that he has witnessed... what a great guy I am... etc., etc. But the site was really too big for this approach.

But if you are a small, one-product company, with an extremely happy customer or some other participant, consider this approach.



10.1.7. Your Unsalaries Sales Staff...

Encourage customers, suppliers, associates, whoever... to report their positive experiences to a newsgroup, forum, mailing list, etc. This, in itself, has limited value. But you can leverage off that tremendously!

How? **Glad you asked...**

First, get permission to quote the posting. Then...

If it's a newsgroup posting, go to **Google Groups** and do a search for that posting. When you find it, copy the URL for that posting (in the "Location" or "Go to" bar of your browser). Provide a link to that posting from your **Testimonial Page** ([remember, always open a new window](#))...



Google Groups (formerly Deja News)

<http://groups.google.com/>

If it's a Web site **forum** posting, simply provide its URL. Same for quotes from mailing lists that are archived (i.e., back issues are stored on the Web, and, therefore, have URLs). If the mailing list is not archived, treat it as a straight testimonial -- with quote, name, e-mail address.

Again, it may be preferable to keep your customer on your site. Simply create a section in your Testimonial Page to quote the relevant newsgroups, mailing lists, and

forums. If your visitor stays on site, you can't lose control.



10.2. The SALES-Clinching Guarantee

Remember your prospect's mindset? No matter how great you **know** your product is, your prospect is skeptical.

Everyone has bought a bad product at one time or another. So anyone over the age of 8 **has learned to be careful.**

No one wants to make a mistake. Especially not an expensive mistake -- the more expensive your product, the more important is your guarantee.

So let your prospects know that you are willing to take the risk for them -- that's how much you believe in the product.

Let me repeat ...

Take the risk off your visitor's back and put it all onto your own shoulders...



... Guarantee your product!



10.2.1. Developing the Perfect Guarantee...

First, let's talk **attitude.**

Don't pitch your guarantee as a "**Full Refund If Not Satisfied**" or "**Money Back If You're Not Happy**" kind of thing. That's **negative.**

Instead, offer "**A Free 30-day Trial**" or "**A No-Risk Free Trial Download.**" It is the same thing, expressed in **positive** terms.

“Examine it, try it, use it for a full 30 days without risk.” Now you’re inviting them to try your product. You’re not **warning** them about it.

Did I say “30 days”? Wait!...

Make the guarantee as long as practical. Longer trial periods allow prospects to “get used to” your product. You also get inertia working **for** you, instead of against you. People forget.

I don’t know about you, but when I see a 30 day guarantee on a product, I wonder about the product. And when I get it, I am very aware that I only have 30 days to be sure. So I actually test it **and make a decision immediately.**

However, with a one-year guarantee, I don’t exactly enter the deadline in my day planner -- **“End of guarantee period -- decide by now, Ken.”** No, I just kind of forget all about it.

I took a subscription to a newsletter that offered a full guarantee for a full year after subscribing. Each month that I received the newsletter, I was reminded that it wasn’t very good. However, I put off asking for my money back -- “I’ll do it later.” After all, don’t you put off unpleasant stuff? Then guess what? I forgot all about it!

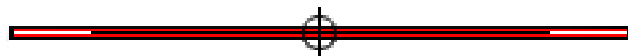
Now, I’m not saying to offer a one year guarantee to reduce refund requests if you have a bad product. No, just that it’s good business to offer a one year guarantee. You will get more sales and less returns. **It’s the best way to offer your guarantee for your great product.**



Your guarantee must be specific, not vague. It must **prove** your commitment and confidence.

It must be iron-clad. Not waffling. No ifs, ands, buts, or any legalese... “Just ask and we’ll refund your money. Period. No questions asked.”

Make your reader think, “Gosh, I’d have to be brain-dead not to try this. What do I have to lose?”



10.2.2. How to Handle the Refund Request.

If someone does make a refund request under the terms of your guarantee, **honor it**.

Understand that a few guarantee claims will be fraudulent. Allow them to “fool” you -- it’s just not worth your time to do otherwise. And, of course, a few claims **will** be genuine (not everyone can love your product, no matter how good it is). Either way, it doesn’t matter...

Refund them all. But go **beyond** that...

Do it quickly and with a smile. Thank them for the product feedback, and apologize for not measuring up to their expectations. Promise to improve the product -- **and do it**, if possible.

Then really go “the extra mile.” **Convert** that unsatisfied customer **into a friend**. Apologize for their inconvenience and offer to “make it up to them.” For example... if you’re selling software, offer your next version **free**.

In the long run, it’s great for business -- no bad-mouthing you and your product to all their friends, **or worse...** to newsgroups, mailing lists and e-mailed newsletters!

You may even convert an unsatisfied customer into a **raving fan!**

[**SIDEBAR**]

If you offer a free trial of your product, the guarantee becomes less important. But for PennyGold site, the guarantee **was** vital because a 30-day trial was impossible (due to the nature of the information itself). And since PennyGold **did** deliver what we promised, the guarantee didn’t cost us anything.



10.2.3. How to Reduce Refund Requests to **Near-Zero**

While you must honor refund requests, there are ways to **prevent them from ever happening...**

- **Deliver an obviously great product** -- if a customer receives a crummy, low-quality product, that looks like no serious effort was ever made by the vendor, you’ll get an angry customer.

And angry customers **punish** you by asking for their money back.

So it's simple... **OVERdeliver... go beyond expectations.**

- **Build a good relationship with your customers and less than 1% will ever ask for any kind of refund!** -- Start with a wonderful, warm, "welcome and thank you" letter upon shipping the product.

This letter should thank and reassure, removing any buyer's remorse -- this would also be the place to point out any little extras that you have thrown in, "just to show you my appreciation."



Then follow with solid after-sales support, newsletters, and so forth.

You have to be really hard-nosed to ask for a refund if a company has delivered a good product and built a solid relationship!

If you honestly offer a solid product, about 2% of purchasers will still make claims. That 2% figure will drop to well under 1%, if you are an effective one-to-one marketer and provide good after-sales support.



10.2.4. Summing Up...

People who phoned me with questions about PennyGold, often mentioned "and it's guaranteed, right?" -- followed by some detailed questions about the guarantee.

Clearly it's a **determining factor in the decision-making process.**

Use one... always.

MYSS! 2002... Two Critical Sales-Builders



TEN-Times-Your-Money Guarantee

If you're like me, you hate to make a mistake. So I am going to make your purchase of *PennyGold* totally risk-free!

Since I **know** what *PennyGold* has earned for me, I back it with an unprecedented one-year guarantee.

Use *PennyGold* for one year. If it doesn't pay for itself ten-fold, I **WANT** you to ask for a refund! Yes, just tell me that you didn't make at least **TEN TIMES WHAT YOU PAID** for *PennyGold* after using it for one year and I'll return your purchase cost!

The Guarantee

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/500.html>



And the MYSS! guarantee...

If you feel that MYSS! does not deliver everything that you want and expect, simply tell me that you want your money back.

I'll refund you immediately. That's more than a guarantee. It's a personal promise.

All the best,
Ken

And there are...

- no time limits
- no exceptions
- no reason required
- no strings of any kind.

Make Your **Site Sell!** Guarantee

<http://myss.sitesell.com/s-guarantee.html>



11. Site-Sales Techniques

So far, we have seen that a “**you vs. me**”-focused benefit-laden **Opening Page**, verifiable **testimonials**, and a sales-clinching **guarantee** are critical for the success of a sales-oriented site. The **MWR Closer Page** is the fourth, of course, and [we'll discuss that soon](#).

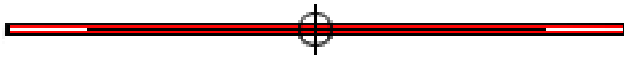
In addition to these, keep a few other key tools in your cyber-toolbox. Use them at the right time (i.e., for the right product and appropriate target market).



11.1. Build a Form that Works!

After reviewing several [forms](#) online, you might think that companies don't want you to complete and submit the necessary data. They're full of barriers to completion... vague, long, intimidating, worrisome.

Here's how to get it right...



11.1.1. Make it Short

Make your [Response Form](#) short. Ask for as little info as possible -- only what you absolutely need to know. Remember, the typical Web surfer is time-pressured. If she sees a flurry of entry boxes, chances are she'll just say, “Ah-h-h, maybe later.”

[SIDEBAR]

Here's a way to get more info **and** not lose anyone. Let's say you offer a free newsletter. Just ask for the e-mail address. That's all you really need.

But you'd like to **personalize communication**, ask for a first name, also. A [CGI mailing script](#) stores that name, along with his or her e-mail address, in an online database. When it sends the newsletter to that subscriber, it uses the name in the subject of the e-mail (“Jill, here's PGOLD XPRESS #035”). And you could preface the newsletter with a brief letter that starts, “Hi Jill...”

So how do you get this **extra** piece of data **without losing subscriptions?**...

First, just ask for the e-mail address. When your visitor clicks the "Subscribe" button, she advances to **another** form which then asks for her first name. Since this only takes a second, odds are she'll give it to you. If not, you still have her registered as a subscriber!

Tech note... Your techie will have to set a **cookie** to tie the info from the different forms together, so that you can read it as all coming from the same person.



11.1.2. How to **Qualify** Your Prospect

There is one big exception to making your form as short as possible. That's when you want to **qualify** the respondent.

If your form takes orders for widgets or asks people to subscribe to your free newsletter, odds are **you want as many people as possible to complete and submit the form.** In these cases, keep it as short as possible. But...

... let's say you're looking for **leads** -- people who are seriously interested in your million-dollar bridge expansion joints. When these people submit a form, the data will be delivered to your director of sales.

On one hand, you want to weed out as many "tire-kickers" as possible -- no point in wasting your sales director's time. On the other, you don't want to scare away serious inquiries. **Design the form to optimize the balance.**

The more data that your form requests, the more motivated the client must be to complete it. **And certain kinds of questions will also qualify prospects better than others...**



Let's start by designing a **Response Form** that asks for full contact information, with a few pointed questions thrown in (name of company, title, decision-making capabilities, etc.). End the form with a question like "Please provide a brief summary of your needs." This eliminates the tire-kickers -- it forces people to think!

If you only get a few inquiries, lighten up a little. If you get too many "low-level" requests, toughen up the form. It's cheap and easy to experiment until you find the

perfect balance.

Another way to qualify prospective customers is by **the type of return response you will send**. Everything else being equal, which of the following propositions do you think will generate a higher number of qualified submissions?...

"For more information, fill out this form..."

Or...

"If you would like our sales director to discuss our expansion joints with you personally, fill out this form..."



11.1.3. Make it Clear

Make everything about your form as clear as glass and as easy as pie...

- **Instructions** must be clear.
- **Design** must be simple and clean.
- **Organize** your required data into logical groups.
- **Layout** your data headings and corresponding entry boxes clearly. Test across all browsers.

Use radio buttons, drop-down boxes, etc. -- wherever it will make your customer's life easier. If some data is a must, and other pieces are optional, mark the "must have" with an asterix. Then explain that the "asterix" is for data that you require.

Test all forms with users before going "live."

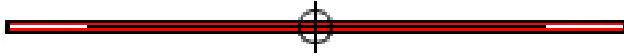


11.1.4. "Submit" is for Techies

Don't use a "SUBMIT" button...

"Submit" is a techie word.

If your visitor is subscribing, make it a "SUBSCRIBE" button. If she's ordering your product, make it a "SEND ORDER" button.



11.1.5. How to Remove Worries

The more boxes that ask for personal info (name, telephone number, address), the more nervous your customer gets. So make sure you put your **Privacy Policy** on your form. Here was PennyGold's...

Don't worry -- your e-mail address is totally secure.
I promise to use it **only** to send you the PGOLD XPRESS.

A short, clear, and direct privacy statement goes a long way to reassure people. The longer your Privacy Policy, and the more legalese that it contains, the **worse** the reassurance.

[SIDEBAR]

Honor your privacy promise. If you don't, you'll be exposed sooner or later. People with "catch-all" e-mail accounts can put any name in front of their domain, giving them an infinite number of e-mail addresses.

For example, let's say you have a **catch-all e-mail account** for your domain, "domain.com." If you wanted to test how well I honor my policy of not selling my e-mail database, you would subscribe to my newsletter with a **unique** word followed by "@domain.com." Next, set your e-mail filter to send all e-mail that comes to **unique@domain.com** into a folder with **my** name on it. There will be no surprises!



11.1.6. Verify the Data

The **CGI script** that handles the data gathering should verify that it has all the mandatory data.

For example, after your visitor hits "**Subscribe**" to sign up for your free newsletter, the CGI should check to make sure that the e-mail address field is not blank, **and** that your subscriber has used a valid format (i.e., **xyz@something.ending**).

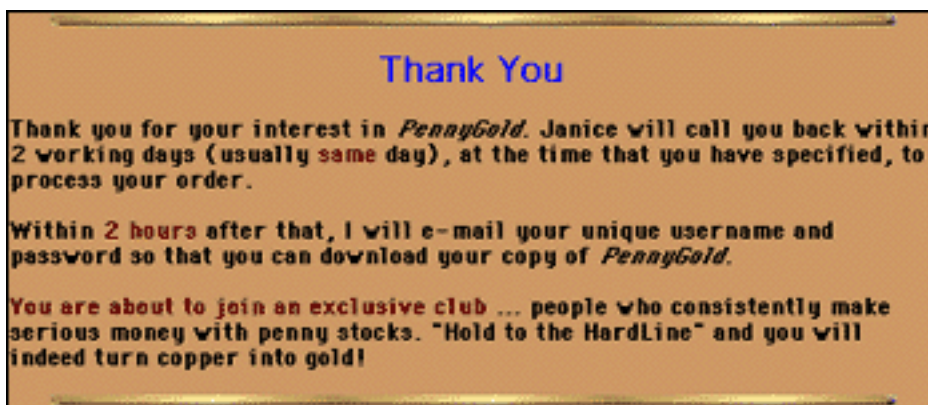
If the address is empty or invalid, the script pops up a page politely asking her to

correct the entry.



11.1.7. Put Up a Response Page

Once your CGI script has verified the submission, it should put up an **HTML Response Page**. Here was what a visitor saw after submitting an “Intent to Order” form for PennyGold...



PennyGold Thank You Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/thankyou.html>

Note the functions of this page...

- reassures the customer that the info was received
- identifies what **our** reply to his submission will be
- confirms the customer's action. **This removes any last second doubts... eliminates “buyer's remorse.”**

Here was the Response Page for those who subscribed to the free newsletter, PGOLD XPRESS...

Thank you for your subscription to PGOLD XPRESS.

I'll send you a welcoming e-mail, as well as the current issue of PGOLD XPRESS, immediately. You'll get it in a minute or two (assuming you have entered your e-mail address without typos*). [Please let me know how you like it.](#)

*If you don't get it within 10 minutes, try again, being sure there are no typos.

Thank You For Your Subscription

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgxprsresponse.html>

This page promised two e-mails, which the CGI script sent automatically. Since the welcome e-mail continued the sales process, I didn't bother confirming the customer's brilliant choice on this page.



11.1.8. Follow-up with an E-mail

While a customer cannot store an HTML Response Page, she can store an e-mail. So program the CGI script to send an e-mail after submission. This follow-up serves as a reminder -- it's amazing how quickly people forget things.

[SIDEBAR]

Of course, you can always forward your response form directly to an autoresponder that replies immediately to subscription requests!

The contents of the e-mail could be similar to your Response Page. Or you may decide to move matters to the next appropriate level of communication. Everything depends on your particular circumstances, of course.

If you ask for non-standardized kind of data in your Response Form (ex., feedback, new product ideas, tech support question), **reply with individualized responses.** **Respect the effort your customer made to complete the form.** Her time is precious.



11.2. How and When to Use Music

Music is a controversial point. There are several potential downsides...

1) Download time is s-l-o-o-o-w. If you use plug-ins like RealAudio to eliminate download waiting by [streaming](#) the music, only a small percent will actually hear your music. Most visitors don't have a plug-in. If you are using music just for background "look and feel," **no one will take the time** to download the plug-in while at your site. **So let's stick with MIDI files** as the most practical compromise.

As we discussed earlier, a MIDI is a file containing programmed, computerized music. It delivers an amazing amount of music per K of file. But you are still looking at 20-30K for a decent-sounding MIDI... which means **download time**.

[**SIDEBAR**]

However, when you give your customers good copy to read while the music loads, **most will wait for the music**. Our own log files show that **less than 5%** kill the MIDI download.

2) Netscape and Explorer use different HTML tags to deliver MIDI as background sounds. This can be handled with a **javascript work-around**, which means that older, non-javascript enabled browsers (pre-Netscape 2 and pre-Explorer 3 or 4, depending on your code) won't hear the music.

3) If you want a MIDI file to keep playing as your visitors click to other pages, you have to "play" the MIDI in a separate small [frame](#). This means you have to use a frameset (with all its disadvantages). See the PennyGold site where I used frames to deliver a jukebox of 5 MIDI selections that kept on playing as the visitor clicked through the site...

[Roadhouse Blues \(61k\)](#) [Canon in D \(33k\)](#) [OEE](#) [Stairway to Heaven \(65k\)](#) [Sweet Little Pipe \(62k\)](#)

PennyGold Home Page

<http://goodbytes.com/pennygold/>

4) People will complain about the music. At least that's what the experts say. (However, we got **far more compliments** than complaints.)

So why...



... play music?

Simple...

People buy more. Choose the right, toe-tapping stimulating music, and people will get into the right mood. Do you think that Wal-Mart and Sears play that music just to keep their staff entertained?

[**SIDEBAR**]



AudioBase

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

Audiobase provides high-end streaming audio solutions -- not purely music, but instructions and comments strictly for **your** visitors. It also automatically optimizes for your visitors' connection speed. But it comes with a hefty price -- monthly fees start at 5 figures.

I experimented with **not** using music. One day, I decided that I didn't like the frames and the long initial download. So I dropped the music for two weeks, and delivered a frames-free site. I loved it -- it felt tighter, faster, cleaner... **to me.**

How did sales go, you ask? I'm sorry you asked!...

Sales dropped by 70%, including three days in a row with **no** sales at all, which had not happened since I figured out how to increase traffic (several months earlier). I put the music back on, and sales returned to normal.

As I write this, I still have trouble believing the results could be that dramatic. I don't know if it was coincidence or not, but I never tried the experiment again. **I didn't have the courage.**

If you're not using music now, perform this little experiment...

Try two weeks with background music. I'll bet your **sales go up** (unless music is really inappropriate for your product and target market -- for example, hard-core, info-seeking techies).

Follow these guidelines for adding background music to your site...

- 1) Stimulate your visitors.** Make most selections fun and toe-tapping.
- 2) Provide alternate choices,** so that there is something for everyone in your target market.
- 3) Deliver an OFF option.** You **will** get complaints if they can't turn the music off! One of the two complaints that PennyGold received was regarding the inability to turn OFF the music (even though the OFF option **was** clearly there).
- 4) Don't distract your visitor or slow her down.** Remember the goal -- deliver her to your **MWR Closer Page** and get the **MWR**. For example, don't invite her to visit your **MIDI** museum. Don't offer a fancy jukebox with 80 music choices.

Keep the music where it belongs, **in the background**.

[SIDEBAR]

Here are a few great sites to find selections for your own mini-MIDI-jukebox...



The Classical MIDI Connection
<http://midiworld.com/cmc/index.htm>



Free Midi archives - Directory of Best MIDI Sites
<http://www.onlinebusiness.com/shops/ midi/BEST MIDI Archives.shtml/>

For additional resources, just visit your favorite Search Engine, and use "midi" in your keyword search!



11.3. The RIGHT Picture **is** Worth 1,000 Words

From all we've covered so far, you might have the impression that I **hate** graphics. I don't, as long as they get at least one of the following jobs done...

- **create** a solid, professional business image and an appealing "look and feel," one that is appropriate for your target market
- **help** navigation
- **contribute** to **getting the sale** by adding to the verbal content

... while being as small as possible.

OK, let's elaborate a little...



11.3.1. Where to, Why to & When to Use Graphics

Use graphics for one or more of the following reasons...

1) Increase the overall visual appeal of the page, just enough to be appealing and set a classy, solid look. Beyond that, "appeal" does nothing for the motivation of your potential customer, who just wants enough info to make a decision.

Decide what you want your design to transmit (ex., stable conservatism, sharp originality, etc.). Then, together with your graphic designer, develop the following...

- overall page layout -- build an [HTML](#) template (left margin, position of navbars, headers and footers, etc.)
- background color or background GIF
- colors for text and links
- quick-loading corporate logo

- Table of Contents and navbars
- bullets and horizontal line dividers.

Beyond that, go easy on “just for appeal” graphics. Once you have established a solid look, beautiful **graphics don’t help get the sale. Words do.**

2) Aid navigation. [As discussed earlier](#), correct use of graphics can **clarify navigation.**

3) Increase the information content of the page. Graphics must add to or complement the text info. For example, [as described earlier](#), you can also use graphics to **build credibility** by including photos of you, your employees, your facilities and your product. This is **far more effective** than anything you could say with words.

If a graphic does **not** accomplish at least one of the above, **don’t use it.**



11.3.2. Show Your Products in Their Best Light

If your product is highly visual, take maximal advantage of the Web. Provide images that help explain or demonstrate your product.

Great photos **can** sell a product. So if there is indeed a time to sacrifice a bit on download time, this would be it. Here’s how to do it...

Say you’re selling your brand new “Millennium Widget.” It’s a beautiful, ergonomic widget. You want to show...

- the product from all angles
- your widget in high-detail
- the incredible benefits of using this marvelous contraption.

Great ideas! But on the widget’s product page, show **low-K** thumbnail photos, with a caption-link below each photo. Now you’ve got the best of both worlds...

- Your widget product page downloads quickly **and** delivers the sales copy followed by the thumbnails.
- Each thumbnail photo-link [dead-end side-branches](#) to detailed photos and some related copy. Your user will gladly wait for the whole photo if she knows what to expect (tell her how many K)... **and** if she believes that the graphic will add to her understanding. **Just be sure to deliver on the promise!**

If, instead, you make your visitor wait for five 60K graphics to download on the product page... well, say good-night, widget.

[SIDEBAR]

If you're selling hard goods or travel or just about anything else that would benefit from letting your visitors zoom in for close up looks, check out this site...



MGI Software

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



11.3.3. Are Your Graphics Confusing?

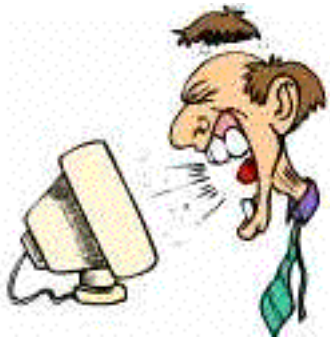
Sure, **you** know what that funny squiggle on your navbar means. **But your viewer doesn't.**

And that photo of the watcha-ma-call-it that you took it from a funny angle. You know why you did it. But your prospect mistakes it for a watcha-ma-call-**that**.

Make sure your graphics don't confuse.

Graphics must be clear, **even if your visitor comes in with graphics turned off.** In that case, your [ALT tags](#) describe the file. Graphic links that do **not** have ALT tags are Web site mortal sins -- there is no way for the graphics-off visitor to know what he's clicking on, let alone the link's destination.

If your graphics don't have ALT tags, graphics-off visitors have to turn graphics **on** and reload (refresh) the page. **That makes them cranky...**



... Cranky visitors don't buy.

Does your site stand up to a graphics-off browser?



11.3.4. Picture Perfect

Buy a digital camera and take professional-quality photos of your products. Scan existing photos. Use existing stock photos on CD-ROMs from companies like Expert, Corel, and Softkey.

Or get stock photos online from...



PhotoDisc

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



PictureQuest

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

Like all graphics, your photos must be as small as possible. Your graphic designer must know how to **compress your photos into super-tight JPEGs.**



11.3.5. Clip Art, Buttons, Backgrounds, Bullets, Etc.

You may want to spring for a skilled graphic artist to [customize your whole look](#). Coordinated logo, background, bullets, buttons and horizontal rules all do add up to a certain air of sharp professionalism.

But if the price is a little steep, you can certainly get away with less.



ArtToday has an **awesome collection** of clip art (over 850,000 images) and over 40,000 bullets, backgrounds, animations, buttons, and horizontal lines/rules. Careful selection here will round out the look of your site.

More importantly, they have a deadly Search Engine to make finding your desired graphic a snap.

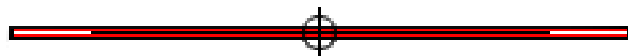
For a low price, you get one year of full access. Download as many images as you need. There are no royalty payments, download fees or other charges, whatsoever.

If you've played around in the quasi-free sites, you'll know that ArtToday is a steal...



ArtToday

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



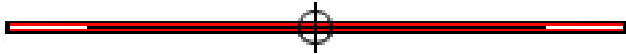
11.3.6. A Few Basics About Graphics

Your graphics guru will know what's needed. But to **keep her on her toes, understand the basics...**

- [JPEGs](#) are best for photos and illustrations with subtle gradations and use [GIFs](#) for gradation and small number of colors -- good for cartoons.
- Transparent GIFs allow non-rectangular graphics, which give a sharper effect.

- Interlaced GIFs load in “sweeps.” This gives visitors something to look at immediately, becoming more detailed as the download finishes.
- Use [ALT tags](#).
- Since you’re still designing for your lowest common denominator, the 256 color monitor, make sure that your guru is using the 216 color browser-safe palette. The other 40 colors are dropped because they vary from Macs to Win machines. By eliminating those 40, your graphics will look the same on both.
- Your [HTML](#) code should specify height and width dimensions, so that the browser software immediately knows how to layout the whole page. This way, graphics load **after** the text.

That’s a very brief overview. Throw one or more of the above into a conversation, and gain more respect from your guru! 😊



11.3.7. Keep or Axe?

OK, you’ve got all your graphics in place. Time to [cut, chop, axe, & prune!](#) Sound familiar? It is...

Review your images the way you edited your text -- remove anything that is not absolutely needed.

Ask yourself this question for every graphic...

“Is this graphic increasing my chance for a sale?”

You know what to do...



... if the answer is “no.”



11.4. Give Your Visitor Something to Do...

Interactivity is the process of **involving** your customer -- giving him something **to do, engaging his mind**.

But if it's gratuitous and stretched, he just thinks, "Boy, that's dumb. I'm not doing that." And if it's too time-consuming, bye-bye. There's just no payoff.

On the other hand, if it's appropriate, quick, and rewarding, your visitor will gladly do it. So...

If your interactive "quiz" doesn't **fit** or if it distracts, that's a **minus**, not a plus. If a visitor is going to fill out a **Response Form**, or do a search, or query a database, or play a game, **there has to be a strong reason why...**

There has to be a **reward** of some kind.

Of course, from your point of view, **the interactivity must contribute to generating your MWR.**

[**SIDEBAR**]

Profnet Inc.'s personality inventory test is a great example of interactivity, but I'm not so sure it leads to much of anything. Visitors are supposed to take this mini-personality inventory test to "help business professionals develop stronger business relationships."

Profnet must understand their particular target market better than I understand basic human nature. The stated benefit would **not** convince me to spill my guts.

But I love the basic idea **as an example of interactivity**. And I also use it as an example of something **most people won't do**.

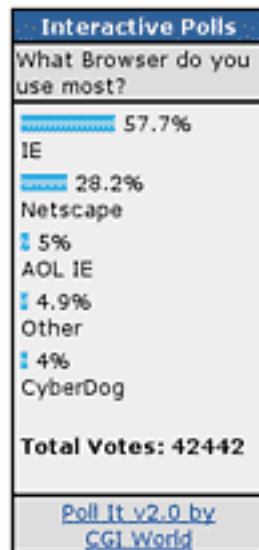
That's just my opinion, of course. And it could just be me. I took a personality test once. Failed. I should have studied. 😊

1.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Adventurous	<input type="radio"/> Adaptable	<input type="radio"/> Animated	<input type="radio"/> Analytical
2.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Persistent	<input type="radio"/> Playful	<input type="radio"/> Persuasive	<input type="radio"/> Peaceful
3.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Submissive	<input type="radio"/> Self-sacrificing	<input type="radio"/> Sociable	<input type="radio"/> Strong-willed
4.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Considerate	<input type="radio"/> Controlled	<input type="radio"/> Competitive	<input type="radio"/> Convincing
5.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Refreshing	<input type="radio"/> Respectful	<input type="radio"/> Reserved	<input type="radio"/> Resourceful
6.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Sensitive	<input type="radio"/> Self-reliant	<input type="radio"/> Spirited

Personality Inventory Test

<http://www.profnet.org/person2.html>

Online polls are gaining in popularity as well. If done properly, they can entertain your visitors while providing a subtle step in the direction of your **MWR...**



Website Abstraction lists and reviews several of the best free poll scripts...

Website Abstraction

Website Abstraction

<http://wsabstract.com/howto/polls2.shtml>

Cgi-World provides various Poll scripts, including the free "Poll It"...



Cgi-World

http://www.cgi-world.com/poll_manager.html

Hint -- Try not to use one of the cheesy free services though -- you'll only look like small fry. Have your techie install a CGI script, and customize your own, if you can.



Bottom line? Blend interactivity into your site. **But make it...**

- fit
- quick
- pay
- help get the **MWR**.

Or drop it.

Keeping the pathway tidy and direct to the **MWR** makes a powerful difference, all by itself.



11.5. A Rarely Used **Powerful Tool**

I surf several hours per day, and yet weeks can go by before I'll see a [javascript alert](#). Many experts say **not** to use them, so they are rarely used. If these alerts were to become commonplace, I'd be the first to drop them -- then they **really would** get too annoying.

The correct advice is to **use them well if you have a creative way to turn them into a plus for you and your customer.**

PennyGold used two javascript alerts, one upon visitor **entry** and one upon **exit**. Our visitors were most definitely not annoyed. The only comments we received were positive. They often said something like, "Very cool. How did you do that?"

I highly recommend creative use of them, **but not just to be cool.**

I did drop the alert “on entry.” Although there were no complaints about it, I just couldn’t develop a message that I thought was worthwhile. **So it delayed access to the site, with no true benefit.**

My “exit” message came up when you left the PennyGold site...



This “personal thank you” was a strong message, created a good feeling, and was definitely worth the alert. People have actually called and told me...

“Hi, I’m just looking at this window that told me to call you if I had a question. You know, I wasn’t going to buy PennyGold because... <reason>. But I thought I’d call and ask you about it.”

Bingo!



As long as javascript alerts are rarely used, they’re a great tool. So let’s hope the experts keep saying **not** to do it!

If you do use javascript alerts, they **do** get “tired” for repeat visitors. So if your site is heavily repeat-visit oriented (PennyGold’s site was **not**), add a few lines of script to the effect that if that visitor has been there before (you can check via a cookie), drop the alerts.

This brings up another general observation...

... before following any conventional thinking (which **is** usually based on solid reasoning), **consider your audience and the nature of your site.** The PennyGold

site used javascript alerts and MIDI music (both generally frowned upon) with great results because they fitted the product and the audience.

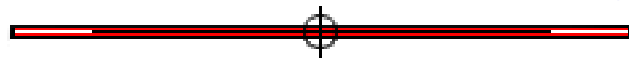
[**SIDEBAR**]

Quick human interest story...

One morning a nice lady from Arizona called the office. She had seen the site and was impressed. As she was leaving the site, the Javascript alert had popped up -- in her own words, she said, "What the heck, I thought I'd give you a call." She had not noticed our phone numbers at the bottom of each page.

We had a nice little chat. When I returned later, there was an order from her.

The more ways you reach out to people, the more ways you make yourself available, the better your chances of turning a visit into an order.



11.6. Build Community to Build SALES

Jim Wilson is the master of building community, through his Web site, **Jim World...**



VirtualPromote

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

Jim's target market is Web marketers. He treasures them, helps them, protects them, and builds them into a true community. In return, they are a constant source of warm exchanges, inspirations, new ideas, and original articles.



Here are just two of the techniques that Jim uses to mold his market into a community...

- He delivers a **high quality, info-packed Web-marketing newsletter** once a week...



JimWorld Gazette

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

- The VirtualPromote site hosts many [forums](#). **Search Engine Forums** and **Get High (Traffic) Forums** have been fabulous successes from Day 1...



Search Engine Forums

<http://searchengineforums.com/bin/Ultimate.cgi>

Visit Jim's site to see why, in his own words, VirtualPromote "becomes constantly more of a home town instead of Jim's formal living room where guests are entertained."

Building off his expertise developed in VirtualPromote, Jim has even launched a Web site dedicated to community building...



CommunityBuilding

<http://communitybuilding.com/>



Did you say that it doesn't apply to you? **Building community applies to any business.**

Yes, even if you sell **toilets**. Now, you may not want to maintain an active [chat room](#) or [forum](#) on toilets. But you could offer a free [newsletter](#) that covers a wide variety of topics on bathroom installations (high-tech tubs with temperature monitoring, lighting and sound systems, etc., etc.).

Encourage people to participate. Ask those with expertise if they would like to host their own column. People with an interest in home renovations would eat this up. And you'd be **front and center** when it came time to order.

Everyone loves to "belong." Think about how to build community among your customers.

Then do it. Your customers will come back to your site **repeatedly**. And they will

appreciate the effort you make to provide a valuable resource.

And that appreciation builds [trust and customer loyalty](#), which build SALES.



11.7. Using FAQs to the Max

A good FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page is essential to any site that wants to **SELL**. Properly done, your FAQ will...

- **overcome common objections.** You will lose many sales because your visitor has an objection that she is “**sure about.**” She won’t even e-mail to ask you about it. But she may very well see it addressed in your FAQ! Foresee as many of these objections as possible. **Frame them as questions. Then build the perfect answers to overcome the resistance.**



- **answer frequent questions** that “just didn’t fit” elsewhere on the site. Provide the info they want -- work **benefits** into the answer. Anytime you provide useful advice at the right moment, you’ve got a happy customer. Most people, if they have unanswered questions, won’t bother e-mailing you for help. **They just leave. Answer these people in your FAQ.**



- **reinforce important points**, especially any that seem to get overlooked. However, if really important stuff seems to get missed frequently, your site needs some work! Even if a main point in your site is well covered, ask the question in your FAQ -- reword your answer. If it’s important, it’s worth repeating (as you probably have noticed in this book!).



- **save you a lot of time.** A well-designed FAQ will save you lots of e-mail response time. If your customer finds the answer to her question in the FAQ, she doesn’t have to e-mail **you** with the question. She’s happier and you save time -- talk about WIN-WIN!

And if someone **does** e-mail you a question that **is** covered in your FAQ, thank them for asking such a good question, and refer them back to the relevant part of the FAQ (not just to the FAQ itself, but to the **exact question**). Or better still, simply copy and paste the answer from your FAQ, customizing as necessary.

What's the best way to make a FAQ? Glad you asked...



11.7.1. 5 Steps to a FAQ that **SELLS!**

STEP 1 **Anticipate the most common objections.** Phrase them as questions. Answer them so that you completely overcome the objections.

Your answers should be **brief, to the point, and stress benefits whenever possible**. You don't have to be so obvious as to say, "The benefits are..." Instead, the answer makes the reader clearly understand the benefit. Again, all the rules of good writing apply -- sharp, active, lively copy.

Don't turn your FAQ into the boring, scientific Q&A stuff. **Make it lively and conversational.**



STEP 2 **If your business is already operating, ask whoever handles questions (phone or e-mail), "What questions do you hear over and over?"** Ask them to make a list. Many of the questions on the list will be the same question, just asked differently.

Choose the simplest, easy-to-understand, way to ask the question. No technical lingo.

If you are just starting out, anticipate the most frequently asked **questions**. These are not objections, just requests for more information on a certain topic.

Answer them, short and sweet, always with an emphasis on benefits. Where there is a good fit with the topic or where you can develop it into a natural conclusion, **link-invite the reader to a Response Page, either your MWR or your Backup Response.**

[**SIDEBAR**]

Questions indicate interest. Use your answers to “close the sale.”

Even more important -- for every question that arrives by e-mail, there are at least 10 others who had the same question, but didn't bother to write. **These are lost sales. Address them through your FAQ.**

How do you decide which questions and objections belong? Simple, you want to include all **the most frequently asked questions**, basically to save you time and provide good info to your customer immediately.

But you also want to include **the most important objections**. They may or may not occur so frequently. But if you answer these objections well, it may just nail down the sale. Here, you must address general issues (trusting Internet sales, for example), as well as objections that are specific to your product and company.

Bottom line...

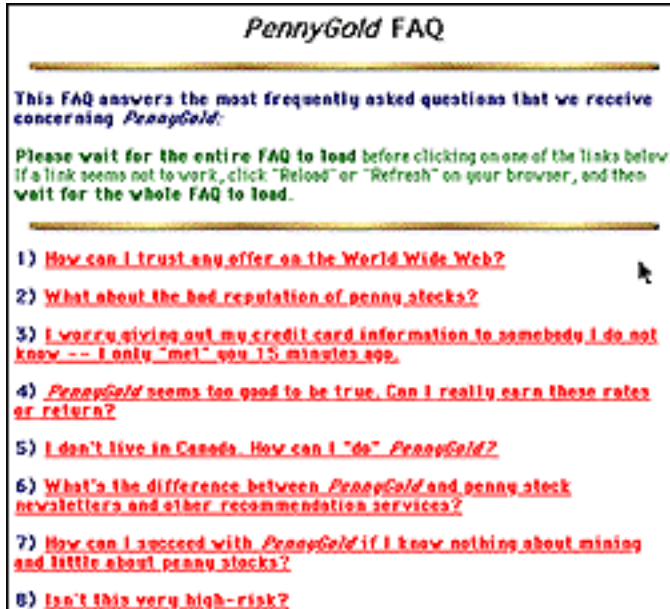
If it's neither important nor frequent, it doesn't belong in your FAQ.

STEP 3 Build the structure. While you may only start with a 5-10 questions and answers, build a structure **that will withstand 100.**

List all the questions at the top (most important “**selling**” ones first), so that the reader can see all the questions at a glance.

Make each question a link to the answer below. Follow each answer with a “Back to top” link, so your reader can skip back to the top to review the list of all the questions whenever he wants.

If the format for a proper FAQ is new to you, please see the PennyGold FAQ as an example. [View source](#) to start your own template...



PennyGold FAQ

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/FAQ1.html>



STEP 4 Improve and grow.

- **Improve** -- Let's say that you get a question that is close to one of the questions in the FAQ, but that touches on a side-issue that isn't well handled by the answer in the FAQ. What do you do? Improve your answer to cover the new issue and send the improved answer to your customer. **Then post the new answer to the FAQ!** Always improve.

- **Grow** -- Whenever you get a "never seen before" question, **prepare an excellent answer to it.** Then enter the **Q&A** into a "non-FAQ database or list." **Take your time at this step.** The next time you receive this question, look up the answer in the database. Copy and paste and then...

STOP! Don't e-mail it. Read the answer. Can you improve it? Probably yes, now that you're reading with fresh eyes. **Make it better,** then e-mail it... and update the database. If the question becomes frequent enough, **add it to the FAQ.**



STEP 5 As your FAQ grows, **it will become an important sales tool.** It is often

the **clincher** that converts a **waffler** into a **SALE**.

So get your visitors to your FAQ. Here's how...

- **provide a link on every relevant page.** For example, here was the bottom of every important (high-traffic) PennyGold **Content Page**...



- **provide a link on your navbar.**
- **mention it in your regular newsletters** -- I even included a "FAQ of the Month" in the monthly PGOLD XPRESS. This gave me the chance to provide good content, at the same time overcoming a common objection.
- **mention the FAQ in e-mail responses to questions...**

If you have any other questions, please feel free to e-mail me directly. And don't miss our FAQ at...

>> <http://www.yourdomain.com/FAQ.html>.

It's the quickest and easiest way for you to get the answers to all of the most important questions. Naturally, e-mail me at anytime should you need more info on any matter!

- **direct them to it in a parting javascript alert.**



11.8. Going, Going, Gone!

Faster than a speeding megabyte! **More powerful...**



... than a locomotive...

More popular than a... okay, okay, enough already.

I'm talking about online auctions. **eBay** and others like it are among the most highly trafficked sites on the Web. Each and every day, people swarm to these sites in order to bid on thousands of items!

Welcome to cyberspace's equivalent of the gigantic yard sale. Find anything and everything -- from Porches to dinky cars, from high-end studio recording equipment to Gucci watches to antique milk urns. Whatever your little heart desires! 😊



There are two types of online auction sites. The general ones which sell absolutely everything...



eBay

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



Yahoo! Auctions

<http://auctions.yahoo.com/>



And the more specialized ones, which focus on selling one particular type of product...



Winebid

<http://www2.winebid.com/>



GolfClub Exchange.com

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



Good Rockin' Tonight

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

(Records and memorabilia)



"So what?"

Hang in there, I'll explain...

Using online auctions is a fairly inexpensive way to make some sales, and build interested traffic to your site.

This is especially true if you sell a **"niche" product because...**

- there are specialized auction sites available to highlight your product.
- a unique product will stand out from the general ones on sites like eBay.

If you don't sell a niche product, don't worry too much about it -- sites like eBay receive so much traffic, even common products are worth listing. Experiment with Net auctions to identify profitable products of any nature.

The listing process is quite simple... Register your product on eBay, or similar auction site, and create a benefit-oriented ad. Then wait for the bids.

Take advantage of auction traffic. Promote your Web site by including a link to it in your auction listing. People can click through for more information and/or to see your other products. Track the results through the usual means (use a [re-direct or](#)

[meta-refresh](#)).

If you sell multiple products, experiment a little. List a few at the auction sites, initially, and track results through individual re-direct pages. Analyze the data, and keep listing the products that attract a substantial number of visitors. Ditch the ones that don't.

Of course, you **must** respond to all your eBay customers with the same great quality customer service and blazing speed. Remember, satisfied (or unsatisfied) auction customers can and will post their impressions. Other buyers review feedback on sellers before they buy, so make sure every comment about you is positive.

Right? Right! 😊

[**SIDEBAR**]

For more info, investigate SiteSell's **Make Your Net Auction Sell!** It's a comprehensive easy-to-follow manual on how to build a successful Net auction business. **Enjoy the fun and the profits!**

Your guide, Sydney Johnston, is doing exactly that!

MAKE YOUR NET AUCTION SELL!

<http://mynas.sitesell.com/>

11.9. Post All Policies

What's the Web marketer's Golden Rule?

It goes like this... **"Treat others as you would expect to be treated yourself."**

What does this mean? Uh-huh. **Post all your policies** -- shipping, international orders, privacy, returns -- everything. **Don't risk annoying...**



... your visitor.

As the demographics of the Internet become more and more diverse, it's crucial that your visitors have all the important information. Imagine...

Your U.S. based business does not wish to ship product outside of North America. You don't have a fulfillment solution in place, and overseas shipping costs are prohibitive. That's your decision. But more importantly...

If that **is** your policy... **let your international customers know right away. Don't waste their time.**

And if you're going the extra mile, let your customers know that as well. For example, you take special precautions processing international credit card orders.

Remember, approximately **50% of the worldwide online population now resides outside North America.** Respect those international customers. Respect all customers.

Bottom line. If you restrict your service in any form... let your visitors know!

Also, make sure your policies are easy to find. Show people you have nothing to hide by presenting your policies front and center on your Web site. It's a simple but effective way to build trust and credibility -- two critical components for long term success.



11.10. Affiliate Yourself with a Charity

Giving to the less fortunate is always a great idea. And an affiliation with an online charity could seriously benefit your business.

How?

Well, a recent study by Roper Starch showed that **76% of Americans would switch to a brand or a retailer associated with a reputable charitable cause.** In fact, slightly more than 50% of adults said they would even pay more if it benefited their chosen cause.

The point here? Folks like to donate to charity, and they like businesses that do, or encourage, the same.

So it's a win-win-win situation. **The charity wins, your customer wins and you win.**



Don't think so? By pairing your business with a charity you...

- raise money for a good cause
- increase your credibility
- build your brand
- foster customer loyalty
- enhance your image

There are a million ways to go about doing this...

You can simply announce that \$1 from each purchase will be donated to a charity, selected by the purchaser. If you go this route, customers should be able to view **charity donation reports that support your claim.** Or use a respected third party service to handle this.



Here's a great idea...

Sign up with **GreaterGood.com**, and get yourself a free storefront. Operating somewhat like a "charity mall," GreaterGood maintains each storefront, and receives commissions on all sales generated from individual stores. They split commissions fifty-fifty with their charity partners.

Best of all, you get you a prominent listing on a highly trafficked site...



GreaterGood.com

<http://www.greatergood.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/GreaterGood>

This site allows visitors to donate free food by clicking a button...



The Hunger Site

<http://www.thehungersite.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/CTDSites>



The free food is paid for by sponsors, whose small banner appears on the “Thank You” Page, along with an invitation to visit them.

The Hunger Site claims a click-through rate three times the average.

The connection certainly worked for me. After reading that my donation of food had been paid for by the listed sponsors, I felt obliged to visit at least one of their sites.

There are only 4 sponsors per day, and an average of 250,000 unique donations (visitors can only donate once in a 24 hour period) are made on week days. This means that it would cost you (at \$.005 an impression) \$1250 to advertise for one day.

But you are feeding the hungry!

With nearly 7 million unique donations in last year, The Hunger Site is a highly trafficked site.

Advertising on it will only build your credibility!



11.11. Something Special for the Holidays

Do something **special**...



... for the seasonal holidays!

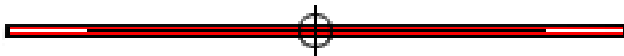
Get your customers feeling the **holiday spirit** (no matter which one) on your site. You don't have to do much...

- spice up your Home Page with a little festive design
- offer free gift wrapping
- offer shipping directly to the recipient of the gift
- post shipping cut-off dates
- develop gift recommendation lists and suggestions
- create "top sellers" lists

Be creative. Add a bit of joy!

Remember, this is a **global and multicultural audience** so be sure to address a variety of celebrations -- Christmas, Hannuka, Ramadan, Kwanzaa...

And any other special occasion you can possibly celebrate!



12. "Who Cares? So What?"

<yawn>

If you make your customers ask "Who Cares? So What?" before you answer "What's in it for me?", **forget about making the sale.**

No one likes an egocentric...



... **blabbermouth.** Don't talk about yourself, or the detailed features of your product, **until it's clear what you can do for your customer.** No one cares about you... **until** they understand that you are useful to them.

Then, and **only then**, do you tell them about...

- **The Features of Your Product** -- once they understand the benefits, they'll want to know "what exactly do I get and what does it do?"

- **Your Company** -- tell them about yourself in an "About Our Company" Page, **not** on the **Home Page as so many companies do.** Once they fully understand the benefits and the features, then they'll want to know more about **who** you are, and about **why** you can deliver the goods.



12.1. The Product Features Page

Your Product Page **delivers the substance that backs up the benefits** on the **Opening Page.**

Hook your prospect with some great opening sales copy. But if you offer nothing of substance (i.e., features) to support your "benefits promise," your customers will head straight back to the Search Engines.

In other words, your customer has heard the sizzle. **Now deliver...**

MYSS! 2002... "Who Cares? So What?" <yawn>



... the steak.

Your "What do I get" page must explain **exactly what your customer receives** when she purchases. It must not only clarify what the product **is**, it must also explain exactly what it **does**.

You can bet that this is one of your customer's key questions -- answer it... clearly and completely. Make it crystal clear. **Your visitor has to see, and understand, enough to believe it's worth the money!**

To communicate this well, remember this...

The customer does not work at your company. She does not know your products. She probably knows **far, far less**. **So...**

Assume your customers know nothing, and you'll communicate much better.



12.1.1. It's Not as Easy as It Sounds!

I can hear you say, "Well that was obvious." I thought the same way about describing PennyGold.

So how come I kept getting e-mails like this one?...

I have never invested in anything before, and the question that I have that does not seem to be answered at your website: will PennyGold give me, a person who knows nothing about investing, all the info such as how to buy, how to sell, and stuff like that? Basically, does PennyGold teach all the required knowledge?

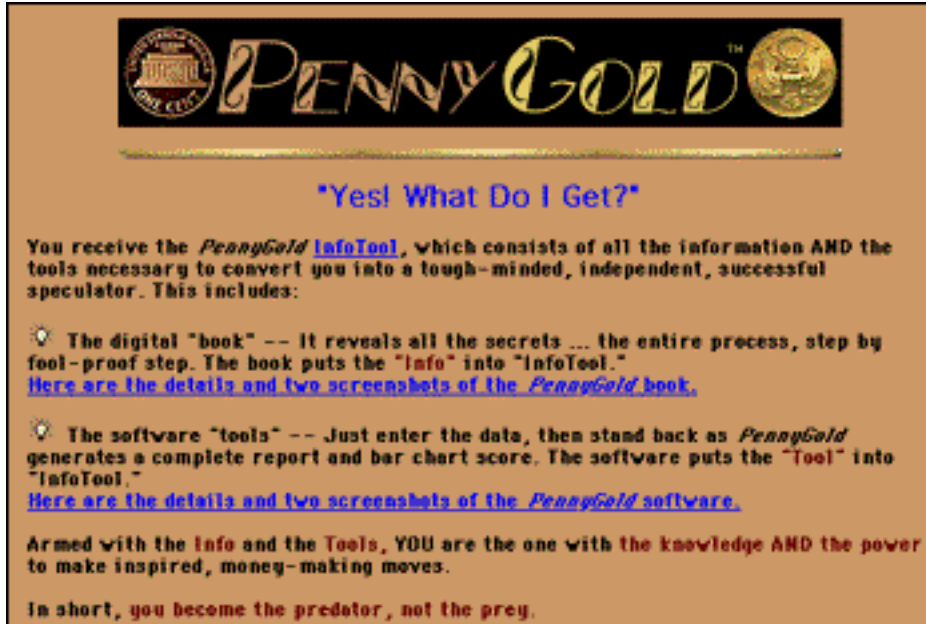
He was absolutely right -- **huge fault**. I was too close to the trees to see the forest. We made the changes immediately.

Don't assume the customer knows what you know, ever, but especially not when it comes to your product (gee, that sounds obvious...now).

MYSS! 2002... "Who Cares? So What?" <yawn>

I can't tell you how many times I revised PennyGold's "What Do I Get?" page. I had a lot of trouble getting myself into the zero-knowledge base of my customers for this page.

Finally, I got it! I no longer was asked that question...



What Do I Get?

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/300.html>



12.1.2. Two Compelling "Show & SELL" Techniques

Show pictures. But not straight, boring product pictures. Show users getting the benefit. If your customer can **feel** the benefits, the purchase is not far away!

See how Bombardier does? I can't wait to ride that Sea-Doo!...

MYSS! 2002... "Who Cares? So What?" <yawn>



Bombardier's Sea-Doo
<http://www.sea-doo.com/>

[**SIDEBAR**]

If you happen to be selling Sea-Doos, your mouth may well be watering in anticipation of a fantastic **Flash** presentation.

There's no doubt that the visual impact of broadband applications is stunning. How exciting it would be for your visitors to see, for example, a Bombardier plowing through the surf (with a happy vacationing family hooting and hollering in the background). Feel the exhilaration! Feel the excitement! Feel the fun...

... all through the power of your dial-up modem. Groan. More like "feel the boredom."

Whoops. Guess what you forgot? That's right -- you **cannot** design for broadband. Sorry, but no. 90% of your visitors don't have it. So...

What are you to do?

MYSS! 2002... “Who Cares? So What?” <yawn>

If you have a product that would benefit by having a visual presentation (like the Sea-Doo!), **offer the rich-media presentation only as an option. And only do it if the benefits far outweigh any possible detriments.**

Use powerful copy to draw your visitor in. **Something like...**

“Want to feel the sheer exhilaration that our cruising, 140 horsepower wave muncher can deliver? Can you handle the RUSH? Want to TASTE the surf? View our rich-media presentation NOW!

Pssst -- Better not let your kids see this!”

Then state the size of the presentation -- the download time for various connection speeds (i.e., 30 seconds at 28.8 kb, 15 seconds at 56 kb, etc., etc.).

Offer visitors the **option** of viewing the rich-media presentation. You won't lose the impatient ones who feel broadband applications are time-wasters. They'll just skip that part and continue with the rest of your site and product. Only those who have **chosen** to do so will see your riveting presentation. Best of all, these motivated visitors still get to taste the surf... right in their living rooms!

Better yet... if you're selling digital goods, **deliver the actual benefits**, for free... **on trial**. Two examples...

- **software** -- offer a trial version that dies after two months, or after a certain number of uses. Using the actual product **eliminates all doubts** in the mind of your customer.
- **digital book** (like this one) -- deliver a Table of Contents that really “teases” your customer into wanting the content. And provide a couple of terrific sample chapters. When you look at your trial package, ask yourself this...

“OK, let's assume the Web site succeeds in the trial download. When the customer sees the trial package, is the purchase a drop-dead-easy, can't-resist decision?”

While you shouldn't get sloppy, you can certainly get away with more sins by offering a **trial download of your digital product**.



12.2. The About Our Company Page

If yours is a small, unknown company, this is an important page. Of course, no matter how small you are, **you must first stress benefits to your customer on the Opening Page.**

Then build your case for **who** you are, and **why** you can deliver what you promise...

- brief history -- outline your experience in your field, how long you've been in business, and your understanding of your business.
- philosophy of business -- don't get sappy or metaphysical. Explain your reason for being in business, your mission statement (but don't call it that, please!).
- management and other principle personnel, and their backgrounds.

Tell all the above in a friendly, one-to-one, story kind of way. As if you were updating a friend that you hadn't seen in a while. If visitors understand **who** you are and **why** you're in business, **you'll be in business!**

[SIDEBAR]

Some experts believe posting a physical address and contact information (including e-mail, phone, and fax) help your chances of getting listed quickly in Yahoo!. What the heck! It certainly wouldn't hurt! And it certainly gives your customers the "warm-fuzzies."

Every word on your **About Us Page** must exist solely to establish your credibility, **without taking on an air of bragging.** Establish yourself as the expert, the best in your field, etc.

Sell the customer on why she should do business with you.

Make it short, snappy, **relevant to your reader...** and **don't appear to be bragging.** **Almost apologize for doing this,** especially if you elaborate on your personal history.

No matter who you are, your customer must feel that...

MYSS! 2002... “Who Cares? So What?” <yawn>

- you are real
- you are stable
- you have some kind of track record that can be verified
- you have a stellar reputation
- you can be reached.

Prove to your visitor that you will “**deliver the goods**” **and** that you will be around to **support them**.

[SIDEBAR]

Because my company and I were unknown to my target market (aggressive investors), and because PennyGold was expensive, I knew that I had to develop an especially strong “About Us” Page.

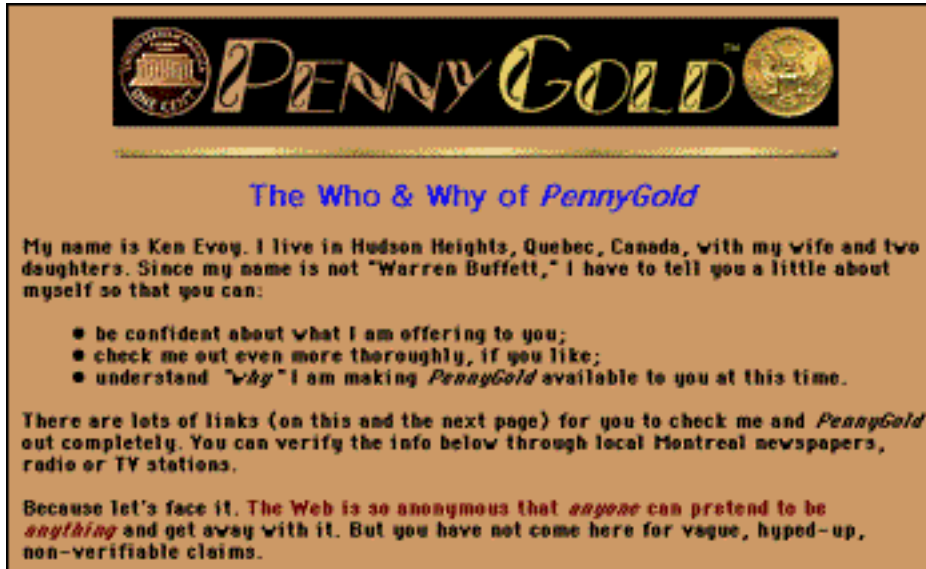
I had to deliver what is outlined above... in spades. The customer had to get a good feel for me... get comfortable with me **as a person** and **as an expert** in my field.

To appear as “real” as possible to my customer, I provided tons of specifics... all of them verifiable...

- where I went to college and med school
- past experiences in the business world
- how and why I started our Web business
- character references

I provided so much info, I actually had to break it into 2 pages. Here was the first one...

MYSS! 2002... “Who Cares? So What?” <yawn>



The Who and Why of PennyGold
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/100.html>



12.3. The Tech Support Page... Why NOT!

Of course, you want to offer **outstanding** tech support. Your customer deserves it.

You can actually reduce costly “live human” tech support (i.e., expenses) by providing a great online version. As Evan Schwartz says in his masterful [Webonomics...](#)

“Self-service provides for the highest level of customer comfort.” In other words, people love to do it themselves. Providing online tech support offers help 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

And it reduces costly “live” tech support! The best of both worlds.



So where’s the mistake? By making it reachable before the sale! **Why remind your “not-yet-I’m-thinking-about-it” customer of all the potential problems?** Why

MYSS! 2002... “Who Cares? So What?” <yawn>

show him parts lists and diagrams, troubleshooting decision trees, long lists of questions relating to a variety of problems?

These problems may only occur for one user in a thousand -- your prospect will probably never suffer a single glitch. But when you list all the things that can go wrong, and all the **work** it will take to solve them, well, you’re doing about all you possibly can to kill the sale.

Don’t do it. There’s no point. **Your prospect does not need tech support. It will kill sales.**

Instead, after the sale, when you e-mail your “thank you and congratulations”, provide your customer with the **tech support URL** (along with username and password to get in) for this product. Of course, let him know that should the tech support page not answer his question, you are always available by phone.

It’s not that you’re trying to hide problems. Every product will give some users some kind of difficulties. **It’s simply that your tech support URL is not relevant before the sale... making it available to everyone can only hurt sales.**



12.3.1. Live Support -- Why NOT!

Lately much ado has been made over the support services that allow you to chat in “**real time**” with visitors to your Web site. **This gives you the option of providing instant service to customers.**

Although this certainly sounds inviting...

You don’t need it.

First of all, by its very definition, **a highly usable site should be extremely intuitive and be simple to use and navigate.** If your site is highly usable, you won’t need “live” support -- only minimal support will be required, easily covered in your FAQs.

If you feel live support is an important option, perhaps you should have a serious look at your site design. Why can’t visitors find what they’re looking for? Why do they need help? If there’s a problem here, you can bet that for every person who uses live support, there are ten or twenty, or even one hundred who don’t bother.

MYSS! 2002... “Who Cares? So What?” <yawn>

Live support is a band-aid solution for bad design and usability.

Follow the timeless principles outlined in **MYSS! 2002**, and you won’t require a live support solution.

Secondly, one of the most important benefits of an online business is automation. We’re trying to save money here, not spend it, right? Why would you significantly **increase your costs** by implementing a “live support service” and allocating staff to manage the process?

Hello! Anybody in there?

[SIDEBAR]

One of the nicest aspects of the Web is your ability to surf away in total anonymity. After all, it’s really quite refreshing to go shopping without someone asking you -- “Can I help you?” -- every two minutes. When I read how these services allow you to “eavesdrop” on your visitors, and even **direct** their surfing experience, I become quite nervous. How do you think a visitor is going to react knowing there is someone lurking in the background monitoring, even controlling their online experience?

How would you react?

Uh-huh. Click-click. Bye-bye!

Thirdly... and this may surprise you...

Very few people use it!

Seriously!

As a little experiment, I decided to use a “real time” live support service at SiteSell.com for a short period. We receive over a million visits a week, certainly enough traffic to justify the use of this service.

What happened?

Absolutely... positively... **nothing!** Two queries -- and one was a friend of the support staff, dropping by to say hello.

Bottom line?

MYSS! 2002... “Who Cares? So What?” <yawn>

There has to be a really good reason to use live support on your page to make it worth the expense!

If you can think of one, here are a couple of companies to consider...



HumanClick

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



Livehelper

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

[**SIDEBAR**]

Believe it or not, live support might be dead even before it catches any steam. Why? Several companies have been working hard to develop interactive “smart bots.” These “bots” will replace a live helper by guiding visitors through your site, helping with questions, stubborn shopping carts, etc, etc.

I know what you’re thinking -- “yeah, right!”

That’s what I thought, too. But surprisingly, these bots are pretty intuitive. See for yourself...



Artificial Life

<http://www.artificial-life.com/>

Meet the “bot” crew (apparently, this company is not without a sense of humor)...

MYSS! 2002... "Who Cares? So What?" <yawn>



And chat with Luci at...



Luci - "Smart Bot"

http://www.artificial-life/default_luci.asp

I thought I'd start out with Luci on a bit more personal level. What did I write?

"Gee Luci, you're not at all what I expected. And you're pretty good looking for a bot".

Her reply?... "Thank you. I'll remember to tell my makers that."

My reply? Laughter. 😊



12.4. How to Use a Disclaimer To Build Credibility

Depending on the nature of your product, you may want to add a "This product is not for everyone" page.

First, it's fair to warn away inappropriate customers.

Second, you add credibility to the rest of your site.



Frame the disclaimer in the interests of your customer, but use it to maximize **your** legal protection at the same time. For example...

The PennyGold Disclaimer was easily the most boring page on the site. According to our log files, it was mid-range in terms of visitor popularity. So people **do** check it out.

It **added credibility** to the rest of the site -- customers told me so. "Geez Ken, sometimes it appears like you're trying to drive people away. But you know, when you read that disclaimer of yours, you feel that Ken must be a pretty fair person."

The PennyGold Disclaimer also helped to **protect us legally**, because it was clear that PennyGold was not a "get-rich-quick" deal. And it provided some solid, common sense to my prospects. The smart ones appreciated it.

Did the Disclaimer Page lose me sales? Probably, but they were "good losses" -- I really **didn't** want unhappy customers. I looked upon it as adding by subtracting.

And more importantly, it gained more sales than it lost...

MYSS! 2002... "Who Cares? So What?" <yawn>



Disclaimer: Why *PennyGold* May NOT Be for You

I am *not* a registered securities broker, dealer, analyst, representative, salesman, money manager, market maker, underwriter nor investment advisor.

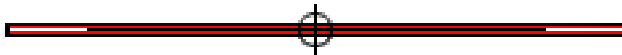
I am independent of any and all financial institutions, companies, organizations, and stock exchanges. No stock exchange or securities commission has either approved or disapproved of the information contained herein.

PennyGold is NOT investment advice. It IS a complete and accurate recounting of a system that has delivered spectacular results to date. It DOES contain all the tools necessary for you to find penny stocks and to get the information about them. And it DOES provide an analysis of that info, according to the [PennyGold principles](#) outlined in this Web site and in the "digital book" section of the InfoTool.

But YOU are the one who has to decide if that approach is valid. And YOU have to judge whether to act upon *PennyGold's* analysis for each stock. If you are not comfortable with the concept of using your own brain, *PennyGold* is NOT for you. *PennyGold* is NOT about getting "hot tips" -- it IS about becoming a skilled penny stock investor.

Disclaimer

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/400.html>



13. The Closer Page

“Do or die” time. There is only one reason why your visitor has made it to your **MWR Closer Page**...

Your site has succeeded... **so far!** He's interested.

So many sites today finish a pathway with photos and descriptions of the products, and... that's it. No clear way to respond. This isn't TV, it's the Web. **It's time for your visitor to respond...**

It's time to close the sale. Whatever your **MWR** is, **it's time to get it!**

Finish with an **irresistible offer** (bonuses, and possibly a little time pressure), then a strong, clear **call to action** (don't be shy -- tell your visitor what to do right now).

Or, as your VP Sales would say, **GET THE ORDER!**



13.1. Build to the SALE

If you sell **many product lines**, each starts with its own **Opening Page**, has its own **pathway**, and ends in its own **MWR Closer Page** (the different Closer Page responses should all tie into your central [shopping cart software](#)).

Pathways, of course, will vary in length, depending on the nature of the **product**, the **consumer** and the **vendor**. (Just compare PennyGold to any of the SiteSell.com family of sites.)

If your product costs over \$100 and you are an unknown, no one will buy off a short and quick pitch. You will have to build your case as a comprehensive pathway pulls your ever-more-excited visitor steadily to the **Closer Page**.

However, if you're offering **shareware for \$10**, then a sharp, benefits-laden one-or-two-pager (including the **MWR**) should do the job just fine (especially if you're Microsoft). The trial software should later complete the sale for you, **if it's any good!**

Think carefully about the **nature of your product, your target market**, and the

reputation (if any) of your company.

Then decide on how to build to the final close. **The MWR Closer Page should be the logical conclusion** to a pathway that has steadily built to this climax. In other words, there should be...



... no surprises on your **MWR Closer Page**.



13.2. Skip to the SALE

You never know when your on-site prospect becomes ready to buy. Some customers are super-easy “sells” -- impulse buyers. Others will memorize every page of your, and your competitors’, site before making a decision.

So, while you must build a pathway **that builds to the sale, also allow for an entire range of visitors** who become “ready to buy” at different times... everyone from the spur-of-the-moment impulse buyer to the ultimate careful shopper!

How do you build a pathway, yet still allow “**ready buyers**” to **jump** to your Order Page? Hey! **This is the Web!**...

Provide a link to your Closer Page on every important Content Page of your site. When you say “just the right thing” ... when your customer decides “That’s it, I want it” ... she links directly to the Closer Page and delivers your **MWR**.

Here’s an example of how PennyGold linked to the Closer Page **at the bottom of every important Content Page**...



Link to Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/100.html#ORDER>

[SIDEBAR]

For those of you who try the above link, you'll see that I actually linked visitors to a **pre-order** page. Due to PennyGold's unique nature (valuable confidential info and only 1,000 copies for sale), this was a critical Content Page that all serious visitors **had** to see first. I lost sales by doing this, but I accepted that. It's the exception that proves the rule.

If you visit the **MYSS!** page, you'll see that unlike PennyGold, all the text -- from benefit-laden headline, right down to the final call to action, is on one page. But it's fairly long copy. So to allow visitors to "skip to the sale" whenever they feel the urge, we've included the basic navbar...



... at key points along the way to the final call to action, and our **MWR** -- the purchase of **MYSS! 2002**.



13.3. No Distractions, Just Close!

While you should **always** be focused on getting the sale, you must be laser-beamed on the **MWR Closer Page**.

- No dead-end side-branches, for more “last second” info.
- No links to anywhere else **in the copy** (navbars only).
- **No new issues** raised.

Just get the order.



13.4. Why Via the Web?

Your **MWR Closer Page** must include **compelling reasons to respond via the Web**. Possibilities include...

- **great price** -- a Web business has low overhead, so you should be able to offer products **at a great price**. Of course, if you offer unique, high-end products, a low price may not be necessary or even wise.
- **selection** -- since you have a virtual store, you may not need to keep physical inventory. That opens up the potential to offer far greater selection than your “real-world” competitor (ex., Amazon.com does not really keep millions of books in inventory).
- **sales information** -- on your site, you can present the whole story, and answer any question, far better than any sales staff. You can offer the ability to drill-down to almost unlimited detail, **should the consumer so desire**. Build an interactive help desk, e-mail follow-up systems, etc.
- **ease/convenience/instant gratification** -- ordering anything is just a click away. No need to spend money on gas or time in a “real-world” store. No need to even pick up the phone!
- **distribution edge** -- some products, because of their very nature, are best “shipped” via the Web. Software, video games and infoproducts are just a **download** away.
- **uniqueness of products** -- allows people access to products they cannot buy locally.

Work these reasons into the copy of your Closer Page. **But don't hit your customer over the head with them.** For example, **don't** say...

"Just hit the Order button. It's far easier than phoning." You're making a judgment call for your customer, which she will resist. And it's too pleading.

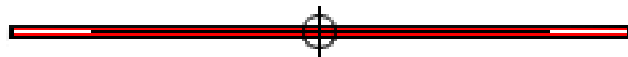
... Instead say...

"Order now and you'll be downloading in just a minute!"



OK, enough general issues. Now let's cover the **"Top 3"** of the **MWR Closer Page**...

- The Offer
- The Call to Action
- The **"How-to's"** of the **MWR**



13.5. How to Make an Offer They Can't Refuse

No matter what your **MWR** is, your customer better hit your **Closer Page** panting for your product.

The offer has to convert that **desire** into a **MWR** right here, right now. In the words of "The Godfather," **you have to...**



... make them an offer that they can't refuse.

Real-world retailers have sales, clearance specials, "limited quantity while supplies last" offers. Direct mail marketers have thousands of techniques to **get the order...**

now. But this is the Web, a totally unique medium, where getting the order now is more important than ever.

Why **now**? Because this **is** the Web. It's more fun to seek the **surprise of the new**, than to return to where you've been. Assume your customer will **never** return. **So get the order now!**

Offer your product at the **right moment**, and sweeten the deal with an **irresistible bonus offer**. Create some way to develop **time-anxiety** in the reader.

Then structure a powerful offer.

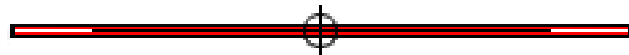
[SIDEBAR]

No matter how good your product is, you have to "**close.**" Many people think that their product is so brilliant that they don't need to "lower themselves" to sell. Wrong! And to those people, I would add, "Sales is a noble and important profession." It's where the action is. Do it well, and you will thrive. So...

Don't think there's something wrong with asking for the order! Are you are offering a great product with outstanding benefits? Do you honor your money-back guarantee? If so, you're offering something that will improve your customer's life, with no risk. But...

Some customers tend to resist buying, especially over the Web. You obviously can't be there, face to face, with your customer -- so you've got to do your best with the written word. **Don't be shy to get the sale!** And don't make the purchase a "close call." Offer so much that your customer would have to be brain-dead to turn it down.

The offer is a major step in converting interest and desire into your MWR.



13.5.1. How to Use the Free Bonus

People like to get...



... free stuff.

The PennyGold Web Site offered a **free download** of a database which contained every PG transaction made over a six year span. There were two versions... a 4 Meg file and a 1 Meg. The only difference? The 4 Meg contained scans of all the confirmation reports for every stock transaction.

Only info-crazed obsessives would want to take the time to download a 4 Meg download. Right? **Wrong!...** 2 to 1 in favor of the 4 Meg. **Why?...**

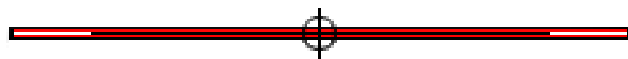
It's free!



Free stuff motivates. If your product lends itself, free bonuses are a strong way to **get the order... now**. If your customer orders **directly**, add a bonus high-quality product, preferably related to what you are selling.

Of course, the trick is to find products with **high perceived value, and low production costs**. Infoproducts are a strong first choice since they are so cheap to produce and distribute. Examples include reports, audio tapes, 30 minute consultation, etc.

Your free bonuses should increase the value of your offer to the point where your prospect thinks, "**Geez, I can't afford not to buy this!**"



13.5.2. How to Create "**Buy Now**" Anxiety

An expiration date ("this offer good if you respond within the next 10 days") produces **time pressure**, a tried-and-true successful method in **direct (offline) marketing**.

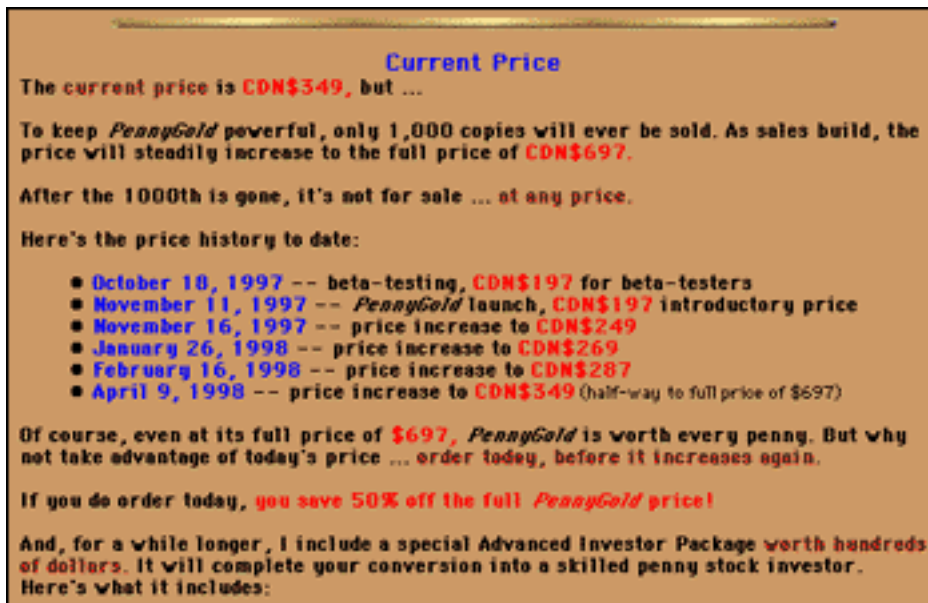
On the Web, it's a slightly different kettle of fish. An offline customer receives a mail offer only once due to the cost. Online, an interested visitor can return to your site several times. So design original, **Web-appropriate** ways to create the need to **order now... be creative in your experimentation**.

Yes, you can still go the traditional route -- valuable bonus, a price reduction, the concept of limited availability -- to get the order. **However, the key is to make your offer stand out from the crowd.**

The Web provides new and unique ways to build on the concept of time-anxiety. Take advantage of the medium.

For example, the PennyGold site told visitors that we were only selling 1,000 copies. **And** that the price would increase as we sold more and more of the units. Many people e-mailed asking if we had any left... when the price was going up next, etc.

Of course, we had to back it up. We provided proof about the 1,000 limit. And, as the units sold, we really did increase the price. We even included the price history on the site...



The screenshot shows a webpage with a tan background. At the top, it says "Current Price" in blue. Below that, it states "The current price is **CDN\$349**, but ...". Then it explains that only 1,000 copies will be sold and the price will increase to a full price of **CDN\$697**. It also mentions that after the 1000th unit is sold, it's not for sale at any price. A section titled "Here's the price history to date:" lists several price increases from October 1997 to April 1998. At the bottom, it encourages ordering today to save 50% off the full price and mentions a special Advanced Investor Package.

Current Price

The current price is **CDN\$349**, but ...

To keep *PennyGold* powerful, only 1,000 copies will ever be sold. As sales build, the price will steadily increase to the full price of **CDN\$697**.

After the 1000th is gone, it's not for sale ... at any price.

Here's the price history to date:

- **October 18, 1997** -- beta-testing, **CDN\$197** for beta-testers
- **November 11, 1997** -- *PennyGold* launch, **CDN\$197** introductory price
- **November 16, 1997** -- price increase to **CDN\$249**
- **January 26, 1998** -- price increase to **CDN\$269**
- **February 16, 1998** -- price increase to **CDN\$287**
- **April 9, 1998** -- price increase to **CDN\$349** (half-way to full price of \$697)

Of course, even at its full price of **\$697**, *PennyGold* is worth every penny. But why not take advantage of today's price ... **order today, before it increases again.**

If you do order today, **you save 50% off the full *PennyGold* price!**

And, for a while longer, I include a special Advanced Investor Package worth hundreds of dollars. It will complete your conversion into a skilled penny stock investor. Here's what it includes:

Order Page, Price History

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#HISTORY>



And guess what! Each time we increased the price, we had a surge of sales for a week. Why?

The increased price validated the process and validated the product. And it increased time anxiety, because it proved that the price really was increasing! And who knew when the next increase would be?

Be creative. **Use the unique aspects of the Web to create time pressure in a new and genuine way!** Don't cross your **customer's tolerance limits** into "used-car salesman" territory -- phoney overly-aggressive, tactics smell bad and lose sales.

Bottom line?

Yes, it's always a good idea to **create a sense of urgency...**



... to your selling proposition.

There's nothing like urgency to build the desire to buy. Often it's all you need to tip the scales in your favor for that "on-the-fence" visitor -- those visitors interested enough to purchase, **but not to the extent that they'll get up and walk upstairs to get their wallet.**



So you must motivate those "almost-buyers" into action. But you've got to be careful. How would you feel if you were hit by these gems?...

Order by midnight tonight, and we'll include a special bonus!

Now's the chance of a lifetime to receive our special product upgrade when you buy our regularly priced model.

And my all-time favorite, the "rotating javascript" (date changes daily),...

Order now, before March 3, 2002, and you'll get a special 25% off discount.

...

...

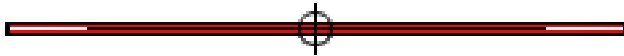
Order now, before April 3, 2002, and you'll get a special 25% off discount.

Exactly. Click. Bye-bye!

Good, **credible** copy illustrating the unique problem-solving capabilities of your product works **much** better! Unless there's a real "honest-to-goodness" reason why you should be raising prices (see PG example above), or limiting supply, stick with re-honing your copy. Impress those "almost-buyers" to the point where **they're racing...**



... for their wallets!



13.5.3. Bundles, Discounts, And Coupons

Customers want to believe they're getting the **best deal** available.

As a merchant, there are a couple of excellent ways to make sure your clients are getting top value for their dollar...

1) Bundle items -- Increase the perceived value of your product by grouping a number of related items in your sales package. This is especially effective if the cost of the whole bundle is approximately the value of a single item within the grouping.

Digital products -- software, e-books, or infoproducts -- are great for this strategy. Why? These products don't represent any "physical" cost to you, and don't incur any additional shipping charges.

"Bundling" a few items together, and offering the consumer a significant discount is a fantastic way to build sales.

What sounds better?...

Buy "The Ultimate Guide To Weight Loss" for \$49.95!

or...

Buy "The Ultimate Guide to Weight Loss" for \$49 Now, and Receive "The Ultimate Guide to Exercise" and "The Ultimate Guide to Low Fat Eating" (a combined value of over \$29.95) for free!

Overdeliver!

2) Buy in quantity -- Why buy one for \$29.95, when you can buy two for \$49.95, or three for \$69.95?

If you can, why not increase the **percentage of the discount** the customer gets as he buys more of your product? It's the perfect incentive for buying.

3) Clip and save online -- Welcome to the joy of clipping and saving, now available from your friendly neighborhood e-merchant.

Yup!

You can now clip...



... and save online.

A popular habit offline, passionate clippers can now visit a vast array of Web sites for the same type of offerings.

Are coupons important? Well... some people clip coupons, and others don't, but one thing is for sure...

Everybody likes to save a buck or two!

And which sites attract the most coupon use? Have a look...

a) Grocery sites

b) Book sites

c) Health sites

d) Music sites

(Source: NPD Group)

For merchants, coupons may play an important role in getting the customer to make

that vital first purchase. Shoppers are hesitant to buy from an unknown, so saving the cost of shipping on the initial purchase (or some other incentive) might just be enough to tip the scales in your favor!



Want to use coupons online? Here's how to do it...

- allow customers to download and print a coupon off your Web site for use in your brick-and-mortar store.
- allow customers to redeem coupons instantly on your Web site.
- allow customers to download, print, and mail your coupon for a discount.
- offer a coupon for free shipping on the next purchase.
- market coupon offers through your network of affiliates.
- market your coupon offer on Web sites that are dedicated to coupons.
- include coupons with purchases as incentives for future purchases.

Check out these examples...



Valupage

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



Coupons.com

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



Coolsavings.com

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



Recently, I received an order from Amazon.com. This one had a little bonus in it -- a \$10.00 coupon. Good deal, right? Sure. But here's the **smart** part...

Amazon.com already knows I'm a customer. I've bought from them several times. They don't have to convince me that Amazon is a great place to shop online. So what do they do? They send me a \$10.00 coupon to their partner store, Drugstore.com. Good thinking. Now I'm introduced to an entirely new range of products online, all backed by the credibility of Amazon.

Sure, a \$10.00 coupon for Amazon.com would have been more useful for me. But this coupon **will** get me over to drugstore.com, even if it's just for a look. And the \$10.00 means I **will** probably buy something small, just to check the service out. Obviously, Amazon is hoping I'll be impressed enough to start buying there on a regular basis.



For the merchant, it's a brilliant strategy. See how Amazon is using coupons to capture a larger share of my total online spending?

Smart thinking!

Bottom line on coupons?

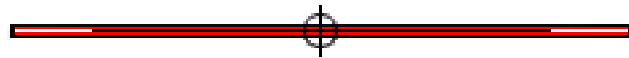
Used sparingly and effectively, they're a **nice addition to your complete Web marketing strategy.**

But they're not a priority. Worry about coupons later...

When everything else is done!

[**SIDEBAR**]

If you decide to market using coupons, please don't venture into the land of low-credibility. **For your coupon program to work, customers have to believe it's worth something.** You've seen the brick-and-mortar stores with the "storewide clearance," "inventory overstock," and "manufacture liquidation" sales every single week? How believable are they? Why would you buy anything at regular price? Use your coupons sparingly, and they add value to your advertising.



13.5.4. The Perfect Offer...

A well-crafted offer...

- 1) combines **product, price and bonuses** in such a way that the customer can easily justify the purchase price.
- 2) creates an intense **buy now** urgency.

[**SIDEBAR**]

Of course, depending again on your product, target market and company, you may not need to offer a bonus or exert buy-now-pressure. But be aware that they are powerful weapons in case your present situation changes.

3) **repeats the major points from previous pages.** People forget. So repeat the highlights to your customer...

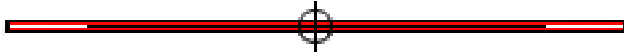
- **key benefits...** how great it will feel to have and use this product. Make him feel it all over again.
- **your guarantee...** how risk-free this purchase is.
- **testimonials...** add a brilliant, convincing one here.
- **your USP...** re-establish your USP. There must be strong reasons to buy from you in **particular** (exclusivity, credibility, etc.).

Re-read your offer. If you are convinced that it more than justifies the price in the customer's mind, you're almost home.

[**SIDEBAR**]

If you are selling an end-user consumer item...

... and your offer justifies the price in the mind of your **prospect's spouse**, you're **all the way home!**



13.6. What's the Right Price?



In the first edition of **MYSS!**, I said... "Pricing is a complicated issue." However, I also said-- "if you remember these two most important points, you'll be fine..."

1) It's not necessary to be an expert on pricing. No error is fatal. You can always change the price tomorrow -- those who remember that the Web is perfect for super-cheap experimentation have a huge edge.

2) "Cheaper" does not necessarily bring more sales. In the case of PennyGold, increasing the price actually increased sales!"

The principles of pricing on the Web still remain true today if you're selling a unique, high value product like PennyGold. But otherwise... **things HAVE changed.**

The Web has become more and more competitive. Each and every day, more companies are joining the e-commerce fray. Shopping bots roam the Net looking for the best price, and merchants can check on competitors in a couple of mouse clicks! One of the better-known shopping bots is...



MySimon

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

Communication is instantaneous, and free. **Get it right the first time.**



13.6.1. Pricing Strategy

Here's the age-old, tired way to determine price...

Take your cost per product (production, advertising, marketing, etc.), and add a healthy profit to it.

That's a very simple explanation. Of course, things can get much more complicated. With the advice of a \$15,000 marketing and pricing consultant, you could construct a strategy to...

- 1) Price below the market in an effort to capture a **greater percentage of market share**.
- 2) Price above the market to build **quick short-term profits**.
- 3) Price at the market to **keep things safe**.
- 4) Establish the **long-term value of a customer**, and give the product away! (Ever hear of Columbia House?)



The **R & W** Web site has a funky little javascript calculator that will help you determine the life-time value of a customer...



Ryan and Wong Consulting Group

<http://www.ryanandwong.com/lvalue.htm>

Or, there's a fifth, and much better solution (and you don't need a consultant)...

5) Ask your customers (and prospects), what the product is worth to them!

Sound ridiculous? I assure you -- it's not! When you stop and think about it, what better way to really find out what something's worth, than to ask your customers?

That's right, why not go directly to the people who are going to respond to your price,

and ask them...

“Hey, what’s this worth to you?”



Not **testing the product market before launch** is one of the biggest mistakes e-marketers make today. You might find that...

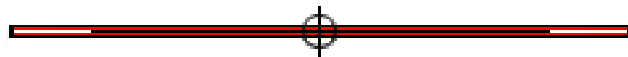
- what your customers would pay in relation to your production costs means you’ll never make a cent.
- there isn’t any demand for your product.
- there’s a huge demand for your product, and people would gladly pay you more than what you were planning to sell it for!
- lowering your cost a small amount will bring a three-fold increase in sales.
- raising the price a small amount will not significantly reduce sales.

Wouldn’t that information be helpful?

Most pricing strategies simply determine cost, examine the competition, estimate demand, and make an “educated guess” as to what the market will bear. The fantastic thing about the Web is that you can **keep experimenting until you find the most profitable price** (profit-per-unit x # units sold) with no worry. On the Web, you can always **correct your mistakes**.

When it comes to pricing online, **creativity, common sense, and a willingness to test** are far more important than reading forty books on pricing!

But now, **there IS a better way...**



13.6.2. Make Your **PRICE SELL!**

If you’re going to ask your customers what your product is worth...

You need a vehicle to do so! And that vehicle is **Make Your Price Sell!...**

[**SIDEBAR**]

Make Your Price Sell! is our server-side statistical analysis tool. It places a **user-friendly** pricing survey on your site. Then, using complex algorithms, it determines the price point where you'll make the greatest profits, and the most sales...

MAKE YOUR PRICE SELL!

Make Your Price Sell!

<http://myspsitesell.com/>

MYPS! comes with a comprehensive manual that gives you the absolute nitty-gritty on pricing. If you want a quick grounding, subscribe to the **Pricing Masters Course...**



Send a blank e-mail to [tpsmt@sitsell.com](mailto:tpsm@sitsell.com) and find the **Perfect Price!**

I was just about to set fingers to keypad to tell you a little more about the “ins and outs” of **MYPS!**, when **the spotlights went on...**



... eureka!

Why bother trying to improve perfection? Top the “un-toppable”? I couldn’t think of a reason. So here’s what I decided to do...

Instead of describing **MYPS!** in my own words, I'm going to turn you over to the highly-esteemed Ralph Wilson, who reviewed **MYPS!** in depth on his own site some time ago, and who graciously allowed us to post his review on the **MYPS!** site. If you're not familiar with the name...

Ralph Wilson is the dean of Web marketers. He and his excellent site, www.wilsonweb.com, have been cited and lauded in such media as Business Week, PC Magazine, the Wall Street Journal, MSNBC and Inc. Online. Yahoo! even has an entire section reserved for wilsonweb.com articles.

Mr. Wilson's e-commerce product reviews are renowned for their objectivity and accuracy. As they say in baseball, "he calls 'em as he sees 'em." **So... without further ado, here's the review...**

Review: **Make Your Price Sell!**
by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, E-Commerce Consultant
Web Marketing Today, May 9, 2000
<http://www.wilsonweb.com/wmt5/issue80.htm>

Ken Evoy, **MYPS!** Creator
Make Your Price Sell!
by Ken Evoy and Carol Ann Dorn
SiteSell.com Inc.

I'm thinking about producing some information products to sell on the Web. But how should I price them? I wonder. I can look at something similar and price them like that. Nightingale-Conant Corp. sells self-help information products. Then I look at something at my local Border's bookstore and wonder if I'm pricing too high. What is the right price? What is the best price for my information products? Now I know how to find the answer.

I'm very excited about Ken Evoy's new **Make Your Price Sell!** online service. The system consists of an online survey you can customize and cut and paste onto your Web site. After describing your product or service as clearly and compellingly as you are able, you have your customers fill out a short survey. The answers are recorded and analyzed in the **MYPS!** server, and offer you powerful insights into how to price your products.

Six Key Questions

The survey consists of three pairs of questions that deal with:

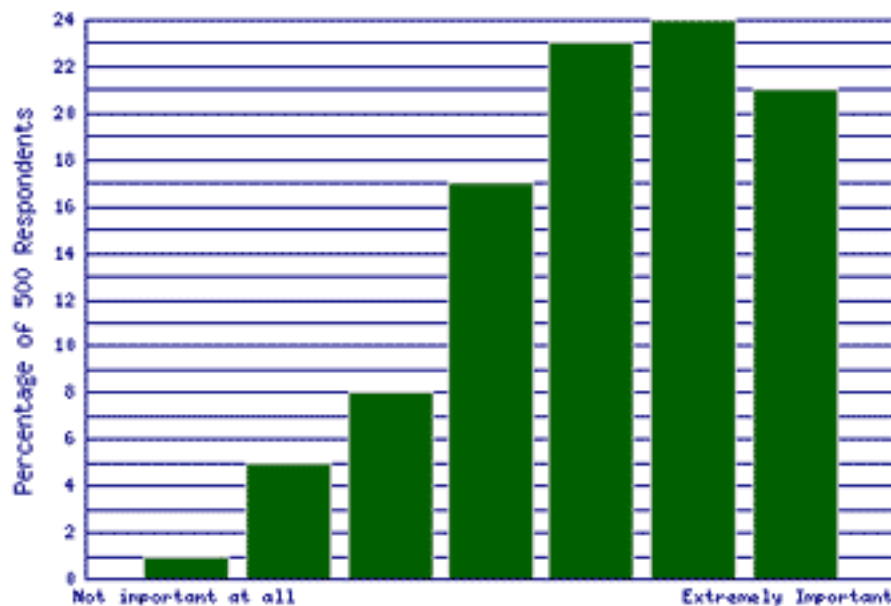
- **Product impact** -- how unique and important your respondent considers it.
- **Net buying habits** -- how often your respondent buys this type of product and how much he usually spends.
- **Price points** -- what your respondent considers a “fair” price for the product and where the “**Teeter Point**” is.

The “**Teeter Point**” is a key piece of information (and Evoy has trademarked the term). Half your respondents are asked, “What price is almost too high to buy this product?” The other half are asked, “What price is just a bit too high to buy this product?” In other words, where is the point that respondents really have to struggle to decide whether they should buy the product or not?

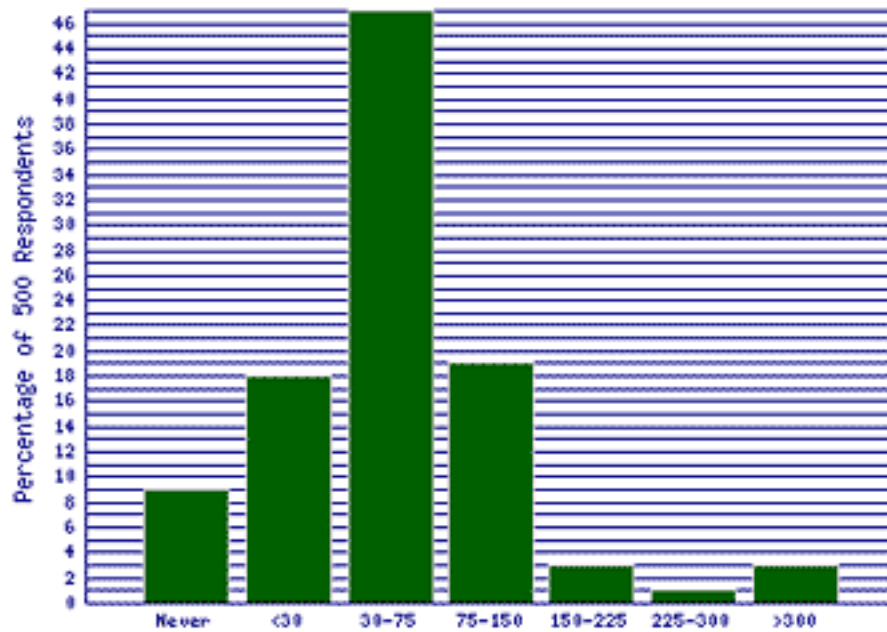
Bar Charts

The beauty of **MYPS!** is in the graphs it produces. Here are some examples...

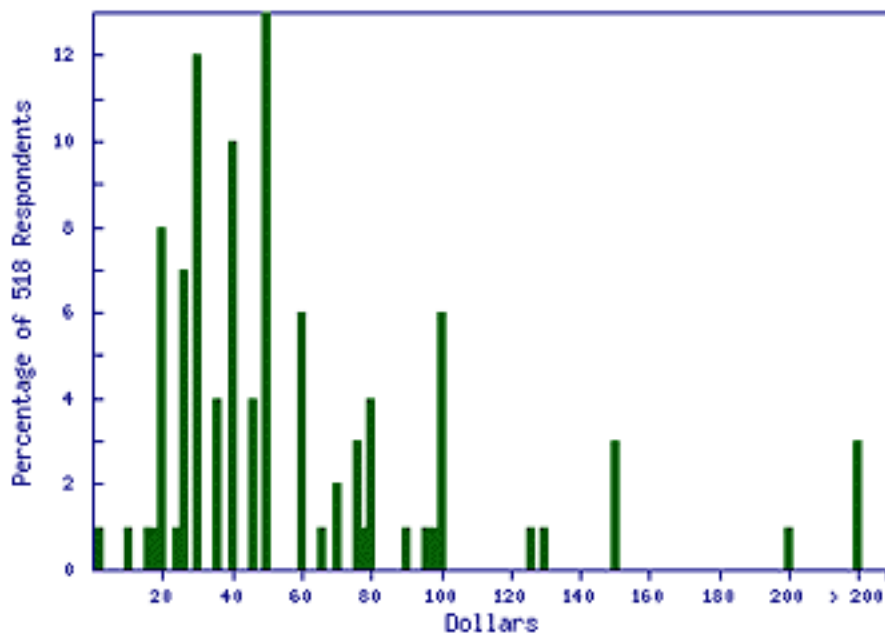
The “How important is the product to you?” question results in a bar graph...



The “How much do you usually spend for this kind of product?” question shows another bar graph...



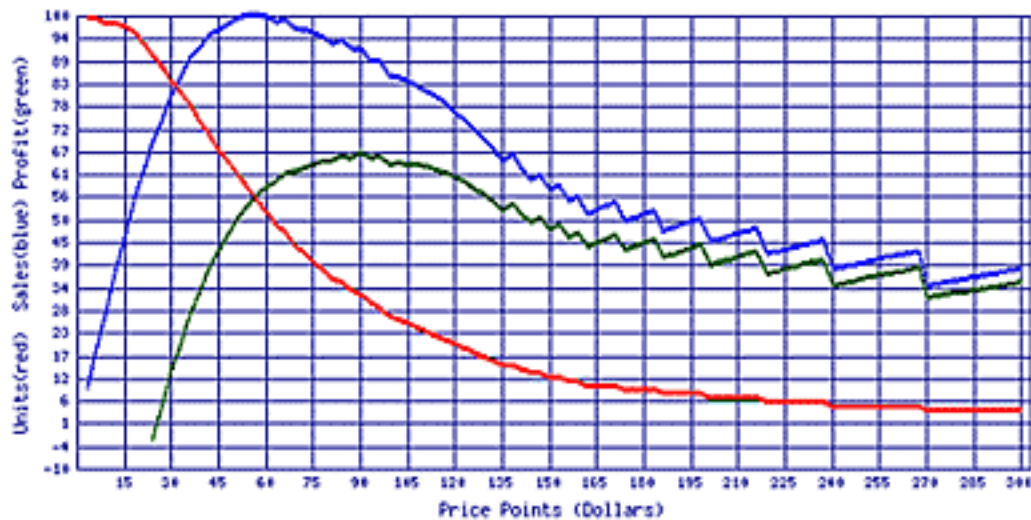
The “What is a fair price for this product?” question graph shows a scattering of answers from low to high. But the graph enables you to see the clustering...



Composite Graph

The real genius of **Make Your Price Sell!**, however, is found in the Composite

graph...



It takes a bit of work to understand it, but an effort very much worth the time. The program plots smoothed data obtained from respondents into single curves. In the example shown in the manual, the red line displays the drop off in units purchased as the price increases. The blue line looks like a dome with its top arching over right at \$57, which is the price point at which the program has determined you will make your greatest total sales dollars -- that is, you will sell the product to the greatest number of people. The green line is a more shallow dome that peaks right about \$90, the price point at which you will make the greatest gross profit. You sell fewer products at this higher price, but the higher margin means you make a higher profit. After \$90 the maximum profit point passes -- though slowly. The graph indicates that you could price substantially higher than \$90 for a price "skimming" strategy, and still make a tidy profit.

So where should you price the product shown in this example? If you have a penetration price strategy the price should be around \$57. For a high profit strategy you would price around \$90. Your final price depends upon the pricing strategy you've set as part of your overall marketing plan.

The 122-page manual provides a lucid explanation of pricing theory, and then describes exactly how to use **MYPS!** to determine price. It includes twelve ways marketers can find the right people to fill out the online survey, and notes that price consultants may want to administer the survey in paper form, and later input the answers into the **MYPS!** online interface. Considering the quality of information the graphs offer, this will expand the toolset of many consultants.

Weaknesses

Make Your Price Sell! isn't perfect. The graph indicating price peaks shows jagged stairstep "peaks" off to the right side of the graph. The uninitiated might mistake them for meaningful price points, while in actuality they are graphing artifacts resulting from sparse data on that edge of the graph. The plotting program should have smoothed them out. The text interpreting the graph can be improved, too, explaining the price points the graph is showing you. I would have liked the ability to isolate out the responses of those who were the most frequent purchasers of the product type, since this would tell me what those who actually purchased such products thought of them, rather than diluting their insights with the opinions of respondents who didn't purchase this type of product often at all. **MYPs!** offers a way to look at the answers of your "best prospects" but doesn't really explain how this is determined. Like any first generation software product, **MYPs!** has a few rough edges that will need to be smoothed, and features that need to be expanded in later versions.

The Bottom Line

But **MYPs!** succeeds wonderfully at its chief goal: to provide marketers with a scientific tool that will help them set their product's "Perfect Price." And for the first time it makes available to mere mortals on the Web the sophisticated analytical tools once only high-priced consultants were privy to.

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At SiteSell.com, we use **MYPs!** before every major product launch -- in fact, we originally designed it for our own use. But it was so helpful, that we decided to make it available to other Net marketers.

Why?


MYPs! provides invaluable information. It eliminates guesswork. It lets us price every product with razor-sharp accuracy, based on what the market will bear. The simple survey looks like this...

Make Your Words Sell! Pre-Launch Marketing Survey

Please answer **all** of the following questions as accurately as possible...

1. How important is Make Your Words Sell! to you?

1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7 ○

Not important  *Extremely important*

2a. What price is **ALMOST TOO HIGH to buy Make Your Words Sell!?**

\$
US dollars, please

2b. What price is **JUST A BIT TOO HIGH to buy Make Your Words Sell!?**

\$
US dollars, please

3. How much do you usually spend for Information Products on the Net?

US dollars, please

☐ I have never bought Information Products on the Net.

☐ Less than \$10

☐ \$10 - \$24

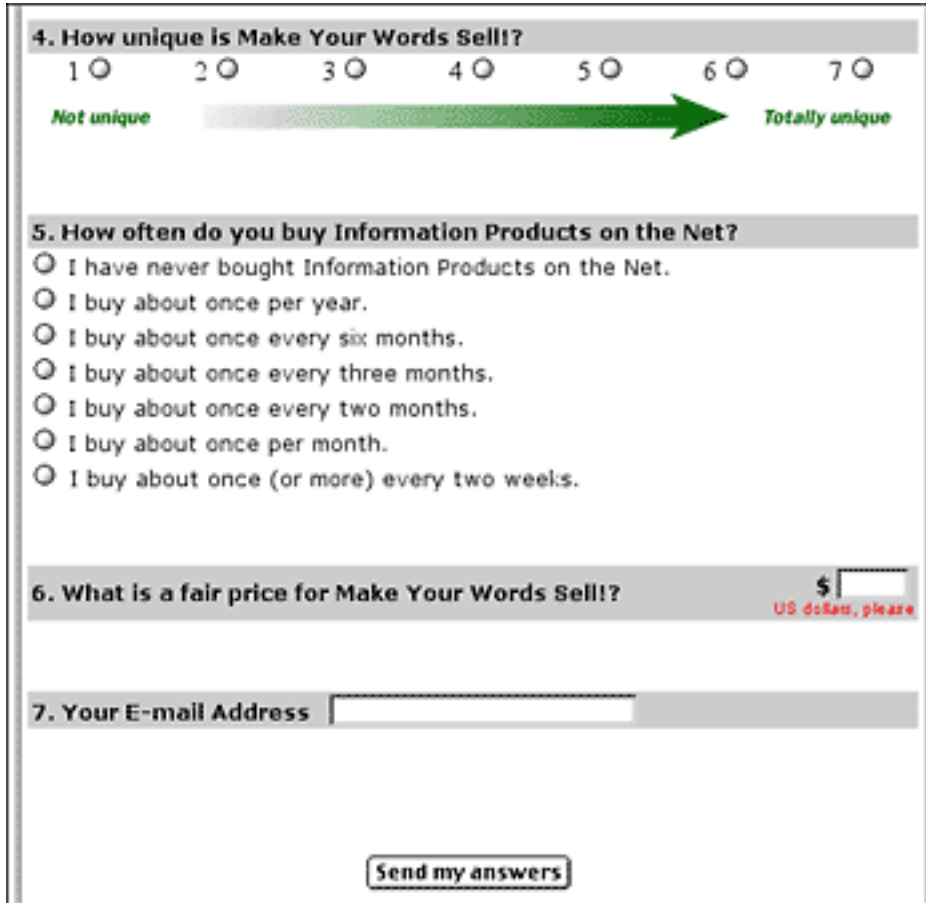
☐ \$25 - \$49

☐ \$50 - \$74

☐ \$75 - \$100


☐ Over \$100

And the bottom half of the survey...



4. How unique is Make Your Words Sell!?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not unique  Totally unique

5. How often do you buy Information Products on the Net?

☐ I have never bought Information Products on the Net.

☐ I buy about once per year.

☐ I buy about once every six months.

☐ I buy about once every three months.

☐ I buy about once every two months.

☐ I buy about once per month.

☐ I buy about once (or more) every two weeks.

6. What is a fair price for Make Your Words Sell!?

\$

US dollars, please

7. Your E-mail Address



Six quick questions, all but two “answerable” by radio buttons. Total time required to complete survey? Under 30 seconds. And that’s important. Remember our discussion on usability? **Remove any barriers.** People don’t want to fill out names and addresses, answer a hundred questions, comment on this and that, blah, blah, blah.

So **MYPS!** respects the importance of your visitor’s time. That’s good.

But you need more. To really get folks to respond to your survey, you need to give something away.

For the survey we ran to compile feedback on **Site Build It!**, we gave participants a copy of **Make Your Site Sell MORE!** as a **thank-you gift**. This product is not available anywhere else from SiteSell.com.

Here's the background on this product. I gave a speech about site-selling to an e-commerce convention in Los Angeles. Attendees paid \$5,000 each (Gulp!) to attend this 4-day seminar, so I felt a strong obligation to put all I knew about site-selling into my 90 minute presentation.

I originally created this bonus book as a handout for that affluent group of dedicated marketers. Attendees loved it. So its value as an freebie "incentive" is therefore quite powerful.

On other occasions, survey respondents are guaranteed a discount (usually around 10%) on whatever the price happens to be when we launch.

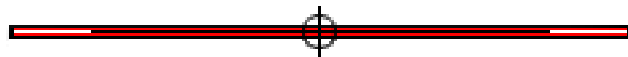
Whatever it is you do to motivate your visitors...

Reward them well for providing you invaluable information.



Bottom line on a pricing survey?

A pricing survey is more helpful than a room full of expensive consultants. **Go to the source, and ask your target market directly!** What could be better?



13.6.3. Dynamic Pricing

Chances are...

Your ancient ancestors knew more about dynamic pricing...



...than you do!

We used dynamic pricing for thousands of years. Then the industrial revolution came along and killed dynamic pricing stone dead. It was replaced with **static, or "fixed" pricing**, which is what we still use today. But the Net is going to change all that.

First... what the heck is “static” or “fixed pricing?” And “dynamic pricing”?

Let's start with static pricing...

All it means is that a **merchant sets a price, and doesn't change it.** For example...

That golf shirt at Wal-Mart was \$29.95 last week, is \$29.95 today, and will be \$29.95 until the day it goes on sale... which is really just a new fixed price. And it will be the same price in each and every Wal-Mart between Miami and Seattle.

But for thousands of years, **pricing was dynamic.** It changed, ebbing and flowing, in direct co-relation to supply and demand. Market vendors could see competitors' prices and stock, and **could balance that against buyer demand**, adjusting their prices accordingly. Sure it was raw, and sure it was low-tech, but it was dynamic pricing, and it worked. Your competitor's entire stock stolen by bandits on the long trip into town? Up goes your price! Bumper crop for everyone? Down goes your price.

Simple... and effective.



But then things changed. With the **onset of the industrial revolution and mass marketing**, dynamic pricing was no longer practical. Fixed pricing worked because it was simply the most effective way to handle matters, given the technology at the time.

But now things are changing again. The Net allows nearly **instantaneous exchanges of information** -- which means supply and demand can again be measured... in real-time.

This means dynamic pricing can once again be realized. And for both the vendor and the merchant, selling through dynamic pricing is by far the more efficient way. With dynamic pricing, the price of a product acts more like the price of a stock on a stock exchange... **adjusting constantly**, on a second-to-second basis, a **perfect reflection of market conditions at any given moment.**

The result?

Customers buy more product at a price that makes sense to them.

Now here's the interesting part...

SiteSell.com has developed its own technology to **price products dynamically**. It's a server side software application that we currently use to price all but two of our products. These are the first products on the Net that are **fully** dynamically priced. For example...

\$33.8466 CAD

[Don't see the price? Price not changing? Click here.](#)

However, Canada is famous for its feeble dollar. So, if you're in the U.S. or the rest of the world, think of this as yet another bargain from Canada...

At today's conversion rate, that means **the price in U.S. dollars is only...**

\$22.8566 USD

(Currency conversion for rest of world is on Order Confirmation page.)

[Don't see the price? Price not changing? Click here.](#)

[Click here to see why the price is changing.](#)

Make Your **Words Sell!**
<http://myws.sitesell.com/>



Exciting stuff, to be sure!

How does it work?

Well, the price of the **dynamically-priced products** are always dropping. If no sales occurred for a couple of days, well...

We'd literally be giving these products away!

Now, here's the good part...

The price also increases! 😊

Yup, every time a sale occurs, the **price increases** by a small amount, spread out over thirty minutes. That's triggered by consumer demand. So, depending on whether there's been an order in the last thirty minutes, the price might be ticking up or down.

What does this mean?

Well, your customers will vary in price sensitivity. Some are cautious penny-pinchers. Others are happy to pay the asking price once they've found just what they're looking for...

And others -- well they're somewhere in between.

So as the price of the product drops, **people start buying** -- buying pressure increases as the price decreases. But when people buy, what happens? That's right -- the **price starts going up again**. Supply and demand, correct?

The price customers see on the Order Page is a **perfect reflection**, at that very moment, of the **balance between the buying pressure from visitors to the site and the continuously dropping price**.



This part is really cool...

Just like in a stock market a customer may order at the current market price (the price displayed in the ticker) or he may submit a bid **below current market price**.

If the price of the product falls to the level of that bid, the order is filled. (Maybe at 4:00 A.M. in the morning!) A bidding page allows participants (yes, buying is now participatory) to view a weekly price graph. There they can view the high, low and average price for the week as well as the most recent sale price.

What does this mean?

Consumers buy at the price that makes the most sense to them. Dynamic pricing is never hype-driven, "rip-off" pricing. **Price increases are generated by buyers, not the merchant.** This validates the perceived value. So when prices are high, customers are stating that it's worth a high price! Generally, as prices rise, the **Conversion Rates drop**. Our experience at SiteSell.com shows that with dynamic

pricing, **Conversion Rates hold steady**, even rise, at higher prices. (Until a “too high” price is reached).

Is that it?

Nope! Dynamic Pricing is a “**customer rewarding**” buying experience. It’s exciting and... it’s fun!

Customers receive e-mails...

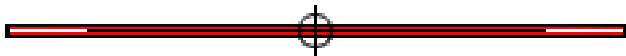
- **When they are out-bid!**
- **When someone else gets an order filled ahead of them!**
- **When their bid order has lapsed.**

This causes excitement, increased return visit traffic, and a sense of involvement in the buying process.

Price driven by demand!

Although dynamic pricing may be a new pricing concept on the Web, **we’ve used it for thousands of years**. It involves customers in the buying process in many more ways than the fixed pricing method. SiteSell utilizes this dynamic pricing because it is **effective, interactive, and fair**. After all, it’s the customers who are setting the price -- not the merchant.

What could be fairer than that?



13.7. The Call to Action

Do you remember what **MWR** stands for?... **Most Wanted Response**.

Have you ever been to a site where you say, “What was he selling? Anything?” I certainly have... some have even been Web marketing sites! Somehow, you’re just supposed to know what they’re selling!

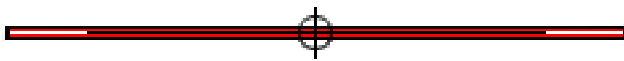
Don’t assume that prospects know your **MWR**. **Tell them exactly what to do --**

that's what is meant by the "call to action." It's not enough for your prospect to agree with you... they have to deliver the **MWR!**

If you want your customer to buy or subscribe (or whatever), don't figure that your visitor knows this -- she's waiting to be told what to do. If you don't tell your customer exactly what you want her to do, you've left **too much room for error.**

Never assume. Ask for the order... tell her what to do... exactly.

Get the MWR... that's why you put up your site.



13.8. "And How Would You Like to Order Today?"

The moment of decision!

Your customer has done it all. She came down the pathway and entered your **MWR Closer Page.** She read the **offer.** Your **call to action** told her what to do. She's about to do it...

Don't blow it now. Offer **every way possible** for your customer to **deliver your MWR.**

[**SIDEBAR**]

With the PennyGold site, I originally figured that everyone would simply order online, a smooth, logical end-point after reviewing the Web site. After all, most people have to get off the Net to order **by phone** (since most homes still only have one phone line). Printing out a form to **fax or snail-mail** is an unnecessary drudgery.

Well, guess what!? My first order came in (from Sarnia, Ontario -- I'll never forget it!) **by fax, even though I did not offer fax as an option. The customer merely scribbled "I want to order PennyGold" on a piece of paper and faxed it!**

I decided to offer and test **every** possible way of ordering. **Orders arrived every single way...** online, fax, 1-888- phone call, courier to our physical address, yes even snail-mail. If I had offered **Pony Express...**



... I'm sure horses would have shown up at the office!

The majority of orders did come **directly** from the Web site. But about 15% of all orders arrived via **offline** routes. Since they cost little to set up, it was certainly worthwhile to offer them. And with non-credit-card snail-mail orders, we also save the 2-4% merchant bank bite!

The bottom line? **Different people are comfortable with different methods.**

Let your customer **order** however she likes... via e-mail, [secure server](#), 1-800 or 1-888 phone call, mail order (create a printable order form) -- let her sky-write it, if she wants.

And let her **pay** however she likes... credit card, money order, even barter for chickens.


Credit card will be the most popular payment method, which brings us to the importance of secure servers...



13.8.1. Secure **vs.** Non-Secure Server

If your **MWR** is a straight-off-the-Web sale, you must be able to accept credit card orders **directly via the Web**. **Your customers will want their credit card info to be safe and sound.** So put your pages on a server with [SSL security](#), which encrypts the information (virtually uncrackable) -- this is what's known as a [secure server](#).

Realize, though, that you are **not really** doing this for reasons of security. Despite what the press says, there are no hackers hovering over your site, waiting to steal credit cards. **But your customers believe there are!**

Customers relax when they see that security key  at the bottom left of the browser, indicating a secure credit card transaction. **If you don't use a secure server to take the credit card info, you'll lose sales, big-time.**

Are you a one-product company?...

If setting up your own secure server is too difficult to implement, [find a Web host that offers SSL security](#). Make sure the host is secure at “both ends” -- **incoming** data from consumer, then **transfer** of that data from Web host to you (usually via PGP-encrypted e-mail).

If a secure Web host is too expensive for you, this is not a death knell. **Not having SSL can be overcome** if you design a **great** site that **SELLS**, and if you **work around** the problem. You’ll have to get **creative** in setting up your online order-taking method.

Think of it. People hand over their credit cards to all kinds of people in all kinds of places... restaurants, XXX video stores, **even...**



... gas stations. They give their credit card info to total strangers over the phone, including cell phones where anyone could be listening in. They fax orders all over the world -- that faxed paper sits there for anyone to see.

Sure the unwarranted press hype worries the public. But the much bigger reason for people **not** to buy on the Web is that **vendors don't do a good job of selling.**

Sell effectively. Then develop a creative “SSL-workaround.”

[**SIDEBAR**]

For PennyGold, we did not accept credit card orders directly via the Web. Due to the sensitive nature of the PennyGold info and its high price, we preferred to eliminate credit card fraud by calling the customer at the hour he specified, and tape-recording the call...

Ordering Information

Order now ... while it's still fresh in your mind ... and while *PennyGold* is still selling at the current price of **CDN\$349**. **It will be the best investment decision that you make this year.**

Until VISA, MasterCard, AMEX, and the other credit card companies implement SET (Secure Electronic Transaction), we'll be offering you our own simple, secure and fraud-proof ordering system.

"Secure" ... because I want your credit card information to be absolutely safe.
"Fraud-proof" ... because I'm severely restricting distribution. So I can't afford a copy to fall into the hands of a credit card fraud.

IF YOU ARE FROM THE U.S.A. OR CANADA
Just pick the most convenient way (e-mail, phone, fax or regular mail) to order:

1) Send in the following Intent to Order Form via the Internet:
(All information below is kept in strictest confidence.)

Intent to Order Form

Yes, I want *PennyGold*.

My name is:

I live in:

My e-mail address is:

Please call me to take my order and credit card information (VISA or MasterCard) at this phone number:

(type in country code ONLY if you are outside of North America)

Please call at the above phone number between the following hours:

PennyGold Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#ORDERFINFO>

Our customers **appreciated** our cautious approach because they knew we were protecting their investment in their software! Of course, this approach is impractical for cheaper products.



13.8.2. Four Steps to **SELLING** Via Secure Server

It's not hard. Four steps, let's go...

STEP 1 Before going to any expense, **check with your merchant accounts.** Many do **not** allow smaller companies to even accept orders via the Internet! If they do, they will insist that the credit card info be secure. And they may insist that you

use a certain service. The outcome of this step will settle the issue for you.

[**SIDEBAR**]

If you do not have a merchant account, or if your merchant bank will not permit you to take orders directly via the Web, either get innovative in your order-taking or [investigate the third-party credit card processing companies.](#)

STEP 2 To accept orders via an SSL-secure server, **check with your techie and Web host** for what it involves. Here are the basics...

You'll pay your Web hosting service \$20 to \$50 more per month, plus a fee for the [security certificate](#). Here is an example...



Thawte

<http://www.thawte.com/certs/server/contents.html>

Your Web host may offer to take orders for you off **their** secure domain... secure.**webhost.com**. But if you can swing it, get **your own** security certificate and take orders off **your own** secure domain... secure.**yourdomain.com**.

There are two advantages to this strategy...

- your customer does not have to worry about who secure.webhost.com is
- you look like a larger, more credible company.

If you're a larger company with your own server that you'd like to make secure, [see VeriSign's info on how to do this](#). Beyond that, it's out of my hands and into your techie's! 😊

Remember, to be considered secure, you must encrypt "both ends" of the order-receiving process (**getting the order to the server and forwarding that data to you**). So also ask your Web host or techie about an **encrypted way to e-mail the order info**. **PGP** (Pretty Good Privacy) software is a PGB (Pretty Good Bet)...



PGP Security

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

STEP 3 Compare your security protocols with the requirements of your merchant bankers. They often have a list of criteria that must be met for your order-taking procedure to be considered secure. **Make sure all of your merchant accounts have signed off on your secure setup, whether it's your own secure server or that of a Web host. Don't jeopardize your merchant accounts.**

STEP 4 Cross-check info from your techie, Web host, and merchant banks, with your own research at Ralph Wilson's **Electronic Commerce Research Room**. He has tons of state-of-the-art info about secure transactions of all kinds -- secure servers, SET, digital cash technologies...



Electronic Commerce Research Room

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

[**SIDEBAR**]

Naturally, once you're selling via secure server, **stress the "benefits" of a secure server in your call to action.** Yes, I know this perpetuates the myth. But you want the order, right?



13.8.3. Phone -- "I Just Wanted to Hear a Voice"

A lot of people still need the **security of a human voice** before ordering.

Of course, if the **vendor** is a crook, she's a crook whether she receives the order via secure server or over the phone. Unfortunately, the customer doesn't realize that -- that's **not** why he phones. He simply needs the "warm and fuzzies" of **hearing a real voice...**



... **So do** offer phone ordering.

For North American customers, **make it a toll-free call**. The monthly rate is amazingly cheap, sometimes zero (you're charged only for the long-distance calls). A few points on the 1-888 line...

- **If you are in the U.S.**, specify that your toll-free service **must work for Canadians**.
- **For overseas calls, 1-888 does not work**. Provide a regular long distance number.
- **Specify that this is your order line**. Refer all inquiries to your regular long distance number. Otherwise, people will chew you up with long-distance charges.
- **If you have several 1-888 lines**, dedicate one purely for taking orders from your Web site. This allows you to track how many **orders** arrive via 1-888. If you're worried about customers abusing your 1-888#, **place it only on your order page**. That way, you'll qualify all callers as potential customers.



... **The person who takes your orders** is often the first "live voice" that he hears. Remember, **this person is your company**.

If she is well-trained and pleasant, you're a great company. If she's rude and knows little, you're rotten... **at least in the eyes of your potential customer**.

So leave nothing to chance for employees who make direct "real voice" contact with your customers...

- Develop a **telephone script** for orders that will be handled by phone, from the opening "Hello" to the parting "Thank you for your order."
- **Build a list of the most common questions** -- prepare the replies.

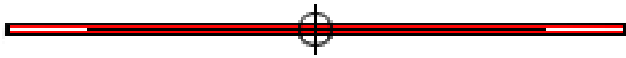
- **Enter every problem encountered** -- develop answers for them. Improve responses constantly.
- **Keep track of any other common situations**, and what to do about them.

Enter all of the above information into a database for quick and easy access.

And “smile”...



... yes, you **can** smile on the phone.



13.8.4. Fax -- “I Like to Send Paper”

When we received our first order for PennyGold **by fax**, I just had to call that customer and ask **why** he would fax the order rather than just submit the online form. **We didn’t even offer faxing as an order option!**

Why would he hand-scribble a note, cut his Internet connection, **and...**



... fax it?

“Because I like to send paper. It feels real.”

So...

Design a simple “fax form” that can be printed straight off the Web site. The customer just prints it, fills it out, **signs** the credit card authorization (a “**must**”), then faxes it to you. Here was the **PennyGold Order Form** for credit card payment...

PennyGold Order Form
(Please print the form first and then fill it out.)

Date:

YES, I want *PennyGold*.

First Name

Last Name

Address

City

Country

E-mail address

Day phone
Area code Local phone number

Evening phone
Area code Local phone number

Card (VISA or MasterCard only)

Card Number

Expiry Date

In order to purchase PennyGold, I hereby authorize GoodByte\$ Information Products Inc. to bill my credit card, and agree to pay to my credit card company, the amount of CDN\$349. I understand that my credit card company will convert this amount to the currency of my own country at prevailing market rates.

Credit card authorization:

Signature

PennyGold Order Form for Credit Card Orders Via Fax
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/formcc.html>

If you would like the HTML code for this page, just link to the form and get the source code (via [VIEW SOURCE](#) in your browser's menu).

It is the same [form](#) that you use for regular online ordering (except, of course, it does not use any [CGI programming](#) to process the order).



13.8.5. Snail Mail -- "I Hate Giving My Credit Card"

You will be amazed at the **number of people who still...**



... snail-mail money orders or checks. They turn up in our mail regularly. I originally offered this route only "to be complete" -- but people actually use it!

There are two reasons that people would choose this route...

- 1) Many people are maxed out on their cards, or don't have one. But they **do** have money in the bank to **purchase a Money Order.**
- 2) **Many of the rest simply refuse to give their info out,** whether it's over the phone, or by fax, or however. Of course, they don't realize that their total risk is only \$50, in the event of fraud. And they don't realize that it's probably riskier to use their credit card in the real world.

[**SIDEBAR**]

I was the victim of a real-world fraud when someone used my AMEX info. The suspect was a clerk from a local toy retailer! My bigger problem was explaining the charge to my wife. The fraud hit...



Frederick's of Hollywood
<http://www.fredericks.com/>

Here was the **PennyGold Order Form** for non-credit-card payment. The customer just printed it, provided the info required, then mailed it together with payment. Encourage payment via **Money Order** or **Cashier's Check**. But also accept personal checks. Just make it clear that you don't ship until the check clears...

PennyGold Order Form
(Please print the form first and then fill it out.)

Date:

YES, I want PennyGold.

Please find enclosed my personal check, certified check or money order, for \$CDN349 (or equivalent in the currency of your country), made out to the order of "GoodBytes Information Products Inc." (if you are sending a money order, please specify an **International** postal money order **if you are from outside of Canada**).

First Name

Last Name

City

Country

E-mail address

Day phone
Area code Local phone number

Evening phone
Area code Local phone number

I understand that you will e-mail my username and password to download PennyGold as soon as you receive this order (unless I am paying by personal check, in which case there may be a delay of up to 6-8 weeks). By acting now, I also get the **Advanced Investor Package, FREE.**

PennyGold Order Form for Non-Credit-Card, Snail-Mail Payment

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/form.html>

If you would like the HTML code for this page, just link to the form and get the source code (via VIEW SOURCE in your browser's menu). Once again, it is the same form that you use for regular online ordering (except, of course, it does not use any CGI programming to process the order).



13.8.6. No Matter **How** They Order, K-I-S-S!

No matter **how** your customer delivers your **MWR**, make it a fast, easy, clear, one-step process. In other words...

K-I-S-S.

And not **just** simple. Make the **process** of responding crystal-clear to your visitor. Here's why...

Most customers will have last-second hesitations, especially during these early years on the Web. If you make the process **complicated** or **prolonged** or **confusing** or **vague**, you will lose responses.

Don't do anything to make your about-to-buy customer hesitate...



... or think twice.

Review your ordering process. How hard is it to place an order? Is the **MWR Response Form** clear? If you sell many products, do you provide a convenient, clear, easy-to-use [shopping cart program](#)?

For example, one of the most common mistakes on sales sites is asking for **too much info**. People don't like providing info. It makes your **Response Form** look like **work**. What do you think happens? Yup, lost orders.

Ask for the least amount of info necessary. For a credit card purchase, you only need...

- first and last name
- street address (for extra security)
- credit card name, number and expiration date.

Don't ask for more.

[SIDEBAR]

[Review the basics of designing a form that works.](#)

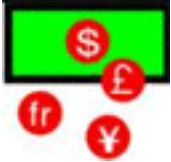


13.8.7. How to Set up a Currency Converter

Most online businesses receive customers from all over the world. It's important that they understand how much your product costs **in their currency**.

Let's say your software costs \$447 in Canadian money. Naturally, Americans want to know how many of their own hard-earned dollars they will pay. And since the Canadian dollar is currently selling at an all-time low, I want Americans to know that this **only amounts to \$260** in American money (hey, I'm almost giving it away!).

What you need is a...



... currency converter. There are two ways to put one up on your site...

1) Do it yourself. Write a simple javascript converter. Update the currencies manually. For example...

Go to the **Order Page** of PennyGold, do a [VIEW SOURCE](#) on it, and adapt the currency converter there for your own use...



PennyGold Currency Converter

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#CURRENCYCONVERTER>

There are two **disadvantages** to this approach...

- you have to update the currency conversions manually every week or so (it is possible to write a script to automate this).
- your customers' browsers must be javascript-enabled (Netscape 3+ or Internet Explorer 4+).



2) Integrate a third party's Web currency converter. While you can check out the details at the sites below, you face the following decision... either pay a **monthly fee** or **accept advertising**.

No matter what, do **not** accept an option that makes your customer **link out**, or that **breaks the momentum towards the MWR**. Once he links out, he may play with the currency converter on the other site, then see something else to link to, then...

bye-bye.

Here are two of the most popular currency converters...



OANDA's 164 Currency Converter

<http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic/>

And...



Xenon Laboratories' The Universal Currency Converter

<http://www.xe.net/ucc/>

How to Customize The Universal Currency Converter

<http://www.xe.net/ucc/customize.htm/>



I use Xenon's free converter **only on my PGPer Renewal Page**. Since these visitors already own PennyGold and want to renew subscriptions, I know that they are motivated enough to survive being "linked out." Even then, clicking opens a second page (via [TARGET=VIEW](#)) with the currency converter buried inside a PennyGold frameset...

[Click here to convert to the currency of your country.](#)

Once you know which option you would like, order by either...

Currency Conversion for PGPer Renewal

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgpers/renewal.html#CURRCONV>



13.9. The A-B-Cs of Online Ordering

As we have just seen, each **MWR Closer Page** must end with a compelling **offer** and a strong and **clear call to action** to deliver the **MWR**. Your customer can

deliver your **MWR** in several different ways (online, fax, 1-888, etc.). This section discusses specifically **online** ordering.

There are numerous ways to accomplish online ordering. First, let's consider fulfilling an order from the perspective of those of you using **MYSS! 2002** to sell your "single great product" online.

HTML-to-CGI Response Forms -- perfect for smaller companies with a small number of products (I call these **Response Forms** for short -- when a Response Form is specifically designed to take an order for product(s), we'll call it an **MWR Response Form** or an **Order Form**).

- the simplest way to fulfill an order is to use an "**Intent-to-order**" online form to obtain the customer's info, and then call them back. This is how we did it with PennyGold. This is only useful if you happen to be selling a higher priced item in low volumes.

- the next step is to implement a secure server, and **accept credit card orders online**. If you're just starting out, and process less than 10 orders a day, you may wish to process the orders manually through your Point of Sale (P.O.S.) terminal. This eliminates the step of having to contact the customer personally, but it's still labor-intensive.

- the final step is to automate the entire process... real-time credit card verification, e-mail **autoresponders**, and, if you're selling an infoproduct or any other downloadable product, a **digital fulfillment system**.



Selling a single product from a Web site is one thing -- selling many products from a Web store is a slightly different ball of wax indeed. If you sell only a few products or services, you may wish to do it the way SiteSell does -- **dedicate a single product to a single sub-domain**, and build a **site that SELLS!** No clunky shopping cart to worry about, no additional usability worries... no nuttin'. Basically, it's the single product model expanded to include multiple products. And it works. For us.

But if you happen to be selling hundreds, even thousands of SKU's, you need different options...

- **shopping carts** -- for small to medium companies with more products for sale.
- **online store building packages** -- tons of options here -- even free!

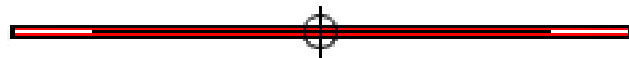
- **online malls** -- the simplest way to enter into the multi-product e-commerce foray!
- **e-commerce solutions** -- for companies with mega-needs, these packages encompass far more than just ordering.

[**SIDEBAR**]

The first edition of **MYSS!** primarily addressed selling **single** products. For this edition, **MYSS! 2002**, I've included a brand **new** volume to address the multiple product issue, the [Online Store Selling Volume](#).

If you're selling hundreds of products (or the idea appeals to you), click the link above to propel yourself smack-dab into the most comprehensive how-to resource available.

But for now, let's proceed with selling single products...



13.9.1. Order Forms and **CGI** Scripts (Made Easy)

Have your **HTML** guru design a simple [Response Form](#) to take your customer's order online. We'll call it the **MWR Response Form** if its function is to get your **MWR** -- it's the same as an **Order Form** if your **Most Wanted Response** is a direct sale straight off the Web.

On the PennyGold Web site, the **MWR** was **not** an actual sale, just an "intent to order." When the customer clicked the **SEND** button, [CGI scripting](#) processed the data entered by the customer and sent it to us via e-mail. For security reasons, **we phoned the customer** to process the order. Here was the PG "Intent to Order Form"...

Intent to Order Form

Yes, I want *PennyGold*.

My name is:

First and Last Name

I live in:

City, Country

My e-mail address is:

E-mail address

Please call me to take my order and credit card information (VISA or MasterCard) at this phone number:

country code - (area code) -
(type in country code ONLY if you are outside of North America)

Please call at the above phone number between the following hours:

For example -- Between 9 AM and 5 PM
(type in the best hours to reach you at the above phone number)

AND/OR

Call me at my other phone number:

country code - (area code) -
(type in country code ONLY if you are outside of North America)

Please call at my other phone number between the following hours:

For example -- Between 7 PM and 9 PM
(type in the best hours to reach you at the above phone number)

Press "Clear" to start over:

Clear

When you're ready, press "Send":

Send

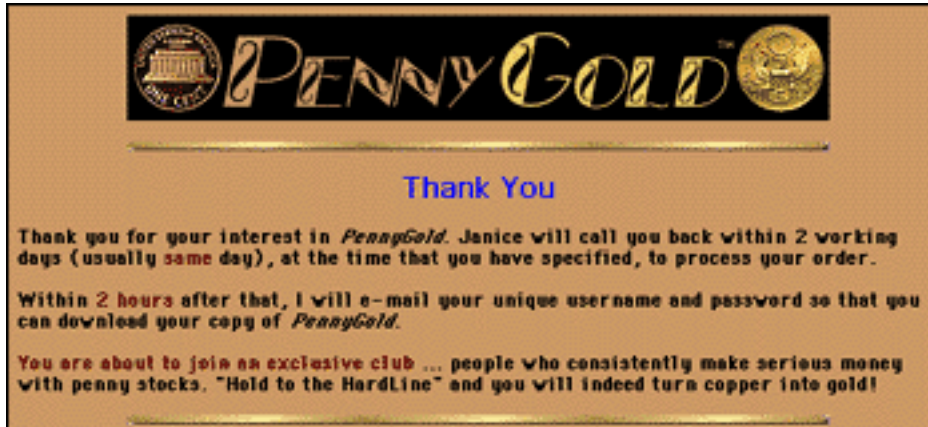
PennyGold **MWR** Response Form

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#ORDERNOW>

[SIDEBAR]

[Review the basics of designing a form that works.](#)

After the customer sends your **MWR**, thank him and eliminate “buyer’s remorse.” The **CGI script** immediately pops up a short note (an HTML page) that **removes any last second doubts or worries...**



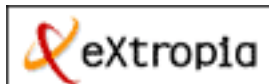
As well, the CGI script can even **send an e-mail right after the order**. This again could contain a “thank you and congratulations” message, along with instructions regarding tech support, etc. Your customer can store this for future reference.

You’ll need a techie to provide the CGI scripting that accomplishes the above. When the customer hits the SEND button, the CGI kicks in. Without the CGI, the form would just sit there, even when the customer hits SEND. This kind of simple CGI is pretty standard, and can even be downloaded off the Web.



As a matter of fact, most “common function” CGI scripts are “off-the-shelf” and available for free download. Don’t let anyone tell you that an Order Form has to be completely custom-programmed. **At most, you might need a little fine-tuning.**

If you have any “techie” ability at all, download free scripts and modify them yourself to fit your own needs. Here’s where to go...



Extropia.com’s CGI Scripts

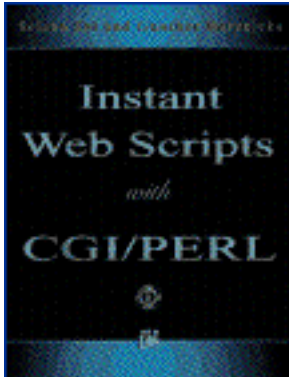
<http://www.extropia.com/>

Extropia.com offers a wide variety of outstanding business-related scripts -- from chat rooms to Site-Search Engines to good, basic shopping cart software that will meet the needs of most small companies. I can’t believe they give these away. I mean, I would pay my techie hundreds of dollars to write these for me. Instead, I only have to pay him to configure them. **Don’t miss this site.**

If you’d rather learn how to use the above scripts yourself, check out their book,

Instant Web Scripts With CGI/PERL, by Selena Sol and Gunther Birznieks. It covers most of the scripts in the Web archive in great depth. Each chapter takes you from downloading, through installation and customization and usage. It also explains in simple terms how the programs were made so that you can **make your own** with a proven methodology.

Buy this book even if you **don't** want to do it yourself... just to thank them for erecting such an awesome resource...



Instant Web Scripts With CGI/PERL

http://www.extropia.com/books/instant_web_scripts/introduction.html

An encyclopedic collection of CGI scripts, **CGI Resource** has some excellent scripts for bulletin boards, cookies, form processing, mailing list management, password protection, Search Engines, shopping carts, and a whole lot more. This is a **must visit**...



The CGI Resource

http://www.cgi-resources.com/Programs_and_Scripts/Perl/

This is purely for form-to-e-mail conversion. But it's a good one...



CGI E-mail

<http://web.mit.edu/wwwdev/cgiemail/index.html>

Another great resource in book form...



Cgi/Perl Cookbook

By Matthew Wright and Craig Patchett

<http://www.cgi-perl.com/>

Another great compendium of CGI scripts...



Matt's Script Archive

<http://www.worldwidemart.com/scripts/>



13.9.2. Simplicity Rules... Unless...

The way we processed orders for PennyGold is the simplest way to do business on the Web. Because we weren't actually processing credit cards directly online, no [secure server](#), [security certificate](#), or [encryption software](#) was required. But processing orders this way only makes sense if...

- your product is a high ticket item, and you can justify the time spent one-to-one time with the customer.

And...

- you process very few transactions daily.

Or...

- your high ticket item is likely to generate fraudulent orders.

For a high-end product like PennyGold, processing orders the way we did simply made the most sense. After all, over the two years it took to sell out PG, we averaged 1-2 orders per day. So it wasn't a big hassle to phone those few clients, and punch a couple of credit card numbers into the P.O.S. (Point of Sale) terminal. Easily handled by single person... no automation required.

But when SiteSell began selling a single product (the first edition of this book, **MYSSI!**), an entirely different situation arose. At \$17, it made no sense to process each order like we did with PennyGold... and when you're selling umpteen copies per day, it is neither sensible nor financially viable to phone customers individually.

So the next step was to take **all** the client's info online, including credit card number. Now a [secure server](#), [encryption software](#), and [digital certificate](#) were needed! Once that's all in order, there's one more decision to make...

Will you have your orders [cleared in real-time](#) on the Net, or will you continue to process them yourself with your P.O.S. terminal?

[SIDEBAR]

Just to clarify... If you decide to process orders yourself, you must take the encrypted order that arrives in your mailbox and...

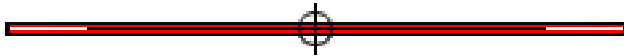
- decrypt it.
- print it for your records.
- process it through your P.O.S. terminal.
- e-mail confirmation data, and if relevant, password and download information to the client.

Processing orders by hand makes the most sense if you're doing 10 orders a day or less. As you can well imagine, this process becomes rather tedious as business picks up.

If you're just starting out, and sales have yet to pick up, it's not a bad idea to process orders yourself. In fact, it will help give you a better feel for how the whole process works as well as where your customers are coming from.

But if you really want to sell, your business **has to** scale.

And that means automation!



13.9.3. Automate to Grow FAST

How do you know when it's time to automate?

Perhaps when an order showing up in your mailbox has you groaning...

"Oh no!", instead of shouting "Oh, YES!"

Or perhaps it's when you begin selling **more than a single product**. Whatever the reason, automation **leverages your business far beyond the scope of what you could possibly accomplish by hand**. And that's the supreme advantage of doing business online.

Let's return to the **MYSS! 2002** example...

An infoproduct like **MYSS! 2002** is, without doubt, ideal for the Web. It's a relatively easy process to automate the entire sales process, from [clearing credit cards in real-time](#), to using [autoresponders](#) to reply immediately to customers, to implementing a [digital fulfillment system](#). In short...

It scales easily and effortlessly.

Other than a very occasional glitch and support issue, a business like this can run itself -- leaving you free to focus on other things.



Let's proceed through a graduated single-product selling process ...

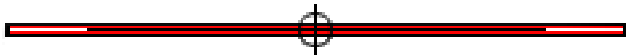
1) You sell a single high end product via a simple ["intent-to-order"](#) CGI mail

form (like we did with PennyGold).

2) You sell a single low-end product in low volumes -- credit card info is obtained online, but orders are still processed offline. This eliminates the step of having to contact the customer personally, but it's still labor-intensive. This works best if you process less than 10 orders per day.

3) You sell a single low-priced product in high volumes -- credit card orders are [verified in real-time](#), and customers receive automated ordering information and invoice. If you're selling a digital product (software, infoproduct, etc.), now's the time for a [digital fulfillment solution](#). Or in other words, full-blown...

Automation!...



13.9.4. Scale... ESSENTIAL for Maximum Growth

Here's a quick review of the rock-solid foundation upon which **MYSS!** was built...

To succeed in a Web-based sales venture, you only have to succeed at three levels...

- 1) develop a great product**
- 2) write a Web site that SELLS!**
- 3) attract targeted customers to the site.**

But now, if you want to grow a **BIG** business, I'd add a fourth step...

- 4) Your business must SCALE.**

What does "scale" mean? It is the ability to grow in **sales** without requiring a proportionate growth in **time** and **expenses**. **It should require disproportionately little, even ideally zero, growth in expenses.** And that means **automation**.

As I said just above, scaling means that you have to automate. That means a lot of sophisticated, expensive programming.

Scaling was not important for me when I launched PennyGold. But that was \$1,000

software. So the **MWR (Most Wanted Response)** for the site was to send in a simple form that asked us to call the person to process an order.

This model does NOT scale. At \$1,000 per unit, that's not too serious. But if you want to sell \$30 e-books, you must automate. You need to be able to accept credit cards in real-time, run some fraud-checking and send automatic e-mails after the order, with unique usernames and passwords that stop working after one successful download.



No way could I do all that... **if** I was just starting out now. The Net has reached the point where the technology of e-commerce should be hidden from us. We should only have to worry about our business, about what we **know**. Not about...

- Search Engines
- HTML and ftp and javascript
- how to set up real-time credit card verification
- all the complicated programming

We should **ONLY EVER** have to concentrate on our businesses. Because that's what we know. Give us one place that solves all our problems in a **cohesive, coordinated fashion**, so that all we have to do is grow our profits.

Put the technology...



... on autopilot, so to speak...

With **automation!** [For more info on automation, click here.](#)

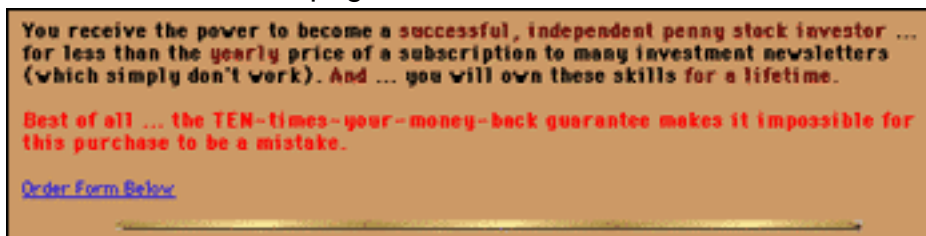


13.10. No Clicks from Offer to Order

The **offer**, the **call to action**, and the **MWR Response Form (Order Form** if you are after a direct sale straight off the Web) should all be on the same Web page. **Don't make your customer click again, not at this critical point.**

If it's a long offer, include several **internal links** to the Order Form (ex., "Order Form Below" or "Order Form Above" -- or if your site is more aggressive, "Order Now!"). This way, as soon as the person even **thinks** he's going to order, he doesn't have to look for your form -- he just clicks.

In PennyGold, I developed the **offer** and **call to action** over a long page. I used internal links to make the Order Form quickly available, no matter where the customer was on the page...



(Note the link "[Order Form Below.](#)")

Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html>

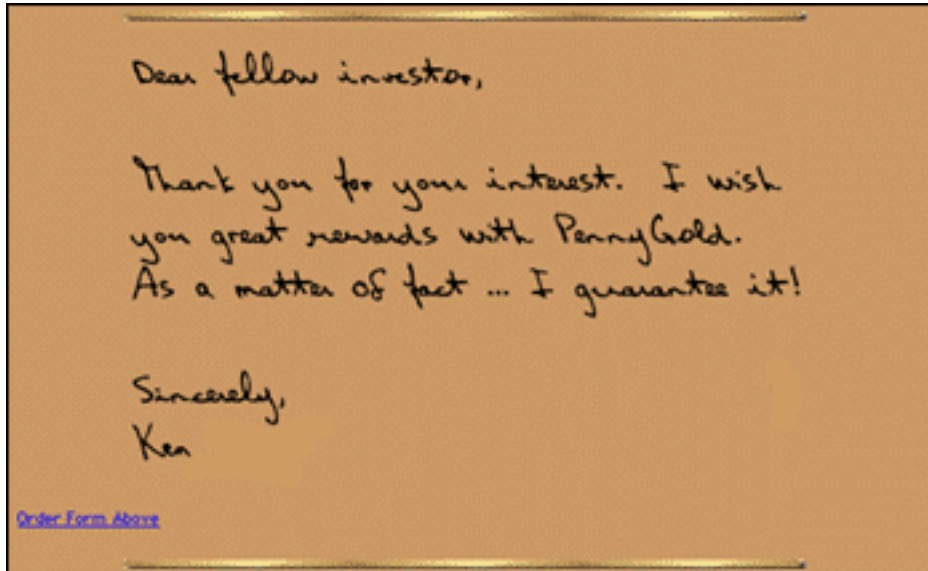


13.11. The Thank You Note

A short, personal handwritten (font-generated) thank you note is a terrific touch. Thank your visitor for her time and interest.

Choose a solid-looking, cursive (handwriting) font and "sign" your letter. Even if your visitor knows it's just a font (and they usually don't), they'll appreciate the effort and the projected warmth.

Put your note right after the **MWR**. This is not the same as the **CGI-delivered thank you note**, delivered after your customer **submits** the **MWR**.



Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#THANKYOU>

[**SIDEBAR**]

Best of all, use **your own** font to write your thank you note. Yes, Signature Software produces a font that duplicates your own personal writing! I can't remember how I found out about the company, but within 5 minutes of visiting their site, I was sold on the concept. So I bought it, and I loved it. I wrote the thank you note (above) with it. **Now...**



... I really did write the note!

The site effectively sold me, so that's why I asked the President, David Fenwick, to write an article in our **Experience Speaks** section of **MYSS! 2002**.



Signature Software

<http://www.vLetter.com/sighome.htm>



13.12. The “Last Ditch” Pitch

OK, let's say your visitor ordered. Do you realize that there are 10 **wafflers** who got all the way to your **MWR Response Form**...



... but can't quite pull the trigger?

Make one last pitch to them. But don't distract those who are “sold” (i.e., **buyers** who are **ready** to submit an order). So put this pitch **after** the **Order Form**. Don't worry about your waffler missing it, either. If she's a “serious waffler,” she'll be **looking** for more info.



What should you include in your “Last Ditch” pitch?...



- ... **First, don't appear to be begging.** That'll kill you.
- **Second, K-I-S-S.** Short and sweet.
- **Repeat your #1 clincher.** Perhaps a link to your Testimonial Page, or a product review that raves about your product.
- Add a link to one last personal **you-to-your-customer message**, something new and original that could “**tip the scales.**” Also, short and sweet.
- **Build in a Backup Response.**

Here was the PennyGold site's “Last Ditch” pitch...

Not Sure? Try *Decision Helper!*

I do not want to talk you into buying something that you won't use. We are only selling 1,000 copies, so I want them in the hands of the right people. So...

If you're not sure about *PennyGold*, [please see what *PennyGold* owners have been saying](#). Their feedback has been most gratifying for me, and hopefully will be helpful for you.

Still can't quite believe this offer? [I have a final message for you](#). Then please come back and try *Decision Helper*.

Danny Goodman, THE Javascript guru, has written a wonderful little program called *Decision Helper*. I offer it here to help those of you who are still undecided to come to a well thought-out decision *that is right for you*.

If you find this gem as useful as I do, you'll want to use it (only with Netscape 3.0+) whenever you need to think through an important decision with several possible solutions. It really forces you to think straight. [Here it is](#).

PennyGold Decision Helper (Offer)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#DH>

When a customer clicked on the “I have a final message for you” link, she saw this final attempt to convince...

Do you still have some nagging doubts? Are you still saying to yourself, "Sounds great, but what if...?"

Good! That means you have the **healthy doubt** necessary to be successful in penny mining stocks.

Use a second needed quality, **motivation**, to do what successful *PennyGold* Practitioners do get more info until you are **SURE!**

I designed this Web site to do much more than just "sell *PennyGold*". I designed it to weed out the "get rich quick junkies" and to put true **POWER** into your hands ... **the power to "be sure"** ... if you will make the effort...

If you've reached this point of the Web site, **you are very close** to making the right decision. Please finish your due diligence ...

Tear this Web site apart -- it's loaded with verifiable data. [Check the FAQ](#). E-mail people who have given references and testimonials. [E-mail me](#) or call (514-458-1064, Monday-Friday, between 9am to 5pm, EST) and fire your toughest questions.

PennyGold WILL change your investing future ... it's worth the time to complete your investigation.

PennyGold “Not Sure”

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899notsure.html>

On our **MYSS! 2002** site, the last ditch pitch is shorter, simpler, and much less intense.

After all, this isn't a \$1,000 piece of investment software we're selling, right? It's a relatively small investment. Our customers need much less convincing...

Don't procrastinate...
Don't "bookmark us to come back later"...

[Click here to order
the Printed Version or
the Electronic Version
\(or best of all, the combo!\)
right away!](#)

OR, if you're still not sure...

Avoid the **paralysis of procrastination** by
taking full advantage of the Guarantee!

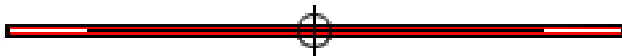
Here's how...

[Click here to order
the Electronic Version right away.](#)

(Usability experts have called it "an awesome onscreen read."
Marketing gurus?... "the ultimate digital Web sales reference book.")

Make Your **Site Sell!**

<http://myss.sitesell.com/>



13.13. Example of "How to Close"

The PennyGold Order Page (**MWR Closer Page**) is a good example that uses most of the guidelines outlined in this chapter.

Please read it all -- there's a lot of good stuff there (if I do say so, myself <blush>)...



Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html>

[SIDEBAR]

Again, please don't misinterpret this. The goal is for you to understand **how to close the sale on the Web**. I'm not trying to sell you PennyGold -- it's sold out, remember? 😊

I followed all the same rules when creating the Order Page for MYSS!...

MAKE YOUR SITE-SELL!

Start Your Site SELLING Today

Testimonial

Click & hold on box below.

"Twice as good as Rudl's... less than 1/10 the cost."

Review by Paul Myers in the respected TalkBiz News

Fill in the Order Form [below](#) and hit the "Submit Order" button.

Within minutes...

[we'll be shipping your copy of the Printed Version](#)
and
[you'll be downloading the Electronic Version of...](#)

Make Your Site SELL!.

And very, **very** soon...
you'll be doing exactly what the title says ...
make your site SELL!

[Get "The EDGE"...](#)

Make Your Site Sell! -- Order page
<https://secure.sitesell.com/order.html>



13.14. If At First You Don't Succeed...

The Web is made for tinkering. It's **cheap**, and it's **immediate**. Try a different headline. A different bonus. A better **Response Form**. Keep trying different methods.

Here's the formula...

STEP 1 -- Measure your current **Conversion Rate (CR)** over the last week.

STEP 2 -- Change one element of the Closer Page (offer, call to action, or form).

STEP 3 -- Measure the new **CR** over the new week.

STEP 4 -- Act accordingly (i.e., keep or drop).

STEP 5 -- Start over at STEP 1.

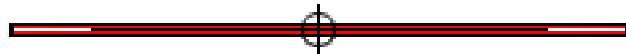


If you want to get really sophisticated, prepare two different **MWR Closer Pages**. The only difference is one element of the offer. Get your techie to write a [CGI script](#) that alternately delivers the two pages (i.e., first **Closer Page A**, then B, then A, etc.).

Measure the two **CRs**. Act accordingly. Repeat. Keep fine-tuning.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes.

If you keep trying different approaches, you'll find what works. Stick with that, but try to make it better.



13.15. Summing It All Up...

Writing a good site that **SELLS** is similar to the classical direct sales rule, **"A-I-D-A"...**

- **Attention** -- get your customer's attention by starting with a powerful, benefit-laden headline that is relevant to the product that you are selling.
- **Interest** -- build interest by building on your product's benefits, and explaining its features. Build it further by eliminating any doubt about you and your product.
- **Desire** -- maximize desire with testimonials, an iron-clad guarantee, and other sales-building techniques that eliminate all resistance. Then make an **offer** that is irresistible.

- **Action** -- get the **MWR** (or **Backup Response**) via your call to action (i.e., tell your visitor what to do).

Once you've done that, **tinker**. Keep what works -- dump the rest. **Your site is never done.**



14. The Backup Response

Let's say that your **MWR** is a direct sale of a \$447 piece of software. For every one person who triggers your **MWR** and buys directly from the site, **there are 10 who pause, then pass.**



... Here's what scares them...

- 1) What if it's a scam?
- 2) What if it doesn't work?
- 3) What if they do something with my credit card information?
- 4) What if it's OK, but I don't like it?
- 5) And so on, and so on, and so on...



Sure, you've designed your site to head off these doubts. But... **the more unknown your company and the more expensive your product, the more likely the customer will still have doubts.** Even with the PennyGold site, which documented the validity of the product to the nth degree, customers still breathe a heavy sigh of relief when they see how good the product really is!

In the words of one PennyGold owner...

You know, you proved it so thoroughly, so completely, that it's just not reasonable to turn down this opportunity. But even as I ordered, I worried, 'What if...'. Thanks for a great product.



No matter why a hesitater turns down your product, **it's ultimately based on a lack of trust.** Can't blame people for that. These people **want** your product, but they can't quite jump over the trust hurdle. **Don't lose them. Find a way to stay in front of them, to gain their trust.**

Even if you're a large, known multi-national, customers can't reach out and touch your product. The Web creates a gap that isn't there in a conventional retail store.



Here's an interesting statistic from our PennyGold site. For every 100 buyers...

- only 15 buy on the same day as the first visit to the site
- 40 buy within 1-2 days
- 15 buy within 3-4 days
- 30 buy **more than 4 days after the first visit, many as long as months later.**

In other words, **85% bought after the initial visit.**

Many of that 85% bought after **triggering** one or more of PennyGold's **Backup Responses.**



To get **your** hesitaters to finally jump and deliver **your MWR**, you must...

... **Set a Backup Response.** If your customer does **not** deliver your **MWR**, what's your Backup Response? What do you want your customer to do **if you don't get the MWR?**

A good Backup Response must...

- **deliver a benefit to your visitor at a “no-brainer” price (free is best), and**
- **provide you with the opportunity** to remind your customer about you and your product again.

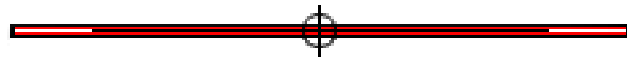
Sooner or later, a healthy percentage of those who trigger your **Backup Response** will deliver your **MWR**. Why? Because you're building a quality, long-term, repeated exposure, one-to-one relationship with your customer. When you **finally** reach your prospect's comfort level, she buys.

If you forget your 10 **almost-ready-to-buy** customers, your hesitaters, **you're**

chopping the sales effectiveness of your site by 90%.

[**SIDEBAR**]

We discussed the **MWR Conversion Rate (CR)** earlier on. From here on in, please remember that any talk about the **CR** applies also to the **Backup Conversion Rate**. **I will also use the term, Conversion Rate (CR)**, to mean either the **MWR CR** and/or the **Backup CR**, according to the context. **We discuss Conversion Rate in more detail a bit later.**



14.1. It's Now or Never. Unless...

Not only are you losing the **hesitaters**, you're losing them forever. Here's why...

There is an old Web axiom of “**keep them coming back for more.**” That's true and reasonable for entertainment-based sites, or sites that change every day, like news sites. And maybe even for your particular set of circumstances (ex., if you sell books and other products like Amazon.com).

But for most sales-oriented sites, **people don't come back over and over again**. I mean, if you're looking for a new cutting-edge multiplexer, you'll visit the vendors' sites and make your choice. If you return to a site, **it's for more info, not because they've added a new bell or whistle!** After you buy, you won't come back until you need to buy another multiplexer.

That means that only the keenest return once or twice. But most of those who came close to buying, the **hesitaters**, will never come back. I wouldn't, would you? **It's a big Web out there... might as well see something new!**



Customers don't **revisit** commercial Web sites unless they want to **know more** before making their buying decision.

Bottom line? Unless the very nature of your sales-oriented site **naturally** tends to generate frequent, repeat visits, **realize that your customer is in “now or never” mode.**

If that's your case, and it most likely is, **why don't you revisit them?** Here's how...

Develop **Backup Responses** that allow you to e-mail the respondents. Then “revisit” them via e-mail, and provide them with reasons to revisit/reconsider you...

- good content that serves as a reminder of the product that they almost bought
- upgrade announcements
- new product introductions
- new info about your site that causes them to revisit you
- the rest is, as they say, “limited only by your imagination” (and good taste).



... While developing your Backup Response and the Backup Response Product, remember every baseball coach’s favorite saying...



14.2. Keep Your Eye on the Ball

Your Backup Response must deliver a WIN-WIN for you **and** your customer.

First, it must deliver great **content** to your customer.

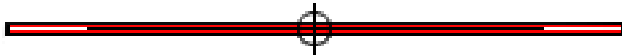
Second, it must increase your chances of ultimately getting your **MWR**.

Third, it must cost you **nothing** to make and distribute if your price tag is **FREE** (which it should be).

If the product for the Backup Response is a **physical hard good**, it will, of course, have a **cost of production** and a **shipping charge**. Think this through carefully. If you are giving away this hard good, will sales of the **MWR** generated by the **Backup Response** support these costs? **Or would it be better to put a low, “no-profit” price tag on it?** The advantages are...

- **prevent** out-of-pocket losses
- **qualify** Backup Responses as serious inquiries, by eliminating the “freebie-moochers”
- **reduce** follow-up expenses by concentrating on a smaller number of serious prospects.

Through all these considerations, never forget the target... getting the **MWR**. To get the **MWR**, first we have to **give** (great content), then **take** (ask for the **MWR**). Let's start with “give” ...



14.3. The Perfect Products for Backups

OK, let's see. The product for the Backup Response should ideally cost you zero to make and ship. And we're on the Internet, right? Wait! I've got it!...

Digital products! Geez, that was tough! Products like...

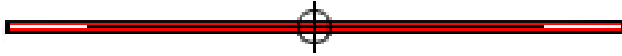
... infoproducts, software trials, totally free mini-apps that would be of value and interest to your customer. You get the idea.

These digital products must all have one thing in common... **great content!**

A quality Backup Response Product must contain excellent content. Here's why...

- **It impresses people** with your expertise and ability to deliver. You build credibility.
- **It builds the habit of dealing with you.** If it's a free e-zine, they don't cancel their subscription. If it's a 60 day free trial software, they use it and become dependent on it -- when the trial times out, they buy.
- **It makes your prospect like and trust you** -- they feel good about you, confident.
- **It develops feelings of obligation.** Since they keep getting free, quality stuff from you, when it comes time to buy, it will be from you, not a competitor.

But remember, do not let your Backup Response become a **one-way street, where you just give, give, give.** You must...



14.4. Give, then Take

If you don't weave in reminders that **you want their business**, your customers will just fall into the habit of receiving great content... free. After a while, they just take, take, take, while you give, give, give. They don't even thank you anymore!

So...

1) Always tie the content back to your product. But be subtle.

2) Provide excellent content, but make it clear where the “best stuff” is (in your **MWR**, in case you were wondering). This is a thin line to walk.

The right freebie not only gives, it takes. It should directly increase your chances to sell. For example, if your backup response is free trial software, give them the full deal, **all** the functions. Then disable it after a month or 10 uses. **If it's any good, they'll buy.**



Here's an example from PennyGold...

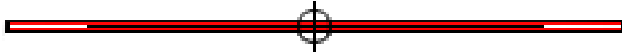
The PennyGold site gave away a javascript software that helped people make decisions... **any** kind of decisions. It's a neat and slick little piece of code (by Danny Goodman, the javascript guru), [which we'll discuss in more detail later](#). Of course, to teach people how to use this mini-app well, you need to include an example... in this case, PennyGold. People ran through the example and weighed PennyGold against other options. Guess which one won, every time, hands-down, **fairly?**

Yup. PennyGold.

Give, then take. As long as you “take” with class and subtlety, your customer won't object. He understands that there is a trade-off, as long as it's done in style. If he does object, he's not a customer. **He's a...**



... raccoon -- comes for the free eats, then leaves without even saying thank you.



14.5. Match Product to Desired Response

Develop more than one Backup Response Product. Tailor each to a desired type of response.

First, decide whether a **freebie** would be more effective as a **bonus for your MWR** or as the **offer for a Backup Response**.



For example, **the PennyGold bonus** was a 6 month subscription to four e-zines. Since these could only be read by those who own the PennyGold software, this was the right place for this freebie. The total value was hundreds of dollars -- but since they were already posted in the PGPers Club, they didn't really cost anything to include in the offer.

The PennyGold Web site also used a wide variety of other kinds of Backup Responses. An important method that we didn't use for PennyGold is the **30 day trial download**. Due to the confidential nature of the information and methods of PennyGold, this was not useful for us. But if this format fits your product and if you have a strong product, **use this method -- it's a powerful way to sell**.



The bottom line?

There is no limit to high-quality, low cost-to-produce items that you can give to your customers. Get creative. Design your own special freebie for a **Backup Response** that fits your own circumstances.

Let's explore several of these Backup Responses now, using PennyGold as the example for each...



14.5.1. The True Purpose of the Free Report

A free report is really a **direct sales letter** combined with the **outstanding information**.

Remember... give, then take.

In this case, give valuable info. Take by adding the sales elements. Here's an example...

The PennyGold site offered a free report entitled “**How To BUY LOW AND SELL HIGH in Penny Mining Stocks.**” It made the offer in the opening paragraphs, to maximize the number of responses.

Visitors got this free report in return for “sending” a referral e-mail to a friend who might find PennyGold interesting. Naturally, she had to provide her own e-mail address, too, in order to get the report!

The report contained **valuable content**, and also acted as a super “second sales effort” when the customer checked her e-mail a bit later.

And the “refer-a-friend” e-mail increased traffic to the site at the same time.

Here was the page...

**Close this window after you have finished.
Do NOT press the BACK button.**

Do you know someone who'd find the *PennyGold* site interesting?
Tell a friend about it. They'll thank you, and so will I ... by
e-mailing you a FREE special report:

**How To
BUY LOW & SELL HIGH
in Penny Mining Stocks.**

You won't read this information anywhere else on the Internet, not
even on this site...

and the Report also contains an **extra** special thank you gift.

You've heard about the WIN-WIN situation? Well this is
WIN-WIN-WIN ... for you, your friend, and *PennyGold*!

	First Name	Email Address
You:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Friend:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Please double-check **both** e-mail addresses for typos.
Both e-mail addresses are totally secure.
I promise to use yours **ONLY** to send the report,
and **NEVER** to contact your friend.

Here's the e-mail that your friend will get:

Hi (Friend's name goes here),

I'm at this site called PennyGold. It's all about investing in penny
mining stocks.

But it's *NOT* about "HOT TIPS" or recommendations or advice.
Instead, they give you the knowledge and tools to go out and
successfully invest yourself.

Refer a Friend to PennyGold

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgref/pgxref1.html>

The **CGI script** verified that the visitor had punched in the information correctly, then e-mailed the report to the visitor and the referral letter to the friend.

[SIDEBAR]

If you try the above page, you'd find that you must enter an e-mail address for "You" **and** a different one for your "Friend." This was a fun little experiment -- all attempts, failed **and** successful, went into a database. If you ever had any doubt that people hate to give info, you should see this file!

It was amazing how many of them tried to get the report and avoid giving all the info! Actually, I should only have required a proper e-mail address for "You" (the person completing the form) because some people gave up when they couldn't fool the script. That means I didn't get to send them the special report. And they were probably peeved.

But I was just having too much fun with that. Money isn't everything. 😊

The special PennyGold report had **two** goals...

- 1) Satisfy the reader with terrific, truly valuable information. We received thank-you notes on a regular basis, so it certainly achieved this goal.
- 2) "Sell" her again on the PennyGold InfoTool. The report itself reinforced the strength of the PennyGold approach. And I even offered this person a 10% discount just for her kind act of referring a friend. (And this was a **true** offer. It was the **only** way to receive 10% off the price of PennyGold.)

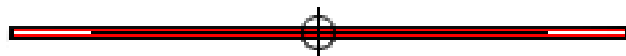
Here was the e-mail that the customer received...

There's only one drawback to free reports, **they suffer in that they are one-shot deals**. For example, with the PennyGold free report, the customer understood (from the privacy statement on the page) that this was a one-time mailing. I wouldn't bother her again.

However, here's a wonderful special circumstance to keep in mind...

If **your** special report has **time-sensitive material**, develop it into a mini-newsletter. Deliver an outstanding report to your customer, as promised. Then, at the end, promise to **update** the report, as developments require. To be fair, offer the ability to UNSUBSCRIBE.

Now you've developed a solid reason for repeated contact. Naturally, you send the update (with honest to goodness valuable info -- this is always the engine that drives success) whenever you have news about your product, or about a new product launch, etc., etc.



14.5.2. Text of "Sales Letter" as "Special Report"

This is the e-mail that PennyGold visitors received when they requested the BUY LOW AND SELL HIGH report. You'll see that I took another stab at generating the **MWR** by offering a discount right at the beginning of the letter. And I mentioned PGOLD XPRESS (the free newsletter) at the end.

The sales pitches (below) are blended with solid content and done with acceptably good taste. But you be the judge...

[REDACTED]

Dear <whatever name customer entered>,

Thank you for referring a friend to PennyGold. I appreciate your support. As promised, I include the special report below. But I like to "over-deliver" on my promises. So...

To show my appreciation in a more "concrete" way, I am also offering you 10% off the purchase price of PennyGold (whatever it happens to be at the time of ordering). Just use your friend's e-mail address as your "proof of referral" at that time.

Are you thinking, "He must give this discount to everyone"? Nope, I don't. No one else receives this 10% discount. This is the ONLY way to get "10% off" the current price.

For more details, I have set up a special Order Page especially for people who have been so kind as to refer someone to PennyGold. Here's the URL (please keep it confidential)...

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899thankyou.html>

OK, on to the special report on...

HOW TO BUY LOW AND SELL HIGH IN PENNY MINING STOCKS

EVERYONE wants to know when and how to BUY LOW and SELL HIGH. In penny mining stocks, 97% of investors ("players" would be a better term) LOSE MONEY because they do the reverse... they BUY HIGH and SELL LOW.

The best way to show why the losers do that, and at the same time to show you how to BUY LOW and SELL HIGH, is to tell you two true

stories:

1) The "Greed-then-Grief" cycle -- A few years ago, I met a neurologist at a party. We started to talk about investing, and I mentioned how well I was doing at penny mining stocks. Whoops!

"Don't talk to me about penny mining stocks"... almost shouting!

"I bought 100,000 shares of XYZ at a buck. My broker told me it had been at a dime a year ago, and that it was heading to \$10. Great, I thought. I'll buy 100,000 shares and turn it into a million."

I had a good idea where this was heading...

"Anyway, to make a long story short, I sold it all last week for a dime."

When I started to laugh, he asked, "What's so funny?"

I asked him, still laughing, "Do you know who bought all your stock last week at a dime?"

Of course, dear reader, by now you know the answer to that.

Yup, me. Sold it six months later in the 30's.

This story illustrates the "greed-then-grief" cycle to a tee. Your typical amateur buys when "the story" comes out.

Now this neurologist is definitely NOT a stupid person. But why would anyone buy a stock that was a dime just a year ago and that costs a dollar now, without even asking himself, "If this company is so fantastic, who the heck is selling me stock at \$1.00?"

Why? PURE GREED... greed that is caused by "THE STORY."

"What's THE STORY?" you ask. Great question! It's so good that I'll hold my second true tale 'til after I answer:

Here's what happens. Little shell company, totally inactive/quiet, hopefully nice and clean... only 5,000,000 shares and trading at \$0.10, no debt. Prez owns the control block. The more stock he and his cronies own, the easier it will be to move.

Now, the typical amateur (i.e., the 97% of penny stock investors)

is afraid of this stock. And for good PSYCHOLOGICAL reasons...

After all, no one is talking about it. It certainly LOOKS dead ... hardly ever trades... price is so low, it can't be any good ... doesn't have any decent prospects, etc., etc. So your typical amateur investor, part of the 97%, doesn't buy.

It takes a hard, disciplined, knowledgeable investor to buy a stock like that.

Then, of course, there is the person who DID buy that stock a year or two earlier... at a dollar! He gradually gets disgusted with seeing that !\$@#\$\$ loser stock! Every month, when he receives the statement of account from his broker, that "loser" reminds him of how dumb he was. So one day he cracks and finally sells it "at the market" (i.e., for whatever he can get for it).

Who sucks up that bargain? Yup, the 3% who make the money.

Now, there is one big difference between penny mining companies and just about any other small public companies. A mining venture never generates huge debt. Why? Simple... banks won't lend them money!

After all, they don't have any assets. Even the properties they "own" are actually liabilities, because they generate yearly claim fees and exploration obligations. Since they have no assets, they get no loans.

Even when that stock goes from \$0.10 to \$2.00, the company still has no assets or income to justify any kind of a loan!

So when that mining high-flier goes back down to \$0.10, it does so debt-free. Which means that it's not hard for the insiders to revive it all over again.

Just clean up a few small debts to suppliers who got caught short. Vend in a new property. Or do a deal with another junior. Or roll back the stock (i.e. convert 20,000,000 shares into 4,000,000), raise a bit more seed capital. And they're off and running, all over again.

But for non-mining ventures, once a company succeeds, it actually starts to make money! And it starts to spend all kinds of money for hard assets necessary to grow the business. Banks see income and assets, so make loans. If these companies collapse, the banks usually get nervous and call the loan. Company liquidates. End of story. No revival.

That's why I love *penny mining stocks.* The same company can ride the same roller coaster over and over again.

So anyway, back to our Prez...

One day, the Prez and Buddies say, "Hey, let's do something with ShellCo this year." From here, there are a lot of ways that they can build "THE STORY."

They could acquire claims that will give them a play on the "hot metal" of the year. Decades ago it was uranium. Gold has been a perennial favorite, but is now temporarily out of fashion. Silver looks great this year.

Or if they already have a decent little property, they might find another junior company, one with cash, to come and explore their property (for a piece of the action, of course).

There are many different scenarios. It's not important which one happens. Many times WHICH ONE is totally unforeseeable. But that's not important. Here is what's important AND foreseeable...

For the Prez and his buddies, their little public company is a wonderful vehicle. It is IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS to make something happen. Sooner or later, they WILL find "a story" to tell the amateurs.

Remember this... If and when YOU find a safe, dead-looking little stock to buy, it is only a matter of time before "THE STORY" comes out. So buy before it happens!

By the time you "find" a stock in a press release in a newspaper, or in a newsletter, or in Silicon Investor, it's too late. You didn't find it... IT FOUND YOU. You're not ahead of the story. YOU'RE JUST PART OF IT.

When "the story" hits, that 5-10 cent stock triples or better. Don't wait for the RESULTS of the story to get out. Take the money and run. Then start over.

To summarize, get in BEFORE the story gets out. Get out WHEN THE STORY HITS, but BEFORE any results are known.

Of course, it's not that easy. It's TOTALLY natural to be scared of penny stocks that look dead. Some of them, after all, really ARE dead. And it's tough, if you don't have a solid and disciplined approach, to buy when no one else does.

And, when the stock is flying, greed is a funny thing. A really

good story-teller can make you forget yourself and the "greed-then-grief" cycle. For some reason, "this one is different -- it really IS heading to \$10!" Wrong.

That's why I developed my PennyGold software. If you'd like to see what PennyGold owners say about it, please check out the feedback page.

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/PGuserfeedback.html>

OK, on to the second story.

Some time ago, I identified a little stock that met all of my basic criteria. I did a bit more checking and it still looked good (i.e., "bad but good"). So I called the Prez.

Now, usually the Prez will spend an hour with you, if you'd like to talk to him for that long. I mean, it's not like he has a lot to do. The company is pretty quiet.

But this promoter runs several other companies. After about 15 minutes, he cuts me off and says, very flatly:

"Mr. Evoy, You're a very smart guy. You're asking me all the right questions. But let's get to the bottom line."

"There are only 6,000,000 shares and the stock's a nickel. It will be an easy one to move when I get around to it. Right now, it's on my back burner. I'll do it in a year. And when I do, it's good for a dollar."

"Is that what you want to know?"

He said it so flat, and so arrogant, that I knew he meant it.

I replied, "Yes, I guess that is the bottom line of my questions! Thank you for your time."

I bought 70,000 shares at an average price of about 7 cents. Please understand that I didn't even know what "the story" would be. I just had great confidence in this man's SELF INTEREST.

Now, I had done my homework and KNEW that this stock would not disappear in the foreseeable future. So it was just a matter of buying and holding for as long as it took to explode in price.

I sold the stock 10 months later in the 25-30 cent range.

But the story's not done, yet. The week after I unloaded my last

block of 10,000 shares at \$0.25, the stock doubled to \$0.50.
Within a couple of months, it hit \$2.50.

Here's the real point that I hope sticks with you:

When he told me that he would move this stock to a dollar, HE
DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THE STORY WOULD BE YET! His stable
of companies were just "products on a shelf" to him. And sooner
or later, my little favorite would have its day.

And the tale's still not done. The stock is now back down at
\$0.10! Ready to do it again?

Well, that about wraps it up. The first story showed you how
and why the amateurs (I call them "the 97%") buy at the top...
... GREED, GREED, and more GREED.

The second story showed how and why the 97% sell at
the bottom... GRIEF, DISGUST, SHAME. And how and why the
3% WHO MAKE MONEY at penny mining stocks buy those same
stocks off them.

I hope the above two stories, both absolutely true, have helped
you to understand how to BUY LOW and SELL HIGH.

If you found this report to be of value to your understanding of the
penny mining markets, PGOLD XPRESS delivers more of the same
every month. If you have not yet subscribed, you can do so at...

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgxprs1.html>

Feel free to call me anytime if you have any questions.

All the best,
Ken Evoy, M.D.

~~~~~  
>>PennyGold -- Powerful Penny Mining Stock Software  
Become a sharp-thinking, independent, successful investor  
~~~~~  
>>"I get the facts,I study them patiently,I apply imagination."
-- Bernard Baruch
~~~~~  
>>Web site ==> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>  
kevoy@goodbytes.com voice:450-458-1064 fax:450-458-1068  
\*\*\*\*\*TOLL-FREE ORDER LINE 1-888-98-PENNY\*\*\*\*\*  
~~~~~



14.5.3. How to Use Mini-Apps to Drive SALES

A free piece of software! **WOW!** Where do I sign up?

I love using Danny Goodman's javascript **decision-making program, Decision Helper (DH)**. And I love what it does for my site's sales, too. Danny Goodman allows you to use it, **free**, as long as you give him proper credit.

Which, I guess, is Danny's clever way of driving more people to his site, thereby selling more books...



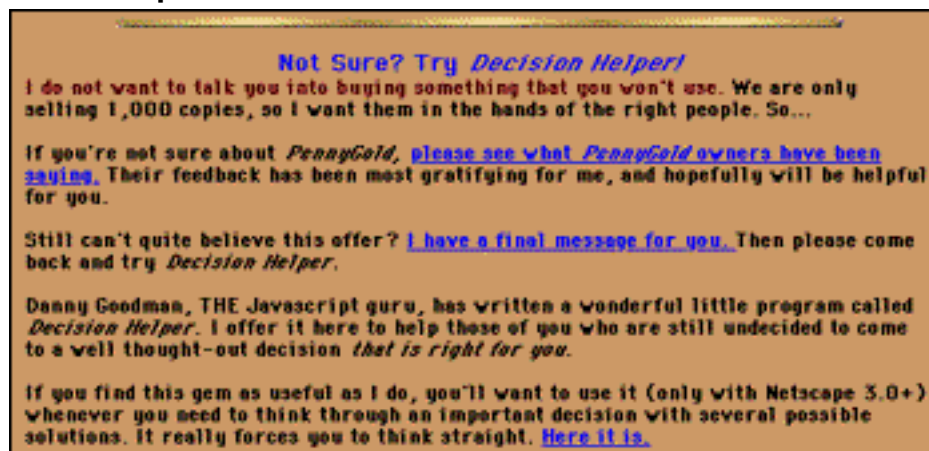
Danny Goodman's Javascript Site

<http://www.dannyg.com/javascript/index.html>



Once you've downloaded Danny's DH from his site, **customize it to fit your product**. List your product vs. the competitors. Enter typical factors that are important in the decision-making process. Rank their importance. Then score them. Voila! Yours is best! (at least, I hope it is).

Since this is a **Backup Response for wafflers**, I included this offer right **after** the **MWR Response Form**...



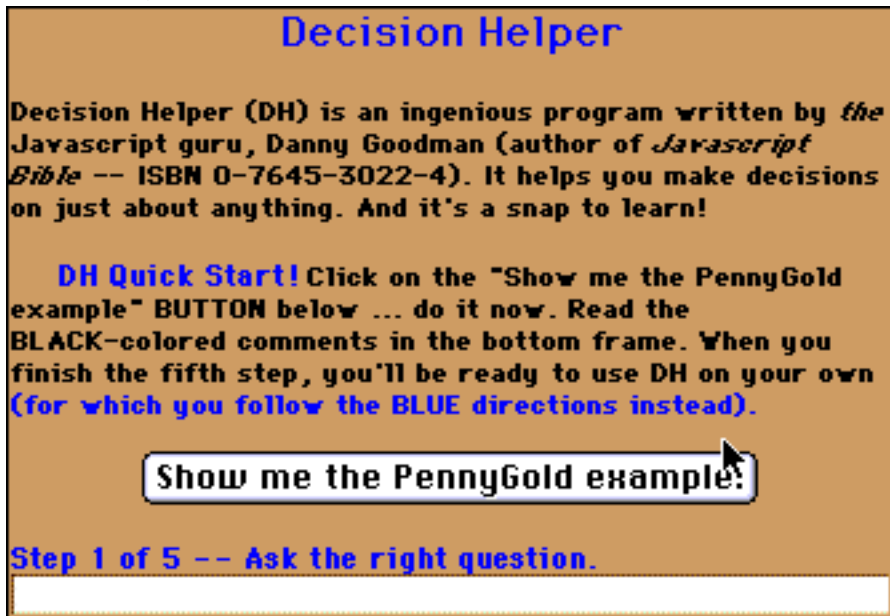
PennyGold Decision Helper (Offer)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#DH>

Why does this offer appear **after** the Order Form? Super question!...

As explained earlier, I didn't want to interrupt those who were "sold" -- they were heading smoothly towards the sale. And anyone who had arrived at the **Order Page** but was **waffling** would continue right to the bottom of that page, to see if there was any more info to help make his decision. There was!

By clicking on the link to Decision Helper (DH), the visitor headed straight into it...



Decision Helper

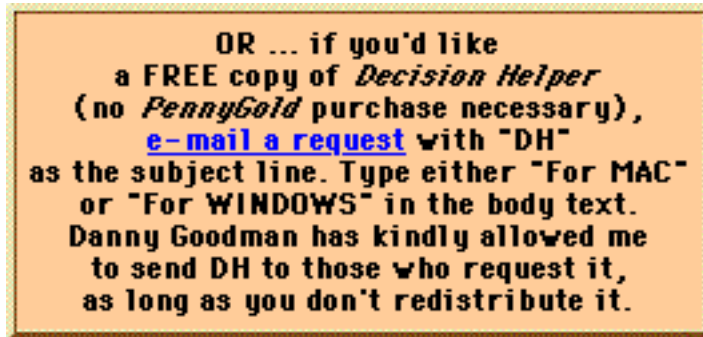
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/dh/index.htm>

After going through the **PennyGold example**, which compared options like newsletters and advisors, it encouraged the user to enter her own options and weightings. When people used DH to compare PennyGold against the competition, the value of PennyGold screamed.



And DH adds that extra-value content -- it encourages the customer to try it for all kinds of decisions ("Now let's see, should I marry Bob or Bill?"). It truly is a wonderful little mini-app.

If the user likes it (what's not to like -- it's great!), she can also send an e-mail to request a copy of Decision Helper, totally **FREE**. While we could have just linked the reader to the free URL download page, we instead required them to e-mail us...



Anyone who won't give up an e-mail address for DH is **not** a serious prospect. By getting an e-mail, we succeed in...

- **breaking the "contact us" ice** -- once they see that all goes well, they develop some confidence. It is far easier to contact us a second time, perhaps to order PennyGold?
- **capturing an e-mail address for our database** -- I would only use this in a DH-related way.
- **developing an opportunity to "sell" via the autoresponse letter.** The "request DH" e-mail generates an automatic e-mail response, which is another opportunity to send a gentle sales letter. The autoresponse letter closes by telling them to download. Here was our "DH Response e-mail" (note the P.S.)...

Thank you for taking the time to visit our Web site, and for your interest in Decision Helper.

You can download it at the following URL:

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/downloaddh.html>

You'll be amazed at how this simple little piece of Javascript clarifies the decision-making process.

Best regards,

Ken Evoy, M.D.

P.S. Please do me a favor and try DH on PennyGold. You'll find that there's no better way to generate terrific investment returns. PennyGold is real. It works. I guarantee it.

Then when the prospect went to the **Decision Helper Download Page**, she saw...

Download Decision Helper

Decision Helper is a **FREE** GoodByte\$ InfoTool. Instead of just reading a BOOK about "HOW to make a decision," Decision Helper is a TOOL that actually MAKES a decision with you.

Decision Helper is indispensable when you need to come up with the correct response to an issue that has several possible solutions. It helps you:

- lay out all the important factors
- analyze them
- weigh them
- make a smart decision.

Once you've done that, it points you towards "the best decision." It even tells you how much better it is than the other possible decisions.

You need Netscape 3+ or Explorer 4+ to use Decision Helper.

OK ... let's get you started on the road to making great decisions.

Click here to download Decision Helper for Windows. This file (labelled "dh.EXE") is a self-extracting zipped file. If your browser asks you, save it as a file to your hard disk. Once downloaded, all you need to do is double-click it. Then, in the window that pops up, click on the "Unzip" button (NOT the "Run WinZip") button.

Decision Helper Download

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/downloaddh.html>



And did this work? Well, although it was not our most popular [Backup Response](#), one quarter of the people who asked for Decision Helper went on to order PennyGold!



14.5.4. Newsletters -- Building Your Business

Publishing an [e-mailed newsletter](#) is an important part of building a long-term, valuable list of future (and current) clients.

Right at the bottom of every important **Content Page**, the PennyGold site offered a link to a FREE subscription to **PGOLD XPRESS**. It was designed to **capture anyone with any kind of an interest in penny mining stocks**, even if they were not ready to buy PennyGold itself.



Clicking linked them to this PGOLD XPRESS Subscription which appeared like this...

A screenshot of the PGOLD XPRESS Subscription form. The form is enclosed in a black border with a gold-colored top and bottom line. At the top, it says 'If you would like a FREE subscription to PGOLD XPRESS, just fill in the following info, then hit SUBSCRIBE NOW'. Below this are two input fields: 'E-mail Address' and 'What I'd love to see... (optional)'. To the left of the 'E-mail Address' field is the text 'Enter info'. Below the input fields is a red text prompt: 'Please double-check e-mail address for typos.' Below this is a 'SUBSCRIBE NOW' button. At the bottom, there is a red text message: 'Don't worry -- your e-mail address is totally secure. I promise to use it only to send you the PGOLD XPRESS.'

PGOLD XPRESS Subscription Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgxprs1.html>

(Please... we no longer publish the XPRESS, so don't subscribe.)

The results? In just a few months, we soon had over 2,500 targeted readers. If your experience is like mine, the first few issues **won't** generate many extra sales. But, with repeated exposure, and as the readership grew, **we saw a surge in sales after e-mailing each new issue.**

I knew that I was asking people to make a huge leap of faith to spend a great deal of money for investment software from an unknown person. So we offered a subscription to PennyGold as our **Backup Response**. As they saw the **high quality** of the **free** product, and as they got more comfortable with me, perhaps even **started to like and trust me**, people bought PennyGold.

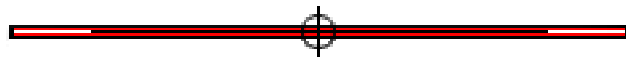


At SiteSell.com, we offer our Site-Sell e-zine **directly from each of our product sites** and we allow affiliates to remotely subscribe visitors directly from their own sites. As a result, we can build a huge base of potential customers and gently deliver our sales message to them over an extended time period. In return, we provide them with cutting-edge **Site SELLING** information.

But the **Site-Sell** e-zine is only one of our back-up responses. The other is to get the visitor to become an active affiliate. Either way, the customer has expressed an interest in hearing more about our products.

And that, friends, is the name of the game!

Newsletters are an important way to build a long-term, successful online business. Let's see how to start and grow your own...



14.5.5. How to Start & Grow Your Own Newsletter

Even if your visitor bookmarks you, he's unlikely to ever return once he leaves.

Newsletters are **the best way** to defeat "**Out of (Web) site, out of mind**" mindset.

By getting your visitor to submit his e-mail address to you, you've broken one barrier (contacting you). By sending him quality info (but not the **primo** material -- you must walk a fine line), he sees you and feels good about you, **on a regular, repeated basis.**

In fact, publishing your own newsletter is **no longer an option**. Finally the online biz community is coming to grips with the fact that a customer can't be regarded as "visitor number 122,015" to the Web site. Customers must be recognized as real, living, caring entities. At least, that is, if they are expected to make a purchase.

So the most important aspect of a vibrant online business -- building a sense of community and trust -- is based on the nurturing of a great relationship with your customers. That's the goal of a **newsletter**. There's just no other way around it. And there's just no better way to keep in touch with them on a regular basis.

Every time your potential customer receives your **NEWSLETTER** you...

- remind him about you and your business
- build trust
- establish a relationship
- build credibility
- promote your products
- build your image as an expert in the field.



Need some great online resources for creating a newsletter? Thought you might...



E-zine University

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



Ezine-Tips.com

<http://www.ezine-tips.com/>



The HandBook of Ezine Publishing

<http://www.e-zinez.com/handbook/index.html>



Let's review a simple, **STEP-BY-STEP** program to build and grow your own newsletter...

STEP 1 -- Orientation -- Who's it for, and what benefits will you deliver?

Before deciding upon **what** you'll write, decide **who** you will write for. Most obviously, you'll publish a newsletter for **potential and existing customers**. But how about one for investors in your company, or your suppliers and vendors, or resellers, etc.? Once you know **who**...

What benefits will you deliver to your subscribers? Will you provide a tip of the day? Will you digest news in your field down to a small number of key snippets each week? Or will you write an original article with valuable info once per week, or month?

[SIDEBAR]

Now that the online business community has whole-heartedly embraced newsletters, just about everyone publishes one now. So you'll **really** have to concentrate on benefits if you want subscribers to yours. **It's no longer enough to simply have a newsletter.** That no longer sets you apart from the crowd. So work on establishing those benefits. Your newsletter needs its own **USP!**

There's no limit to what you can do. Spend some time on this -- **choose a unique and valuable format that provides a solid benefit for your readers.**

Before developing the concept too far, check for competitors, both among the **one-way** and the **two-way** media. Once you know what's out there, develop a conceptual **USP** for your e-zine.

STEP 2 -- Format -- Lay out the newsletter for easy reading by your subscriber, and

for easy development by you.

The best way to show this is by example. Please review the [sample newsletter in the next sub-chapter](#). (Click in either page margin to trace back to this spot after you review it.)

STEP 3 -- Schedule -- Don't do a weekly at first. A newsletter sucks more time than you realize. And quarterly is just not often enough. So a monthly schedule is a good place to start, at least until you have all bugs worked out.

STEP 4 -- Set up a Web page to "sell" the subscription and get the e-mail address. You **only** need the e-mail address, and maybe the first name (it's a nice, personal touch when you mail merge with the first name -- [here's a nice way to get the first name](#)).

Don't make the mistake of turning your subscription **Response Form** into a market research survey, asking for all kinds of information to "better know your customer." If you do that, you'll drastically cut down subscriptions.

[SIDEBAR]

[Review the basics of designing a form that works.](#)

STEP 5 -- Develop a separate Web page to allow people to **unsubscribe**. Do **not** provide this link anywhere on your Web site. Just mention it in your welcome letter and in each issue of your newsletter.

The [CGI script](#) should check to make sure that the e-mail address entered is valid, **and that it exists on the database**. If it does, the script deletes it, then puts up a confirming page. If not, it tells the visitor that he is probably receiving the newsletter at a different e-mail address, and to please enter another address.

It's also important to allow people the option to **unsubscribe directly** from your newsletter -- without having to visit your site. Just have your techie setup a "mailto:" link that will remove them automatically from the database.

STEP 6 -- Provide a link to your subscription Web page on almost every **relevant** page of your site.

STEP 7 -- Automate -- The CGI script that handles the e-mail-gathering **Response Form** adds the address to a database that is kept on your server. When you are ready to send your subscribers the newsletter, a second CGI script sends out your newsletter [server-side](#), at your command, to the database. While you **could** do this manually and [client-side](#), why bother?

STEP 8 -- Develop high-quality content -- Good information is the trade-off that allows you to do a little gentle selling.

Provide what **your customer** wants to hear, **not** what you want to talk about. Make him happy, provide a benefit, ease his pain, and you will have a customer for your products, sooner or later. **Make him look forward to receiving the next issue!** Content does not have to be "text-only." Tie the type of content to the type of product that you sell.

Where will you get your content? Most importantly, out of your own head -- you're the expert, after all. But you'll need some help to stay on the cutting edge, **and** seed great ideas for articles. Luckily, there are **lots** of sources...

- [PR Newswire](#) and [PR Web](#) and [Internet News Bureau](#) -- These services send out press releases. You can subscribe to receive those that are relevant to your industry (also <http://www1.internetwire.com/iwire/home> - **Internet Wire**)
- [E-zines and daily e-mail news related to your industry](#) -- Subscribe to every one, especially your competitors'.
- **Web sites services** that allow article swapping or trading to build a subscriber base...



EzineArticles.com

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



One word of warning about content... Don't give away the farm! Make sure your subscriber still needs your primary product that is for sale.

The topic should also provide you the opportunity to work your business and product into the copy. All the rules of good writing in this book apply.

Don't be shy to weave mention of your products into the content. As long as you are providing valuable information, people expect a gentle self-plug to come with the content. And if someone **does** UNSUBSCRIBE because of your product mentions, was he a potential customer in the first place? Remember, it's not worth the effort if it doesn't bring a return.

The bottom line... **Talk** to a friend, offer outstanding **content**, and blend in some gentle **selling**.

[SIDEBAR]

1) For the technical how-to stuff, see Power-E-mail below. All the principles are the same.

2) Most e-mail software now reads HTML. So you can even send your newsletter as an HTML document, with graphics, forms, etc. We discuss formatting e-mail as HTML a little later.

3) Assume that everyone will see your e-zine, including competitors, special interest groups, etc. Judge your content accordingly.

STEP 9 -- Deliver it (via e-mail) on time -- Regular, timely delivery **establishes credibility**. You can do this manually via your own computer by using the bcc function of your e-mail software.

When you outgrow that (over 250 subscribers), try a full service, mailing list manager program with database-to-e-mail merge capabilities, like **WorldMerge**...



WorldMerge

<http://www.coloradosoft.com/worldmrg/index.htm>

But no matter how you cut it, if you have over 1,000 subscribers, it's just too slow doing it client-side. The manual subscribing and unsubscribing is tedious and time-consuming. And the time it takes to send a mere 500 e-mails through a dial-up connection is... well, it seems like forever.

So, **automate, automate, automate** -- go totally server-side.

Your Web hosting service can set up a server-side **Majordomo** mailing list for you on their computers, for little or no monthly cost. While **Majordomo** is nice and cheap (it's freeware), it's complicated to learn. It's available at...



Great Circle Associates

<http://www.greatcircle.com/majordomo/>

Ask your Web host for details.

Or...

Try **Topica's** free service...



Topica

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

Or Yahoo's...



Yahoo Groups

<http://groups.yahoo.com/>

Commercial packages are easier to learn and offer powerful features. For example, **MessageMedia** has a range of products, both client-side and server-side...



MessageMedia

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

SparkLIST is another popular e-mail list-hosting services...



SparkLIST

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

Some companies **give you a choice**. They will handle your list for you, **or** you can use their software to **do it yourself...**



Lyris Technologies

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

Finally, you can decide to customize for the specific needs of your own business by developing **your own CGI script that does it all...**

- handles subscriptions and **un**subscriptions and bounce-backs (see next topic) -- in doing this, it modifies and maintains the online database of e-mail addresses (and other information that you may have requested, like first name, etc.)
- maintains a backup copy of the database
- **provides a special admin page...**
 - It has an [HTML-to-CGI form](#) for you to enter the text of your newsletter, as well as the subject, salutation, reply-to address, etc.
 - It e-mails to everyone (from server-side) on the database at the click of a button, in a matter of minutes.
 - It will e-mail you a backup copy of the online backup database whenever you request -- a good idea in case of server disaster.

Developing your own custom CGI script is not too expensive, if you can find a solid techie. It's the route I choose for my own online business.

[**SIDEBAR**]

Mailing list hosting, management, and software have become **increasingly competitive**. eMailman provides a great starting point for researching all your e-mail technology needs...



eMailman

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

STEP 10 -- Handle bounce-backs -- People will change their addresses and not tell you. So about 1-3% of your e-mail addresses will bounce back each month. Your list software should either handle bounce-backs automatically, or you can set your CGI script to eliminate the manual work...

Or use a service like **Smartbounce**...



Smart Bounce

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

We enter bounce-backs manually into a database. If we get two bounce-backs in a row from the same address, we delete the address. Once we see that there's nothing to learn from doing it manually, we will automate this, as well.

Which brings us back to a good concept regarding automation... **do it manually until you've got all the bugs out and you're just plain wasting too much time. Then automate.**

STEP 11 -- Publicize -- Once the bugs are ironed out, you're ready to publicize. **The Zine & E-zine Resource Guide** outlines an excellent program for promoting your publication...



How to Publicize Your E-zine

<http://www.zinebook.com/publicz.html>

And there's a **pleasant bonus** when you market your newsletter. Not only will you build your e-publication, you will build more traffic to your site (if you provide a link from your subscription page to your Home and/or Opening Page).

STEP 12 -- Back issues -- Include back issues on your Web site. Introduce each issue with a brief line or two that "teases" the reader to click for more info. For example...



PGOLD XPRESS Back Issues

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgoldxpress/index.html#BACKISSUES>

And that's about it. Follow the above steps, and you'll soon be **ONE BIG STEP** closer to building a **long-term online business that SELLS!**

[SIDEBAR]

The "Informal" Newsletter -- Keep a database of people who have inquired about your product, but have **not** specifically subscribed to your newsletter. If you have more than one product line, track **which product** interested them. Announce upgrades, new product launches in similar categories, etc. to these people, but only for the product that interested them. Mention the newsletter in each announcement.



14.5.6. The More The Merrier! Eyeballs, That Is!

Any netrepreneur worth her salt knows the importance of publishing a newsletter.

It's Web Commerce 101.

Everybody publishes an e-zine now. Unfortunately, not everybody can write the riveting, compelling copy every e-zine needs to survive. There are numerous reasons why. Some folks don't have time. Others simply aren't gifted writers. Whatever the reason, it's not an excuse to skip the newsletter...

You absolutely **must** have one.

If you can't write it yourself (for whatever reason), hire someone close to your business who can. Do **NOT** bother with those online sources for free newsletter content. If you (or your employee) can't write with a unique voice that connects you to your reader, you're in serious trouble. After all, how many of those "one size fits all" e-zines do you delete automatically? Exactly.



On the other hand, if you happen to be one of those lucky enough to be able to bang off reams of high-quality content...

There's **BIG** demand for your work. **Quality content is a valuable resource.** There are more newsletters than there are creators of good newsletter content. Good news for you!

You can trade your knowledge and copywriting skills for site traffic and credibility. How?...

Post articles to various online locations that provide free content for newsletter publishers. If someone wishes to use your article, they must include your short [sig file](#) at the end of the text.

At this point, you're hoping...

- the newsletter, where your article is being published, isn't one of those "one-size-fits-all" newsletters that you just deleted a few paragraphs ago.
- your article creates enough interest that readers visit your site.

While it's unlikely that your visitor counter will spiral out of control, your name and URL will be in front of a ton of new eyeballs! If your articles are outstanding, of course, this could snowball out of control, **causing a stream of...**



... traffic to your Web site!

And instant credibility, too. If you're starting out and looking to **build your mailing list, and your reputation** -- this is the easiest way to do it!

Best of all...

It's free!



Post articles to...



EzineArticles.com

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

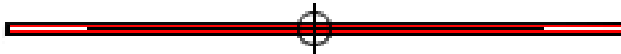


Aracopy

http://www.aracopy.com/ara_index.cfm



Be sure to place all back-issues of your newsletters on your site for visitors to read, and for the SEs' spiders to index.



14.5.7. Sample Newsletter Format

Below is a sample of our PGOLD XPRESS newsletter. Comments in red explain what's happening...

~~~~~  
PGOLD XPRESS

Note the use of a single > tag to highlight important points in blue, and two tags ( >> ) to highlight other points in green.

A Free-zine dedicated to showing you...

> ... how to invest in penny mining stocks

> ... how to avoid being part of the 97% who lose money

> ... how to join the 3% who make money (from the 97% who lose!)

Stresses benefits to subscribers.

~~~~~  
>"I get the facts... I study them patiently... I apply imagination."

-- Bernard Baruch (1870-1965),

legendary financier and adviser to U.S. presidents

~~~~~  
March 13, 1998

Issue #003

PGOLD XPRESS is a FREE monthly newsletter about penny mining stocks. Here's what PGX delivers:

1) Sharp, original articles show you the ins and outs of this fascinating, exciting investment arena. Totally original, you will not read this information anywhere else.

2) Over time, you will become invulnerable to "the story." PGX will keep you from getting sucked into all the frauds and scams.

PGOLD XPRESS is NOT a "tips" or recommendations newsletter. The information herein is based upon sources which we believe to be reliable, but is not guaranteed and may be incomplete. You must DO YOUR OWN investigation and make YOUR decision based on YOUR results.

Stresses benefits to subscribers.

Tips just don't work, especially not penny mining stock tips... they are often just a paid-for part of the promotion... or what I call "the story."

While PGOLD XPRESS \*WILL\* make you a better penny mining stock investor and while it \*WILL\* keep you from becoming part of the 97% who lose money, it won't bring you into the fold of the 3% who win at penny mining stocks. Only PennyGold can do that.

PennyGold is powerful software that will turn you into a self-reliant, successful penny stock investor.

Lets subscribers know where the "good stuff" is.



NOTE: There are only two ways to get on the PGOLD XPRESS mailing list: 1) You have purchased PennyGold; 2) You visited the PennyGold Web site and subscribed. If you wish to unsubscribe, send an e-mail to [unsubscribepgxprss@goodbytes.com](mailto:unsubscribepgxprss@goodbytes.com), with UNSUBSCRIBE as the subject.

Always include easy SUBSCRIBE and UNSUBSCRIBE info. Also remind them that it is **they** who subscribed. People forget and some will actually think you are spamming them. When we get the occasional flame, we remind them that a subscription request came from their computer, if not from them personally. We actually include a copy of the request!

>PGOLD XPRESS back issues are available at:

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgoldxpress/>

If you have good content, they'll want to explore back issues, which brings them closer to re-visiting your site.

> \\\

IN THIS ISSUE:

- SPECIAL NOTE
- ARTICLE OF THE MONTH
- WEB SITE OF THE MONTH
- PENNYGOLD FAQ OF THE MONTH
- PENNYGOLD NEWS
- POSTSCRIPT

Major headings go here -- these will vary with your content and goals.

> \\\

### SPECIAL NOTE

Well, the PGOLD XPRESS subscription base has passed 1500!  
And thank you for your very kind words that I receive from  
many of you after each issue.

This note thanks them, and makes people feel obligated to pass on the newsletter. Gives sense of being part of a group, too.

## >>ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

Provide some good content here. Offer true value. Gentle tie-in back to your main products if possible. If not, next issue... I don't include the actual content here, since it's not relevant.

>>WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

There are hundreds of Web sites related to penny mining stocks. Each issue of PGX, this section discusses one that stands out.

-----

More good content here.

~~~~~

>>PENNYGOLD FAQ OF THE MONTH

This section discusses the best FAQs that I receive daily from visitors to the PennyGold web site.

This issue focuses on one that I receive very often... I call it the "C'mon Ken, this is too good to be true" letter.

This provides some interesting content, **and** I always use it as an argument for buying PennyGold.

~~~~~

>>PENNYGOLD NEWS

Straight tie-in, plug, teaser, etc. re our main product, PennyGold, but still offers some useful and interesting info.

This section updates you on changes to the Web site, including upcoming price increases. It will also contain an occasional important message for PGPers, in between issues of the PGPer Digest.

>1) Price increase -- price increased again on February 16, 1998, but orders remain at double my target rate. Price will increase again shortly.

Creates urgency.

>2) Updates to Web site -- since the last issue of PGX, the junior markets remain super-depressed. Here's a quick random sampling of penny mining stocks for you to check out:

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/quotes-ext/index.html>

Note this time, however, that a few of those stocks have already doubled or tripled. There's a lot of action to come in the months ahead!

Invitation to revisit.

>3) NOTE TO PENNYGOLD OWNERS:

I have posted the PennyGold Research Room in the PGPers Club. This central "library" contains the cream of the entire World Wide Web. Up-to-date information is available on just about any junior mining stock you can imagine, from almost anywhere in the world.

Use the Research Room to:

- Build lists of high-potential stocks.

## MYSS! 2002... The Backup Response

- Get the data PennyGold needs.
- All simply by clicking!
- All totally for free!

The beauty of the Research Room, of course, is that as the Web continues to grow, the RR's resources will just keep getting better and better. And all totally free! It's an amazing world.

**Give sense of missing something, which they are!**

>4) Feedback on PennyGold has been gratifying. I have added a few new comments from PennyGold owners to the following Web page:

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/PGuserfeedback.html>

**Testimonials are especially powerful.**

More information on PennyGold is available at the Web site:

> Home Page (frames/music)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>

> Home Page (no frames/music)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pennygold.html>

> Concept Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/concept.html>

> What Do I Get Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/300.html>

> Current State of the Junior Mining Markets

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/quotes-ext/index.html>

> 10-Times-Guarantee

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/500.html>

> Exclusive Club Page (1,000 copies only)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/600.html>

> Order Page (price and ordering info)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html>

> PennyGold FAQ

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/FAQ1.html>

> PennyGold Site Map

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/SITEMAP.html>

**Just in case they wanted to check something.**

~~~~~

>>POSTSCRIPT

Include any needed legal stuff here.

DISCLAIMER

As you know, I am NOT an investment adviser. Please do not take what I say as investment advice. YOU have to be the final judge in how to best use the information contained in this newsletter (or whether to use it at all). In the final analysis, we all have to be responsible for our own decisions.

Ask for feedback. Include an e-mail address and phone number.

LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

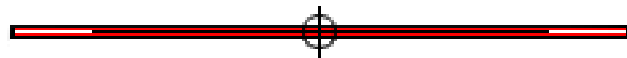
I want to make PGOLD XPRESS as useful to you as possible. If you have any suggestions, tips, or other comments, please e-mail me at kevoy@goodbytes.com. Or call me directly at 450-458-1064.

~~~~~  
Written by Ken Evoy, M.D.,  
President of GoodBytes Information Products Inc.  
(c) copyright 1998 GoodBytes Information Products Inc.

Encourage pass-ons -- it can only help. But assume EVERYONE will see it and adjust your content accordingly.

>This publication MAY be reproduced and transmitted to  
>others, as long as it has been copied in its entirety.

~~~~~  
~~~~~



#### 14.5.8. Getting Sign-ups for Future Notifications

This was probably the weakest of my Backup Responses. After all, **the benefit to the customer was not the greatest. And it was vague...**

At strategic points in the PennyGold site, people may request to be informed about future InfoTools...



This provided me with a list of people, serious people, who were sufficiently convinced by the tone of the Web site to exchange their e-mail addresses for future money-related notifications.

Actually, I doubt if this ever generated much business. But part of my philosophy

about the Web is...

**“If you don’t try, you’ll never find out!”**



#### 14.5.9. Selling Your Newsletter

If you think signing people up for your free newsletter or e-zine is a no-brainer, think again. We just discussed how most Webmasters recognize the importance offering a newsletter... **and how everybody now offers one on their sites.**

So you can assume that your visitor is becoming increasingly desensitized to the “enter your e-mail and receive our fantastic e-zine” messages. Plus, **she’s worried about privacy issues, and concerned about spamming.**

**More and more...**



**... you’ll have to work to get that subscription.**



This is something I forgot on the original **MYSS!** site, and it showed. Let me explain...

On my PennyGold site, I had a 6-to-1 ratio between subscribers to my e-zine, and those who bought the PennyGold software. That meant for every single person who bought PennyGold, there were 6 who signed up for the newsletter.

When I reviewed the stats for **MYSS!**, **I realized we were selling more books than free subscriptions.** How the heck could that be? And yet the stats were undisputable -- for every 100 copies of **MYSS!** we sold, we received 65 subscriptions. But why? It didn’t make any sense. How could we be selling more books than giving away free stuff?

There are, of course, a few reasons to expect a difference between the two sites.

After all, PG was expensive. And PG was in a rather unique niche market -- there are not hundreds of penny mining e-zines on offer. So people are less likely to buy PG and more likely to subscribe to the e-zine.

So I expected at least twice the number of **MYSS!** buyers to take the free subscription. We tried a few things, each of which did a little to improve the rate...

- moved the link to the top of the left margin.
- did a gentle animation with the Subscribe link.

These small changes boosted the rate to 0.85 to 1. Not good enough. So then we got radical, and made some big changes...

I had assumed that "free" was a no-brainer. I didn't think there was any need to **sell the reader** on paying me with his e-mail address.

Boy, did I goof!

So I decided to revisit the PennyGold Subscription Page. Suddenly, I realized I had done something different on that site...

**I worked to get that free subscription. I SOLD it!...**



The screenshot shows a web page for "PGOLD XPRESS", a free monthly newsletter about penny mining stocks. The page has a black border and a white background. It features a title line, a short description, and four bullet points. The first bullet point describes the content as sharp and original. The second bullet point mentions the Bre-X story and the importance of being a better investor. The third bullet point states that the newsletter is not a "tips" or recommendations newsletter. The fourth bullet point is a note about the risks of penny stock investing and the value of the newsletter's information.

**PGOLD XPRESS** is a **FREE** monthly newsletter about penny mining stocks.

- Sharp, original articles about penny mining stocks show you the "ins and outs" of this fascinating and exciting investment arena. Totally original, you will not read this information anywhere else.
- **PGOLD XPRESS** will help you "keep your head when all about you are losing theirs." You will recognize and avoid scams, promotions, frauds ... all the hype. It will keep YOU from getting sucked into such outrageous frauds as Bre-X (click here for the Bre-X story -- its lessons are important). You will be a better investor for it. (P.S. If you think you're too smart to get fooled, I can tell you that thousands of extremely sophisticated investors and funds were fooled by Bre-X ... along with the widows and orphans.)
- **PGOLD XPRESS** is NOT a "tips" or recommendations newsletter. Tips just don't work, especially not penny mining stock tips... they are often just a paid-for part of the promotion! Even when they are honest recommendations (and how do you really know?), by the time you get the tip, you rarely get it at the recommended price... but the author and all his insider friends always do! So who do you think makes the money?
- Please note: While **PGOLD XPRESS** WILL make you a better penny stock investor and while it WILL keep you from becoming part of the 97% who lose money, it won't bring you into the fold of the 3% who win at penny mining stocks. Only **PennyGold** gives you the Info and the Tools to consistently make money at penny mining stocks.

**PennyGold Xpress**

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgxprs1.html>

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[ **SIDEBAR** ]

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Please... just visit -- don't subscribe. This is just an example, meant to show you how to "sell" your e-zine.

---

And what was Ken doing on the **MYSS!** site? I had a quick, measly, "gimme your address" form.

**Now**, if you surf to any of the other **SiteSell product** sites and click on the "World's Most..." button, we "pop-up" a new window that "sells" that subscription...

**SITE-SELL!**  
The Internet Site-Selling Authority

**The World's  
Most Usable E-commerce E-zine...  
Is **FREE!****

Enter Your Email Address

Then  
**Subscribe to SITE-SELL!**

Don't worry -- your e-mail address is totally secure.  
I promise to use it only to send you SITE-SELL!

The **SITE-SELL!** e-commerce e-zine delivers **only... original** (you **won't** read this elsewhere) and **Immediately USABLE** information and strategies that **multiply** your site's sales.

Does the world really need another Web-marketing newsletter? We subscribe to over 100 of them, most of which simply **regurgitate the "same old, same old."**

We're all overwhelmed with a glut of Web-sales-and-marketing info. Guess what?... **you can't use 99.9%** of it! It's all just theory and news about the latest-and-greatest e-commerce technology (that will be **e-commerce toast** in six months).

Site Sell E-zine (Click the "World's Most..." button)

<http://myss.sitesell.com/s-ezine.html>

We also allow our affiliates to remotely subscribe their visitors to our newsletter. Of course, those visitors become their visitors, and they get credit from any sales resulting from that sign-up. Powerful motivation, indeed!

It took time to build just the right Subscription Page. **It needed a good USP, and strong benefits.** These take some good old fashioned thinking. When you're in a hurry (aren't we all?), it's almost natural to take the easy route. That's certainly what happened to me!

Anyhow, since we started to work for the subscription, the ratio has jumped to 1.2 to 1 -- almost double the original response rate. Occasionally, I'll run further tests to see just how close we can get to a 2 to 1 response ratio.

I honestly doubt if we'll ever get past a 2:1 ratio because Web marketing info is a crowded arena. So the bad news is that you have to work to sell your subscription. However, the good news is that once it's done, the improved response rate works for you **24 hours a day!**



What else can you do to sell your subscription? Glad you asked...

- **Post back issues on your site, where people can review them.** Show them you offer something of quality, and chances are they'll sign up.
- **Outline your clear anti-spamming policy in plain view.**
- Use [Pop-up invitations](#).
- **Place your sign-up info on every page.**
- **Experiment, experiment, experiment.** With the text, with the graphics, with the position on the page -- test and measure results...
- **If you can, weave subscription forms into the text of the site...**



Consider what would happen if you learned the truth about fat reduction, once and for all...

A multi - billion dollar dieting industry would collapse, virtually overnight. Yes, that same industry that pockets *billions* of your hard earned dollars by selling you products that have little or no supporting scientific evidence...

Products that fall between the FDA regulation cracks...

Products that are misrepresented by unscrupulous "doctors" ...

Would collapse. Is it any surprise that they don't tell you the truth?

**Are You Being Scammed by the Dieting Industry? Enter Your Email for the Free Special Report NOW!**

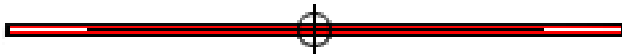
(I don't spam, or sell addresses, I promise!)

### The Ultimate Fat Burning Diet Primer

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

Remember, your e-zine is your Back-Up response. **It's your chance to build a visitor into a lifelong customer.**

So take the time to do it right!



### 14.5.10. Attracting and Buying New Subscribers

Got all the bugs worked out of your newsletter? Delivering a high-quality information-rich resource bang-on every two weeks? Good! Now it's time to take a few extra steps to get those subscribers flocking to your doorstep...

List your newsletter in major e-zine directories on the Web. You'll find these work much the same way as the main directories (LookSmart, Yahoo! and The Open Directory). Drill down through the categories and sub-categories to find the best place and submit your newsletter to the most appropriate section of the directory. Generally, there are two types of e-zine directories...

The free resources, where everybody and everyone can list their e-zines for nothing.

These include...



**Ezine-Universe.com**

<http://ezine-universe.com/search/getlisted.html>

And...



**eZINESearch**

<http://www.ezinesearch.com/search-it/ezine/ezine-add.html>

And the paid resources, where you pay either a flat fee for every subscriber delivered (usually pretty reasonable), or a base advertising rate (delivered by impressions). If possible, always stick to advertising that guarantees you results.

Some services offering paid listings include...



**EzineCentral.com**

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



**List World Media**

<http://www.listworld.net/>

For a comprehensive listing of both paid and free e-zine directories, visit...



**List Resources.com**

<http://List-Resources.com/>

It's always important to do some tinkering first. Do a search for your most important keywords, and note from which categories the returned results are coming. Check

for keywords in the title and the description, as well. Remember, your subscriber is most likely to find you as a result of a keyword search. So do your best to ensure your site is listed for that particular keyword(s).

Keep in mind that your description is the only impression a directory visitor will get of your e-zine, so make darn sure you **SELL** it! 😊

---

**[ SIDEBAR ]**

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In the [Traffic-Building Volume](#) of **MYSS! 2002**, I discuss the process of listing in directories like [Yahoo!](#) and [The Open Directory](#) in great detail. Check out these chapters, and learn the low-down on effective directory submission **BEFORE** you submit your newsletter to any of these resources!

---

Bottom line on the e-zine directories?

That depends.

If your e-zine is about a popular topic likely to generate many keyword searches, and you've listed your site properly (following the instructions detailed in the [Traffic-Building Volume](#)) with a compelling description, there's no reason why these directories shouldn't bring a constant trickle of subscribers to your newsletter.

Of course, if your newsletter is about a highly specific niche topic, your major concern will be listing in directories that receive enough traffic to generate keyword searches for that topic. Just visit the directories with [Alexa](#) enabled.



All in all, if you can hit the major e-zine directories in an hour or so, it's not a bad way to spend your time. Just be sure to do your homework. **Learn how to submit properly, or you'll get...**



... nuttin'.

To spread the word even farther, submit your newsletter to announcement mailing

lists. A brief description of your newsletter will be sent to subscribers who have requested to be notified when new e-zines (within their area of interest) are published. There is a ton of low-quality mailing lists in existence, so it's best to focus only on the better ones...



**New-List**

<http://www.new-list.com/>



**Yahoo!Groups**

<http://groups.yahoo.com/>

**List Partners** takes a different approach to building your subscriber list. It offers a free affiliate program! Sign up, and your affiliates are encouraged to recruit new subscribers to your newsletter in exchange for cash or free advertising...



**List Partners**

<http://listpartners.com/>



#### 14.5.11. Pop-up Invitation

If you think you can get away with it without annoying your customers, launch a "pop-up" javascript window that offers a subscription to your newsletter. These "pop-ups" can be configured in a variety of ways, and are ideally sized to cover a quarter of the screen area in 800X600 browser resolution. Pop-up invitations are more commonplace on the Net these days... many savvy marketers are using them.

Here Ralph Wilson of [Wilsonweb](#) pops-up an invitation to his newsletter, "**Web Marketing Today**"...



## Wilson Internet

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

Don't load the pop-up before your regular page loads -- either have it load up after (so your visitor won't be tempted to leave if it annoys her), or better still, have it load when your visitor exits your site.

Although you may alienate some visitors with a "pop-up" (research shows that the more technically-oriented your audience, the more pop-ups will annoy them), you can guarantee that all have at least seen and considered a subscription to your e-zine. Again, measuring the success or failure of your "pop-up" is simple enough...

Establish your daily sign-up rate without the "pop-up" window. Add a javascript pop-up subscription offer, and run it for an appropriate length of time. Compare the daily sign-up rates. Keep the "pop-up" or lose it, accordingly.

## [ SIDEBAR ]

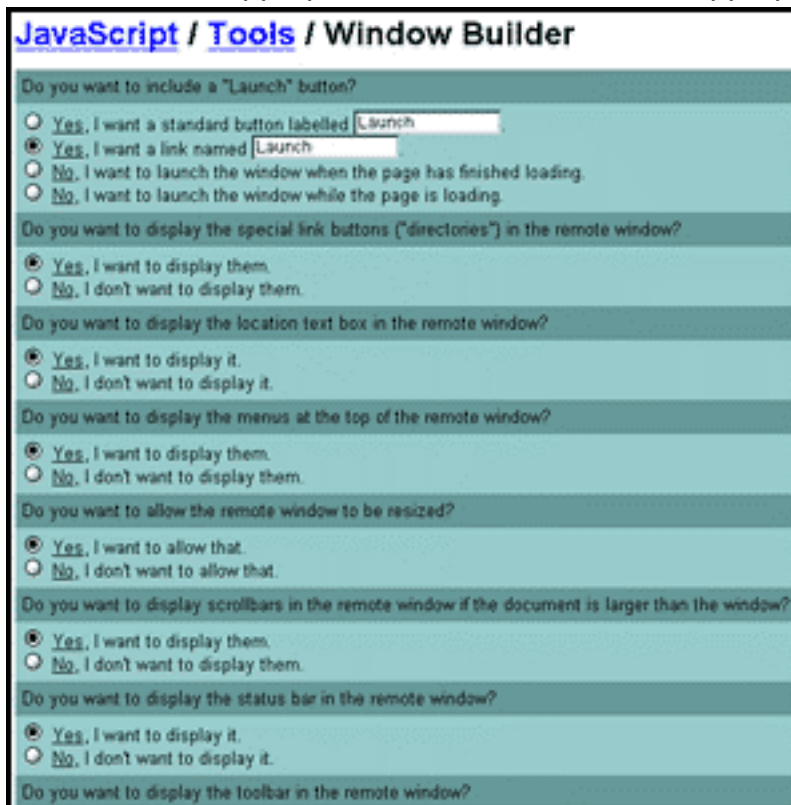
Don't overdo "pop-up windows". Once, on your Opening Page, is enough. Any more than that, and you're sure to distress your customers. After all, how generous

do you feel after being asked for an e-mail address a half a dozen times?

Be sure to have your techie set a “**cookie**” so that the pop-up only appears to a visitor once, and not every time she visits your site, or returns to that page.

---

**Webreference** has a handy little online tool that will build a javascript pop-up window exactly to your specifications with no programming knowledge necessary. Just fill it in the appropriate blanks, and click the appropriate buttons...



The screenshot shows a web form titled "JavaScript / Tools / Window Builder". It contains several sections with radio button options for configuring a JavaScript pop-up window. The sections are:

- Do you want to include a "Launch" button?**
  - ☐ Yes, I want a standard button labelled
  - ☒ Yes, I want a link named
  - ☐ No, I want to launch the window when the page has finished loading.
  - ☐ No, I want to launch the window while the page is loading.
- Do you want to display the special link buttons ("directones") in the remote window?**
  - ☒ Yes, I want to display them.
  - ☐ No, I don't want to display them.
- Do you want to display the location text box in the remote window?**
  - ☒ Yes, I want to display it.
  - ☐ No, I don't want to display it.
- Do you want to display the menus at the top of the remote window?**
  - ☒ Yes, I want to display them.
  - ☐ No, I don't want to display them.
- Do you want to allow the remote window to be resized?**
  - ☒ Yes, I want to allow that.
  - ☐ No, I don't want to allow that.
- Do you want to display scrollbars in the remote window if the document is larger than the window?**
  - ☒ Yes, I want to display them.
  - ☐ No, I don't want to display them.
- Do you want to display the status bar in the remote window?**
  - ☒ Yes, I want to display it.
  - ☐ No, I don't want to display it.
- Do you want to display the toolbar in the remote window?**

### Window Builder

<http://www.webreference.com/js/tools/windows/>

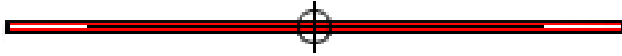
Then copy-and-paste the generated javascript into your existing HTML.

Easy!

A very similar service can be found here...

<http://javascript.internet.com/generators/popup-window.html>

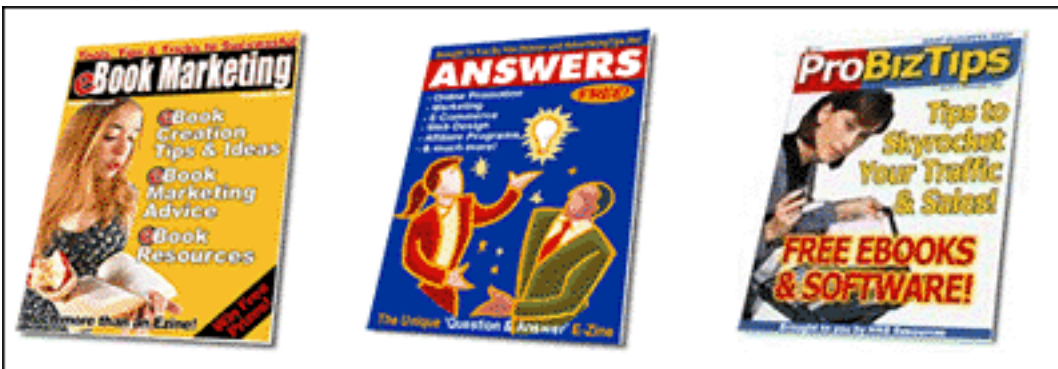
Jonathan Mizel sells his pop-up solution for \$37 at [amazingpopups.com](http://amazingpopups.com), which includes the code for several more popular pop-up configurations.



#### 14.5.12. Dressing Up Your E-zine

Want to really draw attention to your e-zine?

Why not give it a “killer cover”...



Killer Covers.com

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



#### 14.5.13. An Income Generator

Remember, if you take the time to build a quality newsletter with a large, targeted audience, you also get an added bonus...

**An income opportunity!**

**Yes, you can sell...**



**... advertising space in your e-zine.**



How much you charge for advertising will depend on a couple of things...

- **size of the list** (you may charge a bulk fee, or per individual). Generally, you'll need a mailing list of at least a 1,000 readers before you can expect to generate any advertising revenue.
- **focus of your newsletter** (are your readers highly targeted?)
- **affluence of your audience** (does your newsletter attract single professionals with high disposable incomes?)
- **subject of your newsletter** (are you reviewing cookie recipes, or publishing high-end software reviews to engineers?)
- **quality of the content** (is it well written, informative, unique?)
- **attractiveness of the layout**
- **amount of advertising you sell in each e-zine.** You have probably received e-zines with a two paragraph article, followed by two dozen ads? How effective do you think those ads are? How long before you unsubscribed? Quality newsletters (like Danny Sullivan's, for example) only have a couple of paid sponsors per issue. This increases the value of the advertising for both the vendor and the buyer!



One warning... don't publish an e-zine for the express purpose of making money. You won't. Your subscribers will see right through you, and will unsubscribe in an instant. Instead, publish an e-zine about a subject you love, or that is your expertise. Focus only on providing your subscribers with solid value. Then, when the time is right, add a few sponsor ads to your newsletter.

Bottom line?

It all comes down to three things...

- **Size**
- **Focus**
- **Quality**



Nail 'em all, and you've got yourself a great opportunity for a few extra bucks once or twice a month...



Ad Reps will fill up the advertising space in your newsletter. Their fees are substantial (up to 50% of the advertising revenue), and they may not work with owners of smaller sized lists. Here are a few for you to check out...



Advertising.com

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



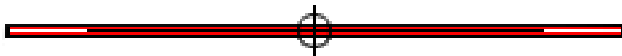
B2B Works

<http://www.b2bworks.com/>



Cybereps

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



#### 14.5.14. Freebies -- Your Chance to SELL!... or SMELL!

Whether you offer a freebie as an appetizer for the MWR, or whether your freebie is the main course of your Backup Response...

... make FREE obvious. Free is a powerful word -- people just love free stuff. So

use the word... *highlight it.* You might as well... after all, it's **FREE!**



But FREE does not mean that your freebie should be cheap or ill-thought out. **Your freebie will often be your customer's first true experience with some kind of product from your company.**

Do you want your customer's first exposure to your products to be a negative experience? Or would you rather that she marvel,

"Wow! If that's what their **free** products are like..."

**Think about it.** You're on my Web site, close to buying, but unsure. You ask for a freebie. It's lousy. What's your next move? Yup, **bye-"buy"...**

What a shame! You designed a great site that **SOLD!** You convinced your customer to exchange her e-mail address for your freebie. **Then, just when you had the chance to shine, you convinced her that your products are poor.**



## 14.6. Formatting Newsletters In HTML

There's no doubt that HTML formatted e-mail is...



... the wave of the future.

It's so much more exciting than plain old **ASCII** (text). HTML formatted newsletters can be everything a Web page is -- yes, even a "mailable" extension of your Web page. For example...



ZDNet's AnchorDesk

<http://www.zdnet.com/anchordesk/>

Sign up for the for the HTML version of David Coursey's e-zine, and you'll find the daily newsletter and his Web page look nearly identical! The newsletter gives you the headlines, and a taste of the day's articles. To read more, you'll have to click through to the site. The newsletter simply delivers the headlines that draw you back into the site. That's an awesome Web marketing tool!



**Truly, the age of HTML formatted e-mail is just dawning.** Alarmed? Relax! Most of us will be able to get along without it for a while -- at least 'til all the various browser incompatibilities are sorted out.

On the other hand, why should you look into HTML formatted e-mail?

Well, HTML formatted e-zines are more visually appealing, effective and dynamic than plain text e-zines. Those who are first to jump on the bandwagon will have a significant advantage. Their e-zines will stick out from the nondescript ASCII newsletters, and will have a greater chance of actually being read. That's a powerful plus. And...

As people get used to seeing HTML formatted e-zines, they'll begin to associate them as being the **norm**. It won't be too long before ASCII formatted plain text newsletters will be considered bush league. Folks will start to wonder why you're **not** formatting an HTML newsletter.



The benefits?...

- **Done properly, it is much more compelling and attractive than a plain ASCII newsletter, and thus more likely to be read.**
- **It's much more effective in drawing a visitor into your Web site.**
- **Allows for expanded advertising revenues, since you can format your newsletter to contain all the banner ads you regularly host on your site.**

- **Allows many of the same programming options that your Web page allows -- embedded audio, animated gifs, etc, etc.**



But it's not all roses (surprise, surprise)...

**If there's one major problem slowing down the widespread implementation of HTML formatted e-mail it's...**

**Various browser incompatibilities.** Yup, big surprise, I know. Seems what one browser interprets and displays perfectly, another displays incorrectly and differently. And guess what? Still others (AOL and older browsers) don't display it at all. Isn't that grand? So the bad news is... if you're going to start publishing your own HTML formatted newsletter, you'll have to continue with a plain text one as well. At least for now. Double the work. Sigh.

I wish I could tell you that was the only problem, but there are more...

- **Formatted e-zines with graphics will be difficult to view offline for anyone with dial-up access -- browsers will try to access the Web every time one tries to read it.** (Since the graphics reside on the host's server).
- **Large newsletters are significantly larger (in kilobytes) than their plain text counterparts -- another detriment for the dial-up user.**
- **Extra programming is required to ensure unsubscribe requests are properly respected with your twin mailing lists.**

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**[ SIDEBAR ]**

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Make sure a copy of any graphics you insert in your newsletters resides on your Web server, and not just on your hard disk. **If you don't, visitors will get an "X" where the image is supposed to be.** (What did I just say about bush league?) Nothing complicated here, the e-zine reads the graphics from your server, just like your Web page would if you hyperlinked to an image on another Web site.

---

Because a properly formatted HTML e-zine can replicate the look of your Web page, all the rules of good copywriting apply. Remember that your recipient is viewing your newsletter in a very confined page! Leave lots of white space, plenty of "scannable" headlines. **Do everything you can with your e-zine to allow reading**

to flow properly.

If possible, draw your subscriber back to your site for full details.



#### 14.6.1. How HTML Formatted E-mail Works

The best way to find out how an HTML formatted e-mail works is to sign up for a e-zine published in this format. ([See ZDNet's Anchor Desk, or Ralph Wilson's Web Marketing Today.](#)) Look it over carefully.

Here's a quick overview of the process...

First, select the formatted mail in your e-mail client. Then select FILE > SAVE AS. A pop-up window will appear. From the "Save as type" scroll down menu, select "HTML Files." Name and save your document.

#### **[ SIDEBAR ]**

Depending on your browser, this procedure may differ slightly. All you need to remember is that you save your formatted e-mail as ".HTML", or dot HTML. That's the most important part!

Okay, now double-click your saved document to open it. If all went well, it will open in your browser. You'll be viewing a humungous version of the e-mail you just received in your mailbox. Do a "View Source." What do you see? A Web page. Nothing more, nothing less. All the tags -- `<A HREF>`, `<TABLE>` -- they're all there.

Have a good look to see how that page was built to display properly in an e-mail client.

**At its simplest, HTML e-mail is simply an "e-mailed Web page."** So...

Does this mean that you have to hand-code your newsletter in HTML?

The answer is... you don't have to, but you probably should. **Building the best code possible is essential to getting your newsletter to look attractive.** Sorry, but that means hand-coding the HTML. Sigh.

Once you master this level, then it's time to move to a decent editor (preferably a

[WYSIWYG](#) one) for help.

When you're finished coding, it's simply a matter of cutting and pasting into a blank e-mail message. And, of course, you've got to test, test, test. Send e-mails to yourself as well as your most patient friends on different platforms. Revise, and try again.

For more on how to build an HTML newsletter from scratch, visit Ralph Wilson...



Wilson Internet

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

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[ **SIDEBAR** ]

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Newer versions of Outlook Express allow you to **choose** how you wish to format your outgoing mail -- in rich text (HTML) or plain text. To find out how your mail is going out, select "New Mail," then choose "Format." Check to see which option is selected. If "rich text" is highlighted, select View > Source Edit to edit the HTML directly in Express.

---

Bottom line on an HTML formatted e-zine?

Put it on your "to do" list. The speed at which you need to implement this really depends on...

- **your customers** -- What do they want? Facts and info, or pictures and graphics? What would better suit their needs? Can you solve more of their problems by implementing a graphic-rich newsletter?
- **your competition** -- What's your competitor doing? Is her beautifully designed, aesthetically pleasing HTML e-zine being delivered weekly to throngs of clamoring admirers? In comparison, yours will look rather drab. Better get to work.
- **the relative importance of graphics vs. pure text** -- For example...

SiteSell e-zines are pure info, plain and simple. So I'm in no hurry to change them over to a different format. Who needs the headaches? But if I had an online store, and wanted to send out an e-mail illustrating a couple of new products...

An HTML formatted e-zine would be the way to go.

To sum it all up...

If your e-zine is highly regarded already, and full of rich content, you probably won't need to worry about HTML e-mail just yet. It's your call. **Just be forewarned -- the change is coming... and soon!**

**NoteTab** is a handy little utility that will strip HTML tags from a document, or just as easily add HTML coding. This is handy for preparing your e-zine for both popular formats -- plain ASCII text and HTML...



NoteTab

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



## 14.7. Getting the Backup Response

Duplicate the formula that you used to get your **MWR...** design a sharp offer, a clear call to action, and the [Response Form](#) for delivering the Backup Response itself.

And just like for your **MWR**, do this while placing yourself inside your customer's mindset.

**Who** is your Backup Response for, and **what** are you trying to achieve?



### 14.7.1. The Compelling Offer

**Your freebie is not really free.** It's going to cost your customer some anonymity. A name and an e-mail address are not given lightly.

So, as always, **stress the benefits** of the freebie. Add a **testimonial** or two. **Build a strong case to "buy" your freebie.**

**Make the prospect send you her e-mail address.** If she won't do that little thing, you do not have a motivated customer. **Do not just give info away by allowing anonymous downloading.** No one builds a business with tire-kickers.

---

**Guarantee not to use the e-mail address for any other purpose.** Over 80% of Web users feel that content providers do not have the right to resell user information. If you violate this, you're in big doo-doo. And you **will** get caught if you sell your lists -- some people put identifying tags in their e-mail addresses to detect if their info has been sold.

See the PennyGold privacy message below (right under the SUBSCRIBE NOW button)...

If you would like a **FREE** subscription to PGOLD XPRESS, just fill in the following info, then hit **SUBSCRIBE NOW**

**E-mail Address**      **What I'd love to see... (optional)**

Enter info           

Please double-check e-mail address for typos.

**SUBSCRIBE NOW**

Don't worry -- your e-mail address is totally secure. I promise to use it **only** to send you the PGOLD XPRESS.

---

#### 14.7.2. The Crystal-Clear Call to Action

Just like for the **MWR**, make it clear what you want your customer to do (as a Backup Response).

**Tell him... exactly. Then make it quick and easy... get the least amount of info necessary.**



### 14.7.3. Automate Your Reply to the Backup Response

Unlike your **MWR**, your **Backup Response** does not immediately build your business or add to the bottom line. It will be free, so it will be popular (if you do it right). While it does not immediately generate a profit, do not turn it into a money-loser, either.

Receiving **Backup Responses**, and replying to them, should not take up a single second of your company's time. **Automate totally...**

**Provide only one way to respond... online.** For a PennyGold sale, I'll send a dog sled to pick up the order. But for the free **Backup Responses**, reduce your costs of doing business to zero. Use online methods only, such as a [HTML-to-CGI Response Form](#), e-mail to autoresponders, etc.



**Keep the Backup Response Form short and sweet.** Only ask for the e-mail address, and perhaps the first name if you would like to merge that into your different communications with the customer. **The more info you request, the fewer inquiries you will get.** Why? Because it takes time and it's personal.

Automate your reply as well -- this should include a thank you, a brief and gentle sales letter, and whatever else is relevant to the particular response. **It should be automatic... and it should be immediate.**



[Review the basics of designing a form that works.](#)

[Please see below for a full discussion on automated e-mail.](#)



## 15. “Well, that’s done!”

.....NOT!

When you are through changing... you are through.

-- Bruce Barton, co-founder of BBDO ad agency



Change is a comforting thing. It’s the only thing you can count on today. And there are very few things that you can count on any more.

-- Roy McAvoy, pro golfer in the movie, *Tin Cup*



**Your site is never done.** It’s a constantly ongoing, evolving project. Kind of like advertising, or brushing your teeth. Never stop building and improving your site.

If you ever entertained thoughts of finishing your site, **don’t**. It will evolve for as long as you are in business. **If it doesn’t, it will go the way of Darwin’s other creatures that stopped evolving.**

**A digital store is “electron-cheap”... keep trying new things.** Keep improving. Try harder copy. Try softer copy. Try different layouts, etc. Keep what works. Drop the rest.

Hey, it’s not like you’re turning part of a forest into 100,000 brochures! It costs almost nothing to try a new page, better sales copy, a provocative graphic. If it works, keep it. If it doesn’t, return to the previous version.

**Hone until it’s razor-sharp.** Then make it better.

Try... try... and try again. That’s the way to succeed.

OK, I guess you got the message. 😊

Let’s talk details...



## 15.1. How to Analyze Traffic to Boost SALES

Every time someone visits your Web site, information like [IP address](#), time and date of access, error messages, etc., etc. are recorded into log files. These log files are stored in your server's computer.

There are **up to** four files -- **access (or transfer)**, **error**, **agent (or browser)**, and **referrer files**.

More and more often, the transfer, agent, and referrer are being gathered into a **combined file**. The error log is still often supplied separately.



Here's what a (simplified) line from PennyGold's log file looks like, broken down for easy explanation.

```
1998-06-03 18:55:58 168.144.2.125 GET /index.html 200 4442 Mozilla/3.01+(Win95) http://goldsheet.simplenet.com/
```

What's that you say? Too small to read? Geez, what a complainer! OK, let's break it up, bolden each part in blue, and then add a little explanation. OK?

**1998-06-03 18:55:58** ➡ Date and local time of access

**168.144.2.125** ➡ IP address of visitor

**GET /index.html** ➡ Visitor requested (GET) the index.html page, PG's Home Page.

**200 4442** ➡ **200** is the code for successful access (if the user had asked for index5.html, which does not exist, we would see the famous 404 code instead of 200 -- there are several other possible outcomes). **4442** is the number of bytes transferred.

**Mozilla/3.01+(Win95)** ➡ Visitor is using **Netscape 3.01** and is on **Windows 95**.

**http://goldsheet.simplenet.com/** ➡ Visitor came from GOLDSHEET, my favorite penny mining site on the Web.

If my visitor had come from the Excite Search Engine instead of GOLDSHEET, this final bit might look like...

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<http://search.excite.com/search.gw?search=penny+stock> ➡ Note that we also see that the visitor had looked up "penny stock" to find me!

Your server should provide you with log files like this (preferably in large enough type to read!). If your ISP can't or won't supply all four, **it's worth switching** to one that will.

**At a minimum, insist upon the access and referrer log data.**

**Log file analysis software** analyzes these files and assembles the data into results like...

- number of hits
- number of visitors
- most popular pages
- most frequent entry and exit pages
- etc., etc.

A "hit" is merely a single line in your Web site's log file. It is **not** the same as a page view or a visitor -- each graphic is a hit, for example. The number of hits is a very rough measure of traffic, and not really of much use. You could double the number of hits you get simply by adding a bunch of invisible [GIFs](#) to each page of your site!

**So what is important?...**



**... Visits, visitors, and what your visitors do.**



### 15.1.1. The Ideal Log File Analyzer

Knock, knock! **Here comes another...**



**... visitor to your Web site!** Wouldn't you like to find out more about what your visitors **do** during their visits?

**Log file analysis software** digests the zillions of lines of raw data in your log files (you saw a single line in the previous section) into usable data and graphs. There is a near-infinite variety of ways to slice and dice the log files. While none of them yet give enough information about behavior, they do yield some helpful information.

I've communicated with many marketing people responsible for their Web sites (from individuals to small-mid-sized businesses). **Their #1 request -- they want to know, and not guess at, visitor behavior.** Once you know how visitors act on your site, you will understand how to change your Web site in order to improve your **Conversion Rate (CR).**



The current state of analyzers only permits us to **guess at** behavior. That is not good enough.

Based on the comments of Web marketers, here's what the "ideal log file analyzer" should do...

**1) Yield more useful data** than is currently available. Summary data like **number of visitors** and **most frequent entry/exit pages** are of some use.

But they still don't give us enough info to know where to improve the **CR. Visitor behavior** is where it's at, **not** summary data that hides the action.

**2) Web marketers want to do this themselves** on their computer's desktop (if it's easy to do). They want to have the software right there on their hard disks, to download the log files, and then to analyze.

MYSS! 2002... "Well, that's done!" .....NOT!

**3) They aren't interested in most of the bells and whistles** offered by the \$10,000 packages. For example, who cares about real-time, on-the-spot analysis. You need to get enough numbers together to see the patterns anyway. Weekly analysis is more than sufficient.

**4) Interactivity** -- they want a product that they can "drive" to ferret out the information that is important for their site. They don't just want some static report that slices and dices down to the atom.

They do **not** want a lot of complicated set up time -- no CGI, no server-side stuff. Just give them the tool, then get out of their way.

**5) The individual to small business marketer wants it at a reasonable price** -- under \$200, definitely. Mid-sized marketers are more price-flexible.

As far as we can see, after a rather complete review of what's available, **nothing comes close to providing the functionality required.** We'll have to "make do" with what's available, out in the real world...



### 15.1.2. The Best Traffic Analyzers for Your

**The best value for the money is freeware.** What **Analog** gives you for free is amazing. Yes, there are fancier, more expensive products that deliver a **bit** more info. But if you want to get 80% of the benefit with zero cost...



**Analog**

<http://www.statslab.cam.ac.uk/~sret1/analog/>

(mirrors all over the world)

**WebLog** is another decent freeware script...

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**WebLog**

<http://awsd.com/scripts/weblog/index.shtml>

After Analog and WebLog, the prices range from \$995 to \$55,000 (except for WebTrends at \$299). Price is directly proportional to bells and whistles. However, that's not what's important. **You want useful info which will increase the effectiveness of your Web site.** You don't really need to know how many left-handed people from Sweden accessed your site between 4-5 A.M on Sunday of last week.

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**[ SIDEBAR ]**

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These days, it's standard practice for **reputable Web host providers** to include a Web site traffic analysis package with even the most basic of hosting plans. If your host doesn't, demand that it does, or move your site elsewhere!

In fact, you really only need to invest in your own log analyzer if you're a real power user and need some special features. Or if your Web host is your brother-in-law, and he doesn't provide traffic data.

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The most well-known **commercial** package is **WebTrends**. They have a free trial download. Try it and compare it to Analog. Then decide if it's worth the money...



**WebTrends**

<http://www.webtrends.com/default.htm>

**WebTrends Live** is a third party solution for large sites that require a much more in-depth tracking and analyzing solution...



**WebTrends Live**

<http://www.webtrends.live.com/>

**MYSS! 2002...** “Well, that’s done!” .....**NOT!**

Recently, **Accrue** discontinued entry level **Hitlist** products because the “eBusiness market is demanding increasingly sophisticated analysis solutions.” However, you’re still welcome to experiment with their newest product, **Accrue Hitlist 4.5**, available for a mere \$15,000. 😊



**Accrue Hitlist**

<http://www.accrue.com/products/hitlist.html>

For those who have more advanced needs, here are a couple of comprehensive listings of log file analyzers...



**Access Log Analyzers**

<http://www.uu.se/Software/Analyzers/Access-analyzers.html>



**Yahoo! - Business and Economy:Business to**

**Business:Computers:Software:Internet:World Wide Web:Log Analysis Tools**

[http://dir.yahoo.com/Business and Economy/Business to Business/Computers/Software/Internet/World Wide Web/Log Analysis Tools/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Business_to_Business/Computers/Software/Internet/World_Wide_Web/Log_Analysis_Tools/)

OK, now that we all have a trusty log file analyzer in our arsenals, let’s briefly discuss what the current crop of common log file analyzers deliver...



### 15.1.3. Data from Log File Analysis

Most log file analyzers, including the freeware above, offer this type of data...

- **Hits or visits** -- A hit is just a line in your log file. Every separate item on each of your Web pages generates a hit. So any HTML page counts as a hit, and so does



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every graphic, every sound file, etc. on that page.

**Using hits as a measure of Web page activity is useless and misleading.** A page with seven graphics would generate eight hits, seven for the graphics and one for the page itself -- an inflated number result. In this case, 8 hits represents a single page view by one person, not 8 page views by a single person, or a single page view by 8 people.

So why do people use the term "hits" to measure Web page activity?

Two reasons... either they don't understand the term, or they understand it and use it because it sounds bigger! What sounds better... "150 unique visitors a day", or "1,500 hits a day?"

If you're using frames, each [frame](#) loads as its own separate page, generating its own series of hits. Obviously, if you're trying to figure out how many people come to your site, the number of hits is **not** the way to do it!

- **Page views** -- This is a better way to measure site activity. The term "page views" refers to the number of HTML pages served, no matter how many graphics or other things may be on the page. If a visitor surfs through ten pages of your site, ten page views will be generated.

- **Visits** -- A visit is a trip to the site by one individual in a "session." If a visitor comes to your site and hangs around for 20 minutes looking at various pages, a "visit" is generated. If she leaves, then comes back more than 30 minutes later, another visit is generated -- even if she only stays for a second on the Home Page and then leaves.

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### **[ SIDEBAR ]**

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Daily statistics (visits, visitors, and page views) must be reported on a day-to-day basis, in both absolute terms and as a percentage of the total (ex., percent of total visitors). If you do a special traffic promotion on a certain day (ex., run an ad in an e-zine), this is an easy way to gauge the response).

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- **Requests for each page of the site** -- Most programs will prepare a list of the most popular and least popular pages. This lets you see what visitors seem to like (or want) the most on your site.

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- **Average number of HTML pages per visit** -- This figure shows how many pages the average visitor goes to before leaving. If this figure is one or two pages you know your site sucks. If you follow the advice in this book, this number will soar!



**Average time per visit (usually in seconds)** -- The software calculates how much time the average visitor spends on the site.

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### [ **SIDEBAR** ]

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Recent **Nielson Net Ratings** indicate that the average duration of a single Web page view is about **50 seconds**. So make sure you get right to the point... tell your customers what's in it for them **immediately!**

---

- **Most common referring pages** -- Wouldn't you like to know where visitors link from, in order to get to your site? This tells you who has links to your site and which Search Engines have listed you (very useful bit of info).

- **Most Popular Pages** -- Your page view stats must be delivered on a per page basis, with the page generating the most page views reported first. By understanding which pages are most popular, you can better understand the needs of your visitors. Use this info to get a strong feel for what your market wants, and more importantly, what it **does not** want.

- **Most popular entry pages** -- Here's where you find out which pages are dragging in the visitors from the Search Engines. A page counts as an entry page when it **starts a visit**. Correlate this with how people find you (referrers and keywords) and you have a wealth of insight on how your site is being discovered and what people want. **Use this information to hone the ones doing well, and rework the ones that are not.**

Your most popular entry pages are likely the ones **scoring the best for your targeted keywords at the Search Engines**. Find where you rank for your most important keywords, and **focus on tweaking your best performing pages first**. Analyze these high scoring pages and see what they have in common. Why do they

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rank well? For what engine do they seem best optimized? What have you done on these high ranking pages that you haven’t done on your other less popular pages?

- **Most popular exit pages** -- These are the pages from which people leave your site. Most people look upon high numbers for a given page as “bad.” Not necessarily. To get a real idea of whether this is good or bad, **you need to correlate this with other data.** If a “high entry” page is also a “high-exit” page, that’s not really that surprising, is it? If a high entry page is also generating tons of links out to your income generating programs, that’s not so bad either.

If, however, you find your visitor is arriving only to leave immediately, you have to ask yourself...

**“Where in the chain am I losing them? How close are they getting to my MWR?”**

**Analyze, fix, and test some more.**

- **Keyword Search** -- Which keywords are people entering into the Search Engines to find you? This data is extremely important! Are there other more popular keywords on which you could focus your optimization efforts? Are the keywords you expected to do well meeting that expectation?

Spend some time carefully examining this info to turn your optimization efforts into a deadly marketing strategy!



They will also give you a lot of data which is not particularly useful for improving the sales effectiveness of your site. All the same, the information is interesting...

**Browsers used** -- This breaks down what type of browsers people tend to use.

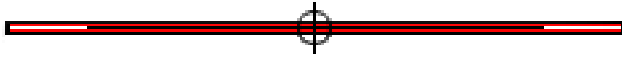
**Most popular operating systems** -- what OS your visitors use.

**Most popular visitor’s organizations** -- This will show you the percentage of com, net, org, etc. visitors.

**Most common countries** -- This reveals which countries visitors come from.

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So... what exactly is the point of this data collection?...



#### 15.1.4. Track, Track, Track

Traffic analysis is **only** the base. It tells you what you need to know about the quantity of visits, visitors, and page views. It gives you ideas where they come from (if via the Web) and what words they used to find you at the Search Engines.

However, sometimes it's not enough. If you're driving traffic to your sales site (or your merchant partner's site via a **Theme-Based Content Site**), you need to see **exactly** what's working in the two bottom-line areas that matter the most...

- **how you spend your traffic-building time and money** -- what's working and what's not. Spend only on the techniques that bear fruit.
- **how you make your money** -- gear your content more and more to what gets the click. Because that's what builds your income.

**The only way to successfully market anything online is to track and measure your results.** In fact, the ability to do this effectively is one of the most powerful benefits of doing business on the Internet.

In contrast, advertising offline means... "Pay your money, and take your chances." There's just no way to measure the success of your campaign.



But online, it's different. You can measure every promotional campaign, every click-through and every e-zine ad with deadly accuracy. Savvy Net marketers have been tracking their results for eons now. Unfortunately, even though it's easy and cheap to do, many small business owners/netrepreneurs don't bother.

Big mistake. It's even a bigger mistake when you need to squeeze every ounce of value from a limited advertising budget. Why waste valuable resources on methods that don't deliver?

For example, let's say you buy ads in three different e-zines. After the launch of each one, you check your log files to compare traffic stats... prior and following the event. This gives you a very basic idea of how much additional traffic these ads

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generated.

But here’s the catch. Using this method, you can’t tell **which** ad was most effective, and you can’t really tell for sure **how much** traffic was generated by these ads. In the end, you don’t know if your money was well-spent or not.

How can you improve this situation?...

The most elementary way to track results is through a simple META-redirect. Let’s assume you are promoting your main product on your Home Page. Once again, you buy ads in three different e-zines (each ad directs to your Home Page selling or PREselling effort), and this time, you want to track the results.

Instead of directing visitors straight to “www.yourcompany.com”, you set up three different pages...

- ezinead1.html
- ezinead2.html
- ezinead3.html

Each page redirects to “www.yourcompany.com”. By viewing your log files, and checking the traffic stats to each of these “redirect” pages, you can determine...

- a) how many click-throughs your ad generated.
- b) your cost-per-click-through. By dividing the number of visitors you receive by the amount you paid for the ad, you can determine which ad was most effective.

Next time, you’ll spend your money on the e-zine that delivered the best results.



Let’s consider another scenario...

Assume you are sending visitors directly to a merchant partner’s Web site, either from your own site, e-zine and/or from a paid ad. You put your affiliate link directly into the your ad (or on your Web site)... which means you can’t measure the effectiveness of that link.

Or can you?

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Certainly, it's very DO-able. Link tracking software is the solution. Link tracking alters your URL link slightly, and sends each click-through to a small CGI program that counts it, and then redirects it to its proper destination. The process is seamless, and much faster than the straight redirect method.

It also means that folks can't strip an affiliate code from a URL. For instance, suppose your affiliate code looked something like this...

<http://www.my-affiliate-partner.com?your-affiliateID>

A surfer could conceivably type **<http://www.my-affiliate-partner.com>** into their browser, and deprive you of a cookie/customer. With link tracking software, you're not only able to measure the effectiveness of ad campaigns, you're able to hide the final destination of your click-through.

In other words, I could set up a link called...

<http://www.mycompany.com/tracker/pl.cgi?partner1>

In the blink of an eye, a click-through would be counted and then redirected to...

<http://www.my-affiliate-partner.com?your-affiliateID>

In other words, the only way a surfer can determine the final destination of the link is to click on it.

Best of both worlds, right?



OK... down to practicalities... software, and solutions!

5 Pillar Affiliates have access to the "Ultimate Link Tracker" in the Downloading section of the 5 Pillar Club. It's a multi-functional CGI-script that will track all your campaigns. And, of course, it's free -- as a sign of my commitment to our affiliate's success.



Allan Gardyne, the famed affiliate guru of [AssociatePrograms.com](http://AssociatePrograms.com), has called The 5 Pillar Affiliate Program "the perfect revenue sharing program", and "the best affiliate program on the Net." So why spend a \$20 monthly fee or \$50 on a link tracking program, if you can get the same thing for free by joining our affiliate program?

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Consider it my gift to you...



**5 Pillar Affiliate Program**

<http://www.sitesell.com/affiliateprogram.htm>

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If you'd like to check out other tracking services, here are a few to sink your teeth into...



**Prolinz**

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

Slick tool! Try the online demo!



**AdMinder**

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

This service requires a monthly fee.

As does...



**Roibot**

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



Low on funds? Check the free service at <http://www.hypertracker.com/>

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Remember... tracking on the Web is easy! No more fumbling around in the dark.  
Measure your results!

---

[ **SIDEBAR** ]

"Click in" and "click through" analysis are covered in detail on DAY 10 of the **Affiliate Masters Course**. To subscribe, please send a blank e-mail to [tams@sitesell.net](mailto:tams@sitesell.net)...



#### 15.1.5. Number of Visitors and the **Conversion Rate**

The single most important piece of information that a log file analyzer should deliver is the **number of visitors** per week.

If you know this number, you can calculate your **Conversion Rate (CR)** by using this simple formula...

**CR** = # of **MWR** per week, divided by # of **visitors** per week.

Knowing the **CR** is critical. Here's why...

1) You can make a change to your site and measure the effects on the **CR**. Say you change a headline on your **MWR Closer Page**. Your **CR** plummets by 80%. Put the old headline back. If sales triple, keep it!

Or what if you change your submit button from **GO!** to **BUY NOW!** If your **CR** drops, return to **GO...** but do not collect \$200! 😊

2) Let's say that you are considering paying for banner advertising on a click through



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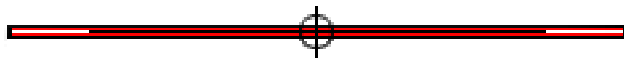
basis (i.e., you only pay when someone actually clicks on your banner and visits your site). You negotiate a fee of \$1 per click through to your site.

OK, time for some simple math. Let's also say that your site's **CR** is 5%. For a \$2,000 test, you get 2,000 click throughs to your site. Therefore, with a **CR** of 5%, you expect **100 MWRs**. If you get 200 **MWRs**, you confirm that this is a highly targeted audience. If you only get 50, it's not. Track this across several different banner vendors to get an excellent idea of where your **best** audiences are.

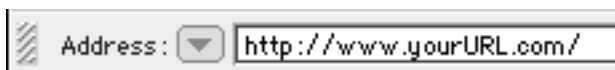
**Without the CR...**



... yer shootin' in the dark, pawdnah! It is **the** perfect indicator of **your site's sales power**. It is also a useful adjunct when measuring the effectiveness of [traffic-generating programs](#).



#### 15.1.6. Do You Know Where Your Visitors Come **From?**



**The smaller and more unknown you are**, the less likely that anyone will type your **URL** (into the browser software) to get to your site. **Most visitors will hyperlink to you**, whether from a Search Engine (where they click on your listing), or from a site that offers a link to yours, or from a banner ad.



The **referrer page** is the URL that your visitor **was** on, just before coming to you. It is vitally important for measuring and managing your...

**1) Search Engine campaign** -- the Search Engine (SE) info is vital. Each link from a Search Engine **includes the** keywords that your visitor used to find you. **The Search Engine and keyword info is invaluable** -- it tells you...

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- which Search Engines you must improve upon
- how much business your keywords generate
- which keywords need work to improve SE-deliveries.
- which [KFCPS](#) are best optimized (i.e, which Web pages are successfully drawing visitors)

2) [link exchange program](#) -- by following how many links you receive from other sites, you can decide whether to continue link exchange arrangements (remember, a link out **loses** your visitor).

3) [banner advertising](#) -- you can verify the **number of click throughs** by seeing how many visitors came from each banner ad. Even if the banner ad is sold on a "per-view" or "per-impression" basis, you can calculate the click through percent (# click throughs divided by # impressions).

You'll find that the same banner on different sites perform differently. And that some banner designs "pull" much better than others. **Drop whatever doesn't get the job done.**

4) [e-zine advertising](#) -- each visitor from your e-zine ads enters your site through a unique URL designed specifically for that campaign. By tracking the amount of visitors who enter here, you can determine much more than just raw visits...

For instance, what sort of a click through rate is your ad generating? If the ad goes out to 1,000 subscribers, and 80 people click through to your site, that's an 8% rate. If your **Conversion Rate** is 2%, is your profit margin high enough to make it worthwhile to continue advertising?

Only your referrer pages can tell you!



**If you run your own server**, configure it to include the referrer field in the log file.

**If you do not run your own server** and if your ISP does not, and will not, supply referrer fields, **switch ISP**. Period. It's that important.

As long as you **do** get the referrer field, there are several software packages ([see](#)

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[above](#)) that do a solid job analyzing this data. They break down the referring sites, and provide numbers that come from all sites, including the different Search Engines and which keywords were used to find you.



#### 15.1.7. Use Visitor Behavior to Boost Conversion Rate

Besides the number of visitors, and where they came from, **you need to understand how they behave during their visit to your site.** And you want to use this info to improve the site to increase sales.

Understanding how people (mis)use your site can help you to improve the site, which in turn will improve your **Conversion Rate (CR)**. Here is the type of info that is commonly available today...

**1) Entries** -- What are the most common entry pages?

**2) Popularity** -- Which page of your site is the most popular? Which pages do they stay on longest?

**3) Exits** -- Of course, everyone leaves sooner or later. But **why** do they leave? After all, we know they came because they had a certain level of interest. They may have left because...

- **They came to the wrong place** -- these people leave from your **Home Page** or the **Opening Page** of a pathway. This is an acceptable reason for a one-page-Home-Page-visit. But it's the **only** good reason. If your **Home Page** or **Opening Page** is a common exit page, it may not be doing the job of "hooking the customer" with benefits.

#### **[ SIDEBAR ]**

Say you're satisfied that your **Opening Page** is the best that it can be. It's well-written and compelling. But still you find a significant number of visitors are leaving almost immediately after arrival. If this is the case, ask yourself these questions...

Are my **KFCPs** **really** targeting the right words or phrases? Are my advertising campaigns focusing on the right groups of people?

If your Opening Page IS well-written, and people are still leaving, that can only mean

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one thing...

Your visitors are untargeted. They are not interested in what you have to offer. You **must** focus your energies on attracting people **who are interested** in your products.

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- **They read all your info, but decide not to buy** -- these visitors leave from your **MWR Closer Page**. You’ll have a higher percentage of multi-page visitors. This is a good-bad reason to leave. If your **Closer Page(s)** accounts for a high percent of exits, this is “good” because you are succeeding in delivering them to your **MWR Closer Page**. But it’s “bad” because they did not respond. **It hurts to....**



... wave good-bye to these “almost” customers. [Improve your offer, your call to action, and/or your MWR Response Form.](#)

- **If any other page sticks out as an exit page, it’s doing something wrong.** You may have pathways that confuse your visitors. Worse still, a key page in a pathway may say the wrong thing, killing the visit or hurting progress through the path. Fix it, or drop it, or move it to a side-branch off the main pathway (depending on its intended function).
- **If you can differentiate between first-time and repeat visitors (via cookies), calculate the CRs for each.** Most people order during a second or later visit (the more expensive the purchase, the more this is true).



- **You may have pages that hurt your CR, but are not themselves exit pages.** I call these “negative predictors.” If you feel that a negative predictor page actually does hurt the **CR** and is not just a coincidence, fix it, or drop it, or move it to a side-branch.
- **A common exit point is not always a bad thing.** Say, for example, you’ve supplemented your site by joining the affiliate programs of a non-competitor’s Web site. If people are leaving at this point, they still remain a potential income source.

**4) Commonest pathways** -- identifies common path sequences through your site. This is getting closer again to delivering useful information, but it still does not get

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into true behavior on the site. The Web marketer needs to be able to track groups of users through key pages and find out what happens.

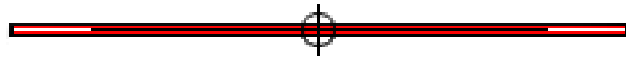
Do people drop off the pathway? Do they go back to the Home Page? Do they quit the site completely when they hit certain pages?



Here's the problem. We can only use raw numbers and pathways to infer and guess at behavior. **But we need to interactively probe those log files to know and understand behavior.** Hopefully, these tools will improve and deliver usable info about how your visitor behaves on your site.

With this knowledge, you can make **logical** changes to...

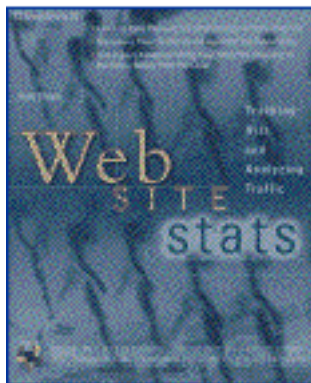
... truly optimize the **CR** of your Web site.



#### 15.1.8. More Info On Analyzing Your Traffic

Detailed discussion of Web traffic analysis is beyond the scope of this book. Suffice it to say that you are **working in the dark** if you are trying to improve your site's sales power without watching **how** your customers are getting to your site, and **how they use it once they are there.**

**For more information on Web traffic analysis,** please see this book...



**Web Site Stats**  
**by Rick Stout**  
**Osborne McGraw-Hill**  
**ISBN 0-07-882236-X**

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And an oldie but a goodie...



The WDWL - There's Gold in them there log files

<http://www.wdvl.com/Internet/Management/index.html>

Ralph Wilson also has many good articles on this subject in his **Web Marketing Today Info Center**...



Web Marketing Today Info Center

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



## 15.2. Quadrupling your Conversion Rate

Generally, you should expect a **CR** of anywhere from **0.25% to 5%**, depending on...

- **product and price**
- **the nature of your target market**
- **how targeted your traffic is**
- **how powerful your site is.**

Over time, you can increase your **CR** by...

**1) Improving your site** -- Hey, that's where this book comes in handy!

**2) Targeting your traffic** -- If you generate highly targeted traffic, your **CR** will

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increase. If we advertised PennyGold with a “FREE SEX” banner, we’d certainly get a lot of traffic... but the only **response** would be angry e-mail.

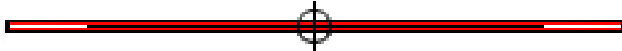
To see how targeted your traffic is, use your [log file analyzer](#) to note the average number of pages viewed per visitor. If your average visit is only 1-2 pages, you either have a terrible Home Page or inappropriate traffic.

**Everyone loses if you adopt a high-volume, low-targeting traffic-building strategy.**

**3) Using other techniques** -- for example, your biweekly [newsletter](#) generates repeat exposure to you and your products. This pulls repeat visits to your site. **Repeat traffic is highly targeted and motivated**, with a much higher **CR** than first-time visitors.

**Everything else being equal, of course, the way to multiply your CR is to increase your site’s SALES power!**

Whatever your **CR** is right now, I won’t feel like **MYSS! 2002** has succeeded if it does not at least **quadruple (yes, 4x) it!...**



## 15.3. A Checklist for Quadrupling Your CR

OK, you’re getting some **Most Wanted Responses**. Congratulations!

Once I received my first order for PennyGold, I knew it would succeed. **It was just a question of increasing the CR.**

After you calculate your **CR**, double it. Then double it again. That’s all it takes to 4x your **CR!** What could be easier, right?

Excuse me?... Details?

**OK...**

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... Quadruple your **CR** by improving upon one or more of these critical site-**SELLING** features...

- ✓ • **The Product** -- do you offer a high-quality product that meets a targeted need? Can it be improved?
- ✓ • **The Opening Page** for each product line, especially...
  - the **opening paragraph** -- does it stop visitors in their tracks?
  - **key headlines** -- do they keep visitors on the site, wanting to know more?
  - **the joint** to the next page -- does it pull through to the next page?
- ✓ • **The MWR Closer Page** for each product line, especially...
  - **the offer package** (price, bonus, time).
  - **the call to action** -- does the site tell your customer what to do?
  - effectiveness of the **MWR Response Form**.
  - **key headlines**.
- ✓ • **Use of Backup Response** -- long-term, this **will** increase the **CR**.
- ✓ • **Other Content Pages**...
  - **guarantee** -- people read your wording carefully. Is it solid, honest, and simple? Does it reassure?



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- [testimonials](#) -- letters from happy users, product reviews.
- [headlines and joints](#) for each **Content Page**.
- [look & feel](#) -- warm and trusting? Or does your visitor see a loud, shrill effort? Or a big, cold, couldn’t-care-less multi-national?
- **contact info** -- is your address, e-mail, phone and fax numbers in plain view?  
Is it easy for customers to contact you?
- **other site content** -- does it add to the selling effort?



#### • Usability

- [user-friendly, overall?](#)
- [readability and scannability](#) -- clear and easy to read/scan?
- [navigation](#) -- can your dumbest visitor navigate easily?

Remember... for every buyer, there were **10 who came very close**. They were so close, they took out their credit cards. But that final barrier of trust/doubt/inertia kept them from hitting the **ORDER** button.

**Put yourself in that person’s shoes** and ask yourself...

“What do I have to add or remove or change **to get the Most Wanted Response????**”

Figure it out. **There is an answer!**

**Keep a backup copy**, though. If your experiment lowers your **CR**, just put the previous version back up!

Also, always keep notes in a “Site Log” of what changes you made to your site, and when. **One week later, measure your CR. Has it gone up, down, or is it flat?**

Once you figure out how to double the **CR**, **do it again!**

MYSS! 2002... "Well, that's done!" .....NOT!

There you have it... you've quadrupled your **CR**!

Oh, right, you **still** want to know **how**!...



### 15.3.1. How to Test and Measure Site Improvements

It's impossible to know what the market will respond to, or what the best approach is -- **so you have to test, test, and test some more.**

**Don't prejudge** anything -- not the best price, not the best headline, not even the best **MWR**. The marketplace will vote with their pocketbooks. All you have to do is measure it via the **CR**.

So, **test to be best**. Review your site critically -- what could you improve in the [checklist above?](#)

**Then do it.**

Here's an example...

[Headlines](#) are easy to test -- the ones on your **Opening Page** (especially [The Opener](#)) and the **MWR Closer Page** are critically important. Let's say that you receive 5 **Most Wanted Responses** per day. Try a radically different headline on your **Opening Page** or **MWR Closer Page**. If that doubles your **CR** to 10 per day, keep it. If it kills your sales, drop it and replace with your backup copy.

Let your customer's response to your site tell you whether your site is working. **Always try to outdo the current "best" approach.**

Once you have a site that is working, **only change one thing at a time**, or else you won't know which change is affecting the **CR**.



Your Web site is a process in constant evolution. Keep fine-tuning to find the most effective selling elements. The Web truly is an electronic experiment in Darwinism -- it's "survival of the fittest."

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If you know that you have a [great product that offers true benefits](#), if you focus on your target, then keep going **until you find the hot button that sells.**



## 15.4. **Update** the Old and **Develop** the New

There is nothing worse than a site that announces some exciting, upcoming conference to be held in August, 2000...

... when it’s already 2001! What does **irrelevant, outdated info** tell you?

**At best**, you look sloppy and careless. **At worst**, your visitor is smart enough to realize that you don’t care much about his experience on your site -- fatal. Bottom line?...

**Schedule a total site content review at least once per month.**

**Keep your Web site current.** Update features such as...

- Price changes
- New info -- a Web site is never “finished”
- Product updates/modifications/new models
- New product lines/businesses
- New graphics
- Updating broken links
- Improvements in usability and navigation.



You **have to** stay on the cutting edge. Actually, I’ve worded that badly. If you don’t **like** change, and if you feel like you “**have to**” stay on the cutting edge, you’re probably in the wrong business.

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Hopefully, you **love** the idea of staying on the cutting edge.

**Keep your site new and healthy.** Weed out the old stuff. Improve the existing material. And **add, add, add**, new features and content continuously.

If you’re on the Web, you’re much like a...



... shark. You’ve got to keep moving to stay alive!



#### 15.4.1. **Borrow** New Concepts and Technologies

**If you work on the Web, you have to surf the Web.** Revisit the [best of the Web sales/marketing sites](#) frequently. Go to the sites they discuss. Go to the Search Engines and look up topics like “Web sales” and “Internet marketing.”

**Subscribe to mailing lists, newsletters, e-zines.** Follow the links they give. Keep linking. Get off the beaten track.

Be on a constant lookout for **new features and technologies** to “borrow” for your own site... new services, better ways to persuade, cleaner methods of navigation... give more and more useful services and info to your readers.

**Pay attention to how new concepts, features and techniques** (like [Live Picture](#)) **affect you.** Strong new moves will stir you. Notice your reaction. This is something that you may want to borrow, improve, and customize for your own site.

For example, let’s say you come across a site with an outstanding [bulletin board](#). You’ve never been impressed with the interface of bulletin boards, but you found this one excellent, and the threads could be moderated. So you e-mail the Webmaster to find out who sells the bulletin board software. An hour later, she replies, raving about **Infopop’s Ultimate Bulletin Board...**



**Infopop - Ultimate Bulletin Board**

[http://www.infopop.com/business/business\\_ubb.html](http://www.infopop.com/business/business_ubb.html)

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Here's another example...

I was surfing the Web one day, and came across a clever idea. The site asked its visitors to e-mail a short letter to one or more friends, referring them to that site. In return, they offered them something of value. Now, this idea is actually a **traffic-building** move.

But when I saw it, I figured that I could also adapt it to increase the sales power of the PennyGold site. That's how I came up with the [modified Refer-A-Friend concept](#) for PennyGold.

Of course, the refer-a-friend scripts and services are old hat now... but they weren't always!



Lately, I've noticed a sudden evolution in the banner ad. They've become interactive. Yup, indeed! Recently I came across one that trumpeted...

["Shock the Monkey and Win \\$\\$\\$\\$"](#)

A "ray gun" sits in the middle of the banner. Sweep your mouse cursor over it, and the gun is activated. A left mouse click fires a beam at the monkey with a funky "ray gun" sound. When you hit him, the banner dissolves into a blizzard of lightning bolts, and you're forwarded to the advertiser's page. I don't know how much more effective this makes the banner ad, but it sure was neat!

HTML banners allow surfers to make a selection directly on the banner itself before clicking through to the advertiser. Flash banner ads are beautiful and impossible to miss.



The point is to **surf, surf, surf**. Keep your eyes open for good ideas.

Then **borrow, adapt, and improve them to meet your own and your visitors' needs**.

#### **[ SIDEBAR ]**

[But don't steal. There's nothing wrong with using someone else's marketing concept on your site. But if you use their code or their graphics, that's just plain stealing.](#)

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One of our penny stock competitors did this. We shut them down by complaining to their Web host -- we explained that one of their sites was violating our intellectual rights and that we intended to pursue **all** parties in court.



## 15.5. Use Customer Questions to Increase SALES

I can’t tell you how long it took for me to realize that **questions are feedback in disguise.**

**How many times did I get asked,** “How much does it cost?” **or...** “What exactly do I get if I buy PennyGold?”

I thought, “Gosh, what idiots!”

**One day it dawned on me...**



**...I was the idiot!**

What if you got these questions in the middle of **testing** the usability of your site? Wouldn’t you consider these questions as valuable feedback?

**Of course you would!**

Now, for every person who takes the time to e-mail you a question, remember this... **there are 100 more with the same question, who don’t bother to write.** So the person who sends you a “stupid question” is **really** sending you **valuable feedback.**

Your site is **constantly** in the middle of usability testing. Treat questions, even the “dumbest,” as invaluable user feedback.

As soon as I adopted this attitude, I fixed those pages. I don’t get those questions any more.

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**There is something to be learned from all e-mailed questions** (except the truly profane -- just hit "Delete").



## 15.6. How to Fix Invisible SALES-Losing Errors

Review your [error log](#) with your techie every now and then. **Fix what's broken.** The most common two errors that you will see are...

- 1) **"Lost connection" errors** -- this means that the user gave up and hit the STOP or BACK buttons. It is usually caused by slow-loading pages. Streamline this page.
- 2) **404 ("File does not exist") errors** -- this dreaded error means that a link on your page no longer exists. Fix it. It can also be caused by the user entering a wrong URL -- but that's obvious when you look at the report (as long as it includes the requested URL).

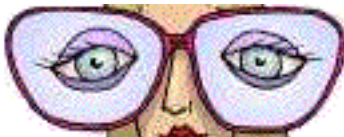
**Fix these two errors -- you'll eliminate 95% of the errors that happen on your site.**



## 15.7. Revisit Later with Fresh Eyes

Look at your whole site every couple of months. After 2 or 3 months, you will forget much of the "basics" of your site, even if you are adding new, special content on a regular basis.

**So you'll be looking at the site...**



**...with fresh eyes again.**

Weaknesses will hit you. You will spot vague or confusing areas when you haven't

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looked at the site for a while.

If you ever wonder whether any part of your site is vague or too complicated or meandering, **it is! Chop, chop, chop.** You’ll spot new ways, and get new ideas, to improve sales.

**Improve your site. Constantly.**



## 15.8. Bottom Line... It’s **Never** Done!

**I must repeat... Your site is never “done.”** Constantly look for new ways to improve your site in order to...

- **attract more traffic**

- **increase the **CR**.**

If you have an existing Web site, decide **now** to **quadruple your traffic** **and** to **quadruple your **CR****. Gosh, that would multiply the number of **MWRs** by 16!

**Go for it! It’s under **your** control.**



## 15.9. The Site Re-Org... Why, When, & How!

As discussed earlier, there are only two **good** reasons to re-organize a sales-oriented site...

- 1) The business outgrows the original architecture.
- 2) The Net outgrew the site.

Correcting those two reasons should have only one bottom line...

**Increase sales!**



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You'll read a lot about major re-orgs at large dot-com sites. Why do they do it? Because they got tired of the look-and-feel and figured their customers did, too.

But these Webmasters forget one thing. Unlike themselves, their customers visit **many** sites, not just theirs. They get used to a user interface. They know where to find things. They get in and get out quickly...

... until it's all changed. **Big, expensive mistake.**

**Only change your site if it will increase sales.**

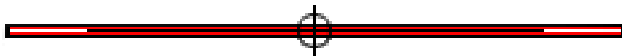
Take the SiteSell Corporate site as an example...

1) Originally SiteSell.com was a single-product site. Minor modifications accommodated our second book, **Make Your Knowledge Sell!** (<http://myks.sitesell.com/>). But our business was beyond the original, simple-but-effective architecture.

2) The Net outgrew the SiteSell site. All the principles of the original **MYSS!** remain as valid today as ever. As a matter of fact, as the Net gets more complex, the **K-I-S-S, user-focused response-getting approach of MYSS! is more appropriate, more powerful, than ever.**

But the look-and-feel of the Corporate site itself was definitely looking old -- design has gotten sharper on the Net.

It was time for an overhaul...



### 15.9.1. First Decision? Look and Feel

A more sophisticated, sharper, yet still very clean look was in order. The **MYPS!** site had received terrific feedback -- the swoosh look was a winner...

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Price With Complete Confidence...

## MAKE YOUR PRICE SELL!

[login](#) [become an affiliate](#) [contact us](#) [world's most...](#) [order now](#)

### Know Your Perfect Price™ in 50 Minutes

"Why is the Perfect Price™ so important?" That depends on whether you are considering a new product concept, launching a new product, or managing existing ones...

Considering a new product concept? Not sure if it will fly? Imagine if you could know how much people would pay. You'd know if this new idea was worth pursuing... or not (think of the dollars and time saved).

Launching a new product? How will you price it? How do you know the absolutely perfect price -- the price that will maximize your income, right from the outset?

**Make Your Price Sell!**  
<http://myspsitesell.com/>

This would be the "unifying look" across the whole site now.

[Visit the Corporate Home Page.](#) Click to the product sites. They all have the same basic look and feel.

Visitors have no doubt that they're at a SiteSell.com site...



The definitive work on making any Web site sell

## MAKE YOUR SITE-SELL!

[login](#) [become an affiliate](#) [contact us](#) [world's most...](#) [order now](#)

### Master the Big 3 of product, site-selling, and traffic-building, and there's simply no way to fail.

Your Web site either makes the sale, or it doesn't.

Ninety-nine out of one hundred sites don't get the order.

We blame that on suspicious, scared Web-consumers.

Wrong.

**Make Your Site Sell!**  
<http://myss.sitesell.com/>

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I've put the old Home Page up at a new URL so you can compare the two...



SiteSell.com (Old Version)

<http://www.sitesell.com/index-old.html>

(NOTE: You can link **out of** the old Home Page, but you **can't** link back **into** it. All the other pages of the old site have been left "as is," but they link to the **new** Home Page. That way, we can route visitors who find old pages into the new site.)

As a one-product company grows, you'll naturally have a bit of a **hodge-podge** as you grow. So, for your first rework, a consistent look and feel across the whole site is an important goal.

One final point... we design now for an **800 x 600 monitor**, since over 90% of our visitors use that resolution. Our use of **javascript** is more aggressive, because browser software is more advanced -- well over 90% of browsers can now handle fairly advanced javascript.

But, as indicated in this book, bandwidth has been slow to increase -- we still follow all the slow-bandwidth rules.

These trends provide insightful information. The **MYSS! 2002** site-selling rules remain the same -- you just adjust for the changes. To keep up-to-date, check out...



CyberAtlas

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

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And...



Nielsen-Netratings

<http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/>



### 15.9.2. Second Decision? How to Get a Clean, Clear Layout

We could jam a million things onto our Home Page (and we wanted to!). **The tough part was boiling it down to the essentials, and then presenting them clearly.**

Customers arrive at **any** site with **very focused needs**. A cluttered Home Page is the biggest and worst trends of present times .

Think about it... You read about a site, get excited, visit it, and then spend 10 minutes on the Home Page totally confused about the...

- site
- product

and most importantly about...

- **WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU!**



Examine our new Corporate Home Page...

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**SiteSell.com** corporate home  
about us media newsroom contact

## E-commerce for the Rest of Us

Worried about all those dot-coms with millions in Venture Cap? Think you can't compete? Stop and ask yourself this...

"What happens to them after they blow it all on Super Bowl ads and on fancy Web sites that normal, everyday people can't use?"

They go broke, that's what happens.

SiteSell.com **tilts the Internet playing field in your favor.** Our "Make Your \_\_\_\_\_ Sell!" products have empowered tens of thousands of entrepreneurs and small businesses to outperform larger, well-financed companies.

And they'll do the same for you.

**What does it take to e-succeed?** It's really **not** complicated...

Make good products that people **need** or **want**... build sites that **sell effectively**... attract **targeted traffic cost-effectively**. Do that... and you'll beat the high-profile dot-coms... like a drum.

That's **our** job... **help you** become a world-class drummer.

**SiteSell™ Products**  
Make Your Site Sell!  
Make Your Knowledge Sell!  
Make Your Price Sell!  
Make Your Words Sell!  
**New Release!**  
Make Your Net Auction Sell!  
**New Release!**  
Site Build It!

**SiteSell.com**

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

Can you tell what's in it for you?... What we do? Reading between the lines, can you tell what we want the visitor to do?

Correct... **visit one of our product sites.**

What's our **Backup Response?** There are three, and they are all in the left margin ("dead-end" side branches). Here's a close-up view...

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**SiteSell.com**

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

**1) Join the 5 Pillar Affiliate Program** -- described by many gurus as "the best on the Net."

**2) Take one of the 5-day Masters Courses.** These offer truly excellent content, while keeping us in front of our customers for 5 days.

**3) Read one of three featured articles,** each of which are favorite articles from our three e-zines (SITE-SELL!, Sales from the EDGE, and the Five Pillar Affiliate Report).

The goal, of course, is to get subscriptions.

———— [ **SIDEBAR** ] ————

**The Masters Courses** and the articles are powerful, viral, PREselling tools for 5 Pillar Program affiliates. But that's another story!



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### 15.9.3. 3rd Decision? Navigation

Again, we decided to keep navigation as simple as possible. **We also went out...**



... on a bit of a limb.

For each link, we decided to **open** a new browser (either via javascript or through simple HTML). This way, we still have our "traffic cop" Home Page underneath. And we are not obliged to provide a link back to Home from each product page.

A visitor is then able to focus on a single issue until a decision is made. If the decision is **BUY**, terrific. If it's **PASS**, the Home Page is still there underneath, ready to tempt with another offering.

Do people complain about windows popping up? Common wisdom indicates that they will.

Well, "common wisdom" should never scare you away from trying something on the Net. You can always change it. In this case, "common wisdom" may be "urban Net-myth" because we've had no complaints.

Some of the pop-ups we **control totally** using javascript (i.e., size, no status bar, etc.). Others we simply open by adding TARGET="NEW" to the A HREF tag -- in other words, simply opening an uncontrolled new browser window.

Check out the [SiteSell site](#) and try the links -- there **is** method to our madness. 😊

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How and when to pop windows is an interesting and useful skill to learn...



#### 15.9.4. Fourth Decision? Content

This step was not complicated. A corporate Home Page had to be written.

All the same, I labored over getting our “**what’s in it for you**” statement just right....



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E-commerce for the Rest of Us

Worried about all those dot-coms with millions in Venture Cap? Think you can't compete? Stop and ask yourself this...

"What happens to them after they blow it all on Super Bowl ads and on fancy Web sites that normal, everyday people can't use?"

They go broke, that's what happens.

SiteSell.com **tilts the Internet playing field in your favor.** Our "Make Your \_\_\_\_ Sell!" products have empowered tens of thousands of entrepreneurs and small businesses to outperform larger, well-financed companies.

And they'll do the same for you.

Of course, we left old pages (all except the index.html page, obviously!) where they were -- **never eliminate old URLs.** You never know who is linking to them. But you can no longer navigate **to** our "eliminated pages" from the new site...

1) <http://www.sitesell.com/extracts.html>

2) <http://www.sitesell.com/e-commerce.html>

and even...

3) <http://www.sitesell.com/faq.html> -- Yes, even the FAQ!.



Very few people were interested in those pages. Why? Visitors are focused on the copy on the main pathway and are trying to make a decision. They just don't want to take the time to read every last word you've written (except, perhaps, for a \$1,000 product).

**If you are customer-focused, your content will grab and **keep** your visitors' attention.**

We removed a free trial download. The free trial is more powerful as an affiliate tool so we provide a neat little server-side app that allows them to customize it and then

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offer the free trial download from their sites.

Yes, the free trial download may have closed some sales. But it was also an excuse to **procrastinate**. We reasoned that it would be better if the affiliates offered it from their sites -- it's a great **PREselling** tool (PREselling is an important concept in our award-winning [5 Pillar Program](#)). When the visitor comes to our site, **our job is to get the sale**.

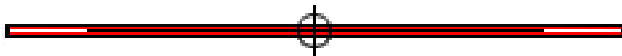


#### 15.9.5. Conclusions After The Re-Org

The site re-org was an interesting exercise. The site-selling lessons of **MYSS! 2002** are truer today than ever. By applying its principles once again, this time to reflect the realities of a larger company, a more sophisticated Net and an evermore impatient surfer, we have increased sales by 33% since the re-org.

As a result, I'm convinced...

Once you understand the basic customer-focused, site-selling principles of **MYSS! 2002**, you'll be able to design a site that sells just as effectively **FIVE** years from now!



#### 15.9.6. How to Handle Minor Upgrades

Unlike major re-orgs, there is only **one** good reason to upgrade a sales-oriented site...

To sell more. In other words... to increase your **Conversion Rate**.

Here's the secret. **Lean in close...**



... I'll whisper this so no one else hears. To make your site sell more, **YOU** must...

**MYSS! 2002...** “Well, that’s done!”

**... MAKE it sell more!**

Not impressed with that answer? Wait! Note the ALL CAPS on “**YOU**” and “**MAKE.**”

Here’s what everyone forgets -- **YOU** really have to study your site, put yourself into the shoes of your customer, figure out what’s wrong, and then...

**MAKE** your site sell **BETTER!**



There are two ways that **YOU** can **MAKE** this happen...

**1) The “You as Customer” Analysis** -- Put aside a morning. You, and your smartest staff, (if you have a staff -- otherwise, do it alone) pretend you’re the customer. Start at your opening paragraph and move through it in the way that a customer would.

OK, you’ve picked a nice, quiet time to review your site -- allow no interruptions. Go online, with an 800x600 or 640x480 monitor, a 56K modem and a cup of coffee. Start your site review.

Review Chapter 20.8 of **MYSS! 2002**. Have you got these “[11 Steps to a Site that SELLS!](#)” nailed down? This important summary lays it all out. Get these correct, and you’ll be way ahead of most sites already! Now...

What’s weak? What is actually killing sales? Any weak or counter-productive phrases? Do your pages take forever to load? Chapter 6.12 of **MYSS! 2002**, [15 Sales-Killing ways to Erode Confidence](#), lists all the ways you can accidentally kill sales. Did any of these sales-killers creep into your site? Eliminate them.



Here’s a real-life concrete example...

We had not had the time to even look at our sitesell.com site during the three months after our launch of **MYSS!**. That’s a good thing -- our eyes were “fresh” -- ready to really “see” the site again.

We made a whole bunch of little changes (improvement in wording, updating information, etc.). Nothing really earth-shaking -- just a general polishing.

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But while doing this, something major hit me! I noticed that we were **not** making full use of our tremendous testimonials. Since we first put the site up, we had received some truly thrilling words of appreciation.

The testimonials page had become too long. How did I know? Simple -- I didn't feel like clicking on all of them to read them. So we did two things...

- 1) We dropped the "blander" ones.
- 2) We "pulled out" a key, provocative phrase from each one and used it as a headline. Take a look...

### Reviews by Web Authorities

You could spend a year searching the Web... you'll never find another site with so many **unanimous** reviews by major Web authorities...

Click & hold on each box below.

***"Twice as good as Rudl's... less than 1/10 the cost."***

Review by Paul Myers -- TalkBiz News

***"The best that I have ever read..."***

Matt Hockin, Multi-Media Marketing Group Co.'s I-sales

***"I skim many books, but not this one."***

Ralph Wilson, Web Marketing Today, Web Commerce Today

***"...the most persuasive site on the Net."***

Allan Gardyne, Associate Programs Newsletter

Reviews by Web Authorities

<http://myss.sitesell.com/s-testimonials.html>

See how certain headlines hit you and pull you into the main quote? Those testimonials become potato chips -- you can't just eat one.

MYSS! 2002... "Well, that's done!"

And we made one more important change....

We had received several "super-duper" testimonials that hit key benefits in important ways since we put up the site. We had updated the "Testimonials Page" with them. But...

We were using "lesser" testimonials in critical parts of the site. So we replaced the "lesser" ones with the super-duper ones at key spots, like on the Home Page, the Affiliate Program page, and the Order Page.

Bottom line? We saw an immediate 20% increase in our **Conversion Rate**. Not bad for a day's work. How much would it cost you (in time and dollars) to increase sales by 20% if you did it by increasing your traffic?



And here's a second way to find out what needs upgrading...

**2) Usability Testing** -- Get some real, live customers. This is absolutely invaluable. But it takes more effort to organize. So most people **never** get around to it. Too bad -- huge loss.

I'm always amazed at how much we learn from proper usability testing. I mean it -- you just can't foresee what "total strangers" will do...

They get lost. They don't see a button that you wanted them to see. They complain out loud as they move around. You'll learn tons, and you'll emerge with a better site.

Most of you will read this and do nothing about it. Those who do act will e-mail me...

"Wow. You were right. We made huge changes thanks to the usability testing!"

Usability is a huge, ignored issue. But not by you, anymore. 😊



### 15.9.7. Test to Be Best

OK, your site is up and you're getting some traffic and sales. That means that you have a **Conversion Rate** (**CR** = sales divided by visitors). Which means...

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... that you want to **increase** that **CR!** And that means...

**... you have to make changes, and then measure the results.**

**Remember the music example that I talked about before?** I told you how I dropped the music for two weeks, and delivered a frames-free site. But sales dropped. And then when I put the music back on...

... sales returned to normal.

A brief comment about music... It depends on **your customer**. I'll bet it boosts sales if your site is aimed at the average consumer. However, if your market is LINUX techies or nuclear physicists, you may get them really upset. These people are info-oriented ("just the facts, ma'am!").

Set it up and try it. See what it does to sales. If it hurts, kill the music and send me a flame. That's the beauty of the Web -- it's so cheap, and measurable, to try different sales-getting strategies.

As usual, it all boils down to **knowing your customer**.



**A few rules for testing...**

**First, only change one thing at a time.** Let's say that you change your Opening Paragraph **and** your Closer Page. But your **CR** remains the same. Waste of time, right?

**Wrong!** Turns out that your Opener would have doubled your **CR**, but your Closer halved it. So it only **looked** like you weren't doing anything. So change only one thing at a time.

**Second, once you run a test, let it run until you have enough numbers to be sure.** I'll stay away from probability theory or you'll hate me. But...

Let's just say that you should get at least 1,000 visitors in your test to be fairly confident that your results are reliable (10,000 is better if you have a high-traffic site, which means that it won't take forever to get those numbers).

Why am I not too hung up about high numbers and statistical significance? Because when you **measure and compare the CR** for your test situation... if the **CR result**

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is close to the previous **CR**, who cares? You're looking for strategies that increase your **CR** from 2% to 3-4%, not to 2.02%.

So 1,000 visitors should be enough to give you a good feel. More **is** more reliable, but we're not publishing in the New England Journal of Medicine here!

**What to test...**

**It's impossible to know what the market will respond to, or what the best approach is -- so you have to test, test, and test some more.**

**Don't prejudge** anything -- not the best price, not the best headline, not even the best **MWR**. The marketplace will vote with their pocketbooks. All you have to do is measure it via the **CR**.

So, **test to be best**. Review your site critically -- what could you improve from the following that would **increase your CR?**

**The CR-increasing checklist is so important that I am repeating it once more...**

- ✓ • **The Opening Page for each product line, especially...**
  - the opening paragraph -- does it stop visitors in their tracks?
  - key headlines -- do they keep visitors on the site, wanting to know more?
  - the joint to the next page -- does it pull through to the next page?
- ✓ • **The MWR Closer Page for each product line, especially...**
  - the offer package (price, bonus, time).
  - the call to action -- does the site tell your customer what to do?
  - effectiveness of the MWR Response Form.
  - key headlines.
- ✓ • **Use of Backup Response -- long-term, this will increase the CR.**

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### • Other Content Pages...

- the guarantee -- people read your wording carefully. Is it solid, honest, and simple? Does it reassure?
- testimonials -- letters from happy users, product reviews.
- headlines and joints for each Content Page.
- look & feel -- warm and trusting? Or does your visitor see a loud, shrill effort? Or a big, cold, couldn't-care-less multi-national?
- other site content -- does it add to the selling effort?



### • Usability

- user-friendly, overall?
- readability and scannability -- clear and easy to read/scan?
- navigation -- can your dumbest visitor navigate easily?



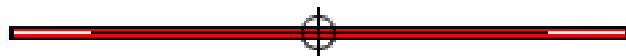
Focus on important stuff -- the opening paragraph, headlines on the Closer Page, etc.

Let your customer's response to your site tell you whether your site is working.

**Always try to outdo the current "best" approach.**

Once you have a site that is working, **only change one thing at a time**, or else you won't know which change is affecting the **CR**.

Your Web site is a process in constant evolution. Have a **great product that offers true benefits?** Super! Focus on your target. Keep fine-tuning and testing to find the most effective selling elements. The Net truly is an electronic experiment in Darwinism -- it's **"survival of the e-fittest."**





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### 15.9.8. Another Makeover... The Beverly Hills Hotel

Up above, I said...

“There are only two **good** reasons to re-organize a sales-oriented site...”

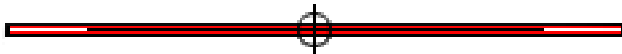
I was wrong. There’s **one more** reason...

Your site could be so bad that it would be better **off** the Net. The **Beverly Hills Hotel’s site** is a wonderful example of “opportunity lost.” Here’s how I would re-do this site...

**Hands On Site Selling**  
**at The Beverly Hills Hotel**  
<http://articles.sitesell.com/bhh/>

It’s a great example of the principles of **MYSS! 2002** in action. The business they throw away with this site scares me. The opportunity they give their competitors should scare them.

If your site is not getting the job done, pay close attention to the timeless principles outlines in **MYSS! 2002.**



## 16. Use E-mail to Close the SALE

You've set up a killer site. People are **buying**. And they're signing up for your free newsletter in droves. Not only that, but they simply can't resist asking for your give-away software! E-mail inquiries are arriving 24 hours per day...

So where the heck are **you**? If you take longer than 24 hours to answer, people forget they even contacted you! **Goodwill and a potential sale are gone forever. We live in the new millennium...**



**... Answer immediately and accurately.** Do that and you'll shine.

Of course, if you are totally **customer-focused**, this comes naturally. Because you know that **what your prospect or customer wants now is a fast and competent response**. Make it **friendly**, too, and you're on your way to mastering the art of power e-mail.

After all, if you don't follow-up, and fast, when someone sends in your **Most Wanted Response**, or when someone has a question about your product, **what's the point of nailing "The Big 3"?**

Bottom line?...

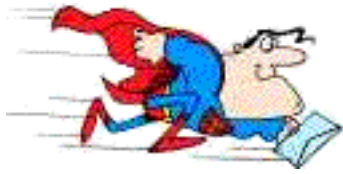
**Make your back-end as strong as the front-end. Power e-mail is the first step...**



### 16.1. Power E-mail

Everyone uses it. It's fast. It's free.

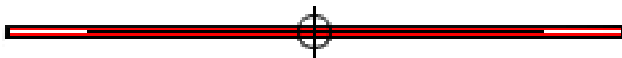
**It's the killer app of the Internet. It's...**



... e-mail!

Encourage your customers to use it. Then **respond...** immediately. Let people know they've been heard.

E-mail is a powerful way to cement a relationship... or to kill one, totally by accident. Here's how to turn your e-mail software into a **SALES-generating tool...**



#### 16.1.1. For a **Pro**-Looking Letter...

Here's how to get it down on (electronic) paper, clean and sharp.

**Short letter?** Sure, write it directly in your e-mail software. But...

If you are composing a **longer message**, use a good **text editor**. Do not copy-and-paste from your word processor -- the text from a word processor is **not ASCII**. You will get all kinds of weird symbols when you paste into your e-mail.

**Two of the best text editors** are **UltraEdit** (Windows) and **BEdit** (Mac OS)...



UltraEdit

<http://idmcomp.com/>



BBEdit

<http://web.barebones.com/products/bbedit/bbedit.html>

Also, since there is no formatting in ASCII-land, **lay things out very clearly and simply**. And use **super-short paragraphs** -- there's nothing worse than long dense ASCII paragraphs.

As you type your letter into your text editor, don't worry about where your line breaks appear. You'll clean that up in a moment. But **do put two returns between each paragraph**, so there is a clear horizontal space between each one.

Proof-read and spell-check, and then...

Proof-read and spell-check. **Yes**, again.

**Then edit some more...**



**... keep polishing 'til it shines.**



When you're done, **remove all [line breaks](#)** (this feature exists in both of the above text editors), **then set hard line breaks at 65 characters**. This gives your message a nice, professional look. And 65 characters is a comfortable reading width.

If you go wider than 65 characters, your recipient may have e-mail software that wraps these wider lines. In that case, she'll get this ragged look (and wonder why **you** would compose it like this)...

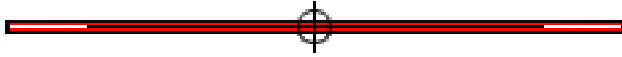
When you're done, remove all line breaks (this feature exists in both of the above text editors), then set hard line breaks at 65 characters. This gives your message a nice, professional look. And 65 characters is a comfortable reading width. If you go wider, some e-mail software will wrap the lines giving this look that you've probably seen...

Instead, it should look like this...

When you're done, remove all line breaks (this feature exists in both of the above text editors), then set hard line breaks at 65 characters. This gives your message a nice, professional look. And 65 characters is a comfortable reading width. If you go wider, some e-mail software will wrap the lines giving this look

that you've probably seen...

**Once you're done, just copy and paste it into your e-mail software.** If your e-mail software allows you to set fonts, choose a standard Courier 10 point (same as in the example e-mails above). Don't get fancy. **Now it's ready for e-mailing.**

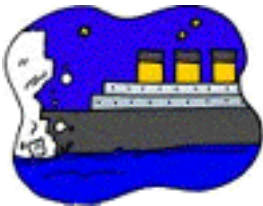


### 16.1.2. Soften Your Writing

Hard ASCII text is cold. No one sees your face to know if you're kidding. Don't just zip off an e-mail. Your customer may easily misinterpret a short, straight e-mail as being curt and rude. So...

**Write carefully, and with kindness.**

Deliver a personal, one-to-one message, not a slick pitch letter. Your e-mail must **not** read like an ad, rather more like news that you are sharing with a friend. **You know what to think about?...**



... **The Titanic!** Think of how you would tell a friend what a great movie it was, and that they should really rent a video of it. **That's the tone to use... simple, direct, friendly.**

### [ **SIDEBAR** ]

If you receive an e-mail that spurs you to write an angry response, **don't send it.** Same goes if you write e-mails when you are in a foul mood. **All negative emotions come across ten times stronger than intended.** Draft it, but put it aside for a few hours. You'll be glad you did. 😊

**Emoticons** can soften your writing by conveying your facial expression. The three most common ones are...

:-) or just :) -- convey happiness

;-) -- just kidding

:- ( or just : ( -- convey unhappiness

Use emoticons, unless you are sure that your reader hates them, or if you are dealing with a real newbie who may not know what they mean.

Even if your viewer thinks they're a little sappy, she will still feel that you are a "nice person." Cold letters on a computer screen have no emotion -- they are simply too easy to misinterpret (at worst) or leave the recipient feeling cold (at best). **Use emoticons to melt the ice.**

For example, suppose you say,

**"Thanks a lot!"**

It's possible to read sarcasm into that. But **not** if you say,

**"Thanks a lot! :-)"**

See and feel the smile?

**When your customer gets an e-mail from you...**



**... this is what she should see.**



Beside emoticons, make every effort possible to **soften your writing**. If you are unsure as to whether gentle constructive criticism could be misunderstood, write "I offer this only with constructive intent." Err on the kind and gentle side.

**NEVER WRITE IN ALL CAPITALS BECAUSE PEOPLE WILL THINK YOU ARE SCREAMING AT THEM. SAME FOR EXCLAMATION MARKS!!!!**



Just before sending any e-mail, re-read it one last time and ask yourself, "Could this be misinterpreted?" **If you have any doubt, clarify.**

Try to be helpful, and don't expect it back. In the long run, you build yourself into a strong brand by handling yourself well, and with consideration for others.

Bottom line? Write with a gentle but firm spirit. **Be considerate of your reader -- if people like, trust, and respect you, they will do business with you.**



### 16.1.3. Write to **SELL!**

Your first priority is to **provide the answer the customer wants**. Of course, as you do that...

Make the **body copy** short and sweet. Short words, short paragraphs, short lines. No gimmicks, huge attachments (unless requested by customer), sound, etc. **Just get to the point quickly.**

Provide great content, and into that content...

**... weave benefits (personalized to your correspondent), your USP, the offer and a call to action** -- whatever is appropriate for that particular letter.

In other words, all the rules of writing “copy that **SELLS**” apply.

Once your content cooks, **proof-read and spell-check it**. Nothing ruins a letter faster than gross typos and spelling errors.

**Then craft your headline...**



### 16.1.4. The Subject... Your E-mail “**Headline**”

Here's a well-kept secret to writing **SALES-generating e-mail... labor over your subject**. The subject of your e-mail is the equivalent of your headline.

**It has all the power of...**



**... a headline.** If it's slack and sappy, it sets a terrible tone for your letter, **if** the recipient chooses to read it (which is unlikely).

If it's sharp, active, and benefit-laden, you're half-way to the sale. Your prospect will read it, and read it with enthusiasm. **So take your time and write a great subject.**

If you want to make sure your e-mail is read by **someone you hardly know** and/or for **Mr./Ms. Very Busy, guarantee it!** Perfect **the subject** of your missive. Take a bit longer than a twitch of the keyboard... you'll deliver an e-mail that is much more likely to get "opened" and read with gusto.



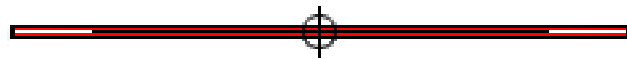
**But don't make it cutesy or misleading.** That's a sure way to be ignored in the future. Think back to what you yourself delete without even opening...

- How to Make BIG, BIG Money At Home!!
- \$64,000 in JUST 5 WEEKS!!!!!!!!!!
- CABLE DESCRAMBLER NOW ONLY \$6!
- 8 Million Email Addresses! FREE!!

What turned you off? They're crass. LOTS OF CAPS and exclamation marks. Since it's so totally impersonal by its very nature, spam never relates to **you**. **People only open messages that relate directly to them or to their business.**

So... personalize the subject. Put the **name** of the recipient into it -- this is a powerful way to get attention. Include an **important, relevant benefit**.

**And, whatever you do, do it with conservative class.**



#### 16.1.5. Sig Files That **SELL!**

A **sig file** is a combination of business card and P.S. Depending on who you're writing to and why, you can **pump your sig file with sales power...**

**... or reduce it to a simple business card attached to a letter.**

For example, I add this "aggressive" sig file to reply to potential customers...



```
~~~~~
>PennyGold -- Powerful Penny Mining Stock Software
Become a sharp-thinking, independent, successful investor
~~~~~
>"I get the facts,I study them patiently,I apply imagination."
-- Bernard Baruch
~~~~~
>Web site ==> http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/
kevoy@goodbytes.com voice:450-458-1064 fax:450-458-1068
~~~~~
```



Use a **sig file that sells** when you post to a targeted newsgroup, mailing list, or any place else where it will be seen by many. **It's a powerful and "legal" way to attract targeted customers.** It amounts to free advertising. And it's acceptable, unless you design a 48 line sig file!

If you fear that a certain mailing list or newsgroup would **not** accept a hard-sell sig file, **design a softer one...**

```
~~~~~
>PennyGold -- Become a sharp-thinking, successful investor
~~~~~
>"I get the facts,I study them patiently,I apply imagination."
-- Bernard Baruch
~~~~~
>Web site ==> http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/
kevoy@goodbytes.com voice:450-458-1064 fax:450-458-1068
~~~~~
```

Since a sig file is located at the end of your letter, it essentially **serves as a P.S.** Direct mail experts will tell you that your P.S. is the second most important part of any sales letter.

So make good use of your sig file -- it's the ultimate in free advertising. **Every time you send out an e-mail, your sig file should be there.**



If I am writing to a PennyGold owner (i.e., someone I am **not** trying to sell), or if advertising is **not** my main motive for contributing to a mailing list, I'll use my most conservative PennyGold sig file...

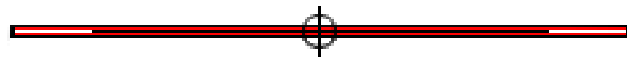
```
~~~~~  
> PennyGold http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/
"I get the facts,I study them patiently,I apply imagination."
-- Bernard Baruch
>kevoy@goodbytes.com voice:450-458-1064 fax:450-458-1068
~~~~~
```



Or, if I'm sending **tech support** to a PennyGold owner...

```
~~~~~  
PennyGold Tech Support
~~~~~  
>>For tech support e-mails, please copy previous  
>>e-mails so that I can "pick up the thread" quickly  
~~~~~  
Web site ==> http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/
kevoy@goodbytes.com voice:450-458-1064 fax:450-458-1068
~~~~~
```

**Sig files are powerful, flexible and free tools. Here's how to design them...**



### 16.1.6. Composing the Perfect Sig File

#### The perfect sig file...

- hits the key benefit by stating the **USP**.
- has the **appropriate** amount of "sell" for your target.
- could contain a great quote or slogan, possibly as the **USP**.
- should contain a **FREE** offer, if you have one as a Backup Response.
- includes your name, e-mail address, and URL of Home Page. Some people would argue about including your e-mail address. But it allows your customer to cut-and-paste your address into a fresh e-mail to you...
  - many newbies don't know about the Reply button
  - others just do this out of habit

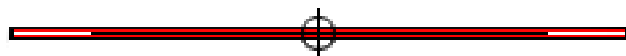
- and when you post to a mailing list or newsgroup, it's the only way for people to reply to you.
- has a nice, clean, professional-looking layout.
- has a simple top-line divider (bottom optional) to set it apart from the main body of e-mail. Be a pro -- use simple dividers like the equal sign (=====) or the tilde (~~~~~~) or even just the lowly dash (-----).
- does not try to cram in too much info.
- is less than 8 lines, including divider. 6 lines is better.
- is never more than 65 characters wide ([reasons above](#)).
- is left justified, not centered. Keep it simple because different e-mail software will wreak havoc on fancy layouts.
- contains no typos or spelling mistakes. Proof-read it to death. An **http:** with a single slash after it is deadly. If you were to send me an e-mail with a typo in your sig file, how could I ever consider doing business with you?
- **is never finished.** Keep improving it.



Once you've designed the "perfect sig file," send an e-mail with your sig file to yourself and a few friends. Check for...

- overall appearance
- impact of copy
- typos
- links -- do they work?

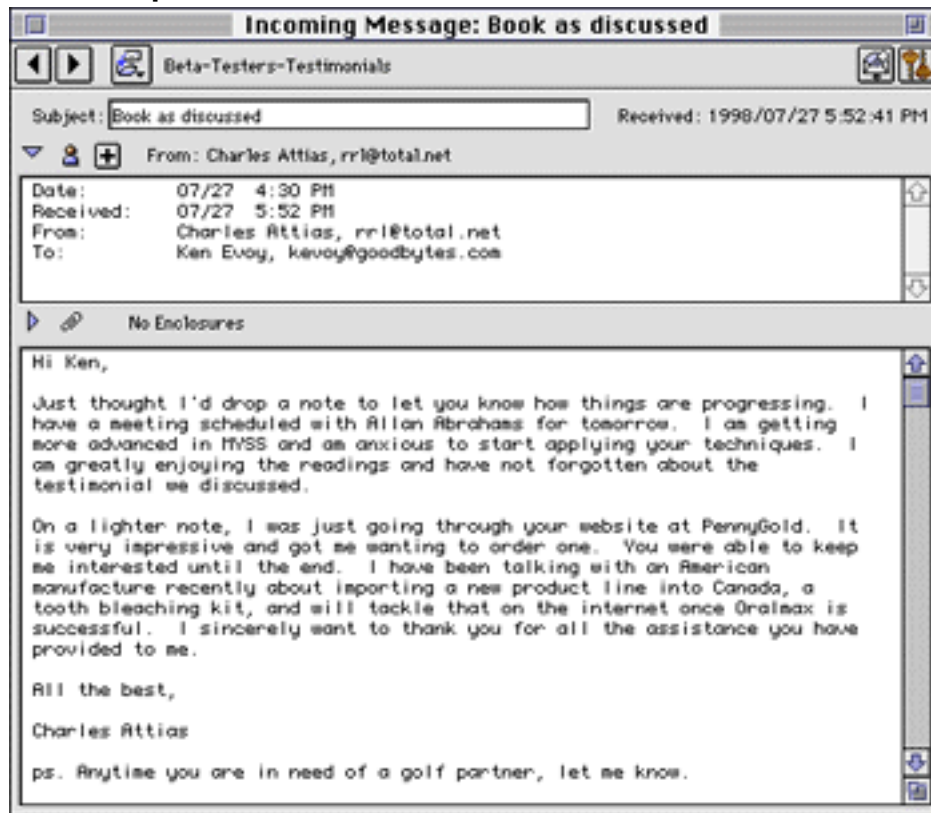
That's it. You're done... **the perfect sig file.**



### 16.1.7. How to Hit Reply for Best Effect

When replying to an e-mail, **hit the Reply button**. That will put the entire contents of the letter into your reply, along with the e-mail address of your recipient.

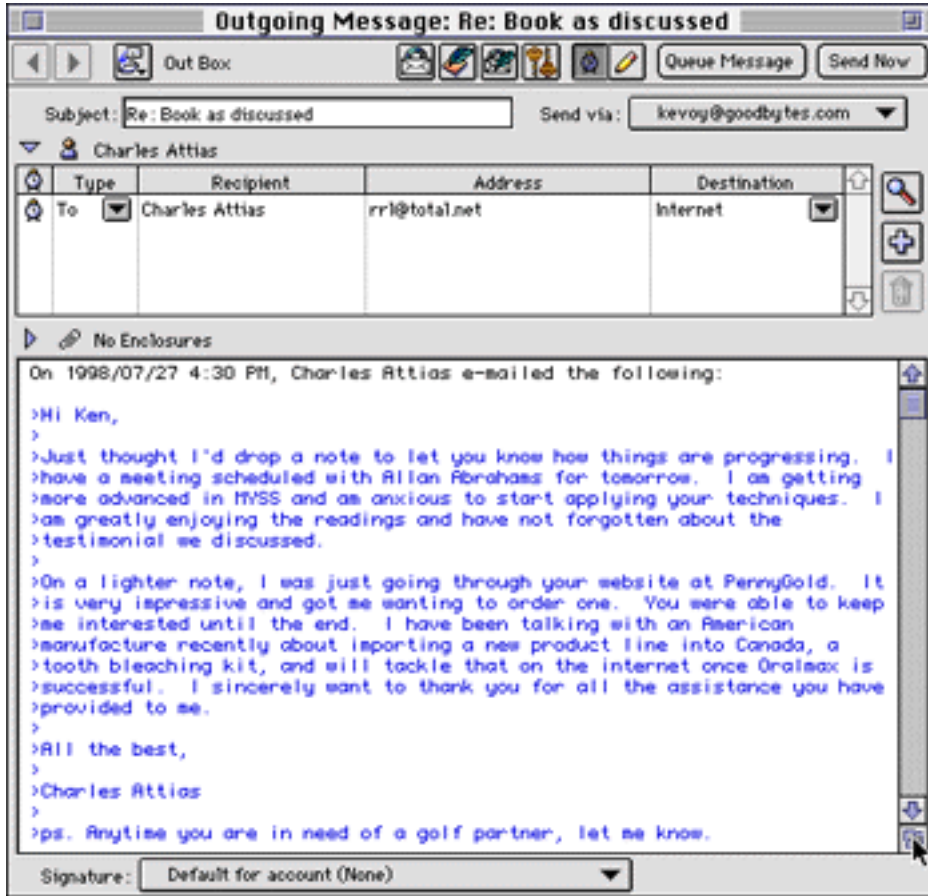
For example...



...hit the reply key, which pops up...

...this reply...

MYSS! 2002... Use E-mail



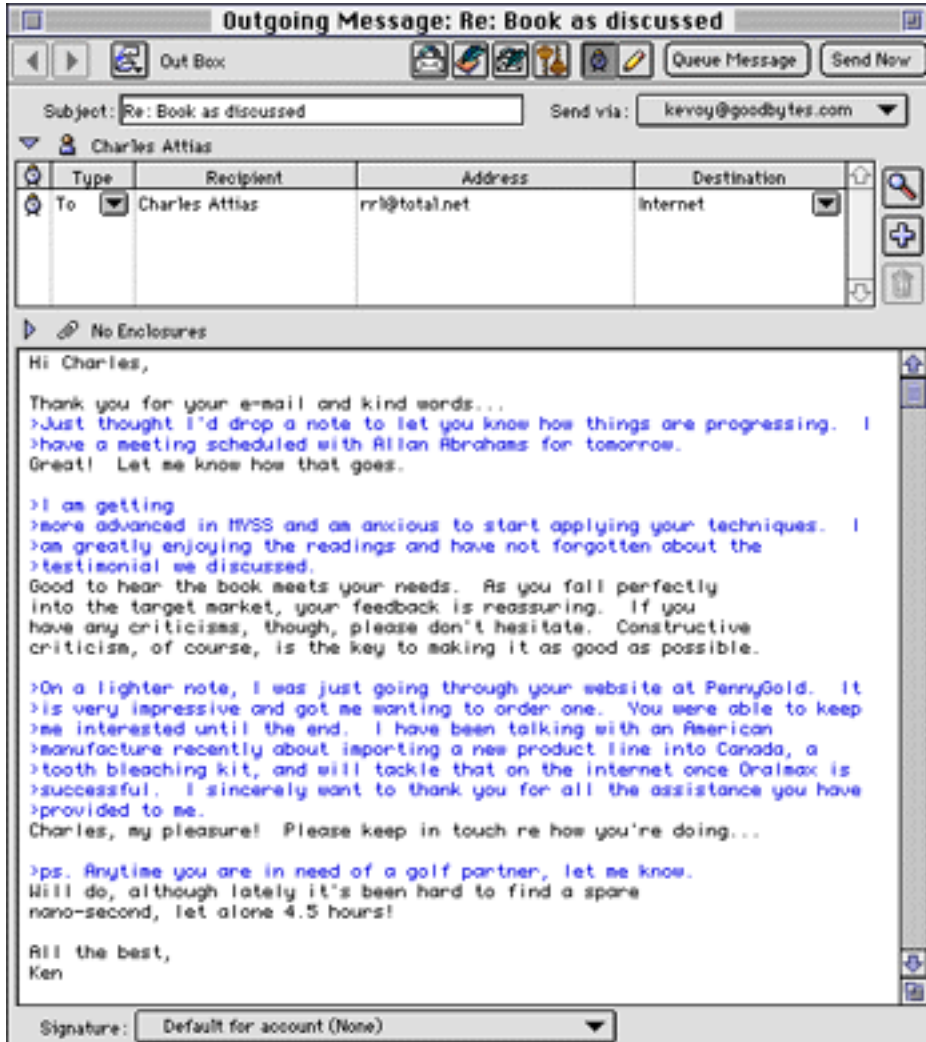
Next...

- select and eliminate any unnecessary quoted (blue) text
- rearrange it into blocks of relevant copy
- add answers under each block.



Here's what the final reply looks like...

## MYSS! 2002... Use E-mail



### This approach...

- keeps all issues organized
- reminds your customer about the context
- helps your customer to organize his reply back to you.

**People send and receive a lot of e-mail.** A solid, organized reply shows your consideration for others, **and** your experience.



### 16.1.8. How to Use the ">" Tag for Special Effects

Did you notice that the quoted text (in the preceding **"Reply"** example) was **in blue**? Most e-mail software packages can be configured to **assign color** to quoted text (i.e., text with the **">" tag** at the far left of a line).

For example, in the "Preferences" section of my own e-mail software, I press on the colored buttons below to assign any color to five levels of quoted text...



With no tags, text looks like this.

> With one tag at the far left, it looks like this.

>> With two tags, it looks like this.

>>> With three tags, it looks like this.

>>>> With four tags, it looks like this.

>>>>> With five tags, it looks like this.

Many people **do** this -- you should, too, if your software permits. The colors clearly show successive levels of "replied-to" e-mails. So when you receive an e-mail, it's clear at a glance what the sender wrote, and what she was replying to. And, when **you** reply to that, your own replies are easy to organize.

And here's a great way to take **extra advantage** of the **">" tag...**

Use it to **highlight important lines**. Did you write something that you **really** want a recipient to see? Add a **">" tag** to the far left of that line (i.e., before any other character on it).

Examples... see the [sample of the PGOLD XPRESS newsletter \(above\)](#) or my [reply to the request for more information about PennyGold \(below\)](#).



### 16.1.9. Special Considerations for E-mail

When you want to c.c. someone, use the regular “c.c.” field. Type in “c.c. Joe Schmoe” at the bottom of your e-mail, so your primary recipient knows about it.

If you want to send the same message to ten different people, **whose privacy should be protected**, use your e-mail software’s “bulk” or “blind c.c.” or “bcc” fields.



Don’t [spam](#).



When you write the **URL** of a site in your e-mail, include it on a separate line so it can’t be missed. For example...

Hi Dave,

Just visited this terrific Web site, PennyGold.

Check it out. It’s at...

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold>

All the best,

Sam

Add **two tags (“>>”)** at the far left of the URL line. They point **to** the URL **and** they color the line differently. So **if** your recipient’s software does **not** display URLs as an actual clickable link (many still do not), it will at least stand out due to its color difference.

One last thing -- leave the URL free and clear from any other letters, punctuation, etc.

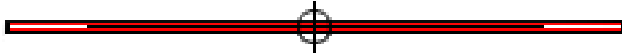


Ready to send? Wait! Check and make sure it’s going to the right recipient at the right address.

My wife once sent an e-mail to the manufacturer of our car, asking if it was Y2K-compliant. We received a reply that was obviously intended only as an internal



message. It discussed how such inquiries should be handled. Talk about embarrassing -- and I'm sure their legal department was not too happy.



## 16.1.10. How to Turn It Around in Hours

### Get your e-mail...



... flying out of your company.

Foresee the different types of e-mail that you will receive. Set up accounts for each major function...

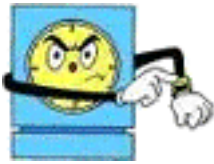
- sales@your-company.com
- support@your-company.com
- info@your-company.com
- prez@your-company.com

Use these addresses throughout your site, so that mail automatically goes to the correct employee. **Make one person responsible for each mail box that you set up.**



If it's **only you** at the helm, use a [catch-all e-mail account](#). Now you can use a myriad of e-mail addresses, such as all of the above and a whole bunch more. Since it's a catch-all account, they all come to you when you check your mail. Program your e-mail software to automatically filter and sort these appropriately.

Whether you have two hundred e-mail accounts for two hundred employees, or if you are only giving that impression via your catch-all account..... **set a “chiseled in rock” rule...**



... Reply to all e-mails within 6 hours.

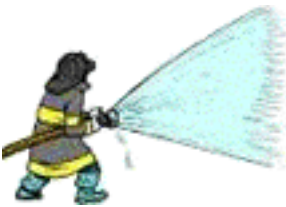
Check your e-mail **at least** three times a day... first thing in the morning, lunch, and just before leaving. Don't put anything aside, to be answered "later."



### 16.1.11. Putting Water on the **Flames**

**If you get flamed**, realize that most of these people are not "psychotic jerks."

**So don't get upset...**



... **pour water on the flames**, not gasoline.

This is your chance to shine. Select the strongest, nastiest parts of their letter to you and hit the **Reply** key. This highlights their worst words in your reply.

Then answer in a friendly but professional tone. Apologize if it's appropriate. When the person sees what a jerk he was, he'll apologize. **If he doesn't, maybe he is a psychotic jerk!**

Do this right, and you'll be amazed at how many converts you score.



### 16.1.12. How to Use Autoresponders to **Get SALES**

When a customer sends an e-mail to a certain address manned by an autoresponder, this powerful "mailbot" automatically fires back an e-mail response, usually an informative sales letter.

**And it does it...**

- **immediately**
- **24 hours per day**
- **for a fairly low additional monthly fee** (some hosts offer autoresponders for free).

Autoresponders are the e-mail equivalent of a “fax-back” service. Think of it as “e-mail on demand.” They can save you hundreds of dollars -- use them for basic tech support, product inquiries for more details, sales-oriented letters to all kinds of questions, and...

... for whatever your creativity allows you to dream up! You can literally set up hundreds!



### **Autoresponders add an extra dimension to your Net-selling efforts...**

- some people prefer to get info via e-mail than via the Web.
- many people still use only e-mail. They can get your info via an autoresponder, but not via your Web site.
- many people like the gimmick aspect, while others like the automatic, “no salesman to talk to” approach.



While writing the letter that will be sent by an autoresponder, remember this...

... all the rules of writing good copy apply.

Talk to your techie if you have a use for this versatile tool. Be sure you get two important features...

- unlimited hits for your \$10-20 per month fee
- unlimited free changes to the copy of your letter -- you **will** change it frequently until you find one that works best. So this is important.

---

[ **SIDEBAR** ]

---

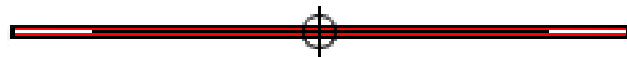
When people use the term “autoresponder,” they generally mean server-side autoresponder. And this is definitely the way to go, **if you anticipate huge volumes**. However, there is a way to do it client-side, too...

**Use your e-mail software.** Most e-mail packages nowadays will allow you to set a response to an e-mail received **at a certain address**. The disadvantages are...

- the response only happens **when you get your e-mail**. The software **then** prepares a response and places it in the **OUT** basket, ready for you to fire off.
- if we’re talking large numbers, this gets very tedious.

**The advantages** of using a client-side autoresponder are...

- it’s free
- it’s easier technically to set up -- you can do it yourself.
- the delay in sending (mentioned as a disadvantage above) is also an advantage. When your customer receives a response within seconds, she knows it was automated. But when she gets it hours later, or the next morning, she’ll think it was sent personally.
- you oversee the process manually. Spot a bug? Iron it out. Perfect your letter. See how people respond to your message. Once all is smooth, **then** automate if the volume is too high to justify this “hands-on” approach.



### 16.1.13. Follow-up For MORE Sales!

The effective use of autoresponders is one of the cheapest and most efficient ways to stay in contact with your customers or prospects. They allow you to deliver **multiple** follow-ups easily.

Most autoresponders can be programmed to send out a series of e-mail messages with a predetermined amount of time between them. This is ideal for delivering courses, tips, or large amounts of information that might overwhelm your visitor or customer, should they receive it all at one sitting.

This ongoing communication keeps you first and foremost in the recipient’s mind.

**The length of the interval between mailings depends on the sensitivity level of your target market.** You want to keep in touch, not irritate!

On the other side of the coin, a long interlude between mailings means your message loses momentum, and your subscribers' motivation levels drop. **The key is find the right balance.**



At SiteSell, we offer [5 different Masters Courses](#) for our affiliate members to promote on their sites. Each course delivers its top-notch payload over a series of 5 days.

The Masters Courses are a wonderful example of “give, then take.” Since these courses are truly ground-breaking, subscribers receive quality information for free. Of course, our goal is not to give away the farm, but to provide our prospective clients with just enough information to whet their appetites for the full product.

Think about your own possibilities... tips, reports, etc. Put pen to paper or finger to keyboard and see what you can create!



Both SendThisFree (a free service), and Aweber allow multiple follow-ups...



SendThisFree.com

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



Aweber Communications

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



## 16.2. Real-Life Example of Closing the Sale

The following e-mail sequence shows...

- the doubts that Web shoppers still have
- how to use e-mail to close the sale.

Throughout the following sequence, please note that I do **not** convince someone who does not want PennyGold. **I simply provide content for this motivated inquirer.** And I blend in some gentle sales copy, in a tone that is appropriate for this customer.



### 16.2.1. Letter From Interested Customer

On April Fool's Day, I received the following letter (reprinted with his permission)...

Received: 04/01 06:05  
From: Viktor, viktor\_harder@paralynx.com  
To: Ken Evoy kevoy@goodbytes.com

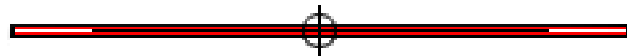
Dear Mr. Evoy!

I first found your Web site back in November. I was impressed by the layout of the site and the salesmanship contained therein. Apart from that I considered it to be a nicely laid out scam. The price of PennyGold was quoted at \$199. I figured "sure its going to go up". Well, darn it, it seems to have done just that. From where I sit I don't know if that is good or bad.

I contacted one of your customers here out of Vancouver to get some more feedback but I haven't heard from him yet. I also took a quick look at Tracker with the data. Will have to spend some more time on it.

Still thinking.

Regards,  
Viktor Harder



### 16.2.2. The **Three Rules** of Power E-mail

**First rule...** read the letter. **Generate a first impression.**

From the above, it's obvious that it's full of doubt. I did not succeed in differentiating PennyGold sufficiently from all the scams out there. I'm a little disappointed. If I had answered the e-mail at this stage, it would have been a disaster.

**Second rule...** read it again. **Get a better feel for the customer.**

Whoops! He's been following the site for six months (November to April). His letter is very well constructed. And he's motivated (has contacted a PennyGold owner, and has downloaded Tracker). This person is the ideal customer for PennyGold. I **know** that he will love it and use it well.

But **he** doesn't know that yet.

**Third rule...** answer **all** e-mail **fast and well**. Provide the content your customer wants, and just the right level of sales copy. And please, show the customer that you understand both his desires and his worries.

In Viktor's case, I am e-mailing to my favorite kind of person. Intelligent, motivated, and genuinely seeking more info and some reassurance...

**Within a few hours, I replied to Viktor...**



### 16.2.3. Prompt, Friendly E-mail Reply

Hi Viktor,

Comments like yours teach me more than all the compliments!

One of the big challenges of the Internet is for the "little guy, the small vendor" to convince the consumer that they are for real.

I am actually writing a book on this subject and would like your permission to use your letter. Please confirm, and let me know if I can use your name and city of residence, or if I can only use the text.

Anyway, back to your letter. You are right. We had just started in November. We have now sold 261 units, which is double the rate of 1 per day that I had planned. Which is why the price has gone up. Ultimately, I want the price to cut sales back to 1 per day, for nice steady growth.

Feedback has been very positive -- and I guess the best evidence of that is that we are starting to get sales referred by PennyGold owners. I add to the list of testimonials frequently -- if I actually asked for feedback, I'd probably have five times as many, but I just wait for the comments to arrive and then ask for permission to use.

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/PGuserfeedback.html>

Viktor, PG is for real. There is more than enough info on the site for you to check and cross-check to be sure. And it certainly seems like you have done most of it!

But if you have any ideas as to how I could convince a "serious, but doubting" visitor such as you, I would absolutely love to hear it.

How do I know you're "serious"? You've done it all... Decision Helper, Tracker, e-mailed PG users.

Like I say to my wife, though, it's impossible to make a wrong decision on the PennyGold Web site. For those who do all the work that you do and decide to buy, they have the right blend of willingness to work, doubt and good judgment to use PG effectively. For the lazy who won't do the work, PG is not for them and I don't want to change their minds.

But for folks like you who are willing to do the work, and who still have doubts, these are the people that fascinate me the most.

What do you feel it will take to make them understand that PG (and other products from small vendors) is true? What can one say to help them sort out the "true efforts" from the "scams"?

I write this not to convince you to buy PG (it's not worth my time to write a letter like this just to "get the sale"). I am asking because the whole art-and-science of ethical sales on the Internet fascinates me.



Thank you for any ideas you may have on this topic.

All the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.



#### 16.2.4. High-Tech Opens, High-Touch Closes

The Web site **opens** the buying process. But no matter how warm and trusting your Web site, cyberspace is still a cold, impersonal place. Your customer still asks, “**What if...?**”.

E-mail correspondence adds a **little** warmth -- it’s personal and obviously customized. It gives the reader a slightly better feel into who you are. But it’s still just a bunch of electrons!

The more expensive your product, the more likely that you will require some kind of “high touch” follow-up to close the deal. If you sell a \$100,000 software networking package, this will likely involve several face-to-face meetings.

PennyGold occasionally (but not often) requires a phone conversation...

Two days later, Viktor called me. We talked for over half an hour.

He had lots of **good** questions -- questions always indicate interest to me. **Good** questions (i.e., those not answered on the site, or very “nuts-and-bolts” oriented) indicate **serious** interest.

While I “lost money” on an hourly basis for time spent with Viktor, I should have paid him for the lessons learned. (If you’re reading this Viktor, thank you. 😊 )

Viktor ordered. And he gave me permission to use his letter.



#### 16.2.5. Prompt, Friendly E-mail Follow-up

Within minutes of our conversation, I replied to Viktor...

Dear Viktor,

It was a pleasure talking to you today about PennyGold. If you put the same effort into PG as you have into evaluating it and me, you will indeed do very well with it.

Thank you for your permission to reprint your letter in my book on Web selling. Naturally, I will send you a complementary copy as soon as it's done.

As I said, once you are up and running, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask.

All the best,  
Ken



#### 16.2.6. It Was More Than Worth the Effort

Viktor is **the ultimate careful shopper**.

He spent a lot of time on the Web site. He e-mailed people who had provided testimonials. He downloaded Decision Helper and Tracker, and subscribed to the newsletter. He followed the story.

An obviously intelligent person, he had been burned by other offers on the Internet. Yet ours stood out for its thoroughness and honest feel. He just needed the time and space to think it out.

But if I had been sloppy or late or offensive in my e-mail reply to him, I would definitely have lost that order. We would have both lost. Instead, **we both won!**

#### Postscript...

Viktor is an active PennyGold owner, one of the most interested and vital members in what has become an excellent group of individuals. He contributes great ideas via our PGPer Digest, and posts his files on company "finds" to share with others.

**Meeting (and "selling") Viktor... was more than worth the effort.**



## 16.3. Automate Replies to the “Same Old, Same Old”

We’re entering the third millennium. If you are answering the **same old questions** over and over by hand, let me put **this as gently as I can...**



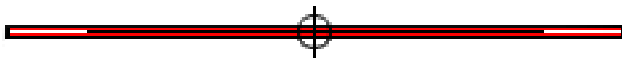
**...You’re stuck in the wrong millennium!**

For example, let’s say someone asks you for more info on your product. Take the time to craft an excellent answer... **once.**

The next two or three times the opportunity arises, **make it even better. There will soon come a time when you just can’t make it any better.**

**After that, use that same answer over and over.**

Here’s an example...



### 16.3.1. Best Answer to the Request for More Info

Let’s use the request for more info as an **example of “automating your e-mail”...**

The first time I got an e-mail requesting more info, I snickered. “Hey, it’s all on the Web site. What more do you want from my life?” I mean...

If potential customers ask for more info by e-mail, **why would I bother?** My Web site is supposed to do that, and will do it much better! Odds are that this is not a serious request... or the person is just some frivolous, in-a-big-hurry tire-kicker. Right?

**Wrong...**

That’s why I added that **second rule** of power e-mail ([outlined earlier](#))...

**Read it again. Get a better feel for the customer.**

A request for more info is just...

**... a request for more info.** Don't look any deeper than that. Don't assume that he has even visited the site. He may have just seen your e-mail address in a posting or an article somewhere. Who knows?

**So...**

"Assume nothing but the goodwill of your inquirer."

**Based on this premise,** I drafted a good answer and sent it.

The next time I got the same question, I reviewed my original letter. **Then I improved it.** After 4 or 5 improvements, I felt it was about as good as I could make it.



**Now, when someone asks for more info, I just cut-and-paste-and-mail the following...**

Hello Joe Info-Seeker,

Thank you for your request for more information about PennyGold. Full information is available at the Web site, far better than I could ever convey in this e-mail to you:  
>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>

Allow me to give you "the personalized" tour by providing you with the direct URL addresses of some of the most important pages:

>> Home Page (frames/music)  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>

>> Home Page (no frames/music)  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pennygold.html>

>> PGOLD XPRESS (free subscription to our newsletter)  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgxprs.html>

>> Concept Page  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/concept.html>

>> What Do I Get Page  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/300.html>

**MYSSI! 2002...** Use E-mail

>> Current State of the Junior Mining Markets  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/quotes-ext/index.html>

>> 10-TIMES-GUARANTEE  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/500.html>

>> Exclusive Club Page (1,000 copies only)  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/600.html>

>> Feedback from PennyGold Owners  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/PGuserfeedback.html>

>> Order Page (pricing info)  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html>

>> PennyGold Site Map  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/SITEMAP.html>

>> The PennyGold FAQ covers the most common questions:  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/FAQ1.html>

Or please call me directly with any questions -- 450-458-1064.

Thank you again for your interest.

Ken Evoy, M.D.  
President

Now, if the “more info” inquiry was a serious request, I have advanced the sales process. If it was just a frivolous waste of time, it has taken less than 20 seconds to **cut-and-paste-and-mail!**

Of course, **your automated answer must meet your customer’s needs. Or you can do more damage than good.** Here’s an example of how...

---

### **[ SIDEBAR ]**

---

This section covers questions that do **not** belong in a FAQ (such as the “more info” question above). For those that do, [see the earlier discussion.](#)



## 16.4. Using **Autoresponders** to Reply NOW!

There’s nothing wrong with sending out an automated e-mail immediately upon receiving mail to a particular mailbox or mailboxes. (For example, to your

support/help address -- just have your techie set it up!)

In fact, it's a good idea! Using an autoresponder to respond immediately to a customer's e-mail is a great way to let them know...

- **You received their message**
- **You are concerned**
- **Your business is credible**



Even if you can't reply personally right away! For a brand new customer, this is doubly comforting.

It doesn't have to be anything too fancy...

Dear "customer's name"...

This is an automated response to let you know we received your e-mail. Thank You! Believe me when I say it is a high priority for us. We know how frustrating it can be to get no response from some companies online, so "ourcompany.com" is doing its best to deliver fantastic customer service to its valued customers.

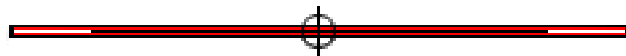
What's our promise to you? The guarantee of a personal response to all e-mail queries within 24 hours, or free product upgrades for life!

Expect to hear from one of us soon.

All the best,

The [www.yourcompany.com](http://www.yourcompany.com) team

Nothing special here... but it gives your customer the warm fuzzies. Better still, it only takes seconds to set up.



## 16.5. Real-Life Example of Losing a Sale

A brief note about this example...

At the time of this update, Infoseek's star has fallen, of course, and they are no longer the bellwether they once were. Nonetheless, the point illustrated is as poignant as ever...

That's why it's still here! 😊



InfoSeek did not seem to realize that many sites that list with it **eventually became their paying customers**. As a matter of fact, every penny of their banner ad revenue comes from a site in its [index](#).

In **MYSS! 2002** lingo, InfoSeek's **MWR** is the **sale of a banner ad**. But their **Backup Response** is for a company to **list in their index** -- it's free and it starts a relationship. In other words, when I list my company with InfoSeek, I am **their prospect**.

Based on the following correspondence between myself and InfoSeek, **you be...**



**... the judge** as to whether InfoSeek gets it!

In the Traffic-Building volume, I describe [the disaster that happened](#) to my InfoSeek-indexed site when PennyGold received a listing in their directory.

I wrote to InfoSeek (support@infoseek.com) about the sudden disappearance of our Web site from their [index](#) after listing in their **directory**. All I received back was stock, cut-and-paste answers **that were...**

- **totally uninformative**
- **awkwardly unpersonalized**
- **extremely confusing** -- although I used their reference numbers and the name of

the support person each time, my e-mails were answered by **three** different people.  
**What a confusing mess.**

- **and worst of all... unhelpful.**



### 16.5.1. First Letter to InfoSeek

At first, I didn't realize that there was a direct connection between the directory listing and the [big drop in our index listing](#). I sent them the following letter, asking what had happened to my PennyGold site...

Hello,

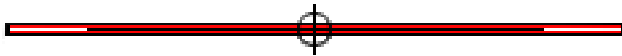
My site has disappeared from your search results. Well, actually it's still in your database. But it no longer turns up on the first page when someone looks for "penny stocks." This happened about the same time we were listed in your directory.

This is a serious, successful and well-regarded site. Many have written us to say that it is the single best site about penny mining stocks, that even if they don't buy our software, they have learned a lot about a unique and powerful approach.

Please let me know why we have been dropped by your algorithm. I resubmitted, but I doubt if it will do any good, because it is still there when I do a search for

"http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/"

All the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.



### 16.5.2. InfoSeek's Reply

Here's their reply...

Hello,

You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support group.



Infoseek does not guarantee ranking positions for any URLs in any of our search results. Our index is a dynamic one in which thousands of pages are submitted, updated and deleted constantly.

We also continue to tweak our search algorithms to provide our users with the best results possible for their queries. As a result, URLs for a particular search result will change positions.

To change your current rank, you can update your page with more relevant information for a specific query and resubmit it to Infoseek via e-mail or our Add URL form. Please review our Guidelines and Policies to make sure you are in compliance and our Troubleshooting section for tips.

Thank you for using Infoseek.

Regards,  
R.Aguilar

Needless to say, I was not impressed...



### 16.5.3. Second Letter to InfoSeek

Dear Mr. Aguilar,

Wow! A cut-and-paste reply, compared to Excite's personal responses and help.

There is no way your stock reply answers what I sent to you. Our site is fully compliant, uses no tricks, and is highly regarded by all.

Furthermore, tweaking does not explain Page 1 #5 for months, then dropping out of existence, to be replaced by many sites which have little or nothing, and certainly far less than ours, about "penny stocks."

But thank you for the 2 seconds it took to cut and paste your reply.

All the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.

To which Mr. (Ms.?) Aguilar replied...



#### 16.5.4. InfoSeek's Reply

Hello,

You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support group.

As we said in our first response to you, our index is rather dynamic. More people than ever are submitting new or updating pages in our index. Since January 1998, we've seen an increase of 60% in our Add URL submissions alone. As people submit and update their pages, their relevancy rank changes for specific keywords. Given the large number of submissions, the change has been more dramatically apparent.

While we can't give out proprietary information about how our search algorithm works, we can tell you to try to narrow your keywords to specific ones rather than broad terms, i.e. 'beagles' instead of 'dogs.' As stated in our submitting tips, you should use a highly descriptive title, include a META tag description, and create META tag keywords that contain comma-separated phrases. Infoseek realizes that there are many folks who "play by the rules" and are making every effort to track down those who are not. Infoseek is constantly re-engineering our search algorithms in order to make everyone's experience with our service the best it can be.

Thank you for using Infoseek.

Regards,  
R.Aguilar

This must be their **"stock answer #2 if stock answer #1 doesn't cut it."** Obviously, PennyGold did not get a Page 1 #5 ranking by not knowing the trite stuff he talks about above. Note, too, that the support person refers to himself as "we." Poor one-to-one technique. But it was nice of him (?her) to **again** let me know that...

"You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support group."

But what the heck, I'll try again...



### 16.5.5. Third Letter to InfoSeek

Dear Mr. Aguilar,

Thanks for the answer. It still doesn't explain the SUDDEN disappearance. I suspect that when the directory listing changed my title and description, your algorithm killed my ranking.

All the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.

Which got the following response from a **new** support member...



### 16.5.6. InfoSeek's Reply

Hello Ken,

Sorry to hear that your web page has been removed from Infoseek's directory and for the problem you have had in our index. Web pages can be removed from the directory for either technical or editorial reasons. I will resubmit it to our Directory Team for them to look at.

Infoseek's URL Review Team consists of several off site contractors to whom Infoseek has hired to review any and all URLs that are submitted for our Directory within Infoseek's Channels. You will not receive a reply from them.

The normal time frame is within 1 week, however, this sometimes can take up to 2 weeks given the amount of submission request that they have received. If after 2 weeks, you do not see your URL listed within the directory, you can resubmit your URL again for review after 4 months of your original submission.

We thank you for your patience, and for using Infoseek.

Regards,

L. Skinner

He obviously misunderstood the situation. If you forget that, though, at least the letter was **personalized, friendly, responsive, and informative**. Clearly a much better effort, but **not helpful since it was totally off-base**.

What else would you expect? L. Skinner was not aware of the contents of my **first** letter to Mr. Aguilar. By now, I'm beginning to wonder about why InfoSeek bothers with a reference number in the subject of each e-mail they send...

Re: Infoseek Customer Support Reference 028498

Every e-mail from them has a **brand new** ref number. Why bother, if it does not track back to the original support person? And shouldn't the number remain the **same** for the same topic? Whatever the reason for all the ref numbers, it's to make **their own lives** easier, which is the...

**Wrong focus. Prospect first, always.**

However, I decided to give it the old college try...



#### 16.5.7. Fourth Letter to InfoSeek

Dear Mr. Skinner,

Thank you for your e-mail.

You misunderstood my e-mail. Our site has not been removed from your directory.

Here's the problem... when you decide upon the title and description of the site for your directory, it changes the index's title and description too, which has destroyed our ranking in the search results of your index.

On the day that we were listed in your directory, we disappeared from our Page 1, #5 ranking for "penny stocks" which we have had for months. No coincidence.

All the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.

I sent this one, not knowing who would answer or what would happen. And also getting tired of an ever-growing number of reference numbers, not sure what the heck they were for...



### 16.5.8. InfoSeek's Reply

Hello,

You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support.

You request to have your site removed from our directory has been forwarded on to the correct department for action. I have also asked that your title and summary be changed back to reflect your original submission in our index.

Thank you for using Infoseek!

Regards,

E. Lott

#### **Wow! Someone else!**

And Mr. (Ms.?) Lott decided unilaterally that I wanted our site removed from their directory! Perhaps it would have been smarter to ask what I thought the title and description for the directory listing should be, with a reminder to be conservative? Or simply to ask if I would prefer to be removed from the directory? But I did appreciate the reminder that...

"You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support group."

Well, I'm in too deep to let it drop now. So I responded...



### 16.5.9. Fifth Letter to InfoSeek

Dear Mr./Ms. Lott,

I did not specifically request (letter above) that my site be removed from the directory. However, \*if\* it is impossible to have a directory listing \*without\* modifying the index listing's title and description, then you have correctly deduced that this would be my first choice.

Thank you very much. Just to confirm the details, to avoid any misunderstanding...

o you are removing <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/index.html> from the InfoSeek directory

o you are restoring the title and description of the abovementioned URL for listing in your main index. I include a screenshot of that listing (screenshot.gif). It was at Page 1, #5 for "penny stocks" for at least 6 months until it was listed in the directory.

The title was...

"PennyGold: Powerful Penny Stock Software"

and the description was...

"PennyGold: powerful penny stocks book/software shows you how to make money by investing in penny stocks... AND gives you ALL the tools to DO IT."

But I guess your spider will pick that up again via the META tags?

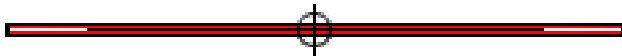
Mr./Ms. Lott, will the site suffer any penalty points in your index's ranking algorithm for requesting such a change?

Thanking you again, and wishing you all the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.

I mentioned Mr./Ms. Lott's name a few times in the letter. It was an attempt to get some kind of personalized response back from that **same person**.

Well, I did get a response back from the same person, but...

**... decide for yourself on how personalized this letter is...**



## 16.5.10. InfoSeek's Reply

Hello,

You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support. I have asked that your site be removed from our index. We reserve the right to make changes to your title and summary if they are included in our directory. And once we make the changes you requested to your site, Infoseek does not guarantee ranking

positions for any URLs in any of our search results.

Thank you for using Infoseek.

Regards,

E. Lott



... Yes, another robotic reminder, just in case I was totally brain-dead, that...

"You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support group."

At this point, I decided to leave R. Aguilar, L. Skinner and E. Lott alone (**doesn't anyone there have a first name?**). I don't think I could have survived it if they thanked me for using InfoSeek again.

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### [ **SIDEBAR** ]

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Of course, now that Infoseek's gone, it's all moot anyway. But the lesson remains obvious...

**They sure needed to learn how to deal with their prospects.**



## 16.5.11. Excite Comparison

Just in case you think that all Search Engines behave like this...

Compare InfoSeek's e-mail support to the help I received from **Excite...** personalized, helpful, and the problem was corrected.

And my e-mails were always answered by the same person!

A big thank you to **Excite**, and especially to **Larry Little** who went "above and beyond" to help. Here was an answer **from Larry**, in response to the time when Excite mysteriously dropped PennyGold from its database...

Janice,

I just went into the database and manually added it.  
'Addition of <http://www.pennygold.com/> to urgent support list'  
I really hope you see it reappear within the next two weeks.  
Let me know if it doesn't.

LL

Direct, relevant, personal, in context... and he even **invited us to write back if there was a problem!**

The above response was **not** a unique, "one-time-only" event. Larry conducted himself like this every time we wrote him.

**Which engine do you think is going to keep our business?**

Yup, I'm **Excited!**





## 17. After the Sale

Strictly speaking, **MYSS! 2002** is about **getting the sale**.

“But what happens **after** I get the order?”... you ask?

Well, nothing too important. Just a few minor points, hardly worth mentioning, really...

- you get paid
- you ship the product
- you build a powerful, long-term relationship with your customer.

Like I said, nothing too important. 😊

But, as long as you're here and I'm here...



### 17.1. How to Get Paid 🤝

You've got a great product. Awesome sales site (I'm **so** proud!). Tons of sales. You're home-free, right?

Nope. If you don't get paid for your products, your wonderful cyber business will soon be **cyber-bankrupt**...



#### 17.1.1. Credits Cards - How You'll Be Paid!



**Credit card will be your #1 way of getting paid, by far. So you need a merchant account for **each** credit card that you want to accept.**

**At a minimum**, set up a merchant account with VISA and MasterCard. That's what we did for the PennyGold site. We did **not** bother with AMEX. Why?...

While you can use the same point-of-sale terminal for authorization of VISA and Mastercard orders, **you need a different one for AMEX**. For our purposes, this was not worth the bother (or the additional monthly expense)...

... especially because almost everyone who has AMEX also has either VISA or Mastercard. We lost only 3 orders out of 1000 by not offering AMEX, and only 1 due to a lack of Discover.



With SiteSell.com, we offer Visa, MasterCard, and American Express. For two reasons...

- **We want to offer customers every available choice.**
- **It's in keeping with the image we want to portray with SiteSell.com.**

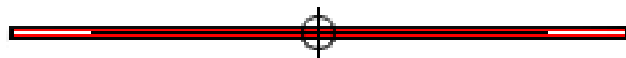
**However...**

Because you may have to come up with a separate security deposit for each account, offering all cards may not be an option for beginning businesses.

Don't worry about it!

Start with VISA and MasterCard. As your biz grows, and if you feel you need to offer more credit card options, secure AMEX, Discover and others.

**Remember, K-I-S-S.**



### 17.1.2. Getting Your Merchant Account

If you are a company or individual of some substance, securing a merchant account will not be a problem. If you already have a merchant account, check with your bank to make sure you're cleared for Internet orders. For most banks, they're a horse of a different color. Just start the ball rolling with your bank manager.

### But if you are a “little guy”...

Things become a little more difficult. (But not impossible!)

Let's say you're all set to sell your Widg-O-Matic on the Web. You apply for VISA and MasterCard merchant accounts. Whoops!

Rejection!

As an Internet merchant, you are considered a “Mail Order/Telephone Order” (**“MOTO”**) account. That's because more than 30% of your transactions are taken with the actual credit card not being present (“card not present”).



**It is hard to get a merchant account for a Web business if you do not have a standard retail operation.** Banks and card processors are shy of businesses that sell **only** through the Web. If you have a substantial net worth and/or a good business relationship with a bank, getting a MOTO account should not be a problem.

#### **[ SIDEBAR ]**

Visa and MasterCard are thinking about updating their protocols in regards to online purchases. This is mainly to combat the growing incidences of online fraud as a result of the surging number of e-commerce transactions.

Bottom line?

Credit card processors may soon include an **ECI** (Electronic Commerce Indicator) field that is sent as part of the transaction data of each credit card sale.

Translation?

Basically, the **Electronic Commerce Indicator** is a risk evaluator/fraud management tool. It simply insures all orders originating from the Web are properly identified as such, allowing the credit card companies to properly and effectively manage potential fraud risks.

Whereas Internet transactions were previously treated as **MOTO** accounts, they will soon no longer be so. **ECI** is a prime concern of the banks that issue the credit cards. It shouldn't directly affect existing accounts unless you don't currently follow proper security protocols.



Expect, however, to fork over a **substantial security deposit**. In Canada, banks may require a significant percentage of your projected yearly sales as a deposit before they'll give you an account.

What's important here is that you shop around. A friend visited two different banks with the same Internet business proposal. One wanted a CAD\$30,000 security deposit, the other a CAD\$5,000 deposit. Big difference!



It's best you go to your interview with the bank manager **armed with some critical necessities...**

- **The statistics on Internet fraud, and how you intend to prevent it.**
- **A solid well-thought-out business plan. Banks are interested in making money, as we all know.**
- **Projected Internet sales, and stats on the growth of the industry. You'd be surprised just how little some people actually know about the Internet!**
- **Anything you need to prove yours is a viable, money-making venture.**

#### **[ SIDEBAR ]**

Don't assume your bank manager knows anything about e-commerce. Depending on the country, or even the region you're in, you may be a pioneer -- the first to try this! So bring ALL the facts relevant to your business proposal, and establish yourself as the expert.



Here's another thing you may wish to consider...

**Having your own merchant account is useful** -- you have much more control over your business and it's much cheaper than using a third party provider.

But if you're just starting out, and sales are slow, it may not be the most practical route for you to go. As I've mentioned, you'll need to come up with a substantial security deposit. You'll also pay a monthly rental on your P.O.S. terminal, plus any other charges your bank decides to impose on you.

On top of that, you'll need a **secure server** (an extra monthly charge), **a digital**

**certificate**, and a **few other pieces of choice software**. Suddenly the merchant account doesn't seem like such a great deal anymore. It might make more sense to get your own merchant account later, after business has picked up.

(This is where third party merchant service providers come in. We'll discuss them in a minute.)

If you're still determined to have your own merchant account, yet can't obtain it from your bank, **Independent Sales Agents (ISOs)** are willing to come to your rescue. **ISOs** secure credit card merchant accounts for Internet, home-based, and retail businesses. **For example, ECS** claims a 95% approval rate...



**ECS**

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

[Ralph Wilson](#) has a list of ISOs and Internet-friendly banks at...

**Web Commerce Today, Issue 17,**

<http://www.webmarketingtoday.com/research/iso.htm>



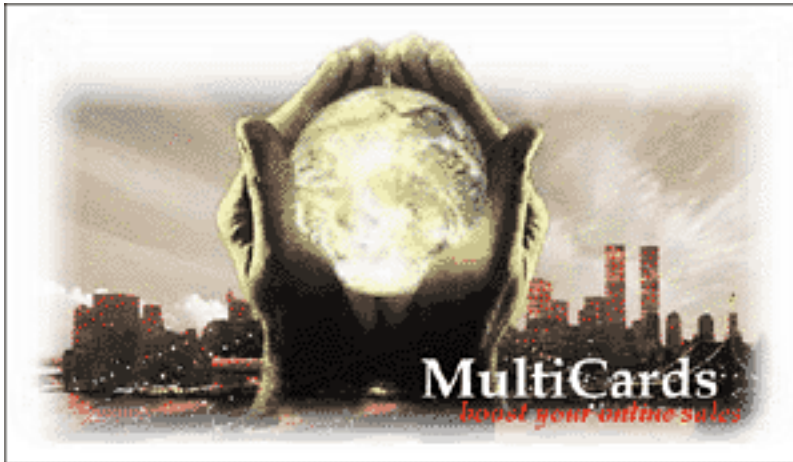
### 17.1.3. Third Party Providers

**Things have changed.**

Now virtually anybody, anywhere, can sell from the Internet and accept credit cards without their own merchant account.

**The companies that provide credit card processing and verification for you are called "Third Party Providers." But beware.** This is called "factoring." There are lots of sharks, and **the fees** can be stiff -- do a bit of comparison-shopping. Some do provide excellent service, including secure servers and shopping cart software.

Check out **Multicards'** useful and informative site...



### MultiCards

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

Although costing you **more per transaction**, Third Party Solutions are great for beginning businesses that don't process enough orders initially to warrant having their own merchant account.

With most Third Party Solutions, you pay **only** when you make sales. (Set-up fees are minimal). No rental fees, no hosting fees, no secure server, and no processing fees means that you sacrifice a small percentage of your profits for a lot fewer headaches. Of course, you can always get your own merchant account when business picks up.



Other benefits include...

- Almost 100% approval rate
- Ability to accept ALL credit cards without multiple merchant accounts offers the customer greater convenience
- Ability to accept International orders and merchants
- Ability to clear orders and verify them in real-time
- Easy cut-and-paste installation. Most platforms are very simple to use, requiring nothing more than a few lines of HTML inserted into your text.

- Ability to accept credit cards orders in less than 24 hours -- even as little as 5 minutes!

Third Party Options are varied and numerous. Check them out carefully -- some only work with sites selling intangible goods like software, infoproducts, or services. Others are happy to work with anybody anywhere, selling anything!...



**ClickBank**

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

Dealing only with intangibles (products like e-books and software), **ClickBank's** rates are a little stiffer than some of its competitors (\$49.95 activation, \$1.00 + 7.5% commission per sale, no monthly fee) but it does offer one superb advantage. It has its own affiliate force of over 100,000 people.

Signing up for this service allows you to offer your own product for reselling within this affiliate network. This may well be worth the extra dollars. You decide! ClickBank offers Visa, MasterCard, Amex, and Discover.



**CCNow**

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

Limited to the sale of physical goods.



**Total Merchant Services**

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

**Kagi** does an efficient and thorough job of handling orders for others. The process is clean, quick, and easy. They provide a list of clients on their site. So you can check satisfaction with their service before using them. Which, in itself, is a nice

[credibility-builder](#), don't you think?....



Kagi

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



WorldPay Inc.

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

**WorldPay** accepts payments in multiple currencies. It promises to refund any businesses who have suffered losses from stolen or fraudulently used cards.

For more info about third party "getting paid" solutions, see...



GetPaidOnline

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



nomerchantacct.com

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

**NoMerchantAcct.** provides comparison of services between major third party contenders. Prices, set-up fees, and restrictions all included. Nice!

Need more resources? You know where to go...



Yahoo!

[http://dir.yahoo.com/Business\\_and\\_Economy/Business\\_to\\_Business/Financial Services/Transaction Clearing/Credit Card Merchant Services/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Business_to_Business/Financial_Services/Transaction_Clearing/Credit_Card_Merchant_Services/)



And, of course, don't miss the **Credit Card Sales** section of Ralph Wilson's [Electronic Research Room](#).



#### 17.1.4. Don't Step on These Credit Card **Land Mines**

**Two major credit card land mines** could blow your financial legs right off (sorry for the graphic analogy, but I hope it made its point)... **frauds** and **chargebacks**.  
**Don't step on these...**



**... land mines!**

Although the credit card field is full of explosives, you have **no choice** but to walk in that field. There is simply no better, more convenient, more universal way to accept payment... there's **not even a close second!**

**So, let's see how...**



**... to avoid the land mines that could put you out of business.**



#### 17.1.5. How To **STOP** Credit Card Fraud

The media never cover this, but **it's you, the vendor who really gets hurt by credit card frauds**. The cardholder's loss is nothing (see below). But the vendor

who gets hit with that fraud **loses the whole amount.**

How serious is online fraud? Is it something you should really be concerned about?

**Absolutely!** And even more so if you're selling high priced items like computer software or stereo equipment. Need an eye-opener? Read these...

- Expedia.com needs **4-6 million** to cover fraudulent charges
- Online merchants estimate anywhere between **5-25% of transactions are fraudulent.**
- By 2003, online fraudulent credit card transactions will hover around **14%**
- **12 times more** fraud exists on Internet transactions than "brick and mortar" transactions.

(Source: Cybersource, Meridien Research, Gartner Group)

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#### [ **SIDEBAR** ]

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As I... er... speak, Visa and MasterCard are both implementing a "zero liability" policy for credit card shoppers. That means the cardholder's loss is no longer limited to \$50, **but absolutely nothing at all.** Good deal for cardholders. This may encourage greater customer confidence in purchasing online, but otherwise it doesn't help merchants.

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Okay, here's an example of just how the vendor gets stiffed...

If someone purchases a \$5,000 stereo system with a fraudulent card, the thief has your stereo, the "real" cardholder loses nothing, and you're out the \$5,000 system...

**... and are you ready for the best part?** Your credit card company is **ahead** -- whatever your penalty fee is! It boggles the mind!

**"No problem," you say?** You've received your customer's credit card information. You've relayed it to your credit card processor and they fired you back an authorization number, depositing the correct amount into your account. **Home free, right?**

**Wrong!**

As protection for you, **that authorization number is almost worthless.** As a **MOTO** merchant, you don't have much protection. All your authorization code **really** tells you is that..

1) No one has reported the card stolen. Big deal, here's what easily fools this test...

- a crooked gas station attendant has stolen the card number (but not the card) off a carbon copy of a credit card purchase. He uses the number for as long as "the good times last." And if he does it from a free e-mail account, buying software or other software-type product, he'll be virtually uncatchable.

- a thief steals the card, but no one has noticed yet.

- a high-tech fraud simply generates a phoney card number that passes the test (easily done -- you can buy these number-generating algorithms on the Internet). Believe it or not, this "authorization" does not cross-check to see if it is even an existing, real account. It only runs a mathematical test to see if it **could be** an account.

2) The card is **not** over its credit limit, so they have deducted that amount from the card's outstanding limit. Again, big deal. Most stolen cards will **not** be over the limit. And even some algorithm-generated numbers have been known to pass the test.

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**[ SIDEBAR ]**

If you are in the U.S., and if you are selling **hard goods** (i.e., not software), and if a high percentage of your customers reside in the U.S., ask your credit card processor about **Address Verification System (AVS)**. By verifying the on-record billing address with the "ship-to" Order Form address, you can get **slightly** more protection... but many fraud artists know how to defeat AVS.

If you are shipping digital goods directly **via Web-download**, of course, AVS is useless since there is no billing address.

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Bottom line? The credit card company's authorization does **nothing** to protect you. **It's up to you to protect yourself.** So...

**It's very simple ➡ Verify the credit card for every order.** Here's how...

**First**, on the Order Form, get the **exact** name of the customer as it appears on the credit card. Also get the **customer's address** with postal code, and **phone**

number.

**Second**, look for any lurking **red flags** in the **order...**

▶ different “bill to” and “ship to” addresses (if you give this option on your Order Form)

▶ international orders. Once your merchandise crosses a border, forget about ever getting it back, even if it’s the crassest fraud. And don’t even think about shipping an international order with different “bill to” and “ship to” addresses.

▶ orders that come from **free e-mail services** (Hotmail, Yahoo!, etc., -- more on this below)

▶ order value of over \$100 (or whatever amount you determine is worth the time to prevent)

▶ orders with next day delivery (since they aren’t paying, they’ll just want to get your stuff ASAP)

▶ unusual numbers of items - i.e., five Sony Walkmans

▶ suspicious shipping instructions -- “Yeah, just leave that box of Sony Walkmans by the front door.”

▶ suspicious sounding addresses -- 123 Main St, Anywhere, USA

▶ orders where shipping charges are extremely high

▶ orders occurring late at night

**Third...**

• **If the dollar value of the order is low**, and if **no “red flags”** have shot up during the order, process it via your merchant terminal and ship the product once you get your authorization.

- If the value of the order is high, or if you spot a **red flag**, follow these three steps...

**STEP 1** Phone your credit card company and ask them to verify the credit cardholder's name and address. They will request the number, expiration date, name and address. They will say "OK" or "No good."

If the verification fails, e-mail the client. Politely explain that there was a "problem" with the credit card and to contact their bank, or to please use an alternate card.

If the verification passes, and the card later turns out to be a fraud (some thieves have all this info, too), **you're still on the hook for the money!** So proceed to **Step 2** if you're really worried.

**STEP 2** If it's a North American order you're concerned about, **try doing a "reverse search" on the customer's phone number to make sure...**

- it's a real phone number
- it's the customer's phone number

Do a reverse search at...



AnyWho

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

**STEP 2b** If you're getting a red flag order from a legitimate domain name (so-and-so@xyzcompany.com), **do a "Better Whois" search and find the contact name for that domain.** See if they match up. Use the contact info for additional follow-ups.

**STEP 3** Call the customer to "process the order" by phone. Tape the call, and let your customer know that it is being taped, so that you can use the tape in court, if necessary. Serious buyers won't balk. Frauds will.

**Verify that the person on the phone...**

- is the cardholder, at xyz address and at the phone number you are currently talking to (repeat the phone number)

**and...**

- is indeed ordering the merchandise.

**Also request some extra info...** the name and phone number of the bank that issued the credit card, the exact name on credit card, and the exact billing address.

If all the info matches and the “order processing” proceeds without a hitch, proceed to Step 4. If you have any doubts, call the **issuing bank directly** and triple-check before going to Step 4.

#### **STEP 4 Ship the product.**

For international or extremely high ticket orders, you may wish to go a couple of steps farther.

#### **STEP 5 Take extra precautions for international orders**

When you’re still hesitant consider...

- using an online escrow service like [Tradenable](#).
- asking the purchaser for a **fax of a credit card bill, driver’s license, or gas bill.**



**Don’t worry about offending the customer** -- she’ll appreciate your diligence. After all, there’s only two reasons for placing an international order...

- the customer can’t get your product locally
- the customer is a scam artist.

If you carefully review all orders and implement the steps listed above, you should be able to virtually eliminate any occurrences of credit card fraud.

Oh yes, and remember...

**You can always say “No”.**

More information on **credit card verification** appears on Ralph Wilson's [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#). He has tons of state-of-the-art info on this.

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**[ SIDEBAR ]**

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A word about free e-mail addresses. You have to be careful here -- obviously, the anonymity these services offer means you're much more likely to receive a fraudulent order from a free e-mail provider, than a verifiable ISP address. But...

Customers have become exceedingly concerned about companies abusing their privacy information. They're concerned about being spammed into submission. Many of them are **distrustful** of online merchants. That's **why** people have taken to the free-email services in droves. In fact, Hotmail claims over 30 million users.

So unless you can effectively explain to users why you won't process orders from free e-mail services, and convince them that you can be trusted with their real ISP addresses, **you can expect to lose some genuine customers**. How you intend to deal with this is up to you. But don't immediately discount an order as a result of a free-email address.

For example...

We almost decided not to accept orders from free e-mail addresses due to all the hullabaloo. And guess what?...

It's true... all of our frauds come from people who give free e-mail addresses. But now ask me this...

“How much fraud do you get, Ken?”

“Oh about 0.2%!”

Compare that with the fact that 5-10% of our orders come from people who give free e-mail addresses. It's bad business to throw away 100 orders out of a 1,000 to save 2 frauds... especially when we sell zero-cost (i.e. digital) products.



### 17.1.6. How to **Eliminate** Credit Card Chargebacks

Since you do not physically run your customer's card through the "click-clack" and have him sign the chit, he can always say that he did not order or receive the merchandise.

If you can prove delivery via a shipper that can document delivery to the customer's shipping address (including a copy of the customer's signature upon receipt), the customer will at least have to send the product back. But if it's software, of course that liar **will keep a copy on disk.**

The customer can also **chargeback** for a variety of other reasons, many of which will shock and dismay you...

"Product was not what I expected" or "It doesn't work the way you claimed" or "Product arrived damaged." No matter how clear you make it and no matter how good your product is, the customer can always claim this -- and you're out of luck.

You are so **vulnerable** that your customer does not even have to bother with a phoney excuse. He can merely request a copy of the card imprint with signature. Since the very nature of your business makes this impossible, and since failure to provide it can result in a chargeback, **you lose again!**



Chargebacks are made by two types of clients, the **outright fraud** and the **dissatisfied customer.**

The best way to eliminate the **dissatisfied customer is...**



**...to not have any! Specifically...**

- **sell a great product at a great price** -- if your customers senses that he has been tricked into buying bad value, you're headed for a chargeback.
- **conduct your business in such a way that people like you** -- as discussed earlier, customers buy from people they like. They don't chargeback, either. So



design your site and write your e-mails appropriately. On the Web, nice guys (and gals) do **not** finish last!

- [see the discussion on how to reduce claims on your money-back guarantee.](#)

**Bottom line?** “Being nice” is not only a “nice” way to do business, it’s a powerful way.



A fraudulent chargeback is **basically...**



**... legalized theft.** The best move to prevent **fraudulent** chargebacks is verify all orders by phoning the customer back, and by [taping all such calls](#).

The recording will intimidate people from charging back, since they know that you could always provide the tape as proof of purchase. It will keep all but the nastiest frauds from cheating you. And when a chargeback does occur, it provides a first level of defense... but it will not defeat the hardened fraud artist.

If telephone verification is not practical for your product/business, just do a regular manual verification and **monitor this problem closely**. Too many chargebacks not only damage your bottom line, they upset your credit card company which **may even cancel your account**.

**Let me repeat -- “may even cancel your account.”** So it’s up to you to do all you can to keep chargebacks to a minimum, best below 1-2% of total sales.

If you don’t do your homework well and put a solid prevention program into place, chargebacks can become a nightmare. **AntiFraud.com** has some good info on chargebacks...



**AntiFraud.com**

<http://antifraud.com/>

You can do all the credit card verification in the world to make sure that the frauds don't get you **before** your ship. But chargebacks get you **after**.

**Don't cut corners -- arm yourself with information, then protect yourself.**

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**[ SIDEBAR ]**

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If you are selling hard goods, each unit has a true "out of pocket" cost to you, the expense of the product itself. So you must be extra-careful. Frauds and chargebacks against hard goods really hurt.

If you are selling digital goods (downloaded software, information products, etc.), each unit costs **zero** to make (excluding development costs). So there is a temptation to totally automate the ordering process via real-time verification. You may be willing to simply factor a certain % **loss** into your digital business.

**This attitude is a huge mistake.** "Why?" you ask?...

Since downloaded software is not delivered to a real street address, it's easy for your thief to disappear into the ethers of cyberspace. So stealing from providers of **digital** products is especially common.

Be aware that if you start to get a lot of fraud or chargebacks (see below), every fraudulent charge does end up costing you time and **very real hard dollars**. Here's why...

Ultimately, **every fraud gets discovered**. And when it does, the bank will not only deduct the original amount from your merchant account, **it will also assess you a penalty fee**. You **lose time** investigating and working with the bank. The bank looks at you as a risk and **may increase your discount rate**.

And if you get hit with too many frauds or chargebacks, **your bank may even shut down your merchant account!** You go on a black list. And once that happens, it is almost impossible to get a **ECI** merchant account. Which kicks you right out of the Web sales game.

And this brings us right back to the message above. If you are planning on using real-time verification, consider combining it with a good fraud screen.



### 17.1.7. A Word about Chargebacks

When it comes to chargebacks, **not all credit card companies are created equal.**

SiteSell.com does get the occasional chargeback. It is almost always an error. (Why chargeback a purchase if you can just implement the money-back guarantee?) Here are some of the usual reasons...

- “Oops! I forgot who “Goodbytes” was.”
- “Oh right, that’s the book my wife wanted.”
- Oh, my lousy brother used the card. Leave the charge on, I’ll take care of my brother. (Oh-oh!)

And so on...

So, how do various companies deal with chargebacks?

**Visa** sends you a Level 1 chargeback **where you get the chance to provide a signed chit.** Of course, because your business processes transactions without a credit card, you don’t have one. What this does do, though, is allow you to contact the customer and head off a mistake. Once you get things sorted out, the customer drops the charge-back request, and everyone lives happily ever after.

**American Express** is just as easy, and a pleasure to deal with.



But **MasterCard?** Ouch! That’s a horse of a different color.

Get this... **MasterCard just flat charges you back.** According to MasterCard International, **you’re supposed to get a notification of chargeback, but we never do.** Regardless, it’s too late. The chargeback has actually happened.

So what are you, the “out-of-luck” merchant, supposed to do? If you notify the customer, he has to reverse the chargeback -- much more work than just dropping it. And even in the unlikely event that he does this, you are still stuck with the **bank’s penalty fee...**

**... Yes, even though it’s not your fault.**

Now, even Visa will automatically chargeback in crystal clear cases (ex., two identical charges to the same card within minutes). That's fair. And it's more than fair that the customer must have the last say as to whether she ordered a product using card -- especially in cases where the chit is not present (i.e., not signed). This is the case for all Internet orders -- after all, if the customer does not feel secure, she won't use it.

**But a flat-out total chargeback before the merchant has a chance to reply?**

Couldn't be. I was sure my bank had it wrong.

So I called MasterCard International. Here's what they confirmed...

**If the cardholder simply confirms that she did not order the product, the chargeback simply happens.** And no, the merchant is never given the chance to rebut before the actual chargeback is debited from the account.



So here's what you can do to make a difference...

**1) Make VISA your "default" card** by pre-selecting this radio button (it's a simple bit of HTML) and by giving it the place of prominence on your order form. Put the Amex second in order. Tuck MasterCard into the least visible place so that only those who must use it will choose it.

**2) Let MasterCard know you're doing it... and why.**

**3) If you publish an e-zine...**



**... let your subscribers know about this!**

Hey, we all agree...

It's an absolute must that customers be protected. That only helps our business. But it's unfair that the merchant be burned. If enough merchants complain and give MasterCard "least favored status" on their order pages, they'll change their policies

to match Visa's and American Express'. Somehow, this has been overlooked by everyone, including me.

**Now... it's time to make a difference.**



#### 17.1.8. How to Do Real-time Credit Card Verification

**If your sales volume is high and your per-order dollar cost is low**, manual verification and authorization may simply not be worth the hassle. In this case, you might want to consider **real-time automatic credit card verification**.

**First Data Merchant Services' ICVERIFY** is the leader in providing **electronic transaction processing software**. This software enables **your secure server (or ISP)** to accept and verify all major credit cards, debit cards, purchase cards and private label cards. ICVerify collects credit-card information from an Order Form.

It processes and authorizes the orders in real-time, while the customer is logged onto the site. Finally, it deposits the correct amount into your merchant account...



**ICVERIFY**

<http://www.cybercash.com/icverify/>



Instead of buying ICVERIFY's software, you could use the **services** of a company that offers real-time verification **via its own secure server**. Although the real-time verification and authorization occurs away from your own site, the money is still deposited into your merchant account.

A leading example is **CyberCash's CashRegister...**

With **CyberCash**, your Order Page remains **on your own secure server**, but the credit card info is encrypted and cleared on CyberCash's server. (Cybercash is now

owned by Verisign)...



CyberCash

<http://www.cybercash.com/cashregister/>

Other companies providing similiar services include...



CyberSource

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



Authorize.Net

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



SurePay

<http://www.surepay.com/homepage/>



Most **third-party real-time verification services** host your Order Page on **their own** secure servers. A good example, Verisign's service provides several payment processing models (named "**Payflow**"), based on "flat pricing" (no per-transaction fees) and the number of monthly transactions. E-commerce merchants processing less than 1,000 transactions a month will pay a \$179 set up fee, and a monthly fee of \$19.95. These verification services initiate order fulfillment, **enable easy, secure, bank-approved, real-time credit card payment over the Internet**, and provide other value-added features.



Verisign

<http://www.verisign.com/products/payment.html>



#### 17.1.9. Fraud and Real-time Credit Card Verification

If you're processing orders offline, you can carefully scan all orders for the red flags we discussed [earlier](#). When you spot one, it's a simple process of following the [4 step process](#) to decide whether or not you will ship the order.

But if you process your orders in real-time?

Ouch! You can't manually check the orders. You have to rely on the verification service to do that job for you. Most importantly, you have to hope they do a **thorough job** of checking.



But here's the bad news...

**Sophisticated credit card fraud artists can defeat real-time verification.** So, whether you sell digital or hard goods, **a real-time verification system should be combined with some kind of "fraud screening" algorithm.**

**You could design your own anti-fraud screen...**

Get your techie to design a [CGI script](#) that detects the **red flags outlined above**. If the CGI script does **not** detect a red flag, it allows the order to continue on for real-time verification. **Otherwise...**

The CGI script sends a **red flagged order** for manual verification by you, aborting the real-time process. It also puts up a polite message to the prospect -- this alerts him to a snag in order-processing and it tells him what to do. The message could even vary according to which red flag was violated!

For example, if an order arrives from **@hotmail.com**, the CGI script would **stop** the

real-time process. **Instead**, it puts up a new Web page confirming all other entered data. It also asks him to enter an ISP-based address instead of a free one.

**Don't care to design your own fraud screening CGI?** Use a real-time verification service that offers it. Ask them what they are doing to "kick out" the red flags **without** "insulting" the true orders.

Already, **CyberSource**, **CyberCash**, and **Anacom** offer decent fraud screens during their own real-time verification process (as with most [third party services](#), your Order Page resides on **their** secure server).

If you offer a high-end item, the CyberSource algorithm is **the** Cadillac. But it's rather pricey...



**CyberSource**

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



**Anacom**

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

If you're carrying out higher priced transactions not requiring real-time verification, **Scottson-Michaels'** service has an extensive list of known fraudulent and unauthorized users of credit cards as part of their own fraud preventing process. Turn-around time for this process can take from 38 minutes to 4 hours to as high as 24 hours for certain orders...



**Scottson Michaels**

<http://www.scottson-michaels.com/>

Fraud Patrol is CyberCash's answer to eliminating online fraud. It is supplied in addition to the real-time authorization service -- set-up is minimal for current users,



and prices start at \$0.18 a transaction...



**CyberCash's Fraud Patrol**

<http://www.cybercash.com/fraudpatrol/>

CrediView has a database of over 120 behavioral parameters that its eCredibile system uses to flag suspect transactions. Once a suspect order is flagged, it is given a "fraud rating" and it's then up to the merchant to decide whether or not to ship.

CrediView also offers an insured service -- **eCredibile Guaranteed**

([http://www.crediview.com/solution/ecredibile\\_guaranteed.html](http://www.crediview.com/solution/ecredibile_guaranteed.html)) If a merchant uses this service, CrediView will guarantee it by refunding the cost of any stolen goods...



**CrediView**

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

Keep an eye on this one!



### 17.1.10. Want to Scare Away Thieves?

Here are a few fraud-intimidators to consider using on your site...

- **Notify customers that you do "random phone verifications"** to eliminate credit card fraud. Ask for a "best time" to call them.
- **Post your anti-fraud policy clearly.** State that you intend to process credit frauds to the fullest extent of the law. While this won't do much for the hard-core con artists, it may others think twice before scamming you!
- I spotted this message on the site of an order-processing service...

Your IP address of 209.41.157.228 will be recorded so we may investigate disputes and fraudulent use of credit cards. Abuse of credit cards will not be tolerated.

Posting the user's IP address is a simple matter for your Webmaster. And it makes the customer worry, **"Geez, what else does he know about me?"**

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**[ SIDEBAR ]**

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Sigh. More bad news.

Tracking your customer's IP address will eliminate bogus charges from the really dumb criminals. Unfortunately, the most successful criminals aren't particularly dumb. That means they will probably access your site from a proxy server. A proxy server is a sort of substitute server.

Basically, the "fingerprint" that is your IP address is replaced by the proxy server's footprint. This means your visitor is covering his tracks by using a disguise. So it becomes more difficult to trace his original location -- difficult, but not impossible. Logs are generated automatically when a proxy server is used, so getting a hold of the log means you can discover the thief's true IP address.

The problem being, of course, that a thief can route through several different proxy servers. If he's really industrious, he'll route through third world servers. Then your chances of getting a log file are next to none.

For more, see ["Stealth Out The Competition"](#).

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- Add the following to your Order Form, just above the "Submit Order" button...

ELECTRONIC AUTHORIZATION SIGNATURE:  
By pressing "Submit Order" below, I hereby agree to authorize  
<<Insert name of your business here>>  
to charge the above specified credit card for the amount shown here.

Of course, you have to balance "intimidators" against the possibility of scaring away honest customers.

And that, dear reader, is **your** call. ☺



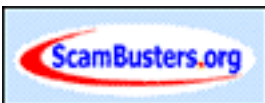
### 17.1.11. Resources to Help You Avoid The Land Mines

**AntiFraud.com** has a wealth of information. Don't miss their free **Prevention Tips**. By implementing their basic tips, they claim that you can reduce online fraud by approximately **80%**.



**AntiFraud.com**  
<http://antifraud.com/>

Another great source to help you avoid all the pitfalls of doing credit card business, Internet style...



**Scambusters**  
<http://www.scambusters.org/CreditCardFraud.html>

As well as...



**VerifyFraud.com**  
<http://www.verifyfraud.com/>



**Merchant Fraud Squad.com**

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

Download ClearCommerce's white paper (it's a PDF file, just like this book) on credit card fraud...



**ClearCommerce**

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

Visa publishes a free Electronic Commerce Risk Management Guide. Two words? Get it...



**Visa**

[http://www.visabrc.com/doc.phtml?2,104,890,906\\_brochure.html](http://www.visabrc.com/doc.phtml?2,104,890,906_brochure.html)



**To sum up their most important recommendations...**

- 1) Insist upon** exact name, full address and phone numbers.
- 2) Refuse free,** Web-based, or e-mail forwarding address. It's just too easy to run frauds from these e-mail addresses. Insist upon an ISP- or domain-based address, since these can be traced back to a "real" person.

You can check this against **an up-to-date list** that Antifraud.com maintains at...



### Red Flag Email Domains

<http://antifraud.com/redflag.htm>

**3) Keep copies of all correspondence with suspicious customers** -- yes, even e-mail. It will help support your case afterwards.

**4) If in doubt**, call the phone number listed on the order. Verify that they are the cardholder and that they ordered the product. I would also add -- **tape the call**. You won't lose the honest customers.



For more information on protecting yourself from online scams and cyber-criminals, see...



### Dan Janal's Risky Business

<http://www.janal.com/bookstore.html>



## 17.1.12. Other **Anti-Land Mine** "Devices"

There are other **electronic verification protocols** designed to help you avoid credit card land mines. **They protect both you and your customer.** Sooner or later, one or more of **SET** (Secure Electronic Transaction), **Verifone** and **First Virtual** will affect the way you take credit card orders.

**Secure Electronic Transaction (SET)** is a credit-card processing **protocol** that uses digital certificates to ensure the identities of all parties (customer, vendor, bank) involved in a purchase.

Using a Web browser "wallet," SET encrypts credit and purchase information before

transmission. The vendor never sees any of the credit card info -- talk about secure! The vendor merely passes the encrypted info to a processor service, which decrypts, clears, and authorizes.

**Secure Electronic Transaction (SET)** differs from the more popular **SSL** technology in one crucial manner. For instance -- let's say Bob decides to visit a site that uses **SSL** technology to process its credit card orders. Having found an item that tickles his fancy, Bob orders.

What happens behind the scenes when Bob clicks the "Order Now" button? Well, the SSL technology **confirms** that **Bob's card is indeed valid**.

Anything wrong with that?

Not really, except **it doesn't verify that it is Bob who is using the card**.



Now let's suppose Bob's card is stolen.

Bob uses his card infrequently, so it takes him a week to realize it's gone. Finally, he phones the credit card company. All the while the thief has been merrily ringing up purchases online. Lucky for Bob, he's not responsible for any of the fraudulent charges. Guess who gets stung again? You're right... the merchant.

However, if that merchant had been using Secure Electronic Transaction (SET) technology, **the system would have rejected Bob's credit card**. SET would have confirmed that it wasn't Bob using the card!

Cool!



Originally developed by VISA and MasterCard, SET is now supported as well by American Express, many large high-tech companies, and by most card-issuing banks. However, its introduction has been delayed substantially and other formats may develop an insurmountable lead.

Even though SET is a superior encryption and processing system, it still lags far behind SSL.

Why?...

A major problem is that SET requires much greater effort -- i.e., a surfer must obtain a “digital certificate” that tells merchants that he is the rightful owner of a credit card. Then, if his browser doesn’t support the “virtual wallet”, that will need to be updated, too.

Unfortunately, there’s **little impetus** for a surfer to do this as he’s already protected by the Fair Billing and Credit Act! After all, he loses nothing if his card is used fraudulently. As for merchants?...

Well... the implementation of a simple screening process will **eliminate 95%** of all fraudulent charges. As for refusing orders from free e-mail addresses, SiteSell decided to accept them. We can still refuse to so if we get stung too often. As I mentioned earlier, it makes [good business sense for us to accept them.](#)

If/when the SET protocol arrives, hopefully the fraud and chargeback problems will be eliminated. It’s a phenomenal system, and it has undergone thorough testing.



Visa

<http://www.visa.com/nt/ecom/security/set.html>

Setco manages SET specification and the promotion/support of SET online. Want to become a SET merchant? This is where to go...



Setco

<http://www.setco.org/>

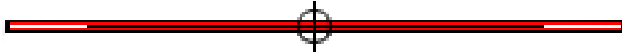
**Verifone** uses a helper application called a “**wallet.**” Your customer has an encrypted code that refers to their credit card. When she buys from you, the wallet passes the code to the vendor.

The vendor immediately sends the code and purchase price to Verifone which verifies the transaction with the credit-card company. Once authorized, it transfers the funds to the vendor along with an authorization to ship...

## VeriFone E-payment Solutions

Verifone

<http://www.verifone.com/solutions/Internet/>



### 17.1.13. Next Generation of Credit Card Security

How does that old saying go?...

Oh yes... **“Better late than never.”**

Credit card companies are trying a little harder to come up with an ordering protocol that provides the merchant with much greater fraud protection, while increasing the consumer's confidence in online purchasing.

Of course, some solutions are better than others. **For the merchant, the best solution means protection without forcing the customer to do any additional work, require any additional hardware or software, or learn any complicated protocols and/or processes.** With that in mind, let's review some of the new offerings.



The first is called the **Payer Authorization model**, and it's probably the best of the lot. Here's how it works...

In addition to a card, the credit card company provides its customers with a **P.I.N.** (Personal Identification Number), or password, which is to be used in any card-not-present transactions. When a purchase is made online, the customer enters this code along with her additional billing information. It's then a simple matter for the card's authenticity to be verified.

The biggest benefit of this payment model is fairly obvious -- it requires very little additional effort on the part of the consumer. Most of us are already pretty comfortable with P.I.N. numbers -- thanks to the popularity of the debit card. As long as customers can be assured that entering their P.I.N. numbers online won't make them vulnerable to any additional frauds, all should be well.

I guess we'll have to wait and see.



**American Express** has introduced its own “Private Payments” model to address the online concerns of both merchants and their customers. And although it follows along the same principle as the **Payer Authorization model**, this one’s a little different.

Instead of receiving a permanent P.I.N. or password, a customer must visit the American Express Web site and obtain a **transaction number** (to be used in conjunction with the credit card), each and every time she wishes to make a purchase online. After the transaction is completed, the number becomes inoperable -- **it’s only good for one transaction.**

Hmm... perhaps single use transaction numbers **will** further reduce the chances of any online purchase being fraudulent. However, **it’s also likely to reduce the total number of online purchases as well.** When the decision to buy often hangs by a thread, going through the additional hassle of obtaining a transaction number is likely to tilt the balance in favor of...

... “Maybe some other time.”

In short, you’re likely to lose a large percentage of **impulse buyers** -- only the truly dedicated shoppers will go to the extra trouble.

Because of the hurdles that it raises to purchasing process, this payment model is unlikely to do much in the way of additional sales for all us folks doing business on the Web.



**Visa**, with its Smart Card Program, has taken a slightly different approach to securing online transactions. A customer’s smart card will contain both her **credit card information, and microchips able to verify that user’s identity.** In order to purchase online, the customer must swipe her card through a terminal attached to her PC, and enter the correct P.I.N. to activate the credit card number.

Wait a minute. Did you spot the killer sentence in the last paragraph? Yup, it’s...

**“... the customer must swipe her card through a terminal attached to her PC...”**

If each and every potential customer has to go the bother of purchasing and attaching additional hardware onto her PC in order to make a purchase, guess how many sales you’ll get? That’s right, much fewer.

### **Successful solutions are effortless solutions!**

But things aren't all bad. At least the major companies are starting to move. And because all these solutions require P.I.N.s or passwords, they provide an elevated level of fraud protection, especially when the physical cards are stolen, or the numbers are hacked online.

For the merchant and netpreneur, this additional security has perhaps greater import. Because more personal information is required for transaction approval, it is much easier to verify the authenticity of the card's user. What does that mean?

**It means merchants are less likely to be the victims of fraudulent chargebacks, and chargeback liability will shift from the merchant to the customer.**

And that, dear reader... is a **positive development!**



#### 17.1.14. Accepting Online **E-Checks!**

Tens of millions of people are maxed out on their credit cards, but have money in the bank. Millions more don't even have credit cards, but there's cash in the checking account. Many small businesses don't have a corporate card, and many more prefer to cut checks. What do they all have in common?...

**They all have...**



**... cash in the bank!**

So here's some good news. **You can actually accept checks directly via the Web.** Use software (below) to import data that your customer has entered into your **Order Form.** Then, using that data, you actually print the bank drafts and take them to your bank! Save the credit card fee, and no need to wait for the check to be in the proverbial mail.

It's that fast and easy. Unfortunately, most of these services presently only work in the

United States. Sigh. ☹️

**However**, many of the fraud and “chargeback” issues are the same as for credit cards. Here are the key safety tips...

- Don't accept orders from customers with free e-mail addresses.
- Record the customer's IP address, in case you ever need to trace the user.
- Be careful with customers from outside of your country.
- Before you process the order, call the customer's bank and verify the account number, account holder's name and current funds to clear the check.

Several companies offer e-check software. For example, **Virtual Check Solution** has an excellent site, with a great demo and informative FAQ. From the same company that brings you Antifraud.com...



**Virtual Check Solution**

<http://softwaresolutions.net/vcheck/>



**CheckFaxx**

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



**Telecheck**

<http://www.telecheck.com/home/home.html>

MYSS! 2002... After the Sale



**ValidPay.com**

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

ChecksNet has an informative site, with good section on some of the dangers. It works with American, Canadian, British, and Australian banking systems...



**ChecksNet**

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

**OR...** if you prefer, **have someone else do it for you.** For a fee, of course.

**RediEFT** (electronic funds transfer) empowers you to accept personal and business checks online in real-time and have them guaranteed in seconds...



**RediEFT**

<http://www.itransact.com/info/redieft.html>

**CrossCheck Inc.** offers a slick check approval and (optional) guarantee service...



**CrossCheck**

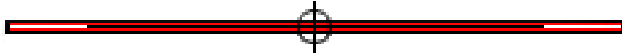
<http://www.cross-check.com/core.htm>



For more info, as always, check with Uncle Ralph, who has a section in his [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#) reserved for **Accepting Online Checks.**

Check out the legal and fraud aspects fully before using this interesting payment

method. Many more payment schemes will spring up before one or two grab marketshare -- stay up-to-date at the Research Room.



#### 17.1.15. Using 1-900 Phone Billing

**Internet Billing Company** offers a variety of money collection systems. The most interesting is their 1-900 billing service, called **Web900**. When your customer chooses to pay via this option, she will simply add the cost of your product to her phone bill.

But there's a catch. The commission for i-bill is 20%. Phew.

And there's a second catch -- as they say on their site... "Clients who sell tangible merchandise should not use Web900."

Whoops! Third catch... only for amounts under \$35.



**Internet Billing Company Web900 Service**

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



#### 17.1.16. Online Escrow Services

An online escrow service is the perfect ordering solution for when the buyer or the seller have concerns -- concerns like international orders, larger ticket items, or auction purchases. In any event, the escrow service's job is a simple one...

**Act as a middleman between two parties.** You see, it's really boils down to this...

... the seller wants his money.

**And the buyer...**



...doesn't want any surprises!

**And that's exactly what an escrow service does -- it ensures that there will be no surprises!** Here's how it works...

- Buyer and seller agree on transaction.
- Buyer transfers funds to online escrow service.
- Seller ships product.
- Buyer expects product for quality and... "surprises." Buyer indicates her satisfaction.
- Online Escrow service pays seller.

Memberships are free, and the process is simple, painless, and relatively inexpensive -- considering considering the "peace of mind" factor!



**Tradenable**

<http://www.i-escrow.com/>

Cost for this service is as little as \$2.50 on sales of \$100 and less. Buyer and seller discuss and decide who will pay i-Escrow's small charge.

i-Escrow also contracts out its services to LookSmart's **Beseen Buy-It!** service...



“Buy-It”

<http://buyit.beseen.com/>

**Buy-It** is a third party payment solution that allows you to accept credit card payments on your site with a single click...



### 17.1.17. Catering To Teens

Teenagers are one of the largest growing segments of the online population. And they're Net-savvy. They have disposable incomes. They love to buy stuff.

Anything else of importance? Why, now that you ask, there is something. According to a recent study conducted by MTV and Harris Interactive...

Kids in the U.S.A. (between the ages of 8 and 24), are spending big bucks on the Net -- somewhere in the **projected range of 164 billion dollars**. That's "billion" with a "b". In fact, e-commerce spending comprises 13% of their total spending.

Only one problem... **No credit card.**

And, surprise, surprise, most parents don't seem to be willing to allow their teens to blissfully charge up their cards. Shocked? I didn't think so! 😊



Well, a couple of companies have rushed to the rescue... of both the teens wanting to buy online, and merchants who want to be able to sell to them.

These services allow teens to start up an account, by sending in money and acquiring an user I.D. This then allows them to shop at any of the many member shops that support these services. Unfortunately, it appears that these programs have yet to gain any momentum... several have folded since their inception.

However, if you carry a product line that caters specifically towards teenagers, check out these two sources...



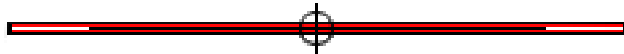
**RocketCash**

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



**VisaBuxx**

<https://www.visabuxx.com/>



### 17.1.18. Microsoft's Wallet/Passport

Microsoft claims 65 million plus registered users of its wallet and passport services.

Not bad!

This free-for-customers service allows people to buy from participating merchants without having to worry about entering, and re-entering information. The customer's wallet information is encrypted and stored on Microsoft's secure server. It's relayed to the merchant when a purchase is made. The passport system is a decent attempt at further reducing the occurrence of online fraud...



**Microsoft Passport**

<http://memberservices.passport.com/>

For merchants, the cost to join the program varies. The fee is tied directly to the number of unique page views your site receives a month. Microsoft has taken the growing concerns about online fraud seriously, and has partnered with Equifax to increase merchant confidence in the system...





Equifax

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

Microsoft's service can be used exclusively, or integrated into existing shopping cart software. This gives customers different payment options.

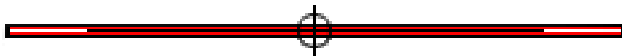
Buying with the **Passport Express Purchase option** means customers can buy by simply entering their Microsoft wallet name and password. It's handy because it frees them up from entering reams of personal information each time they make a purchase.

Current merchants offering the service include Buy.com, McAfee.com, Costco (online), and many, many others. You can view the entire list at the Passport Directory of Sites...



Microsoft Passport

<http://www.passport.com/Directory/Default.asp?>



#### 17.1.19. Person-To-Person Payment Services

**Person-to-person, or P2P services are not (in the long term) a viable payment option for an Internet business.** But for now, they can be beneficial to the netrepreneur, if used properly...

So... what's a P2P service?

It's a service that allows individuals to **exchange money securely** via the Web.

For example, the person who bought your antique butter churn on eBay can pay you online -- no more waiting for that check! In fact, it's really online auctions that are responsible for the exploding popularity of the P2P services. **PayPal** and others like it have made it simple for "regular" folks to indirectly accept credit card payments online. Secure, safe, and FAST!

Here's how it works...

- Sign up for free, and provide credit card information, and/or bank account number.
- You can then transmit funds to anyone world-wide, with an e-mail address.
- The intended recipient receives a notice via e-mail when her money is waiting. The recipient does not need to have an account with the service, but will need to sign up to receive the cash.



Simple. **But the service does have drawbacks...**

- **Limited daily spending amounts.**
- **You may wait up to a week or more to see the money deposited into your account.** These services are free, so it's likely companies make their money incurring interest on the money they hold in their accounts.
- **Slow to offer comprehensive fraud protection.** Here's a typical scenario...

You find the trinket of your dreams on eBay. The vendor suggests you pay him via the services of PayPal.com. Obliging, you do so. Unfortunately, the vendor doesn't oblige **you** by shipping the item. Recourse? None. Too bad, so sad, you're outta luck. Vendor gets your money, and you get nothing.



To their benefit, **PayPal** has upped the ante on buyer protection... but nowhere near the level enjoyed by credit card users. Currently, PayPal will protect buyers up to \$5,000 per year, but only if the seller who defrauds them is a verified PayPal user.

Verification includes the registering of a CC number with billing address, or a bank account number. PayPal lists verification status in the confirmation e-mail, so it's easy to decide whether or not to proceed with payment.

PayPal also protects the seller against fraudulent chargebacks, but only on transactions that exist between "verified accounts." Unfortunately, chargeback protection only applies to transactions within the U.S. -- international clientele are out of luck.

Let's return to the eBay scenario...

Had you used the services of **Tradenable** to pay for your trinket, things would have been a little different. You would release payment **on arrival** of the shipped goods. No shipped goods, no released payment.

Had you paid with your credit card, you could have instigated a chargeback.

Bottom line? **P2P services work best when you know the other party can be trusted.**



So what benefits do the P2P services offer?

These services are cheap, fast, and easy to use. How can they help you? Let me see... why not use a P2P service to...

- Pay your affiliates quickly and in a timely fashion (PayPal offers batch payout options). Why not save on postage, checks, time, etc.?
- Pay customer rebates
- Pay cash prizes
- Pay cash incentives

In fact, for netrepreneurs, these ideas show you where the **real value lies**... and it's **not** as an alternative payment option.

#### **[ SIDEBAR ]**

Now that PayPal has gone international, what about offering PayPal as a payment option on your site?

Good question. Here's the answer...

Nothing wrong with offering it -- **in addition to your credit card payment options.**

Currently, buyers are better protected (with a zero liability policy) by purchasing with a credit card. Plus, at this stage, your customer is more likely to have a credit card than a PayPal account. Making PayPal the **only option** is a **big** mistake. Most

customers won't bother to sign up for the service in order to buy from you.

Do NOT add extra barriers to making the sale!

**Psst...**

If using PayPal as a payment option appeals to you, be sure to read Ralph Wilson's superb review of the service...



**Wilson Internet**

<http://wilsonweb.com/reviews/paypal.htm>

---

The biggest, and by all accounts, the best. It offers international service. They also have a 3rd party credit card service available...



**PayPal**

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

Other similar services include...



**ProPay.com**

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



**BidPay.com**

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

Incidentally, **BidPay.com** does process some international orders. BidPay is PayPal's major competitor.



**Billpoint**

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



**Yahoo! Paydirect**

<http://paydirect.yahoo.com/>



**C2it**

<https://www.c2it.com/>



**Money Zap**

<https://www.moneyzap.com/application/main.asp>

**DigiCash** offers eCash, **the digital equivalent to cash**. It allows consumers to pay real money for purchases on the Internet. It's simple for consumers and maintains their privacy.

To use eCash, both users and merchants must have an account with an issuing

bank. Your customer takes funds from her regular account, transfers it into eCash via purse software, and then stores it on her hard drive in an encoded form until she purchases.

When purchasing, she sends the correct amount to the vendor who relays it to the bank (which verifies and redeems the amount into the vendor's account).



### Advantages of eCash...

- allows for privacy, something that credit cards do not
- low transaction costs
- can be divided into smaller denominations than exist in the real world (allowing for micro payments).

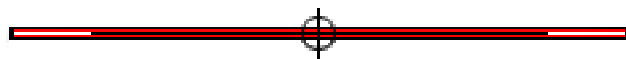
**The big problem?** There are few people who use it and few vendors who accept it! **Whoops!...** Long-term, I don't think this is a viable format, but in case you're interested...



Digicash

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

OK, want to see why you'll never have to hear, "**The check is in the mail**"?...



## 17.1.20. Coming Soon To The Internet Near You!

**Payment solutions are still evolving.**

**SET**, the most effective and practical solution available today, requires too much effort on the part of the surfer to gain widespread acceptance.

So, the work continues.

By the time **MYSS! 2002** needs to be updated again (groan!), there's no doubt we'll be seeing a whole slew of new Internet payment options. Here are a few to monitor...



## 1) Debit Cards

Debit cards are used daily by millions of North Americans and they are growing in popularity world-wide -- at least in the brick-and-mortar world, that is.

Their benefits are numerous -- for both merchants and buyers.

For customers without credit cards, the ability to use their debit cards in an online environment means access to broader and more diverse markets.

And the benefits for merchants? Simple. They have immediate access to a much larger client base. Buyers need both a debit card and a P.I.N. number, so there is less risk of fraud occurring. It's also cheaper to process debit card transactions.

**UTM Systems** of Washington has developed the UTM Machine -- a device that fits into a 3.5 inch floppy drive. All you have to do is insert your debit or credit card into that, plug your info into a "pop-up" automatic teller interface, and... PRESTO! You're the proud new owner of... well, of whatever you're buying. 😊



**UTM Systems**

<http://www.utmsystems.com/reader.htm>

Sounds great? Sure it does! But, as usual, there are reasons why we haven't seen online debit card expansion. Here are some of the more pressing concerns...

- A large number of merchants must adopt the system in order for it to be successful.
- Many customers are already hesitant to use their credit cards online -- will they feel more confident about launching their P.I.N. numbers into the great black void of cyberspace?
- Credit cards are easy, easy, easy. Most customers won't be bothered to add the peripheral software and necessary hardware to their computers. After all, why should they bother with the expense? Their credit card liability is already \$0.00.

Doubtful future -- but we'll see...



## 2) Smart Cards

Smart cards are big in Europe, but not so big in North America. Read about some case studies at...



**Mondex Canada**

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

The power of the “smart” card is its embedded chip that allows stored personal information or “electronic cash.” It can be used for a wide use of applications -- vending machines, pay phones, parking lots, etc.

Though currently used in the brick-and-mortar world, smart cards could easily be used in the online environment. Like the debit card, however, there are problems...

**1) A stolen smart card can be used by anyone.**

**2) Customers need to “swipe” their smart cards into peripheral software.**

Visa and MasterCard are both working vigorously to fully implement smart cards. MasterCard already has a smart card available that allows you to make purchases using Credit, Debit, or Mondex Services (their electronic cash).

It also saves your loyalty program info, so you can automatically receive your Air Miles on every applicable purchase...





**MasterCard**

<http://www.mastercard.com/ourcards/smartcards/>

There's no doubting the power of the smart card. **It is the next big thing in payment processing.** The question remains... **when will the technology be available to everyone?**



**Other matters of note...**

**i) Achex and E-cash** -- Free services that debit your checking account for online purchases. Merchants must sign up to accept the service...



**Achex**

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



**ECash.com**

<http://www.ecash.com/online/>

**ii) Internetcash** -- These are debit cards that are available in \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100 denominations. They're available online at the Internetcash site, or at selected offline stores within the United States. Cards are activated by going to the Internetcash site, and entering the 20 digit number beneath the scratch-off card label.

Internet cash targets teen audiences, and/or those who don't have/want credit cards. The large number of merchants joining the program means that card users will have a broad and varied shopping experience...



Internetcash

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



### 17.1.21. A Time of Great Upheaval!

Yes, it seems like everyone and their dog is trying to come up with the ultimate Web-payment solution these days. In general, it's not a bad idea. But...

**There's still a gigantic underlying problem!**

**Almost all of these solutions add new barriers or hurdles to doing business on the Web.** They add extra steps to the process. They assume surfers are savvy enough to download, install, and figure out new protocols. And, more importantly, they assume surfers are **interested** in doing this!

Wrong!

The customer does **not** want to buy peripheral software to swipe debit cards, smart cards, or any other type of cards. She does not want to **have** to learn to use a digital wallet. Once she arrives at your Web site and feels compelled to buy, she has to be **able** to buy... **right NOW!** Eliminate that option, and 9 times out 10, you'll lose the sale.

Not good!



Remember, many people have enough difficulty with online ordering. Yes, even when it entails nothing more than entering a credit card number into a simple online form. The addition of "private keys," "digital signatures," peripheral hardware/software, and "wallets" only raises more barriers between you and your customer.

And that is something you definitely do not need.

**Ordering protocols simply have to focus on the lowest common denominator to remain successful.** For now, that's the credit card.

Of course, now that customers are protected by Visa's and MasterCard's zero liability policy, why should they bother shopping with anything **but** their credit cards? After all, they have nothing to lose.



Sure, there are lots of people who still believe shopping online is a frightening business. But that **will** change. As the Net becomes less of a new thing (and for thousands of people each day, it is just that!), more and more people will become aware that shopping online poses no danger. And when that happens, the momentum necessary to build a new ordering protocol will die quickly.

Merchants just want to **eliminate the risk of fraud.**

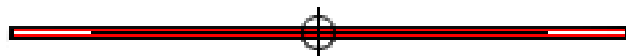
Customers, on the other hand, want nothing more than to keep the **entire process as simple, painless, and as fast as possible!** After all, there's so much to do, and so much to see -- click, click!

Bottom line on all these new order processing protocols?

**Implement them if you like...**

**But only in addition to taking all the major credit cards.**

Because that's where 99% of your orders will come from.



### 17.1.22. The **Tried-and-True** Boosts Income, Too!

Many customers still insist on using more traditional payment methods -- **yes, even though they surf the Web!** We receive **personal checks, money orders and certified checks** by regular post every week.

Anyone who would take the time to do that must have strong, personal reasons for doing this. If you don't provide these options, this is likely lost business. However...

**Even with money orders, fraud is possible.**

Our own bank in Montreal has been plagued by fraudulent money orders and certified checks. Develop protocols for how to handle each way of getting paid...

- **Money order** -- For postal money orders. Call the U.S. Post Office at **1-800-868-2443** to verify that the serial number on the money order is valid.

If the amount is for more than \$100, you can also hold the front of the M.O. up to the light... if it's good, you'll see a shadow of Benjamin Franklin in a gray oval on the left.

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**[ SIDEBAR ]**

**Canadian money orders** -- the 1-800 number is on the back of every M.O. Instead of Ben Franklin, you'll see beavers <sheesh -- **blushing** Canadian here>.

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- **Bank money orders/certified checks** -- Get your customers to provide the local phone number of the bank. Call to verify that it's good.



- **Personal check** -- make it clear to your customers that you don't ship product until the personal check clears. Or don't bother with personal checks at all -- it's a hassle that may not be worth the effort.
- **C.O.D.** -- call your local courier. It's still done, but not cross-border.
- **Bank transfers, purchase orders** -- for business to business sales.

Bottom line?

**Accept payment in as many ways as possible, or you will lose sales needlessly. Just be careful!**

If you are going to eliminate a payment modality (ex., AMEX or personal check or Verifone), have a good reason.



## 17.2. The “Final” Step... Fulfillment

OK, you’ve got the order and received payment. Now you need a simple, organized protocol for physically taking the product from inventory, packing it, shipping it, and tracking it until delivery. And it’s got to be done **quickly, efficiently**, and as **cheaply** as possible.

If you happen to be selling a digital product, it’s a simple matter to ensure your client receives nearly instantaneous download information... just implement a **digital fulfillment solution!**

But if you’re selling “hard goods” (things that won’t fit in a telephone line), read this next sentence very carefully...

**The key to getting your customer to return time and time again for repeat purchases depends how fast you get the product to her doorstep! Especially the first time!** So, we need a **product fulfillment program** in place.



If product fulfillment is beyond your in-house capabilities, you can contract this out to a third party. Consider using...

- **a fulfillment house** -- It will cost you more than if you did it in-house, but it may be worth it if you are just starting. It will be **essential** if you plan to do a lot of international business. Shipping products individually to people overseas is going to kill your profit margin. The solution? Set up a fulfillment house overseas, and ship your product over by a low-cost freight solution.

**Advantages?** A fulfillment house can handle just about anything you want to throw at it... from stocking, assembling, and shipping product... to order-taking via the Web... yes, even to providing customer service call centers. You could start your own business, outsource everything to a fulfillment house, and never left a finger again! (Haha!). Great idea!

**Disadvantages?** The expense. Unless you’re selling product with a pretty reasonable mark-up, you can expect to see your profit margin disappear.

Searching for a fulfillment house?

See this list from Yahoo!...



**Yahoo! List of Fulfillment Houses**

[http://dir.yahoo.com/Business and Economy/Business to Business/Marketing and Advertising/Fulfillment Services/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Business_to_Business/Marketing_and_Advertising/Fulfillment_Services/)

**iFulfill** caters particularly to the needs of small Internet start-ups...



**iFulfill.com**

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



**Netship**

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



**Universal Distribution Services**

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



**Fill It Inc.**

<http://www.fill-it.com/>



**National Fulfillment Services**

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



• **Drop-shipping** -- If you're selling a hard good **and** if you're a small biz, consider paying the manufacturer to ship the product to the customer **directly**. Here's how it works...

Let's say you've just written a book. You're selling an Acrobat Reader version via direct download from the Web (hey, this sounds familiar). And you're also selling a **hard copy** of it. Geez, you don't want the **bother and expense** of a shipping department, right? So...

You contract with a digital printer to make a few hundred at a time, **and** to ship them. When the online credit card order clears, it gets written to an online database. The database file can be accessed online by the manufacturer.

The manufacturer uses that data to print **your own** label, pops the book into the padded envelope, and sends it via UPS to the customer.

Your customer can't even tell that it came from a third party. All you have to do is negotiate price for the manufacturer's service.



**Advantages?** Pretty obvious. **It's cheap and easy to get going.** There's no inventory to maintain in a warehouse of your own, no personnel, etc.

**Disadvantages?** Not so obvious. But think these through and you'll be OK...

**1) Negotiate a fair price.** It may cost you a bit more than if you do it yourself. But it will be more than worth it (unless you already have the staff and facilities to easily organize in-house warehousing and shipping).

2) You must establish a database and communications protocol to be able to easily track orders, shipments, returns, stock levels, back-orders, etc. Hey, a special Web page, well-protected, is ideal! Do this well and life's a breeze.

3) It may be tough to find manufacturers who are willing to drop-ship. Larger ones tend to avoid the bother, or may not give you good service -- will the maker ship immediately? What if they back out and decide **not** to "drop-ship"... after you've gone to all the time and expense to set up a Web site and advertise? **Smaller** manufacturers tend to be more reliable -- but **check them out well**.

4) If you offer several different products from **several different manufacturers**, drop-shipping becomes impractical.

5) Your ability to deliver stunning customer service is compromised. This boils down to the "left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing"! This is why your database and communications system must run exceptionally smoothly!

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[ **SIDEBAR** ]

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Ideally, the order-taking and fulfillment system is tied to your inventory tracking. In other words, when you ship one unit of Widget 982, one unit is subtracted from inventory in your records.

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If you decide to do this yourself...



... **Give your customers a variety of shipping options.** Each option should have a **clear price/speed difference from the others**. Don't confuse your customer with a whole bunch of options with only minor differences. Here are some possible options...

i) **courier** (choose one only -- don't make your customer choose between five different couriers). Each courier has a zillion ways to ship and bill. You can charge according to price of order, weight, number of items, volume, region where customer lives. It's enough to make your head spin. Your mission? **Simplify it for your customer.**



FedEx just released its Global Trade Manager Service, designed to make international shipping simpler for small and medium sized businesses...



FedEx

<http://www.fedex.com/us/>

ii) **regular mail** -- this is generally a poor option, since you can't prove receipt. But the postal service does have a variety of courier-type services. So check them out.

Stamps.com helps you print postage directly from your printer. No more trips to the post office!



Stamps.com

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



- **Download from your site** (the best -- it's fast and free, but only if you're selling a digital product). Actually, if you sell a digital product, offering download **only** is fine. That's what we did for PennyGold and all our other SiteSell products -- and we have lost exactly zero orders by restricting customers to this option.

You'll have to decide whether to make shipping **a profit center, or just charge your cost**. But whatever you do, obey the usual "\$x.95" rule. If it's \$6, charge \$5.95. Shipping costs can cost you an order. Make them **look** as cheap as possible.

Ship the product as close to the **time** of ordering as possible. Note that I did not say "as close to the day of ordering as possible." In other words, ship **immediately**. Technically, you are supposed to ship **before** you take payment. (But after what you just read about credit cards...)

**And maintain a database that tracks** order entry, credit card status/verification number, date shipped, and **confirmed receipt**, along with the date for each. **This is critical for practical and legal reasons.**

**Advantages?** You can get that order out the door at the drop of a hat, and we all know how important that is, don't we? Also, because you'll be keeping all the records yourself, you can ensure that customer service is excellent. Another big plus!

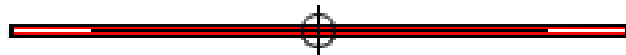
**Disadvantages?** You'll have to maintain an inventory, and if you can't sell it, you're in big trouble!

See Ralph Wilson's [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#). He has lots of solid, up-to-date info on **fulfillment issues**.



Naturally, as enlightened Web vendors, we know that fulfillment is not really the final step at all. **It's actually the first...**

... in a mutually rewarding long-term relationship with your customer.



## 17.3. Delivering it NOW!...

### Digital Fulfillment

I've said it before, and I'll say it again...

Digital goods (infoproducts, e-books, software, etc.) are the best products for the Internet. There is simply no other product that utilizes the immense money-making potential of the Internet so efficiently. "Infoproducts" are discussed in greater detail in the [Product Volume of MYSS! 2002](#). Creating your own digital product is also the focus of SiteSell's **Make Your Knowledge Sell!**...

**MAKE YOUR KNOWLEDGE SELL!**

**Make Your Knowledge Sell!**

<http://myks.sitesell.com/>

Yes, having a product your customers can download is a huge advantage, for sure. No packing, no shipping, and lots of room in the garage for your car. But what I'm really talking about here is the **power** of **automation**. In **Make Your Knowledge Sell!**, I said...

There is simply no reason that you cannot automate your business **so that your business works while you...**



And that, dear reader, is the real power of the digital good -- **the ability for a totally automated system, from order taking, credit card processing, order monitoring... the works!** As I said earlier, it's all about making your business...

### Scale!

I've learned a lot about digital delivery due to **MYSS!**, and SiteSell's other digital products. And, at first glance, it **seems easy enough, right?** Well, it is -- but getting it all set up can take a lot of work...

**First**, you have to be able to take the order through a form or shopping cart.

**Second**, clear the credit card.

**Third**, send an e-mail with download URL and username and password.

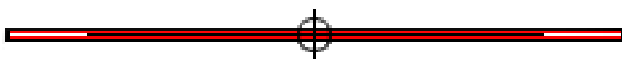
**Fourth**, write all your customer's info to a database (your database **is** your business!).

**Fifth**, inactivate the username and password after the customer downloads (or someone will post it to a newsgroup or mailing list).

**Sixth**, you have to pay the affiliate who generated the sale (if applicable).

It takes a fair amount of technical savvy and financial resources if you want to do all this yourself.

That's why digital fulfillment houses have arisen. They'll handle everything, and are by far the simplest solution. **Digibuy** seems to be best-of-breed at this stage...



### 17.3.1. Digibuy



**Digibuy**

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

Digibuy offers **fulfillment services** for e-books and downloadable software publishers. It allows you to set up, modify, and add products anytime. You upload full versions of your software for instant download by your customers. You have complete control over pricing, order forms (designed to match your site), and delivery options. You can even check order status and process refunds yourself.

Each time a customer buys one of your products, Digibuy sends you a notification e-mail including all information necessary for you to fulfill the order. Your customer receives an e-mail confirmation and a confirmation page.

And Digibuy supports some third party affiliate programs like Commission Junction. So you can even start your own affiliate program!

For each sale, they take a **13.9% commission** (\$3 per month minimum). And there's a **setup fee...**

**Essential Service** -- Includes all features except customizable order forms. One-time set up fee is \$29.99 for the first product, \$9.99 for each additional product.

**Advanced Service** -- Includes all features. One-time set-up fee is \$199.00 for the first product.

Slick. **Highly recommended** for those who like the idea of using a "do it all for you" digital fulfillment house.



**Anaconda** is a pretty high-profile site that sells some rather neat cgi scripts. They use Digibuy. Go to Anaconda's site and see what I mean -- just click as if you want to order something...



**Anaconda Partners**

<http://anaconda.net/>

I asked Adam Stanhope, one of the partners at Anaconda, about their relationship with Digibuy. His answer...

Hello Ken:

We are very pleased with Digibuy - almost couldn't be happier.

We leave the entire fulfillment aspect of our business to Digibuy and they handle it flawlessly. It is very easy to manage our data. Their fee policy is straightforward. The monthly disbursement always comes on time. Their reporting and refund mechanisms are excellent...

We know that we could do our own direct-to-bank credit card processing for a lower fee, however we are certain that the additional value we get from Digibuy far exceeds the savings we might see processing transactions on our own.

Adam Stanhope  
Anaconda Partners LLC

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**[ SIDEBAR ]**

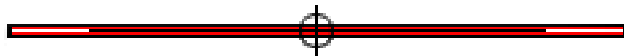
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Digital fulfillment will be included, at no extra charge (except for a transaction % fee, of course) with **Site Build It!**...



**Site Build It!**

<http://buildit.sitesell.com/>



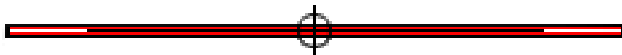
### 17.3.2. Doing It ALL Yourself!

Are you the type of person who likes to control your business from top to bottom, from A-to-Z, from... OK, you get the idea!

Generally, it's better to save your money and **start manually**. Once you reach a certain level of sales (3-4 orders, or more than \$100 per day), you may want to consider automating the order processing and fulfillment **on your own**.

For one thing, it's **less expensive** to have your own merchant account when the orders are coming in consistently. Even better, you get paid **within days** with your own merchant account.

To repeat, I do not recommend "total automation" right away. It's not cheap. And I recommend that you get your hands "dirty" with the manual process first. It really drives "what happens" home...



### 17.3.3. Processing Orders Manually

If you're a solo operation, working out of your home, this is the way to go. If you are well-financed and launching a big promotional campaign and affiliate program, you may want to [jump straight to the next section on automating your own business.](#)

Here are four key elements to implement your own smooth-running fulfillment center...

**1) Secure Order Page** -- Most Web site hosting services offer packages already containing secure server space. But if you're not sure, or you're still shopping around, be certain to ask if they offer SSL (Secure Sockets Layer -- a portion of the site space is devoted to secure ordering activity).

You'll need to create a page on that secure server space, where you'll put an order form. If you don't know how to code an HTML version, check out an excellent tutorial at...



**Sizzling HTML Jalfrezi**

<http://vzone.virgin.net/sizzling.jalfrezi/fforms.htm>

But if you don't care to know the "techie-stuff," Feedback is a terrific service that automatically generates a form for you. Simply decide what information you want to accept, enter it on the site, and a special script will build a form for you...



**Feedback.com**

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



Let me repeat this important bit of advice -- every extra bit of information that you ask for cuts down the number of responses. **So ask for the bare minimum...**

- Name
- Full address (including country)
- Telephone number
- E-mail address
- Billing address (if it's different from the shipping address)
- Select Credit Card type (actually determined by the number of the card, but the customer feels better clicking that radio button!)
- Name on credit card
- Credit card number
- Credit card expiration date
- List of infoproducts with prices

- Shipping rates and methods
- Taxes

**If you accept checks...**

- Name on check
- Bank name
- Bank city and state/province
- Check number
- Account number
- Routing number
- ABA number

**2) Merchant Account** -- if you can't get your own, obtain the service of a third party provider. [We discussed this in detail earlier.](#) Either way, you **must** be able to process credit card orders!

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**[ SIDEBAR ]**

Yes, even this will be included with **Site Build It!, the ultimate e-commerce value bundle...**



**Site Build It!**

<http://buildit.sitesell.com/>

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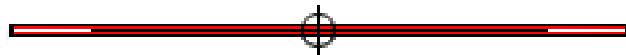
**3) Order Clearing** -- When you first start out, don't worry about automatic real-time credit card verification. Clear manually... yup, use the good old **point-of-sale** machine. It's "healthy" for you to submit manually for a while. You'll understand the whole process more deeply and will encounter situations like fraud directly.



**4) Fulfilling Your Orders** -- It's just a matter of cutting and pasting **relevant download and password info** from your "Thank You for Your Order" template into a new e-mail. And then hit the **Send** button.



**When will you be ready to automate?** Simple -- when you can't stand the thought of fulfilling an order manually any longer!



#### 17.3.4. Automating on Your Own!

Basically, if you want to automate **the whole process** on your own, it can get pretty expensive. There are a heck of a lot of steps to master in a long chain of events. Each step must take place before money and goods actually change hands on the Net.

**iFulfill.com** explains it well on their site...



**iFulfill.com**

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

Once the web site is up, you still need to:

- Find and configure a shopping cart to enable your site to take secure orders;
- Establish a merchant services account to allow you to take credit cards over the Internet;
- Sign up with couriers and mail service;
- Establish procedures for collecting sales tax;
- Establish procedures for order processing;
- Check and ship orders every day;

- Be able to handle special orders (next day, 2nd day, international);
- Provide customer service;
- Track packages;
- Issue refunds.

Once you've setup this infrastructure, you still must take steps to make sure your customers recognize your charge on their credit card statement. You should:

- Send E-mail to verify order
- Send E-mail to inform customer that order is shipping
- Provide an 800 number & Web address on credit card statement to allow customers that don't recognize your charge to easily get answers and details.

That's a lot of work, and a significant investment. For many web merchants, it's more than they can justify.

They're right. Are you sure you want to do this? We did, and the rewards are worth it. But **be ready for the effort involved**. Of course, when you're only selling digital goods, it's a little less complex. However, there's still more than enough to consider carefully before leaping headlong into the fray.

Let's take a closer look at what's involved...



### 17.3.5. Automating Digital Goods

Knowing how much is involved, you won't be surprised at the cost of automating the whole process. Synergyx Software installs an entire process for US\$1,500...



**Synergyx Software**  
<http://www.synergyx.com/>

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[ **SIDEBAR** ]

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We include a coupon with **MYKS!** that entitles you to \$500 off the \$1,500 fee.

And just so you know...

We have **no** relationship with Synergyx. We do **not** get paid to make this recommendation. As a matter of fact, we forego the affiliate commission to cover half of your \$500 discount coupon. Synergyx contributes the other half.

They have received excellent reviews elsewhere, but I urge you to do your own due diligence.

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There's a satisfaction in controlling your own business totally. It's our choice of operation. But not many people would want to spend the amount of time and money **we've** spent to custom-program the whole process. When we were first starting out there was **no single provider of the entire process**. But there **soon** will be...

**Site Build It!** is currently implementing several high-tech e-commerce modules. By the time you read this, the module allowing you to fulfill digital products should be firmly in place.

Soon after that, you'll **even** be able to offer **your own affiliate program**, using the same cutting-edge, proprietary technology that we do. And at a fraction of the cost of comparable systems! For more info...



**Site Build It!**

<http://buildit.sitesell.com/>



### 17.3.6. Let Someone Else worry About It!

Don't want to deal with all the techie mumbo-jumbo of electronic fulfillment? But want the payment to go directly into your bank account? Try this...



**Plug'nPay**

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

Here's how it works...

- 1) **Upload** your "Payload" to their servers.
- 2) **Take the order** on **your** site (or theirs).
- 3) **Clear the card** via **their** technology (they partner with CyberCash). Payment goes to you.
- 4) **Fulfill via these folks**. They can deliver much more than just your downloadables... password-protected sites, live or on-demand streaming media (great for digital movies and music, video conferencing, and selling instructional videos!).

If you have a **subscription-based site**, or an **e-book** that's downloadable from the Net, they will take care of everything after the order (or including the order, if you prefer).

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**[ SIDEBAR ]**

Or use **Site Build It!**...



**Site Build It!**

<http://buildit.sitesell.com/>

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### 17.3.7. The Automation Manual!

Automation is **a mystery** to most online entrepreneurs. However, it's so important that we created a separate manual in **MYKS!** just for this topic. The **Automation Manual** pulls together all the relevant resources in **MYKS!** itself and adds a whole bunch more...

## MAKE YOUR KNOWLEDGE SELL!

Make Your Knowledge Sell!

<http://myks.sitesell.com/>

Most importantly, the Manual organizes it all according to your own personal situation, resources, and preferences...

- Get Someone Else To Do It All For You
- Do It All Yourself
- Have Merchant Account, Won't Ship
- No Merchant Account, Will Ship

No matter what your personal situation or resources, the **Automation Manual** points you in the right direction for automating. No matter how you want to do it, **you can!** No matter what your situation, **the Automation Manual frees you up** from the menial tasks so that you can focus on the **interesting stuff...**



... spending your money!



## 17.4. Upselling... It's All in the Timing!

It's disturbing how often an online purchase is followed by a barrage of **upselling e-mail...**

"Thanks for buying our fine product. Now, why don't you buy this... and this... and this... and this!"

Even worse, some merchants will up-sell or cross-sell before the payment process is even finished.

Upselling is a popular marketing fundamental but its effectiveness depends on timing and placement. **Things work differently in the digital environment.** People are more sensitive to aggressive tactics.



So what happens to an aggressive upselling message?

Instant bad vibes, just at a time when your customer should be feeling good about you!

People **have** to tolerate aggressive marketing offline. After all, you can't go around deleting television commercials, tearing down billboards and posters, or burning down radio stations. But online, people have **total control** over what they deem is acceptable.

They enjoy exercising that control **by filing your message under “g”...**



**... for garbage.**

Selling online is a delicate matter. People who purchase from you are **not** giving you an automatic license to constantly market to them on an ongoing basis.

If your product is great, certainly they'll be receptive to other offers from you, but only if they're in good taste, and combined with content **that provides some benefit to them.**



Show your customer that your main interest is to get them set up and enjoying the benefits of your product. **Do not upsell right off the confirmation page or e-mail** -- you'll make a far better impression if you don't. If you **do** decide to up-sell this early in the relationship, it must be a perfect, natural fit, and done very, very, gently. Remember...

There's no rush. You have lots of time to reach your customers through your

newsletter, now that they are in your “lifetime customers” database!

Lifetime customer are truly valuable. **Treat them that way.**



## 17.5. Nurture Your Customers to Grow the Relationship

So you’ve got a...



... **customer?** Super! Treat him like he’s the only one you have.

Cement the relationship!

**At the time of order**, enthusiastically congratulate and thank him. Remind him of your support program. Give him an e-mail address and phone number to contact should he ever have any questions.

**But don’t stop there...**

Develop a caring, after-sales program. Perhaps a combination of e-mail follow-up and a strong online customer-support department. In short... **pamper him.**

A happy customer will buy from you... **again and again.**

And it takes a lot **less work** to keep a customer happy than to find a new one.

Ultimately, the long-term success of your business depends on **repeat business**. **Customers will do repeat business with you because of the relationship** (assuming you have a good products, of course).

A Web site does **not** build relationships. **People do.**



### 17.5.1. Testing... Testing... Is This Thing On?

It's so discouraging when it seems like nobody is listening...

Hello? Hellooo?

Presently, some well respected industry analysts have been saying fairly harsh things about the state of e-commerce. It would appear that something is particularly rotten in the customer service department (if there's even a customer service department available for anything to rot in).

**Things aren't just bad...**



**... they're pathetic.**



Need proof? Unfortunately, there's all kinds...

- **Of companies surveyed, only 30% respond to email within 24hrs.** (Yankee Group)
- **Of the top 50 e-tailing sites, 77% received unacceptable ratings for customer relationship management.** (Gartner Group)
- **23 of Fortune 100 could not be reached by email through their web site.** (Rainier Communications)
- **Consumers are frustrated by lack of adequate customer service processes in place.** (Gartner Group)
- **Retailers must focus on establishing excellent customer service or face losing USD173 billion.** (Datamonitor)
- **Ninety percent of online shoppers consider good customer service to be critical when choosing a Web merchant.** (Forrester)



Paul Lang has written a great article detailing the best and worst of customer service practices...



**Sell It On The Web**

<http://www.sellitontheweb.com/ezone/opinion074.shtml>



I don't get it.

What's so difficult about offering great service on the Web? Why isn't it being done? Because it is **absolutely ESSENTIAL** to the success of your online business. When you consider that 75% of great customer service can be totally automated, it's even more disturbing!

Your customers are your **LIFE**. Your reason for being. And no, I'm not kidding.

Have I made myself perfectly clear? Have I finished ranting?

Not yet. First, I want you to read these...

- **Exceptional service increases buyers' total satisfaction and encourages repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations.** (Forrester)
- **Customer loyalty measured in repeat purchases and referrals is the key to profitability in an online business.** (Bain & Company and Mainspring)
- **The success or failure of an e-biz depends on one thing - delighting your customers!** (Bain & Company and Mainspring)
- **Repeat purchasers spend more over time.** (Bain & Company and Mainspring)



Now for a couple of comments from the pros...

"Investing in customer retention is perceived as less glamorous than investing in slick Web site design, but unless companies can turn eyeballs

into repeat customers, they don't have a viable business. Customer retention requires ongoing commitment not only must retailers aggressively acquire customers, but they must also be committed to investing in superior customer service and fulfillment capabilities." (Randall Hancock, Senior VP of eStrategy for Mainspring)

"Online buyers tell us every day that the key to winning their loyalty is the level and quality of customer support." (Paul Bates, VP of Information Products Group for BizRate.com)



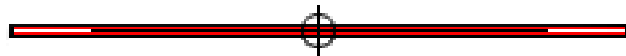
So what's the point? The bottom line?

**Read the following sections carefully. Then implement all the recommendations into your own e-biz.** Seriously... this offers you a fantastic opportunity to rise **above** the competition, and stay there. And it's **so easy** to do. Totally within your control. Inexpensive.

Remember -- **the people have spoken!**

So...

**Do it!**



### 17.5.2. Automated, Yet Personal, E-mail Follow-up

Your single, most important tool for deepening a **personal relationship with your customer, no matter where she lives, is...**



**... e-mail.** E-mail is personal and friendly, one-to-one... but **only if you make it so!**

How do you develop **one-to-one** relationships with **thousands** of people? Simple...

**Automate.**

Yes, **you can automate and still be personal.** Here's how...

Let's say you have just received your first order for ProductX. **Time to write your first "thank you reply."**

You are warm, friendly. Thank your customer, reassuring him what a great purchase he has made and how you will support the heck out of him. Make it a strong letter. Remove **buyer's remorse.** State your commitment to his happiness with your product.

Of course, **actions speak louder than words.** The rest of this chapter will show you how to **deliver** on your promise. Whoops! Here comes the second order for ProductX.

So you re-read the first letter. See a few places to **improve it? Good!**

Over the next few orders, you'll get to the point where you feel that letter is about as good as it can be. When you re-read it, you just don't see a way to improve it.



### **Time to automate!**

Is it any less personal now that this letter is sent automatically upon receipt of your order? Of course not -- as I said before -- **it still contains the same, original heart-felt message** that you wrote in the first place. Just make sure that your automation process itself does not compromise the personal feel.

Now automate a one-week follow-up. Remind your customer of special features, tech support, etc. Offer a subscription to a newsletter for ProductX owners.



... **E-mail offers wonderful opportunities for spontaneous, friendly follow-up.** Use it well and creatively. **Leverage yourself** through automation.

Maintain a database of all people who have purchased from you -- name, e-mail, phone, address, status of shipment, communications, returns, which site they came from, whatever else seems relevant.

The database allows you to manage tens of thousands of clients, in a friendly one-to-one fashion, effortlessly.

**Contact your customers every month**, usually just to provide some good info and to see how they are doing with your products. Don't try to sell them... just provide info and support.

Build a solid, friendly relationship with your customers by focusing on their **needs**, even after the sale.

When it comes time to announce an event, special sale, new product or product upgrade, you'll have enormous credibility. **Care for your customers and show it...** they will buy from you over and over.

After all, when **you're the customer**, and when you know that a company's product is good, and that its support and service are warm and outstanding, **do you hesitate on future purchases?**



### 17.5.3. Delivering Super Customer Support

Let me repeat... your customers are a terrific future source of sales. **Maintain a solid one-to-one relationship with each. They will become the most valuable asset of your business.**

Everyone loves being recognized, loved, supported, and appreciated. Give that to them, and mean it -- your customers **will stay with you forever**. And they'll spread the word.

Be indifferent (or worse, rude) to them, and they'll do more than just leave you. They'll spread the word, **and they'll do it with a vengeance, telling everyone they know.**



Even today, when one-to-one customer management is fashionable, **very few companies do it**. Who knows why? Who cares? It only means that you'll stand out... **way out**.

In today's digital age, it is more than possible -- it's almost easy.

But you'll have to adopt **four all-important attitudes** to succeed...

### 1) Be a customer...

To truly understand Web biz and what a customer feels like on the Web, do as much of your own personal buying on the Web. Get direct experience as a customer.

#### Notice what makes you feel...



... **good, successful, smart, appreciative and appreciated.** Integrate that into your own online business.

#### Notice what...



... **peeves or frustrates you, what makes you doubt certain vendors.** Do you do anything like that in your business? **Eliminate it!**



### 2) Whatever you want, however you want it...

A customer may want a brochure snail-mailed instead of a pdf file. It's OK to reply...

"You know, I could fire you a pdf brochure by e-mail in a few seconds. It would look just as good and you'd have it immediately, **if you like.**"

But if she insists on receiving dead trees in her mail box, send it that way.

Sure, use the Web as your central headquarters for sales. But you must foresee all the ways that **your customers** like to interact. Just because **you** prefer to e-mail, everyone is different. **If you allow your customer to work with you on her terms, you will have a very appreciative customer.**

This is important -- allow customers to do business the way **they** want.

- Want a print catalog? It's in the mail.
- Need support? Use our online interactive tech support... **and** we have trained specialists standing by via e-mail and phone, if you need to talk to someone.

Let's look at Web-based support first...



### 3) Beat "the real world"...

The Web allows your customer support to be better than the real world. Here are a few examples...

- Ship digital product **instantly** -- it's just a download away!
- Tie your ordering mechanisms into your **inventory database**... check inventory and tell your customer **immediately** when you're out of stock... and when you'll be back in stock.
- **Shipping** FedEx or UPS? Automate a script to check their sites -- when delivery is confirmed, automatically e-mail your customer...

Hi Jill,

Well, FedEx tells us that you received your ISDN modem this morning. I hope you enjoy its speedy access and reliability.

If you have any questions at all about installation or using the modem, don't hesitate to call us at 1-888-SUPPORT, Monday to Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM, EST.

Or check out the tech support Web site at  
>> <http://www.isdnmodem.com/support/>

Supporting you is priority #1 for us.

All the best,  
Jack

See how you can go **way beyond the real world**? The above letter costs you nothing, is totally automated, is very personal, and reached your customer immediately. And, as we said before, it really **is** personal. There's no need to have to do an action manually just to make it personal.

You can use the Web to customize and personalize a wide variety of customer service/support opportunities.



Here are just a few more examples...

- **Give your user a customized link** to check the status of an order. This is much better than phoning, taking up your customer's time and yours explaining the order, the date, the order number, etc.
- **Your Web tech support can offer incredible detail**, minute bits of information, that most of your human tech support would not remember. Once that info is on the Web, a motivated user will drill-down to get the needed answer. You know how many drivers would rather find their own way rather than ask for directions? Well now your users can do both!... And save you tons of "real-life" support time.
- **Support anonymity... or not** -- If people don't have to reveal who they are, they may be more willing to do or try certain things, while remaining anonymous. On the other hand, if you need to keep prying eyes out, username and password access does the trick. Depending on your circumstances, you can go either way.
- **Build community** -- This, of course, is basically impossible in the real world. But a username and password are the first step in turning a group of devoted customers, scattered all over the world, into a community. For example, our PGPer Club has the PGPer Digest, special download zones, frequent e-mailing, etc. They **are** a group, and they feel like it. They belong. This is an important human instinct.
- **And it's all free...**
  - for you -- You can offer free samples, minor upgrades, chapter of a new book, free newsletter subscriptions.
  - for your customer -- She can get support from you, wherever she is in the world, 24 hours per day.



**Above all, do it all in a warm and friendly way.** Don't let your techies rule the day, even in the tech support area.

**Be nice... play nice.** People will come back to play (and buy) if you do.

Even though Web-based customer support is superior, for years to come, **many people will still prefer to hear a human voice...**



#### **4) Leave nothing to chance...**

People who handle one-to-one **personal** e-mails and individual phone orders/support must be...



... well-trained, pleasant and totally customer-focused.

**So leave nothing to chance for employee with direct “real voice” contact with your customers.** Develop a series of telephone scripts for all recurring situations. For example...

- **Build a list of the most common questions** -- prepare the replies.
- **Enter every problem encountered** -- develop your answers. Improve upon them constantly.
- **Keep track of any other common situations**, and what to do about them.

Enter this information into a database for quick and easy access. Improve replies constantly.

From the opening “Hello” to the parting “Glad we could help, have a good day,” **leave nothing to chance.**

**Finally, your live support staff must be more than knowledgeable. They must “smile” on the phone.** If your customer likes you, they’ll come back forever.



#### **5) Read this sub-chapter again.**



Okay, okay, perhaps all the bigwigs running the major dot-com companies haven't read **MYSS! 2002**, and really, I sincerely hope they haven't. Because if they have...

### ... THEY'RE NOT LISTENING TO ME!

Sorry, I didn't mean to shout. But I'm disturbed, really I am. What's the customer's number one complaint, according to numerous respected sources?

### Shoddy, or nonexistent customer service.

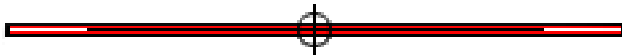
Sad. Very, very, sad. So very much within our control. So easy to do something about. So obvious.

### And yet apparently, very much overlooked.

Dear reader... I hate to be repetitive. I hate to be redundant. But your customer is **your biggest asset**.

You must, and I emphasize, **MUST**, keep her happy. Strike that -- not happy, but **ecstatic**. It's e-commerce 101. Basic Web marketing.

That's it, that's all.



#### 17.5.4. Maximizing Support / Minimizing Time

Your prospect expects an answer to her e-mail... **fast!** Your customer needs support... **yesterday!**

**But here's the kicker...** you'll make a much better impression if it doesn't look automated... as if a real human answered.

In other words, they want to eat their cake, and have it, too. Give it to them... automate whatever you can... **wherever it's appropriate**.



So how do you do this? Geez, you ask all the right questions, at just the right time! Here are several ideas for you to get started...

**First, automate replies via CGI scripts.** For example, newsletter subscriptions can be handled via a [HTML-to-CGI Response Form](#) rather than e-mail. A simple CGI script can build a database of e-mail addresses, send a welcoming e-mail (after you have manually developed your best reply), and then send the current issue.

**Second, automate any incoming e-mail that has a clear, unambiguous purpose.** For example, do you offer a special report? Just have your visitor hit your [mailto: link](#) to send an e-mail to a pre-defined e-mail address, such as [report@yourcompany.com](mailto:report@yourcompany.com). Now comes the automatic part...

[Autoresponders](#), if used appropriately, respond immediately, are cost-effective and sell for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. And they don't eat up any of your time!

Have your techie set up an autoresponder to answer all e-mail to [report@yourcompany.com](mailto:report@yourcompany.com) by sending your excellent report/sales letter. A good autoresponder will also keep a database of e-mail addresses and send you a daily or weekly report regarding activity.

**Third, potential customers have many inquiries, and actual customers have many support questions, most of which you have heard a million times.** Identify the most common. Make a list. Develop, then automate, the replies as follows...

- [FAQ](#) -- Develop two FAQs, pre-sale and post-sale. Depending on the particulars of your product and target market, this may work well for product inquiries but not for product support. Or vice-versa. Or if you've got a huge product line, or a thousand possible questions, the FAQ format starts to strain.



So let's explore **other** options...

- **E-mail support** -- always provide a [support@yourcompany.com](mailto:support@yourcompany.com) address. E-mails with open-ended questions cannot, and should not, be automated -- they will look canned and will usually be off target. So what to do?...

Build and maintain an offline database of "best answers" for all of the most common scenarios. This database can actually be the same one you use for online support. When you get an e-mailed question, simply look it up, then cut-and-paste-and-mail the answer. Customize if necessary -- if you have to customize too much, add this to the database with its own question. **Done right, the result is personal, yet fast**

**and good.**

Occasionally, you'll get a question that requires a custom reply. Support staff should be confident in answering, or refer to someone who is.

For a great example of how **not** to use automation, and how to **destroy** (rather than nurture) a relationship through poor e-mail support, [re-read the InfoSeek example](#). **It contains many important lessons** -- better InfoSeek should teach them to you, than you learn them the hard way!

- **Database driven -- OK, time to call...**



**... your techie!** Now that your **offline Q&A database** is functioning well and answering most questions...

**... put that database online.**

Your support-seeking customer enters a keyword into a search field. The Search Engine searches a large database of possible questions (questions you have previously entered into the database). Up pops five questions that contain that keyword (or questions with answers that contain it). Customer clicks on the question that is closest to hers.



To summarize, **let your customers (both prospective and actual) deal with you however they like**. If you automate properly, most will love the speed of reply and the personalization.

An automated reply system is **valuable for large companies, reducing man-hours tremendously**.

**But for the small entrepreneur, it is invaluable.** You become more productive, freeing up several hours each day for critical functions such as product development or marketing.

If you've ever wished that you could **clone yourself**...

MYSS! 2002... After the Sale



... this is how!



#### 17.5.5. The Best Way to Build A Long-Term Biz

Sell a great product. **Then build a strong, supportive one-to-one relationship.**

The Web offers a host of customer service opportunities. Get creative -- a lot of what you do now can probably be automated and offered on the Web, in a friendly and personal manner.

**Treating your customers promptly, and with care and respect, develops a strong, trusting relationship... and a solid business based on repeat purchases.**

And if you have any doubts about this “goody-goody” way of doing business, consider this final real world example...

Jim Ellington is a happy PennyGold owner. After his purchase, he required just a little support, which I provided in the usual manner. He later e-mailed me some wonderful feedback about PennyGold. I asked him for permission to use his comments as a testimonial on the Web site. He graciously agreed.

Of course, this appearance on the site generates inquiries to Jim. Here's what he e-mails to people, whether they ask him about me personally or not...

My last comment regards Ken Evoy and his organization. They are top notch. He has perfected an idea, and stands behind it 100%. That is VERY rare in this business. Honesty and integrity are almost non-existent anymore. He is the very refreshing exception.

No need to add more about the power of doing business properly. **Thanks, Jim.**



### 17.5.6. Walk the Walk...

It is an immutable law in business that words are words, explanations are explanations, promises are promises -- **but only performance is reality.**

-- Harold Geneen (former CEO, International Telephone & Telegraph Company)



You've read what it takes. **Knowing** is one thing. But if you don't **do it**, it won't do you much good.

As a customer, I fail to receive replies to e-mails regularly, even when I'm a prospect, but especially when I have an after-sales question. The former loses **my order**. The latter loses **my ongoing business**.

Some of the worst offenders?... Web marketers who preach how important one-to-one marketing and responsiveness is!

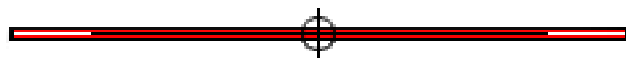
As a result, those who reply **quickly and well stand out**. They have a five-mile **head start** on 99% of their competitors, who have slow and sloppy e-mail habits.

And why **don't** the 99% respond **quickly and sharply**?

**Because it takes effort.** You have to actually **do it**. No excuses, no "we'll start tomorrow." You can't just talk the talk. **You have to...**



... walk the walk. **Do it.**



### 17.5.7. 5,6,7,8, Anticipate, Anticipate

Why not provide superlative customer service **before** your customers ask for it?

How? **Just anticipate their every want and desire.**

The simplest way to do this from the get-go is to eliminate all usage problems by implementing simple navigation and ordering systems. Make sure product descriptions are accurate and in-depth. (Why would you want to allocate customer service to explain that product A does this, and product B does that? What a waste. Do it properly on the site!).

Then all you need to worry about is the **post-sale service...**

For example...

Let's say customer A places an order. **As a result of that order, what questions does she have? What needs of hers should immediately be addressed?**

First and foremost...

The customer will want to know that her credit card is not "out there" floating around in the nether-regions of cyberspace. She'll want to know you received the order safely.



So the first step is...

**1) Send a thank-you acknowledgement receipt of all orders immediately, via autoresponder.**

Okay, good. Now customer A knows her credit card # has been safely transmitted, and hasn't been stolen by cyber-thieves. Her next question?

That's right... "Has my order been shipped yet?"

If this question can't be answered in the first e-mail, the second step is...

**2) Notify the customer that the item has been shipped, or when you expect it to ship. Indicate delivery selection and ETA.**

Now... can you guess her next questions?

That's right... "Where's my order now?" or... "Has it cleared customs yet?"

So make sure e-mail number 2 contains the information necessary for the visitor to track the order. Then after an appropriate length of time, send a third e-mail and...

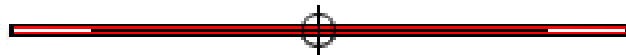
**3) Ask if everything's okay.** Have you received your order? Was everything as you expected? Are you satisfied? **If you're not, how can we make it up to you?**



See how great customer service is nothing more than **answering your customer's questions BEFORE she has a chance to ask them?** It's about staying one step ahead of your customers. It's about putting yourself in their position. Ask yourself -- how do I feel when I'm buying from a faceless Internet corporation? What needs would I like to see fulfilled? What concerns would I have?

You might be too close to your own business to be able to answer these questions accurately. The solution? Provide incentives for your customers, and ask them to tell you how they feel (via online surveys!). Better still, ask permission to call a couple on the phone. Get their recommendations. Then...

**Act on them!**



### 17.5.8. Keeping Your Finger on the Pulse

The bigger SiteSell.com gets, **the more I realize how easy it is...**



**... to lose track of the customer.**

I used to answer all my own e-mail. Sadly, that's impossible now. And now that SiteSell has a team of people who do just that, I started feeling a little separated -- somewhat unsure of what is happening at every point a customer contacts our business. Although this may seem like a necessary evil for a rapidly expanding company, I didn't like it.

Things could unravel, and I wouldn't know. Without my fingers directly on the pulse of the customer... I would be powerless to ensure that customers were indeed getting the best, and only the best, service and support.

So we instituted a weekly meeting between myself and the support staff. Good or bad, I want to hear anything that happens more than one time. In other words, I want to know about any **feedback or problem** that occurs more than once.

Also, we started an important policy. Every e-mail from our support staff bears a sig file that says...

~~~~~  
SiteSell/5 Pillar Report

Dedicated to helping you build your business online

If this e-mail requires a reply, please reply to this entire e-mail so I can help you faster by following the thread. Also, it ensures your reply comes to me personally. :-)

~~~~~  
Sidebar from Ken -- Customer support tries its hardest. If you are not satisfied with the level of support, I would like to hear about it personally. If you are delighted with the support, I would also love to hear about it.

I have set up a special e-mail box just to hear your feedback about customer support. Let me know...

~~~~~  
See? Our support staff knows they are accountable. And I stay directly in touch with customers to find out just how we're doing. (And we're doing very well, thank-you. Based on the 50:1 positive feedback from the folks who deal with support, I feel our support staff does the best job on the Net!)



Bottom line?

Even though we're growing bigger, my fingers remain on the pulse. Yours must, too -- no matter how big you get!

Yes, keeping your finger on the pulse is critical... but not everybody "gets it."

Fortunately some do. Here's a quick story to illustrate my point...

I was invited to lunch the other day by Tal Bevan, President of UUNET, Canada. UUNET is Canada's #1 bandwidth provider. So, I hear you asking... Why was little old Ken Evoy asked to lunch?

Maybe just for the pleasure of my company? Sheesh! Some people. 😊

Okay, okay, here's the real reason...

Mr. Bevan had requested his sales force to pick representatives from 10 companies to have lunch with him. Why?

Good question! Now listen carefully to the answer...

He wanted to know how UUNET was doing. Not from the analysis reports, not from the marketers, and not from the sales staff. He wanted to hear it from the people that mattered the most... the customers! And at lunch, interspersed with small talk, he asked his questions...

"What's good, what's bad?" and "What should we keep on doing?"

You should have seen him scribbling away, especially when I told him about problem areas.



But here's the point... Mr. Bevan felt he needed to **strip away** all the people between him and his customers. He needed to get his fingers on his pulse. He also said something that stuck with me, and will stick with me forever as we grow...

"Never hire someone who is more than one step removed from the customer."

Very well said. Think about it for a minute. **Either everyone in your company must touch the customer, or supervise the people that do.** I'd even go one step farther by saying the supervisor should have previously had direct customer experience, and continue to have some, from time to time.

Bottom line?

If you lose track of your customer's experience at any point where she contacts your business, you sow the seeds for a growing, unchecked problem.

[**SIDEBAR**]

There's another benefit to interacting directly with your customers. After all, Mr. Bevan certainly didn't have to ask me out to lunch. Doing so, he demonstrated the integrity and credibility of his company. After all, if he wasn't really committed to quality and satisfaction, why bother? And, yes, I know you can't possibly take everyone of your clients out to lunch, **but you can LISTEN to them.** Then show them you have listened by acting on their recommendations.

So... what make some people "get it", while so many others obviously have no clue? Is it genetics? Natural tendencies? Birth signs? Does customer focus just come naturally for some people?

Nope. **It takes practice.** It does not come easily for anyone. It's just too easy to fall back inside your own skin. It certainly didn't come easy for me. During my first year online, I kept a yellow Post-it note on my computer. Guess what it said? That's right...

... "What's my customer's experience now?"

Every time I looked at it, I applied the question to a different part of our business. With time, becoming your customer will become natural. And your business will thrive because of it.



So what's your task?

Review every point of contact between you and your customer. Never lose touch with what your customer's total experience is -- no matter how big or how successful you become. On a periodic basis review...

- **Your site -- is everything clear?**
- **Making the purchase -- is it easy to order?**
- **Order fulfillment -- efficient and timely**
- **Your product -- the best that it can be?**
- **Your support -- problems solved quickly and courteously?**

Is your finger on the pulse? Is every point of contact between your customer and your business golden? If necessary, perhaps a Post-it note on your own computer would not be a bad idea.

Think of it... if every point of contact with customer is golden, how can your online venture possibly fail?



17.5.9. An Example of Support OVERdelivery... And What It Brings You!

Recently, I received an extraordinary e-mail from a customer. Before I get into that letter, let me back up a bit.

It turns out that Janice (adored wife who administers SiteSell and also tracks failed orders) had sent this e-mail to a customer who had trouble ordering...

~~~~~

Hi Paul,

I noticed that you had difficulty placing your order overnight for Make Your Words Sell!. It appears the server for our credit card clearing company was down and for this reason we could not process your order.

If you wish, you may try again today as their technical glitch appears to have been resolved.

I invite you to use our discount page since you have already purchased a product from us...

<http://www.sitesell.com/discount-directory.html>

I also noticed that you ordered Make Your Knowledge Sell! without the discount. I will

refund 10% from the price you paid.

I thank you for your attempts to order MYWS!  
and I apologize for the bother.

Best regards,  
Janice

~~~~~

[SIDEBAR]

I've cut out the special sig file that everyone uses when they e-mail customers, since we covered that in the previous chapter. But it was there. 😊

So what did Janice do? Sure, she picked up a failed order and encouraged the customer to try again, after being sure that the glitch was fixed. She's supposed to do that. But then she went way above and beyond...

She noticed that the customer had earlier incorrectly overpaid for a different product. She automatically credited the difference.

Would the customer ever have noticed? Not likely. If he had, would he have blamed us? No.



So why bother? Because it's the natural thing to do, **if** you are totally consumed with your customer's well being.

And that's the "takeaway lesson" here...

You, and every one in your company (including your spouse, if s/he's involved!), has to be infused with a **passion for customer delight, not mere satisfaction.**

Not just your support staff, either...

Your product development team.

Sales.

Marketing.

Everyone.

You'll know you've got it when you go out of your way to find and fix problems. And you know what happens when you embrace this "**delight your customers**" attitude?

Good things happen. Here's how Paul replied...

~~~~~  
Ken; (With apologies to Janice)

For years, I was an out-of-print and rare bookdealer.

"So what?" You say. "What has that got to do with me?"

Everything...

You see, a bookdealer handles hundreds of thousands of books. He learns a little about a lot of things. Authors, titles, and subjects, run through his hands, making instant impressions and telling wondrous stories in just a brief moment. Soon, he develops the ability to "feel" greatness in a single glance...to know, without question, he holds a treasure of a lifetime...

That ability has never left me.

In all that I do, I m a seeker of excellence. Those rare times I find it -in any field-make up for the vast illusions and imitations that pass before my eyes. When I find it, suddenly, the void is filled, the world is new, and I say: "I m not alone."

Ken, I m a hard buyer. I pass up buying products just because I don t like the service. And it doesn t take much to shut me down. I have probably lost out on some great items because the marketing was offensive. I have a trunk load of free ebooks on Internet marketing; some are good, most are bad, a few are just plain silly. You made me realize an important truth:

Money is not an obstacle to buying. I will pay whatever it takes, if the product is first-rate, the marketing exciting and motivating, and the service beyond expectation.

Ken, your marketing is hype. Brilliant hype I might add. What sets it apart is the message that rises from it when I consider its value. You infuse your message with believability. I trust you. You got me. Unlike that other fellow <> who tries to copy your style, (I never believed a word HE said, ) there is honesty embedded in the hype. I could tell. I fully expected you to deliver on your promise.

BOY, DID YOU DELIVER!

Only those who experience the worst can appreciate the best. And that makes all the difference. Just from reading your marketing message, I realize the many mistakes I made in my Web site and email marketing. But I vow this: I will follow your advice and commit to it s spirit.

So now to the matter at hand. I was a bit annoyed at not being able to download your last book. But here is the truth:

I WOULD HAVE PUNCHED THAT DAMN SUBMIT BUTTON AS MANY TIMES AS NECESSARY TO GET YOUR BOOK!

(So O.K., not really! But... you would have gotten a phone call from me today to place the order.)

Thank you, Ken, for your precious gift. No, not for the content of your outstanding book, nor its ridiculous price, or its devoted attention to usefulness and service. Thank you for your excellence.

Paul Bynum

Paul R. Bynum-Director  
Faucette School of Real Estate  
Licensed by S.B.P.C.E. #003  
Website: <http://www.realestate-school.net>

~~~~~

Did Janice win a customer for us? Nope. Seems he would have bought the next day anyway. (Of course, if this was a customer who was **peev**ed, she certainly would have “won one.”)

Did she make us any money? Actually, she cost us a few dollars (plus her time) in the short term.

Did she make a customer **delighted**? Absolutely.

And that, dear reader, results in a lifetime customer. One who’ll tell several friends, who in turn will become lifetime customers.

Janice’s actions did not show up in that quarter’s P&L statement or balance sheet. But chalk up one more big asset for SiteSell... **a raving fan.**

Perhaps you think that this sort of great service is simply an isolated incident? Not so. Here’s an e-mail thread that has literally came in just before press time...

~~~~~  
Hi Earl,

While going through the orders today I noticed that your order for MYWS! went through twice. The orders were a minute apart so you may have inadvertently double clicked on the submit order button.

In any case, I voided your second order so it shouldn t even appear on your credit card statement. If in fact you did want two copies of MYWS! I will reverse the refund and I apologize for the bother.

I thank you for ordering MYWS!.

Best regards,  
Janice

**And Earls’ reply...**

Hi Janice,

Yes, in fact I did double-click the button inadvertently and

was just getting ready to follow up on it. Many thanks that you noticed this and took care of it automatically.

This is the way customer service should work. I can't tell how impressed I am with the quick, professional service that you've provided.

I have to say that I've never received such quality, professional assistance as I have today.

BTW, if you want a testimonial for your customer service, you've got one.

Sincerely,  
Earl Adkins  
[smallville-usa@usa.com](mailto:smallville-usa@usa.com)

### **And Janice's final follow-up...**

Hi Earl,

Many thanks for your great e-mail! You sure know how to brighten a day.

I appreciate the time you took to let me know everything is all right.

Have a great weekend,

Janice

~~~~~

So... is that a lifetime customer, or what?

I happened to think about these incidents because I'm reading an excellent book right now...



E-Service: 24 Ways to Keep Your Customers When the Competition Is Just a Click Away

by Ron Zemke and Tom Connellan

AMACOM Books

ISBN: 0-8144-0606-8

In it, they state the obvious...

“Customer loyalty measured in repeat purchases and referrals is the key driver of profitability for online businesses.”

But what’s the key to “customer loyalty?” No, it’s not customer satisfaction! They show some fascinating data that proves “satisfied customers” are “at risk” of defecting to competitors. In other words, mere **satisfaction** falls short.



The key is to delight your customer. Score 10 out of 10 on customer satisfaction surveys. Because loyalty, as measured by the likelihood of repeat business, shoots up exponentially among “highly satisfied” customers.

So... **delight** your customers.

But here’s the **critical** point...

Don’t delight your customers because you’ll make more money. Yes, that **IS** the end result. Only one problem though...

... you can’t fake this. You have to build **delight** from the ground up. The foundation must be your **attitude**...

Care. Be obsessed with your customer’s success and happiness.

That attitude creates situations like the one above, over and over. Here’s the twist, though...

This “**ground up**” approach has to come from the “**top down.**” The #1 person at your company must infuse everyone with this attitude. Or it simply sputters.

In the article at the URL just below, Dick Lee talks about “adopting customer-centric values” and “instilling customer-centric values throughout the organization”...



CRM Guru.com

<http://www.crmguru.com/content/features/lee01.html>



The author is a **CRM (Customer Relationship Management)** consultant to large companies. Some firms literally spend hundreds of thousands on outside consultants and specialized software to manage customers.

Yet most fail to develop customer **delight** (that's why you always see the same companies (ex., DELL) used as positive examples over and over). For example...

High-powered, super-expensive semi-intelligent software continues to spit back useless, off-target answers to customer questions. And that gets them MAD.

Why? Why would big companies do that?

Because the **ground up** has not been built from the **top down.** There's no true commitment to the customer. If there were, someone would take the time to check what their customers are seeing, and how they're feeling about the responses they get.



And why would they do that? Why **should** they do that?

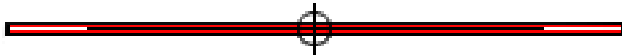
Because they care!

Instead, they look for quick solutions to handle the CRM issue. “Hey, if it costs \$100,000, we must care, right?”

Nope...

Follow this simple advice... **CARE**. Soon, you'll be "looking for trouble." When that happens, you'll be ahead of those high-budgeted dotcoms.

You'll be building lifetime customers who love what you do, and how you do it.



17.6. Customer Relationship Management

With your customers, **great relationships...**



... are what you're after!

And that, supposedly, is what the **CRM (Customer Relationship Management)** software solutions are supposed to deliver. However...

If you're a "little guy/gal", without a huge budget, large staff or call center, CRM software is not anything you need to worry about. In fact, you may wish to skim through this chapter on your way to other things.

Nevertheless, you can't swing a cyber bat without bumping into some reference to CRM, as well as the software packages that manage it -- so I will discuss it briefly.

CRM solutions are big dollar technologies for the really big boys/girls. In most cases, they're a crutch -- a band-aid solution to compensate for the absence of the **ground up and top down** dedication to building customer **delight**. Big companies seem to think that throwing dollars and technology at the CRM problem is the best solution.

Wrong.

We know that it's all about attitude.

How many big companies respond fast, personally, and with a thread that follows-up

to the same human until the problem is resolved?

None.

We do it, though... effectively, cheaply, and without all the CRM tech-gibberish. SiteSell receives in the order of 150 support e-mails per day, and each and every one of them is handled by a real live human.

We're 10 years away from artificial intelligence answering e-mails for us -- until then, **real attitude** is what counts.

So if we can do it... you can do it! 😊



Question?

What does CRM software actually do?

Ah...yes, I was just getting to that...

Customer Relationship Management Software manages (and I use the term loosely) all aspects of the customer experience. This can include...

- tracking past purchases
- determining customer preferences
- providing personalized content
- providing recommendations based on previous purchases
- sales force automation tools
- acquiring customer's personal data
- integrating different divisions of your sales force

To paraphrase the marketers of this type of software...

The main goal of CRM software is to **integrate customer service, marketing, sales and whatever else is relevant to your company in order to attract, then**

keep your customers.

In short, it's software that lets the right hand know what the left hand is doing. It facilitates greater selling, service, and marketing efficiency within a company.

Want to learn more?...



CRM Community

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

And...



SearchCRM.com

<http://searchcrm.techtarget.com/>



Need an example of a CRM software solution in action? Sure...

Say your programming team has finished updating your most popular software application. With a **CRM** solution, all departments of your business are seamlessly integrated. What does that mean? It means your sales, service, and support teams are immediately notified that...

a) An updated version of the software is available.

b) They should immediately contact existing owners of that product with an offer of an upgrade.



To boil it all down...

CRM solutions can ensure the resources within your company are used to the fullest potential, as well as ensuring there are no gaps in communication.

Used properly, and combined with a "ground up - top down" dedication to customer

MYSS! 2002... After the Sale

delight, the correct CRM solution could be a powerful tool. But it should be used only as a **safety net**...



SalesForce.com

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



Upshot.com

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

Upshot.com and Salesforce.com both offer low cost, good quality, sales force automation systems. Both these services are Web-based -- there is no software to install.



Other higher priced options include...



Maximizer 6.0

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



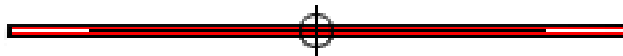
FrontRange Solutions' Goldmine 5.0

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



Saleslogix 2000

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



17.6.1. Personalizing Content

Personalizing the content of a Web site can be both an expensive and complicated undertaking. I mention it here merely for the intention of thoroughness. It is **not** currently an option for the small business owner -- all but the most basic solutions (setting a [cookie](#)) are much too expensive.

And I mean expensive. Big, **BIG** dollars.

Nonetheless...

You've probably already heard about the awesome sales-generating power that a personalized surfing experience generates. Imagine arriving at a Web page to find the site tailored specifically to your specifications -- content based on your choice of topic, your income level, or your specific geographic region.

And if that wasn't enough, these services will also adjust future experiences according to past responses to certain variables. They also offer the opportunity for input through surveys, feedback forms, etc.

[SIDEBAR]

Personalization of a Web site has become a big deal in the new millennium. Seriously, though, don't get carried away with this. Again, K-I-S-S.

Many sites that are overly focused on awesome personalization ask visitors to fill out numerous forms regarding their preferences. This raises privacy issues. And we also know that people hate filling out long forms.

The **best** personalization occurs as the visitor proceeds through your site normally,

making selections along the way...

- It does not make the visitor do extra work.
 - The replies are honest and reliable, since they occur naturally.
-

So... why personalization?

By implementing personalization solutions, businesses are trying to mimic the very successful one-to-one buying and selling relationship we have in the brick and mortar world. On the Net, the customer is just another face in the crowd. She feels like a nobody. Recognize her. Welcome her as a familiar face and great things will happen.

But it makes sense, right? After all, if a brick-and-mortar merchant does his job properly, buyers enjoy buying because they feel welcomed, appreciated, and special in his store. In short, they become loyal customers. Reproduce that online by personalizing content, and...

- **More browsers convert into buyers**
- **Average order size increases**
- **Repeat purchase frequency increases**

So it's no wonder that a great number of Net merchants are rushing to implement this new technology. In fact, Jupiter Communications says...

... "Of commerce sites surveyed, 40% of merchants currently use personalization and 93% of those that currently do not, plan to implement the practice in the next 12 months."



Bottom line?

Personalization solutions capitalize on the basic human desires to feel wanted and appreciated.

Here is an example...



Net Perceptions

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

Because site personalization solutions are out of the reach of the average netrepreneur, I'll just cover the basics here...

1) Personalization Engines/ E-Analytic Tools

These customize a visitor's experience based on choices she has made on previous visits.

Drawbacks? Before this really starts to work well, a customer has to visit and purchase a few times. Otherwise, there isn't enough information available to provide useful information.

An example of this sort of service is...



NetGenesis

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



2) Rules-Based Personalization Engines

These engines customize a Web page's content by consulting a set of rules determined by the site's designers. It's **not** done by appraising personal habits or interests, or evaluating previous selections or purchases.

Drawbacks?

The rules set by the designers are at best, nothing more than educated guesses. They may or may not be effective. This means the site will have to be rigorously monitored, and the rules set and re-set. What a pain!



Vignette

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

And...



Broadvision

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



3) Collaborative Filtering

Amazon.com is a good example...

Customer A buys products #1 and #3. Other customers who bought products #1 and #3 also found product #7 useful. Next time customer A returns, this is brought to her attention.

What's happening here?

The customer's selections are matched up with the selections of users with similar preferences to further personalize the buying experience (i.e., "People who bought this, also bought...").

Nice upselling technique!

And the drawbacks? Well, this is another process that works best after you've made several purchases. Still, it's a pretty neat service.



4) Instant Personalization

Instant personalization? Did I hear you correctly?

Yes... indeed you did. Angara is a company that provides customized content by

consulting its gigantic database compiled from a wide assortment of third parties. These include portals, marketing service companies, free ISPs, free e-mail services, to name a few. The chances are that if you've spent any time on the Web, Angara will have some information on you.

Angara works by dividing users into categories, and then building appropriate pages for each category. For example, males over 45 years of age who have income in excess of \$75,000, or single females with excess of \$100,000...



Angara

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



Personalization solutions start at 5 figures a month. Is delivering a personalized Web experience a dream for all but the biggest and most cash-rich companies?

Not necessarily!

For the netrepreneur, the easiest way to personalize the experience is to address customers by name in your newsletter. This is a fairly simple process, and is essential in re-affirming the relationship between you the seller, and your valued customer. It's more effective at letting your customer know you appreciate her business, and drawing her back to your site for further purchases.

And personalizing your site?

If your company doesn't sell dozens of products or solutions, it's likely you already have a pretty good idea of who your customers are, or will be! Do your best to thumbnail them and their personality types...

... And build your site to best reflect the needs and desires of that market!

That's all you need! Remember...

K-I-S-S!



17.7. Where's My Order?

Once the customer has decided to buy...

That's great!

But chances are she's waiting at home impatiently for your product to arrive! And even though she's selected ground shipping, with arrival slated between five and seven business days...

She phones your customer service after two days... after four days... after five days... and...

Hey! Where'd that profit margin go? I thought I saw it around here somewhere... rummage, rummage!

Why not let your customer track her order online? Then she'll know exactly where it is! And, best of all, you'll get your profit margin back!



TrackShip.net

<http://www.trackship.net/>

Trackship provides software that reads information from your shipping system, cross-references this with your courier's tracking number, and uploads this to the Web. Happy customers can now track their orders precisely. Best of all, this allows your customer service representatives to focus on more important things.



Bottom line?

Anticipate your customer's every need. Replying to a purchase with a confirmation e-mail is one thing, but allowing your customers to follow their products through the shipping process is another.

Take customer service to the next level by answering all possible concerns your customer may have. Do it automatically, via e-mail, so she's not chewing up your profit margin on your 1-800 number, with your customer service reps...

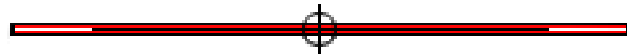
- Where's my order?
- When will I receive my order?
- Has my order been shipped?
- Has my order cleared customs?

Tracking software answers all these questions quickly, efficiently, and best of all...

Cheaply!

[SIDEBAR]

Providing online tracking services for your clients is really only an option if you're shipping a minimum of 5 shipments a day!



17.8. Make Return Shipping Easy

A great product means no customer returns!

Alright, alright, that was a no-brainer -- but don't skip ahead just yet. There are still lots of legitimate reasons for returning a product...

- Product damaged in shipping
- Product doesn't fit
- Customer changed his mind
- Wrong product shipped
- Product took too long to be delivered
- Product wasn't what the customer expected
- Product bought as gift, but the guest of honor already has one!

Product return policies probably don't factor into your customer service strategy, but

they clearly should. Recent stats indicate one-fifth of online shoppers have kept products **they would have otherwise returned**, if not for prohibitive shipping costs. My question to you is this...

If a customer is clearly unsatisfied with your product, and would return it if it could be done easily, do you think he'll ever return to your Web site to buy again?

Most probably not.

=====

So...

How do you turn a **negative into a positive?** A unsatisfied "never-to-return" customer into a raving fan?

Good question!

Why not provide a shipping label so your customer can return your product for free?

What a great way to build customer loyalty! And what better way to "walk the walk, and talk the talk" when it comes to customer service? What does your customer think when she sees a return shipping slip? That you DO care. That you want her to be happy -- in fact, you insist on it!

And guess what?

This only costs you **if the customer decides to return something**. All you have to do is take steps necessary to ensure this happens as **infrequently as possible**. **Ship the correct quality product quickly, package it properly, and follow up via e-mail**, and your refunds will be...

Zip! Ziltch! Zero!

=====

The Return Exchange is sort of a "fulfillment house" for returns. They'll take care of all your return needs -- whether it be returning products to the manufacturer, returning them to you for re-stocking, or liquidating them on their auction site, Finalcallauction.com. To reduce the occurrence of fraud, they also run all returns

through an extensive database of offenders who frequently abuse return policies.



The Return Exchange

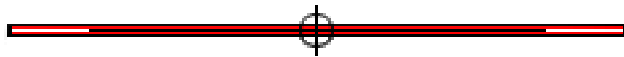
<http://www.thereturnexchange.com/>

And here's another company that helps make returns easy...



UNship.com

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



17.9. Build a Business... NOT a "Back-End"

Once someone has bought from you on the Web...

They're much more likely to buy from you again (provided your product and service are great). After all, your existing customers know that you deliver a fine product in good time, that your customer service is fabulous, and your guarantee is impeccable. To everyone else, you're just another unknown Internet commodity.

In short, it's easier to sell other products to existing customers than it is to acquire new ones. It's at this point that the terms "back-end" or "back-end strategy" start popping up with increased frequency. I'm hesitant to use the term "back-end" because most direct marketers use this term to mean...

"Keep slogging so-so products to the people who made the mistake of buying from us in the first place."

The connotation is...

Bang 'em out fast, and sell 'em fast.

In other words, keep the cash flowing steadily from your customers' pockets into your own. This is **not** a business... it's an exercise in dollar extraction, without a commitment to providing value.



Yes, of course, you want to build your business. And, of course, you want repeat customers. But the best way to do so is to offer **great products with genuine, high-value benefits**. And by digging deep to provide solutions that improve the lives of your customer.

There's no doubt that **ecstatic customers...**



... are repeat customers!

So don't build a "back-end." **Build a business.**



I suspect success is the "least prepared for" scenario on the Internet. Often you'll be so wrapped up in perfecting your current project, the thought of providing your customers with **additional** solutions is farthest from your mind. But it shouldn't be!

What happens if you develop your own proprietary software? You sell it on the Net, via direct download. Perfect! No shipping costs, no stocking costs, and no manufacturing costs.

But what you don't expect is just how well it sells. Because your product doesn't do a good job -- it does an **GREAT** job. Customers are raving. A couple of the big e-commerce sites have given the product glowing reviews. PC Magazine mentioned it in a recent article.

All good news, right?

But...

You've only got **one** product. Once your customer has bought from you -- that's it!

You've built credibility, a customer base, and established yourself as a reputable merchant, and now you've got nothing left to sell.

Why waste all this great publicity?

If you sell a truly fantastic product, your customer won't just buy from you again... she'd **prefer** to buy from **you** again.

But what happens when that customer returns to find you have nothing else to offer? How long will it be before she's forgotten you even exist?

Sadly, two mouse clicks!



Okay, let's be realistic. Sometimes, this is a lot easier said than done. After all, if you're running this business as a one or two person show, developing new products will cut into your marketing and promotion time significantly.

So while you're waiting for the new product to be developed, how do you...

1) Continue to sell to existing customers?

2) Keep in touch with existing customers?

Hey! You always ask all the right questions! 😊

You can...

- **establish a company newsletter**
- **offer extended customer service/ warranty options**
- **offer upgrades to a newer version with more features**
- **allow customers to join your affiliate program and receive a percentage of every unit sold.**

Remember, the value of a customer is immeasurable. Even if you can't immediately market a new product to your customers, keep them involved -- keep in touch.

Don't let them forget you!

Then, when you return with your next product, they'll say...

“Hey, I remember them. They developed that fantastic software. Maybe I’d better take a look at this.”



When **MYSS!** was little more than a glint in my eye, do you think I envisioned the rapid growth and success SiteSell.com would experience?

Hardly.

I was fully focused on getting the PennyGold story told properly. But I certainly built SiteSell around a model that could expand easily if and when things took off. And they certainly did! 😊

With the success of **MYSS!**, people came to trust us, and our pledge to OVERdeliver on value. So it’s only natural that they wanted other solutions from SiteSell.

But instead of rushing a pile of products out the door to take advantage of the customer’s willingness to buy from us, we grew **SiteSell** slowly. Yes, on the same solid foundation of value and credibility that initiated the trust in the first place. And that’s important. Vitally important.

The key here?...

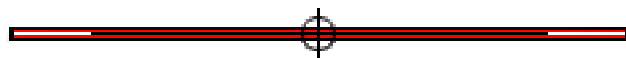
Build ethically, and with regard to your clients’ needs. Don’t rush to produce an inferior product.

Does this work?

Well... as we release more products, I see many of the same people buying over and over again. They’ve become faithful to the SiteSell brand. I guess that means it must!

Bottom line?

At the risk of repeating myself... **Build a business... not a “back end!”**



17.10. The **POWER** of Branding

When someone says “branding”, we immediately think big dollars, and well known gigantic companies -- like Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, IBM, and Proctor and Gamble, to name just a few. But online, you don’t need big dollars to “brand.”

We’re not talking about **labeling customers...**



... with a red-hot poker.

No. **We’re talking about drilling your unique brand, image, product, or product line into your customer’s brain.** Successful branding means a customer thinks of your product before she thinks of anyone else’s. And she immediately associates your brand with quality.

Here’s what branding guru Rob Frankel says...

“Branding is not about getting your targets to choose you over your competition. Branding is about getting your prospects to see you as the only solution to their problem.”



“The Revenge of Brand X” by Rob Frankel

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

How much do you know about branding? [Take Rob’s branding I.Q. test!](#)



Why do we associate branding with big companies? In order to brand effectively **on a large scale, you** require a lot of money. Most people will have to see your brand, image, or product numerous times before it begins to register with them. On a huge

medium such as the Internet, this means a huge outlay of cash, and millions of ad impressions.

But effective branding doesn't have to be about money. **In fact, branding starts simply by doing the most rudimentary things properly.**

If you're starting a new online venture, you may wish to brand your company name, your logo, or your product. Whatever you brand, it's important to identify what it is you will focus on. Then, it's simply a matter of integrating this into your Web site.

It is, however, crucial that you focus on this **before** you start building. It should make up an important part of your business development plan!

[SIDEBAR]

Ultimately, a brand is much more than just a logo and a slogan and a verbalization of the big picture. It's dedication to the vision that enables one to get all the nitpicking customer-focused details right -- from the time she arrives at the site, to the time she buys, to the customer support if needed -- that's how an e-brand is **really** developed!

Let's consider SiteSell.com as an example. As SiteSell.com grows, as does its affiliate force, **its ability to brand effectively increases with its expansion across the Net.** And how does SiteSell brand?

First of all, it OVERdelivers on each and every product that it stands behind. That's the most important criteria. Then...

Well, it's no surprise that all our products (okay, okay, **SBI!** is the exception) are titled... **Make Your "_____" Sell!**

First, you'll notice it has a nice "ring" to it. It's easy to remember. And it readily identifies the brand. Read these aloud...

- **Make Your Site SELL!**
- **Make Your Knowledge Sell!**
- **Make Your Price Sell!**
- **Make Your Words Sell!**
- **Make Your Net Auction Sell!**

MYSS! 2002... After the Sale

See?

Then we take it a step further by extending the **same look, feel, and design across all of our sites...**

The banner has a green header with the text "Price With Complete Confidence...". Below this is a dark green box with the text "MAKE YOUR PRICE SELL!". A navigation bar contains links: "login", "become an affiliate", "contact us", "world's most...", and "order now". The main heading is "Know Your Perfect Price™ in 50 Minutes". The text below reads: "Why is the Perfect Price™ so important?" That depends on whether you are considering a new product concept, launching a new product, or managing existing ones... Considering a new product concept? Not sure if it will fly? Imagine if you could know how much people would pay. You'd know if this new idea was worth pursuing... or not (think of the dollars and time saved).

Make Your **Price Sell!**
<http://mysps.sitesell.com/>

The banner has a purple header with the text "The Simple Art of e-Persuasion". Below this is a dark purple box with the text "MAKE YOUR WORDS SELL!". A navigation bar contains links: "become an affiliate", "contact us", "world's most...", and "order now". The main heading is "What Do YOU Sell? Want to Sell More?". The text below reads: Selling software on the Net? Infoproducts? A service? Million dollar cables for suspension bridges? If you want to sell more... Use the right words. Because words sell, not graphics. If you have any doubts, try this simple experiment. Take a look at this...

Make Your **Words Sell!**
<http://myws.sitesell.com/>

You'll also notice the logo is very distinctive, yet remains similar between the different products. Only the colors change. Let's say that a customer buys **MYSS! 2002** but is unaware of our unique pricing solution, **MYPS!**. If she sees the **Make Your Price SELL!** logo elsewhere on the Net, she'll immediately associate it with the **SiteSell.com** brand. And even if she doesn't buy it, the brand will stick forcefully in her mind.

In addition to consistency, we use subdomains for all our different products...

- <http://www.sitesell.com> -- Corporate Home
- <http://myss.sitesell.com> -- Make Your **Site SELL!**
- <http://mysp.sitesell.com> -- Make Your **Price Sell!**
- <http://myks.sitesell.com> -- Make Your **Knowledge Sell!**
- <http://myws.sitesell.com> -- Make Your **Words Sell!**
- <http://mynas.sitesell.com> -- Make Your **Net Auction Sell!**

Yup, "sitesell" is front and center again. Notice that it's always there, no matter what you do, or where you go? It's not by accident.

This is Branding 101. Anyone can do it. Find a theme, develop it, and stick with it. Make sure your brand name or logo is on every single page of your site. Build it into your text, your links, and even your newsletter. Expand it across your entire advertising network -- that includes your affiliate banners and anything you can think of.

Work on getting your name etched onto your customer's brain. That's what it's all about.



And the good news?

The basics are simple, and cheap. All you have to do is a little planning in advance.

Let's review the SiteSell.com example. We've got...

- **A catchy domain name that sticks in your head**

- A professional, simple, cross-site integrated look
- Sub-domains for new products to emphasize the “SiteSell” brand
- A simple clean logo carried across the different sites
- Great quality products at a very good price
- Large affiliate network that extends branding capabilities.

Anything here that demands a huge outlay of cash?

Nope. The SiteSell.com products’ Home Pages are not feats of state-of-the-art programming (OK, **Site Build It!** is the exception -- but we only tackled a project like this **after** establishing ourselves). There is no “special” secret at work here. What you see is pretty much what you get.

Yes, really!



And don’t under-estimate the power of branding on the Internet. Sure, in the brick-and-mortar world, there’s no way you could compete with the big boys/girls, without tons of cash.

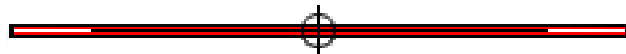
Online, though, all you need is a good product, a look, a dedication to OVERdelivery, and an eager affiliate force. After all, how long can you go surfing before you run into an Amazon.com banner? Exactly.

They’re everywhere!

Bottom line?

Build your brand. Yes, even if you think you’re too small to bother...

Think again. Now is the time!



18. Sites that SELL!

About one in a hundred Web sites **SELL** effectively. I've picked four sites to highlight. Two are large, well-financed companies. Two are small, one-product efforts. The point, of course, is that **it doesn't matter how large or well-financed you are...**

If you have the product, and if you have the smarts, you will succeed on the Web!

As you explore these sites, **review them against [this "must do" checklist of critical site-SELLING features](#).**



18.1. How Small Companies SELL!

Smaller companies have to **SELL** more **actively**. Since they are unknown, they must make creative use of strong **credibility-building aids** and **selling techniques** like...

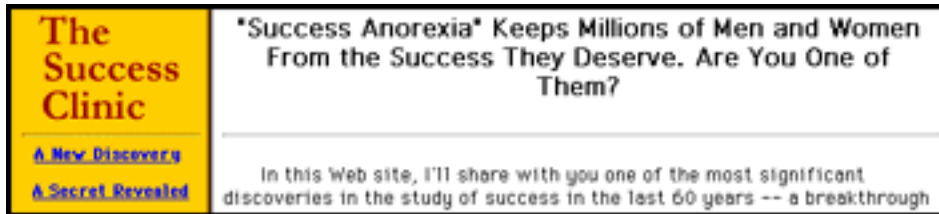
- riveting opener
- headlines that hold
- joints that pull
- testimonials that convince
- Gibraltar-solid guarantee
- irresistible offer and forceful call to action.



18.1.1. The Success Clinic -- Do You Have Success Anorexia?

I have no idea whether the product is any good or not (I suspect it's great), but this is a terrific sales site. Its strengths are...


- Sharp, short text
- Benefits-oriented
- Clear and concise
- The copy drags you through to the end, then forces you to respond
- They even have a nice, simple domain name that relates directly to their product...



This particular netrepreneur experiments. On the Web, if you have a great product, simply **keep trying until whatever you do works**. Two months after I visited the above **Opening Page**, the site led off with the following copy instead...



And, things just keep "a--chuggin' along." They get a brand new domain name -- "**successclinic.com**", plus new content and titles that remain as riveting as ever...

<p>The Success Clinic</p> <p>A Breakthrough Discovery</p> <p>A Solution That Works</p> <p>My Guarantee To You</p> <p>Permission To Succeed Chapter One</p> <p>The Seminars</p>	<p>Do you feel like you're going through life with one foot on the brake and one on the gas?</p>  <p>Have you ever said to yourself, "If I'm so smart, how come I can't get out of my own way?"</p> <p>John Gray, Ph.D., author of <i>Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus</i>, says: "Noah has created a remarkable system that transcends positive thinking and other motivational techniques to help you achieve success. Using humor and down-to-earth language, his book offers a step-by-step approach to help you create the life you want and deserve."</p>
---	--

The Success Clinic
<http://www.successclinic.com/>



See! It's never finished, is it? Just like the Ford commercial says...

The best never rests! 😊

See how a one-man band with a single product does it. [Explore the site now.](#) Pay special attention to how Noah St. John **builds credibility** and **SELLS**.



18.1.2. Web Pages That Suck

I reviewed the **Web Pages That Suck** site in the first edition of **MYSS!**. At that time, the boys had built a site that was fun and irreverent, **but it followed all the rules...**

While they had created a wonderfully **offbeat-funny** look and feel through their graphics and words, a look underneath the hood revealed **a site that took dead aim at getting the order...**

- The older pages led with a strong review from a well-known and respected source -- **these are the best testimonials of all.**

- The strong content and super-friendly approach created a strong empathy for these two “smart wackos.” Geez, I bought it just because they deserved it!
- The **Buy it here** was front and center -- impossible to be missed.

They changed page copy when they learned that their title was confusing prospects (“I thought it was just a book about sucky Web sites.”). To make the title more benefit-focused, they added “**Fixing & Preventing**” before the “**Web Pages That Suck**”...

Fixing & Preventing...



Web Pages That Suck

Learn Good Design by Looking at Bad Design

Homepage

Fast Company magazine calls WPTS the "Best for Improving Your Site's Look and Feel."

"One of the best ways to learn is by example. Here's a site, produced by a pair of graphic-designer professionals, that shows you what *not* to do." (June/July '98, p. 196.)

Speaking of things not to do, [the front page uses a very pretentious technique called an animated splash page](#). The problem with this type of page is it's only cool the first time you see it. Then it ages faster than a bad wine.

The Book

Contains excerpts from the book, background information, and some material that, for one reason or another, just didn't make the book.

Buy it here!

Find out where to get copies. There's a limited number of autographed copies available. Get Vincent and Michael's autograph before they overdose on the media hype!

Book Updates

Important and interesting material available only for those people who bought the book.

Book Signing at Borders

The bad boys of Web design will be up in the heartland of good design for a book signing at the Borders Bookstore in San Mateo, California. Here's the details:

Date: September 10
Time: 7pm
Place: Border's Bookstore
Location: 2925 El Camino Real, San Mateo, CA

I can't promise what we'll do, but we'll certainly try not to be boring.

Web Pages That Suck

<http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/home.html>

Lets see what's happening at “**Web Pages That Suck**” these days...

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!



Celebrating 5 Years of Sucking!
Web Pages That Suck.com

Where you learn good Web design by looking at bad Web design.

Fast Company magazine calls WPTS the "Best for Improving Your Site's Look and Feel."



What's New in Bad Design -- The Daily Sucker
There's always a new way to do something bad. I couldn't predict every new sucky design technique that would come along when I wrote the book, this page will keep you up-to-date. [Love examples.](#) (Digital Suckers® copyright 2002: Photo Disc, Inc.)



The Original Web Pages That Suck Examples
This is what originally made WPTS famous. Go to the [Daily Sucker](#) to see current suckiness that's infesting the Web along with some current examples of the bad old days.



The Book That Changed Web Design
Read about the best-selling Web design book that won't bore you to death. [How to buy the book.](#)

Web Pages That Suck

<http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/home.html>



Wow! Talk about evolution!

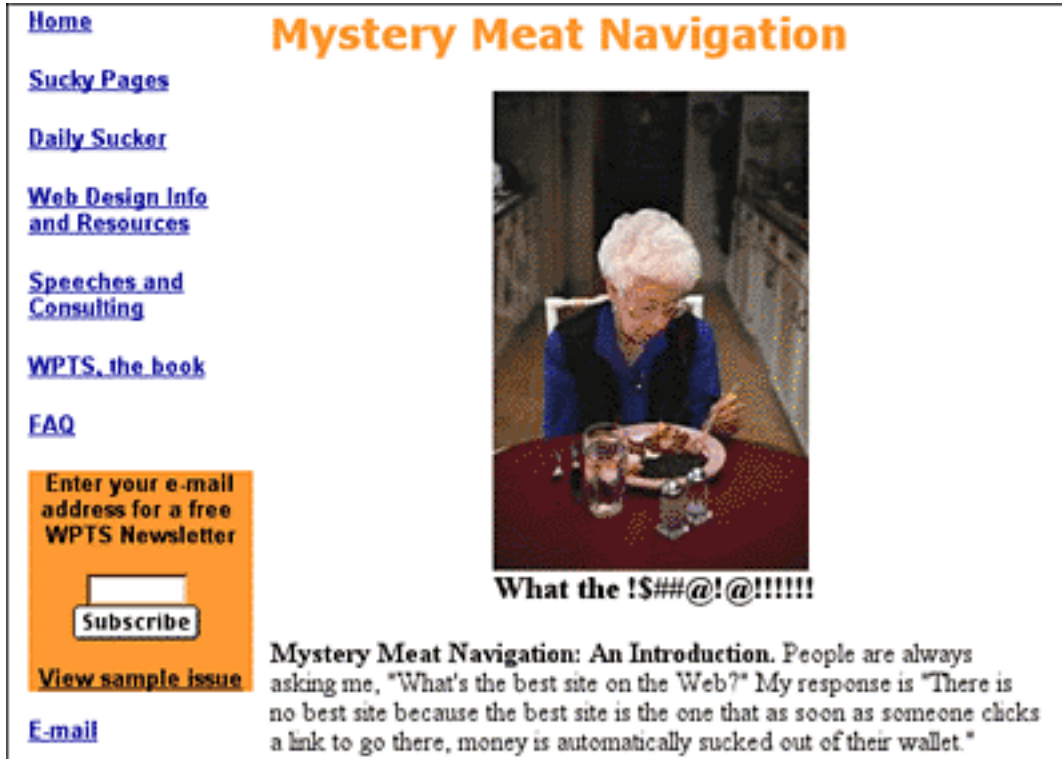
Notice the title? The "fixing and preventing" has disappeared, and there are no testimonials on this first page, although the book is still very much "front and center".

More significantly...

... What happened to the guys showing the gagging sign?

Where's that deliciously refreshing irreverence, and the "totally off the wall" look? This is by far, a much more subdued looking Home Page. Delving into the site, however, you find that humor is still prevalent -- this is still as hilarious, entertaining, and accurate as it has ever been!...

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!



Web Pages That Suck - "Mystery Meat Navigation"
<http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/badnavigation.html>



Okay, why the drastic change in the Home Page appearance?

Take another quick look at the two pages...

Perhaps the original was too funny, or too irreverent?

Or perhaps it simply "got old" which often happens to off-the-wall stuff . Hmmm....

All we can know for sure is that the change was implemented with one thing in mind -- **an increase in Conversion Rate**. Keep an eye on this site, and see whether or not they revert to their past style. If they don't, you can bet that this revised look brings more sales!

Make no mistake, here is a site that follows all the rules!



18.2. How Big Companies SELL!

Large, well-known companies don't have to spend the same degree of effort on outstanding copy, brilliant headlines, etc. Their customers arrive with different **mindsets**.

In a sense, you could almost say that when someone comes to Microsoft's site... **The order is theirs to lose.** Just don't make any mistakes.

At least, this conservative "just don't blow it" approach seems to be the norm. Too bad -- in many cases, they could do much better. All they need to do is to add a **bit** more salesmanship, a testimonial here and there, benefit-oriented copy, a newsletter...

However, allowing for a conservative orientation and individual circumstances, big companies who "get it" basically follow all the rules.

Their special emphasis lies in fast downloads, tight navigation and other usability issues. It's easy to make navigation flawless if you're only selling one product (at least it should be now!). But to do it when you are a company like Cisco -- well, that takes some special design skill.

[We've used Cisco already](#), so let's take a look at two other large companies who "get it"...



18.2.1. Dell

Shhhhhh!

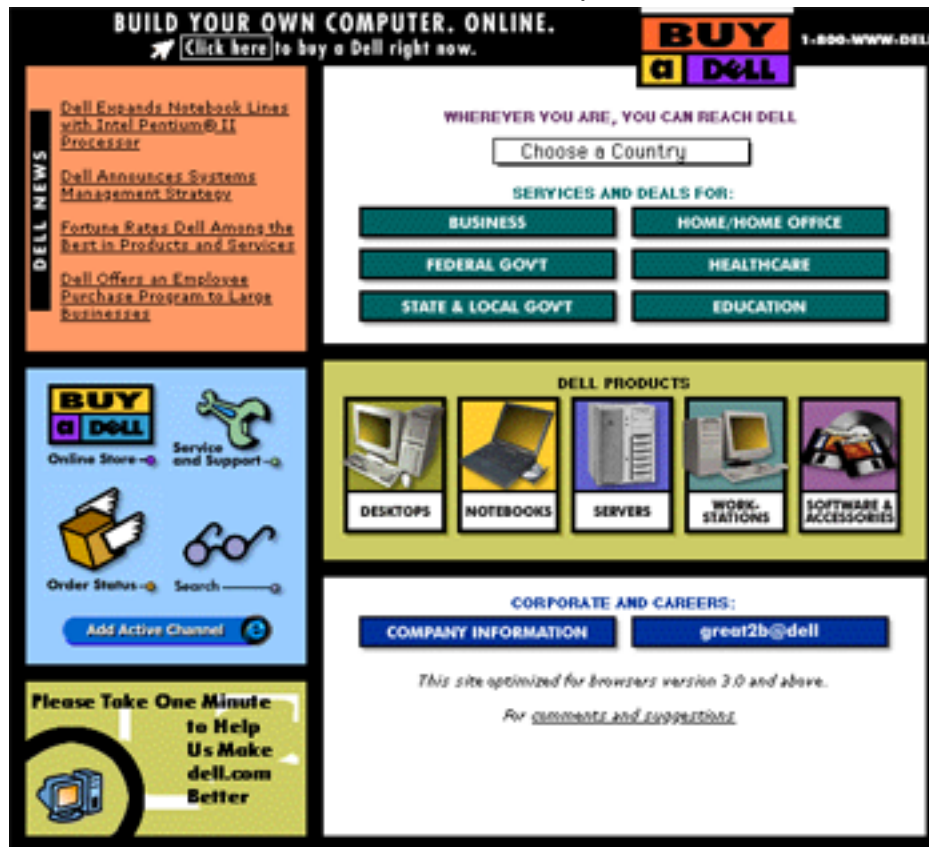
Can you hear it? That's **Dell Computers** growing... and growing... and growing!

Not a company to rest on its laurels, Dell continues to expand and improve its online presence. The main Home Page, [Dell.com](#), is even more simple than the one I critiqued in the first edition of **MYSS!**. Now it simply serves as a the main gateway to the site and it leaves little room for any questions in the mind of the visitor.

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!

Let's follow the evolution of the site in chronological order...

In the first edition of MYSS!, when I compared Dell's earliest site...



To a later version of the same site...



I found that although some small companies modify sales-related issues to improve the situation, Dell modifies usability...

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!

And that's exactly what they've done again with this newest version!...



Dell Computer Corporation

<http://www.dell.ca/>

Check it out!...

- The graphical layout is even cleaner, “easier on the eye.”
- The organization of the site is more apparent.
- The navigation is more intuitive, easier to follow.
- The look is simpler -- less tables and graphics.

MYSS! 2002... Sites that **SELL!**

- Page load-up is lightning fast, even with the slowest of dial-up access.
- The page remains at 800X600 resolution, the accepted standard for size.

The whole page just feels a whole lot more user-friendly. And that's important for a big company.

Beyond the Home Page, their navigation system makes shopping for the computer that's just right for you a snap. [Surf Dell now to see how they do it.](#)



18.2.2. Amazon.com

When I reviewed the Amazon.com site for **MYSS!**, it had just added CDs to its inventory, making the “**The Worlds Biggest Bookstore**” moniker somewhat inaccurate. Now, you can buy anything, and I mean anything, on the Amazon site. Tools, hardware, lawn furniture, charcoal grills, chrome cocktail shakers, toys, and, of course, books and CDs.

This is one **HUGE** site.

As Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon.com, once said...

... “**the smallest amount of friction can stop people**” from proceeding through your site. So for a large site, the main concerns are navigation and other usability issues.

Good usability makes the experience “frictionless.”



So the question of the hour... has the implementation of a gigantic inventory compromised Amazon's ability to do what it does best? That is, can it still deliver superb navigation, ease of use, and personalized service at the drop of a hat?

Let's have a look...

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!

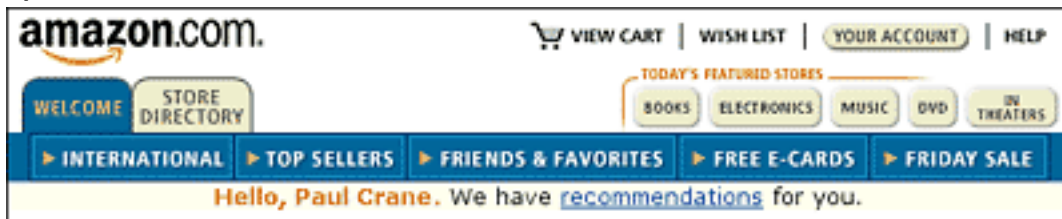


Amazon.com

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



1) Personalization --See the "Hello, Paul Crane"?...



Nice touch, isn't it? That's the cyberspace equivalent of the merchant shaking a customer's hands firmly, and leading him into the store. See how the pros do it? Amazon wastes no time **building relationship that is so critical for online success...**

"We have recommendations for you."

Again, a nice touch. Amazon uses "**collaborative filtering**" -- a process by which your responses are combined with the responses of others to provide content that may be of interest to you! For instance, Paul's previous purchases of

ecommerce-related books yield a particular list of book recommendations...

Browse Books Favorites

Edit Favorites

Categories

- [Business & Investing](#)
- [Computers & Internet](#)

Sub-Categories

- Business & Investing > Industries & Professions > [E-commerce](#)
- Marketing & Sales > Sales & Selling > [Management](#)
- Business & Investing > Marketing & Sales > [Sales & Selling](#)
- Business & Investing > [Industries & Professions](#)
- Business & Investing > [Marketing & Sales](#)
- Business & Investing > Marketing & Sales > [Marketing](#)
- Computers & Internet > [Home & Office](#)
- Computers & Internet > [Hardware](#)
- Home & Office > Internet > [Internet Newcomer](#)
- Computers & Internet > Hardware > [PC Buyers' Guides](#)

▶ [See All 22 Books Favorites](#)

Recommendations

[Computers & Internet](#)



Internet Marketing And Search Engine Positioning - A "Do It Yourself" Guide

Ann Phillips, Editor, BookStar Reviews

"I have discovered the definitive guide for "net newbies" like myself, to intermediate users who want a broader understanding of how to increase search engine popularity. I recommend it highly." [Read more](#)

2) A “creme de la creme” Search Engine -- Okay, so far, so good! Now, let’s see what happens when Paul does a search for “body building”, and clicks “go”...

SEARCH

Books

bodybuilding

GO!

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!

And it very quickly becomes apparent that this is no ordinary Search Engine. Not only does the engine find over 81 relevant titles, it automatically shows the most popular ones...

Most popular matches for "bodybuilding"

- [The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding](#) -- by Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bill Dobbins (Contributor); Paperback
Our Price: **\$20.00** -- Or [buy used](#) from \$13.95
- [Alpha Male : The Path to Hardcore Natural Bodybuilding](#) -- by Sam Delucia; Paperback
Our Price: **\$18.50**
- [The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding](#) -- by Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bill Dobbins (Contributor); Hardcover
Our Price: **\$40.00** -- Or [buy used](#) from \$14.44



Gone is the mishmash of cluttered results, and gone is the headache of sorting through choices to find the ones in stock -- Amazon makes finding what you want as easy as falling off a log. Paul even has the option of sorting the results exactly the way he wishes...

Sort by:

✓ Featured Items

Most Available

Bestselling

Avg. Customer Review

Price: Low to High

Price: High to Low

Publication Date

Alphabetical: A to Z

Alphabetical: Z to A

GO!

Remember what Jeff Bezos said about a "frictionless experience"? That's exactly what Paul's getting here!

Here's another smart, and equally helpful feature...

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!

4.  **121 Internet Businesses You Can Start from Home : Plus a Beginners Guide to Starting a Business Online**
by Ron E. Gielgun (Paperback - July 1997)
Average Customer Review: ★★★★★
Usually ships in 24 hours

List Price: \$49.95
Our Price: **\$15.96**
You Save: **\$3.99 (20%)**

 Add to cart
Or [buy used](#) from \$8.00

5.  **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Starting an Online Business**
by Frank Fiore, Gordon Whyte (Paperback)
Average Customer Review: ★★★★★
Usually ships in 2-3 days

List Price: \$18.95
Our Price: **\$15.16**
You Save: **\$3.79 (20%)**

 Add to cart
Or [buy used](#) from \$10.00

6.  **Starting and Running a Business on the Internet**
by Alex Kiam, Tim Ireland (Paperback - January 2000)
Average Customer Review: ★★★★★
Usually ships in 2-3 days

List Price: \$44.95
Our Price: **\$9.56**
You Save: **\$2.39 (20%)**

 Add to cart
Or [buy used](#) from \$9.56

Take note also of the item's status highlighted in red... **"Usually ships in 2-3 days."** This is important. Ever order something only to find out afterwards that it's out of stock indefinitely? Annoying. **Very...**



... very, annoying. Plus, you feel like you've been duped -- you wouldn't have placed the order had you known the item was unavailable. In your mind, you know that you won't buy from that company again.

The point is... infuriating your customers even slightly is a big "no-no!"

Post the status of each item clearly and openly. "In stock" / "Usually ships in 2-3 days" / "Usually ships in 2-3 weeks" is how Amazon.com labels its items.

Notice how there's no "Temporarily out of stock"?

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!

That's a negative.

"Usually ships in..." is a positive.


Posting an item's order status may cost a few orders short term but **it will gain respect and trust in the long run.**

And what's more important?


[SIDEBAR]

Do a search across all available categories. This results in top few listings for several different sections -- books, video, Amazon store, etc. Amazon is subtly reinforcing its vast inventory...


Top matches for "body building" from all stores

 **Books:** [See all 88 results in Books...](#)

- [The Men's Health Hard Body Plan : The Ultimate 12-Week Program for Burning Fat and Building Muscle](#) -- Larry Keller (Editor); Paperback
- [Encyclopedia of Body Building : The Ultimate A-Z Book on Muscle Building](#) -- Gerard Thorne, et al; Paperback
- [Sliced/State-Of-The-Art Nutrition for Building Lean Body Mass](#) -- Bill Reynolds, Negrita Jayde (Contributor); Paperback

 **Video:** [See all 5 results in Video...](#)

- [Building the Body Beautiful: Stomach and Legs](#) -- Building the Body Beautiful; VHS
- [Building the Body Beautiful: Chest, Shoulders & Back](#) (1992) -- Building the Body Beautiful; VHS
- [Chris Imbo: Peak 10 Fitness, Vol. 2: Lower Body Sculpting Plus Energy Building Aerobics](#) (1995) -- Peak 10 Fitness, Chris Imbo; VHS

 **Health & Beauty:** See all results at [drugstore.com](#)

- [drugstore.com: Awapuhi Shampoo, Body-Building Cleanser](#); Paul Mitchell; 16.9 fl oz
- [drugstore.com: Body Building Mousse](#); Pantene Pro-V; 6.6 fl oz
- [drugstore.com: Botanical Body-Building rinse, Detangler for Fi...](#); Paul Mitchell; 8.5 fl oz

Amazon continues to go above and beyond the call of duty.

It offers Paul the opportunity to be notified by e-mail each time a new book on "body building" arrives...

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!



Now suppose Paul decides to have a closer look at the “**Encyclopedia of Body Building: The Ultimate A-Z Book on Muscle Building**”, by Gerard Thorne.

When he gets there, he gets a couple of extremely helpful features. He can see what other like-minded buyers are purchasing...

Customers who bought this book also bought:

- [*The Gold's Gym Encyclopedia of Bodybuilding* by Ed Connors \(Editor\), et al](#)
- [*Bodybuilding 101 : Everything You Need to Know to Get the Body You Want* by Robert Wolff](#)
- [*Maximize at Last* by Dwayne II Hans, et al](#)
- [*Understanding Body Building Nutrition & Training : Practical, Quick Reference, Answers to Common Bodybuilding Challenges* by Chris Aceto](#)

Or find similar books by the same author...

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!

BOOK INFORMATION

Explore this book
[buying info](#)
[customer reviews](#)
[rate this item](#)

See more by the authors
all books by [Gerard Thorne](#)
all books by [Phil Embicton](#)
all books by [Gerard Thorne](#)
all books by [Phil Embicton](#)
all books by [Doris Barnilleaux](#)

Customers also bought
[these books](#)
[these other items](#)

Share your thoughts
[write a review](#)
[e-mail a friend](#)
[about this item](#)

3) Interaction -- Amazon asks its readers for book reviews, and gets them. These “no-cost” reviews are offered to others interested in the book or product -- an instant “reader survey,” which is valuable to those trying to make a buying decision...

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful:

★★★★★ **improve your confidence in and out of the gym**, April 18, 1999
Reviewer: [Ali \(Tilave@aol.com\) \(see more about me\)](#) from Mclean, Virginia
An easy to follow guide for excellent gains in the gym. This book provides an extensive ref
improve their muscle mass. If you are new to bodybuilding, I would definitely recommend

Was this review helpful to you? ☐ YES ☐ NO

4) Ordering is unbelievably easy...

MYSS! 2002... Sites that SELL!



While a real shopping cart is nice and solid, 1-Click Shopping makes ordering a snap, and easier than picking up the phone to your local bookstore! In fact, Amazon has **patented** its one-click shopping process...

See the “Add to Wish List” button? Clicking on this lets you compile a list of your most coveted goodies, and mail off surprises to your friends and family with a personalized message. You can remind them what a splendid fellow you are, and how your love for them would be best rewarded by a new cordless drill from

Amazon.com. 😊

5) After sale service -- A good part of **MYSS! 2002** deals **not only with getting the sale**, but how to **continue building the relationship** between merchant and customer after the sale. This is something many Internet merchants overlook. But not Amazon. Nope, these guys really have it together...

An order from Amazon brought a barrage of e-mail into my mailbox...



First, an e-mail welcomes me into the Amazon “experience.” Next, a second e-mail confirms my order, and finally, a day or so later, another e-mail informs me that my order had been shipped. See how Amazon addressed any and all of my possible online ordering concerns **before I even had a chance to worry?**

Fantastic!

6) Site Reorganization -- Remember when I discussed doing a [site re-org earlier](#), using SiteSell as an example? I said there were only two reasons to do a re-org...

1) The business outgrows the original architecture.

2) The Net outgrew the site.

Cast an eyeball (or both) over the Amazon site. Pretty easy to see why they changed the site, right? After all, you can't go from the “World's Biggest Bookstore” to what is probably the world's most all-encompassing online store without a bit of revamping.

It's not surprising that Amazon.com has used its immense market share and branding power to expand into a gigantic online marketplace.

What is surprising is just how well they've done it!



Surf on over to Amazon, and spend some time browsing. Search for some new patio furniture, or a reciprocating saw -- it doesn't matter. This site works. No matter what you're looking for! It isn't flashy, but it works. **And it successfully draws you**

into the buying process.

As you see, the site revamping had only one main purpose -- **increase sales**. The site isn't any more exciting than before, in fact it really isn't that different from the original. Pay attention to this...

Amazon was doing an entire revamp anyway, right? They could have changed the entire interface at the same time -- new graphics, navigation, layout, the works. But they didn't. Why? **Because the original interface worked fine**. People were comfortable with it. They knew how to use it. They knew where everything was. So...

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"



Function is much more important than form. Amazon.com's site may not win any "Cool site of the Year" awards... but it works. And that's what is most important!

Kudos are definitely in order. To move from books... to books **and** CDs... to a site of the **magnitude** we see here, while **still maintaining** all the characteristics that made the first two versions of Amazon so great...

... is amazing!

These guys are the reigning kings of e-commerce. Visit the site often. Learn from the best. Pay close attention to how Amazon personalizes the online shopping experience. Then... do the same thing to your site!



7) Customer Support -- When you buy with Amazon's patented one-click process, you get a message stating something to the effect that if you place another order within a 30 minute time frame, they'll try to combine the two orders to save you shipping costs.

Nice upselling technique.

Anyway, I decided I'd test their support staff by ordering two items that I knew couldn't be shipped together. Then I would lodge a complaint when I found they didn't arrive at the same time. So I ordered a CD, which they ship by courier, and a

book, which comes by regular ground mail.

Two days after ordering, the CD arrived via Purolator (ground). By itself, just as I had expected. (The book would be another 10 days!) Feigning discontent, I banged off a quick, "how-come-my-orders-weren't-combined-to-save-me-cash-as-promised" e-mail and hit "send". Then I checked my watch, and sat back to wait.

How long did it take? Any guesses? 12 hours? 24?

Consider the sheer size of Amazon.com. Consider just how many orders, how many complaints they get in an hour. Any bets?

I hope you're sitting down for this because...

Believe it or not, **I got a personal response to my e-mail in under four, count 'em, 4 hours.** The message was very courteous, explaining in detail what was already stated on the site, and expressing the hope that all would still be well between us. Very nice!

If a company the size of Amazon.com can **respond personally** to e-mails this quickly, there's absolutely no excuse for anyone else. We should all do so well!

Support gets an A+ for speed, personalized response, and courtesy. Well done!

8) Incentives -- I discussed the super-smart way Amazon.com uses incentives. For a refresher, [click here](#).

Great stuff, Amazon! Still the best on the Web -- awesome site, service... heck, awesome everything. Amazon makes the buying experience painless, even fun!



18.3. Experience Speaks

OK, time for some **pearls of wisdom** from others who have **"been there, done that... and won!"**

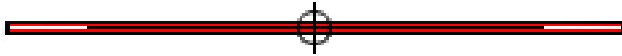
These entrepreneurs have gone the trial-and-error route to success. Through

MYSS! 2002... Sites that **SELL!**

months and years of relentless experimenting, they have learned what it takes to succeed in Web sales.

And now they're going to share this priceless info with you. OK, enough of my voice for a while. **Here's what others feel you must do to...**

... Make Your Site SELL!



18.3.1. Learning from the ShopIrish Webstore

[SIDEBAR]

ShopIrish.com by Creative Irish Gifts, brings the largest selection (500+) of unique and hard-to-find Irish gifts to the Web. It came into existence over ten years ago for a special purpose... to support the peacemaking efforts of the Irish Children's Fund (ICF), a non-profit organization.

More recently, Creative Irish Gifts has extended its support to the Northern Ireland Children's Project, another peacemaking non-profit organization. Purchases from Creative Irish Gifts support peace in war-torn Northern Ireland through these charities.

Rory O'Conner <St.Patrick@shopirish.com>, the Webmaster at Creative Irish Gifts, shares these inspirational lessons they have learned. Copyright (c) 1998, Rory O'Conner, all rights reserved. Used by permission.



Creative Irish Gifts
<http://www.shopirish.com/>

Creative Irish Gifts is a unique specialty item catalog with a non-profit focus that began on our family's dining room table ten years ago. Being homegrown, we've always operated under the principles of simplicity (doing a lot with a little) and innovation. We realized the potential of a website, but didn't have much money with which to play. So I built one myself.

The Creative Irish Gifts website went live in October of 1997. Since then we've received more than \$60,000 in sales directly over the Web. Web sales have grown steadily from 1% of our total business in the beginning, to 5% more recently. For Creative Irish Gifts, 5% annualized is a \$200,000 chunk of business. Our out-of-pocket cost? About \$8,000 in both site development and marketing.

Building, maintaining and marketing the site ourselves has been a rich learning experience. We've learned from both our successes and our mistakes. First, our successes:

LEARNING FROM SUCCESSES

1. HAVE A PASSION FOR WEB MARKETING. This is the most important element. I love everything about what I'm doing -- from design, to programming, to interacting with customers. If I had anything less than passion, the site would not be a success.



2. CONSTANTLY ACQUIRE BOTH TECHNICAL SKILLS AND WEB MARKETING EXPERTISE. It's a beautiful thing to dream up a Web marketing strategy and know how to execute it technically. I couldn't sit down and write any "fresh" JavaScript or Perl, but I know enough about coding to "re-heat" most any freely-available script on the Web and make it work for us. Cross-functionality of discipline is the way of the future for the cyber-savvy marketer.



3. MAINTAIN SITE STRUCTURE AND AESTHETIC INTEGRITY. I'm not a designer by nature, but I do understand that people won't hang around (much less buy from) a site that looks shoddy and disorganized. Shopirish.com is not cutting edge, avant-garde design; but it's got a "classy" image, sensitivity to download times and intuitive navigation. Customers tell us so.



4. TARGET YOUR ADVERTISING. We bought banner space for several Irish-related keywords on Yahoo, as well as on the Boston Globe's website. Both turned out to be well worth the investment.



5. STUDY LOGFILE STATISTICS. I know exactly where people are coming from

and what they are doing on the site. The information is readily available for me to make fact-based (vs. “shot-in-the-dark”) marketing decisions. That is, I know what customers are interested in and can make sound judgments based on that knowledge.



6. OFFER VALUE AND INCENTIVES. The Web is not so different from any other marketing medium. Offer good enough value and customers will buy. Offer incentives on top of good value and customers will buy more. Our sales peak when we announce special offers such as free shipping or web-only sales. We save on overhead when customers use the Web, so we use the cost savings to “incentivize” the purchase.



7. COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS. The web marketer’s Field of Dreams is, “Communicate, and they will come (in droves).” We offer visitors the option to be included on our e-mailing list to be updated on sales, special offers and other new developments at Shopirish.com. We communicate regularly... and those little reminders go a long way. It is a no-fail way to drive sales over the site.



8. OFFER FEATURE-BASED CONTENT. I have the unique advantage of being a photographer and have stockpiled a good number of Irish scenes of my own. So another “hook” for us is our “Irish Photo Gallery” and a “Send an Irish Postcard” system at the site. The latter in particular has turned out to be an enormous success. Site visitors actually drive more site visitors by simply drawing their friends to the site to pick up postcards. On top of good value, we give visitors more reasons to come to our site again and again.



9. INCLUDE A “REQUEST FOR CATALOG” OPTION ON THE SITE. Hard reality: shopping from a Web catalog is still not as rich an experience as shopping from a print catalog. But one thing the Web does offer is incredible reach. By allowing new customers the choice of shopping from the web or requesting a free print catalog from the site, the potential for customer base expansion is infinite. Getting a nice print piece in the mail also validates the legitimacy of a website.

10. OFFER ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT OPTIONS. Even though we offer SSL, some

people still don't want to give credit information over the Web. Our "Call me for credit info" option allows customers to place a web order minus credit information, which we call them for the next business day. It isn't ideal for us, but once we have customers' information they can use the "Repeat customer -- card info on file" payment option. While we don't have the top-of-the-line software that "remembers" visitors' information, repeat customers appreciate not having to input card info with every order. Obviously there is potential for problems, but we've had very few. It's another way to build attachment.



11. COMMIT TO TIMELY, QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE. We respond to customer e-mail inquiries with quality information within 24 hours. We value the voice of our customer and give visitors feedback opportunities all over the site. I need to hear how the site is functioning, if there are any bugs, etc. So listening to what our customers say is critical to the site's success. Also, the positive feedback and encouragement keeps me going.



LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

But it's not all gravy. Here are a few valuable lessons I realized the old fashioned way -- by making mistakes.

1. DON'T USE FRAMES. [Frames](#) seemed like a good idea at the time I built the site, but they've caused much heartache. To my surprise, not all of our visitors have frames-enabled browsers. I tried to have some NOFRAMES tags for these people, but it just isn't adequate. Even worse, search engines are not indexing the sub-pages of our site because of the frames. By using frames we've lost much potential in terms of exposure. Don't do it.



2. ADVERTISE YOUR SITE TO EXISTING CUSTOMERS. If we could do it all over again, we wouldn't just list the site URL in our catalog, we'd advertise it. When we started out we were tentative about the Web as a viable medium for shopping, so we put the URL in our catalog in with our contact information (just more small type). Our catalogs have been our primary form of communications with our customers and print only once a year, so there was no going back once we realized the site was proliferating. On our printed materials next year we'll be urging customers to SHOPIRISH on- line. Why? St. Patrick would.

3. CUTTING CORNERS IN THE INTEREST OF TIME. I still have to go back and edit weak HTML I hastily coded in the early days. I always thought I could get to it when I had “more time.” “More time” never came and before long I was looking at hundreds of HTML pages that needed editing. There are solutions, but it’s always easier to spend the extra time up front getting it right.

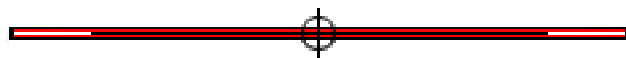


4. NOT GETTING DIGITAL PRODUCT IMAGES FROM THE SOURCE. We made the mistake of assuming we could get the images from our print catalog designer in a digital format. Wrong. They wanted \$50 per image to exhumate the images from digital tape and put them on a Zip disk. Being a small operation we simply couldn’t handle that cost for 300-400 images. I had to scan images from the catalog, resulting in marginal image quality.



5. USING A SHOPPING CART THAT CAN’T HANDLE SIZES. The products database is four times bigger than it needs to be and is a nightmare to maintain simply because I need a separate SKU for every size in the catalog.

Creative Irish Gifts (<http://www.shopirish.com/>) is proof positive that you don’t need millions of dollars to launch an effective Web marketing campaign. In fact, you don’t even have to quit your day job -- I’m a “moonlight marketer.” What does help is to have an already-existing direct marketing business in place, a good understanding of both marketing and technology, and most importantly, **passion**.



18.3.2. Advice from Signature Software

[SIDEBAR]

Signature Software, Inc. is the leading international producer of custom handwriting fonts and the only producer of **custom cursive handwriting fonts**. Their mission is to build and improve personal and business relationships, utilizing personalized handwritten correspondence. Headquarters and primary production facility are located in Hood River, Oregon, USA.

Dave Fenwick <DFenwick@SignatureSoftware.com>, President and Chief Web Weenie of Signature Software Inc., has written this experience-based advice to help

you sell on the Web. Copyright (c) 1998, Dave Fenwick, all rights reserved. Used by permission.



Signature Software
<http://www.SignatureSoftware.com/>

The concept behind the products of Signature Software is to **provide a personality** behind the inherently soulless computer and computer correspondence. So the SigSoft web site needs to project a persona of its own, both to extol the benefits of SigSoft's personal handwriting font products and to entice potential customers into buying.

Although the site offers company background, product support, and even a fun live video camera out our office window, the primary purpose of the site has always been to make it as easy as possible for a visitor to buy. The current design is simple yet interesting, familiar yet new, **but most of all informative**. The site will entertain the most intrepid surfer with hidden links to obscure pages, while at the same time provide straightforward answers to questions with a **minimum of time and clicks**.

The SigSoft site has undergone three major transitions since its birth in late 1995...

- The first was a plain, text-only, three-level deep site with answers to common product questions and a list of phone numbers that our marketing department threw together from existing sales literature.
- A year later, we then paid \$5,000 to have a professional design and build us a creative, unique site that was completely different from anything on the Internet (as far as we could tell). We achieved our goal of a unique site and got way more than our money's worth, but the design was so obscure that it really only appealed to a very narrow segment of web browsers.
- After a year of customer (and employee) comments, the marketing department returned to the drawing board and created a straightforward site that has the familiar look of our print ads, and most importantly, **has a direct way to buy**.

After all the trials and tribulations, we distilled our web site requirements down to ten

basic tenets...

1. BE QUICK. The home page has to load and come up quickly before a potential customer has a chance to look elsewhere. If graphics are used on the home page, make them small and light on storage. Make sure all pages are understandable without graphics. If you need to provide more detailed graphics, then just provide a thumbnail and link to a bigger graphic. Most animations are out because they take too long to load and run. Code for the lowest common denominator of visitor on the home page; you can then be more demanding about their hardware, plug-ins, and connection speed in further links.



2. BE CONSISTENT. Tie all the pages of the site together with a familiar header, footer, logo, banner, layout, etc. in the same place on every page. Once a potential customer has four or more pages open in their browser, there should be a way to instantly identify a site by some recognizable landmark so they become more comfortable on your site. And comfortable customers buy.



3. BE DIRECT. From the home page, provide a direct means to satisfy the needs of potential customers regardless of their destination. In other words, have an easy-to-find map to understandable topics. Recognize the primary destinations of your customers and route them there quickly. A potential customer may get frustrated looking for Downloadable Software Updates if it's hidden in a Help link off the Products page.



4. BE ENTICING. Right on the Home page, offer a special deal just for “coming in the doors.” This could be a free giveaway, discounts, coupons, information, whatever. Make your potential customer feel special the moment they arrive. Try to use or feature products in the presentation of your pages. Signature Software actually uses examples of handwriting fonts to make “personal” appeals.



5. BE CONVENIENT. Make it easy to BUY! Provide a fast means to order every possible way. This includes by phone, fax, online, US mail, using check, ANY credit card, cash, almost anything. The last thing you want to do is place an obstacle in your potential customer's way by not allowing them to use their beloved American

Express card. Mail or fax-in order forms should be simple and easy to complete. If you cannot afford your own on-line order fulfillment, one can be provided for you. You can simply arrange to have one of the thousands of on-line malls to carry your products and link to them. They get a piece of the action, of course.



6. BE HONEST. Offer a money-back guarantee. Customer service should be easy to find and customer satisfaction is EVERYTHING! Word-of-mouth is your best advertising and customer referrals are free.



7. BE INFORMATIVE. Don't just explain your own products, inform your potential customer about the entire market you're in. Become the source for all knowledge in your field and visitors need not go elsewhere to make an informed decision.



8. BE COOPERATIVE. Align yourself with complementary marketing partners. Cross links between multiple sites will bring in more potential customers for you both. This is one of the least expensive ways to advertise.



9. BE REAL. On the web, a fly-by-night operation can look just like Ford motor company. Assure your potential customers that you are a real company and you're here to stay and you've really sold products over time to others. Signature Software even has a live video camera at the office that's always available for viewing on the web! Brag about how many products you've sold because it will reassure potential customers that they're not the first customer, nor likely to be the last.



10. BE VISIBLE. Promote your site everywhere possible. Post announcements in newsgroups. Put your web site address at the bottom of email signatures. Buy banner advertising at related sites. Build co-marketing relationships. Create reasons for everyone to visit your site. The best problem you could have is not enough bandwidth to your site to handle all the hits.

By following these ten basic tenets, Signature Software has found a way to BE SUCCESSFUL! Although the Web was not SigSoft's first marketing venture, it is

quickly becoming our best. If you're passionate about what you do, that passion will become apparent through your Web site.

So get out there and SELL!



18.3.3. The Success Clinic's "Words to Succeed By"

[SIDEBAR]

Noah St. John is the founder and President of The Success Clinic, and publisher of a terrific book entitled, "Success Anorexia: What Really Causes The Fear Of Success And How To Finally Let Yourself Win."

He is a past recipient of The National Merit Scholarship for Academic Excellence and is the President of the Toastmasters International Club of Hampshire County (Massachusetts).

His Web site is a great example of how an entrepreneur can develop a unique, proprietary product, then write a solid site that successfully SELLS!

Thanks to Noah <noah@preparetowin.com> for agreeing to help you with "what works" on the Web. Copyright (c) 1998, Noah St. John, all rights reserved. Used by permission.



The Success Clinic
<http://www.successclinic.com/>

The purpose of this article is to tell you how to build a site that sells your products or services. I'll share with you the thinking that went into the making of my company's Web site, why we did things the way we did, and how it's worked out.

If you are launching a site, this will be a good article for you to have handy, because I'll share with you step-by-step the thinking process that went into making our site an

award-winner and one that sells.

If your site is already up, this article can help you improve your results by re-thinking and perhaps repositioning your site to be even better.

We've had plenty of mistakes along the way, but one of the main things we've done right is to make sure that every word on our site has a definite, specific purpose for being there. And that purpose is simple:

To tell the visitor how, why, and that they will benefit from hanging around our site.

The first thing I did when I sat down to build our site was ask myself one question:

“What is the purpose of this Web site?”

I know that may sound like a silly question. But have you ever gone to a site and wondered, “What the heck were they trying to accomplish with THAT?” or even “Why is this here?”

Well, we wanted to avoid that. So I wanted to make sure that I could justify every page, every link, every word on our site. If every word could not be justified, then it had no reason for existing.



The purpose of The Success Clinic's Web site is threefold:

1. To sell our products.
2. To build community.
3. To offer solid information and content.

I put every page and every word through that threefold test; and **if it doesn't pass, out it goes.**

You might take a moment and ask yourself, “What is the purpose of our site? Why does it exist? What do I really want it to accomplish?” From the looks of things out there, I believe that if you asked most Web designers, they couldn't come up with an honest, concise answer to those questions.

The second essential thing we did is to make sure that our site positions us as people who are here to serve other people. I am adamant about our site not being one of the millions of “I, Me, We” sites that you see out there.

It’s like that joke about the fellow who says to another fellow, “But enough about me. What do YOU think about me?”

Frankly, nobody gives a hoot about you or me! They care about themselves and “What’s In It For ME?” This is known as the WIIFM principle (What’s In It For ME?).

I make sure that for every “I, Me, We” on our site, there are at least 20 “you, you, you’s.” Dale Carnegie said it very well when he wrote, “People care 1,000 times more about their little aches and pains than the news that 10,000 people died in a monsoon in China.” It may sound cynical, but it’s really just human nature.

Why fight it? Instead, **accept it, understand it, and use it to your advantage.**



How? Simple.

State the BENEFITS to the reader for staying at your site. One way we do this at our site is by “teasers” at the end of each page, which almost force the reader to click onto the next page (if they are interested in our subject, which is why people starve themselves of success and keep themselves from getting the very thing they want).

For example, one of our teasers reads, “Click here if you want to find out more about why people starve themselves of success...”

Now, if you’re interested, you’ll click. But imagine if I had written, “Click here for more information about my company.”

Who cares about my company? Probably me and my mother.

Well, those kind of numbers don’t exactly make for a good business model.



Therefore, **structure your entire site, and every paragraph, sentence, and word in it to BENEFIT THE READER.** It’s really simple once you understand that human nature never changes. People will always be 1,000 times more interested in

themselves than in you.

Also, make sure that every page title is really a BLH: a **BENEFIT-LADEN HEADLINE**. You must make it crystal clear what's in it for the reader for visiting -- and staying on -- this page of yours.

For example, "Welcome to Joe's Home Page!" is NOT a BLH. It's an ELH: an **Ego-Laden Headline**. Who cares about Joe except Joe and his mother? This is not the kind of thing that makes people stay.

Here are a few examples from our site...

"Are You Suffering From Success Anorexia?"

"Why People Starve Themselves of Success"

"Our Better-Than-Risk-Free Guarantee To You"

Do you see the difference? The entire focus of the page is **What's In It For The Reader**. In each instance, we offer content, information that's interesting to the visitor, and makes it worth their while to read and hang around.



Finally, the Internet is a marketer's dream for many reasons. But the most important is a four-letter word: **TEST**.

The Web provides the most instant and inexpensive methods of testing ever available. Think of it... you don't have to print expensive brochures or pay thousands of dollars for commercial advertising, only to find out that your stuff doesn't sell.

If you want to, you can change your site **daily**. This flexibility allows you to gauge your site's effectiveness and constantly work to improve it.



Bottom line: Don't try and convince anyone that you're the best, you're #1, or even that you're any good. Tell them what's in it for them (and tell them often and tell them specifically) when they hang around your site, and let them decide for themselves how good you are.

Frankly, people don't care if you're #1 or #57, as long as you **give them what they want.**

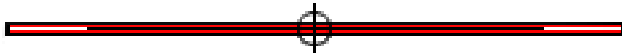
If you do, you'll find that soon, you ARE #1 in their eyes.



18.4. Words from the Wise

Let's move from the **entrepreneurs** to the **experts**. Too many so-called "experts" write the same old drivel that doesn't work.

Not the two who appear here! Paul Lang and Nick Usborne understand the process of selling on the Web. I've asked them to share their thoughts with you, and they were very kind to accept the challenge...



18.4.1. The Ten Secrets of Netsavvy's Sell It!



Want to build a Web store or Internet storefront? Then Netsavvy Communications' Web site, **Sell It!**, is the resource for you. You'll find all the information you need here, including step-by-step guides to building a successful Internet storefront, Web commerce news, shopping cart reviews, interviews with Web store owners and critiques of other peoples' Web stores. And you can also subscribe to a **free weekly e-commerce newsletter** that has all the latest e-commerce news, analysis and reviews.

Paul Lang <paul@netsavvy.co.uk>, President of Netsavvy Communications, keeps his finger on the pulse of selling on the Web. Here he reveals his top ten secrets from all that he has learned about Web sales. Copyright (c) 1998, Netsavvy Communications, all rights reserved. Used by permission.



Sell It On the Web

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



Building and running your own Web store can seem like running an obstacle course, having to continually overcome a series of technical and commercial hurdles. From selecting the software and hardware through to arranging a credit card merchant account, the list of things to do can seem endless.

In essence there are only three steps to creating a successful online store:

- **building the store**
- **attracting people in to it**
- **selling to them when they arrive.**

Although each of these steps has its own challenges and problems, the last step can often be the most difficult. So I'd like to share with you ten secrets for how to turn your visitors into paying customers...

1. Encourage people to return

Apart from the occasional visit by a passing surfer, a new store will remain empty unless its owners actively work to entice customers in to it. This can be an expensive, time-consuming process. And if that isn't bad enough, new Web store merchants will quickly discover that visitors are unlikely to buy on their first visit, particularly if the store carries high-priced items.

Clearly, in order to get the best results from your marketing efforts, you need to maximize the conversion of first-time visitors into repeat visitors and then on into customers. So make sure your site has some valuable content or feature that will encourage your visitors to bookmark it and return.



2. Make it easy to buy from you

Take a good look at your Web store or, even better, have someone else look at it for you. How easy is it to track down the product or service they're looking for? How easy is it to place an order? Any difficulties here mean that you need to re-look at your store design and the shopping experience you provide.

3. Build credibility

Although Internet scams are greatly exaggerated by the media, they do exist and unless you trade under a major brand name you will need to convince potential customers that you're not going to take their money and run. As a minimum, you should include details of your bricks-and-mortar address, telephone number and fax numbers. You should also consider including verifiable testimonials from previous customers, offering a satisfaction guarantee and registering your site with Verisign or TRUSTe.

And if you are accepting credit cards online, take the time to explain to your customers why ordering this way is safe. Remember that there are still a lot of Web shopping "newbies" about, and their numbers are growing.



4. Get global

Remember that the first two "Ws" in "WWW" stand for "World-Wide" and that your store will be accessible to people around the world. According to a recent report from Forrester Research, a U.S. company can expect 30% of the traffic on its Web site to come from outside the United States.

As a minimum, you should include details of what the shipping costs and transit times to international destinations will be. Depending on the type of customer you are expecting and the product or service you are offering you may want to consider offering information on exchange rates or having your Web pages translated into other languages.



5. Remember to sell

Don't forget the basic tenets of successful selling. It is amazing how many stores miss out on this, by not selling the benefits of their product or service, or by failing to ask for an order.

And many sales promotion techniques that have been proven to work in the real world will work equally well on the Web. Contests, promotional discounts, coupons and aisle-end specials are all used successfully in Web stores...



6. Price realistically

Visitors to your store know that it is cheaper for you to do business on the Web than

in a bricks-and-mortar store, and expect to see this reflected in the price that you are charging them. This will not be a major concern to you if you are selling in to a niche market, but if you are selling a commodity item you are going to have to price your products competitively.



7. Pre-sales support

Provide every possible piece of information about your product or service that a customer might need to reach a buying decision. Make yourself easily accessible should the customer require more information and respond promptly to e-mails (preferably within 24 hours but definitely within 48).



8. Provide several ordering methods

Although most Web stores are set up in the expectation that the majority of orders will be received on line, the reality is that many customers prefer to use the Web to aid in the selection of a product, and then place their order by more traditional methods. So make sure you offer your customer several options for placing their orders for example, secured online order forms, fax, e-mail and snail mail.



9. Accept alternative payment methods

When it comes to accepting payment over the Web, most discussions center on the use of credit cards. But what about consumers who don't have a credit card or don't feel confident enough to use it on-line? Make sure you are in a position to accept payment in as many ways as possible, in order to maximize your sales. Options include credit and debit cards, paper and electronic checks, electronic cash, micropayment systems and specialist solutions such as eCharge.



10. Post sales support

The real secret to success in your Web store lies in your ability to turn first-time customers into repeat customers. Maintain a high level of service after you receive the order. Aim to provide an acknowledgement of each order with a unique reference number, an on-line tracking facility or a dedicated e-mail address for order progressing and an e-mail shipping confirmation. And most importantly, remember to

ship your goods in a timely fashion.



18.4.2. The Seven "Must-Remembers"

[**SIDEBAR**]

Nick Osborne <nick@forkinthehead.com > is a direct response writer, a columnist on marketing on the Internet, a marketer of entrepreneurial training systems, and Chief Forking Officer of forkinthehead.com. If you want to write a site that SELLS, here are his seven things to remember. Copyright (c) 1998, Nick Osborne, all rights reserved. Used by permission.



[forkinthehead.com](http://www.forkinthehead.com)

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

Building a site is easy. Building a site **that sells** is hard. It's easy to get distracted along the way and lose your focus. To stay on track, keep my "Super Seven" firmly in mind...

1. Plan and build with a purpose in mind...

If you build a bricks and mortar shopping mall without planning it, without architect's drawings, without a view to how people are going to get in and out, your mall will be a disaster. If it doesn't collapse in a heap of dust, killing everyone instantly, it will likely fail because you haven't planned the layout of the stores and the flow of customers in a professional manner.

Building any successful retail business takes research, planning and a clear purpose in mind – offline and online.

Online, we often make the mistake of believing that just because the price of admission is low, we can fudge it as we go along. Not so.

The first step towards a successful site that sells is to plan it with a very clear purpose in mind. Any aspect of the site that doesn't drive towards that one purpose is irrelevant and should be discarded.

2. Keep a clear picture of your customers in mind as you plan and build your site...

Don't build the site to please yourself, your kids, your boss or your colleagues. Build your site to sell to your intended customers.

Of course, to achieve this, you first have to carry in your mind a crystal clear picture of who your customers are. What sex are they? What age? Where are they? What is their education and their income? What do they spend money on and how much do they pay? Where do they go and what do they look for in a store? Which are their favorite web sites?

As I like to say, repeatedly, "If you don't know who you're talking to, how the heck do you know what to say?"



3. Make buying easy...

Let's go back to our ill-conceived, unplanned, bricks and mortar store. Imagine if we compounded our earlier errors by hiding the merchandise in boxes, removing the signage that tells people where to find everything and, just for good measure, let's hide the checkout counters in the basement, with no lights.

Sounds crazy. But this also describes the average online store. Poor navigation aids, incomprehensible organization and no clear pathway to follow.

If you want to sell, you need a short, clean pathway between your home page and the page where you close the sale. Make it happen within two or three clicks.

That doesn't mean that you can't have 500 pages of great information and testimonials and stories and product pictures. But don't MAKE me go through all these pages to buy something. Leave the choice to me.

And when you get me to the page where I buy – make it easy for me. As with any sales channel, you'll be losing people at every stage of the sales process. The worst place to lose them is at the point where they were about to buy. Get your eight-year old kid to make a purchase on your site, unaided. If he or she can't do it, replan it, rewrite it, redesign it until he can.



4. Don't forget to ask for the sale...

You laugh, but it happens all the time. Site owners invest money and time in getting people to the order page and then get all shy and coy about asking for the sale. Don't be that way.

If you have a top-selling product, stick it on the first screen of your homepage with a hypertext link that says Buy It Now!

It's ok to have special offers. It's ok to offer discounts to repeat visitors. It's ok to work like hell to close the sale.

If you can't ask for the sale, what's the point of creating the site?



5. Be there!...

We'll take one more look at our poorly planned mall. It's in danger of falling down, the merchandise is hidden and nobody can find the checkout counters.

As our final master stroke, let's make sure that none of our employees ever turn up for work.

Online, the equivalent error is to create the site and then sit back and wait. Every successful business person online that I know turns up for work – at the site – five or more days a week. Your site has to be always changing, evolving, reacting, resolving. An advantage we have online is that we can add and subtract products, product lines, whole departments with relative ease. The more responsive you are, the faster you'll be able to profit from the hesitation and absence of your competitors.

But to achieve this, you have to work on your site, behind the screen, every day. You have to turn up for work.



6. About words. Never forget, it's the words that close the sale...

On a good day in our bricks and mortar store, we'll have sales staff ready and waiting to close the sale, again and again. On your site, there's nobody there. So to close the sale, **you need the right words.**

How do you find the right words? Choose words that follow the purpose of your site to the letter. Choose short, simple words and put them together in short, simple sentences.

Above all, be clear. Clarity comes first.

Make the process simple. Your words must hold a simple, targeted promise and simple directions on how to make a purchase. If you want your words to sell, don't use them to educate and fill people's minds. Use them to reveal a customer need or desire that will be satisfied by the purchase of your product.

And if you don't think you can achieve this, hire someone who can. After all, you likely paid for a programmer and designer. So why wouldn't you pay for a writer?

It's the words that close the sale.



7. Last, and most important of all, build a site that loves to listen...

A virtual store has a disadvantage. You can't see or hear your customers. You can't eavesdrop on their conversations or observe their interactions. This can leave you blind to what's really happening.

So you need to build in some very proactive feedback mechanisms. Encourage your customers to complain. Maybe build in a real-time chat function so you can have staff 'on the floor' and ready to help. Send out newsletters or virtual coupons. Use surveys. Have contests. Create a frequent buyer program.

In short, do everything you can to create an environment in which your visitors love to get back to you. Then you'll get a quick heads-up if something is going wrong – or going right.

But if you don't listen, you'll never know.

Of course, there are more than seven things to remember when creating a site that sells, but if you remember these seven, **you'll be way ahead of the pack.**



19. It Ends With Traffic

Remember this?...

“To succeed in a Web-based sales venture, you only have to succeed at three levels...

- develop a great product
- write a Web site that **SELLS!**
- attract targeted customers to the site.”



Traffic-building is the...



... final piece to the Web sales puzzle.

Once you've got a **great product**, and a **killer sales site**, it's time to start bringing customers into your digital store.

When it comes to building traffic, I have tried it all. As usual, when you try it all, **you end up discovering what works...** i.e., what fits into the long end of the 80-20 rule.

From struggling along at 5,000 visits per week, I built PennyGold traffic up to a high of 60,000 visits per week... and with much less effort. Sales, of course, increased proportionately, because my methods involved attracting only **targeted** customers... people with an interest in what I was selling.



The special traffic-building “chapter” has grown into a monster and stands alone as a volume. **It contains everything you need to know about building targeted traffic in the most time-and-money-efficient way possible.** It covers...

MYSS! 2002... It Ends With Traffic

- the best **online** ways to build traffic
- the nutshell on **offline strategies**
- **how to effectively use the Search Engines NOW!**

The Traffic-Building Volume includes everything you need to know to attract customers to your site via the Search Engines. And it shows you how to do it powerfully, ethically, and in such a way that even the most sensitive, stringent SE won't object.

Actually, they'll love the way you do it. Because you work **with** them, not against them.

This volume completes the package. From **product**, to a **site** that SELLS, to bringing targeted **traffic** to your site, you will be in control of what it takes to SELL.

[Click on the blue link \(above or here\) to open the Traffic-Building Volume.](#)



20. Wrapping It All Up...

Wow! Time to wrap it all up already...

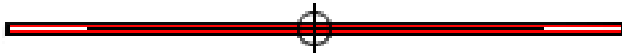
We've come a long way together. You've learned how to...

- set and get your **MWR**
- write and design a selling, usable, trustable, likeable Web site
- close on your **MWR**, and how to set and get a **Backup Response**
- continuously improve your Web results
- build a long-term, one-to-one relationship with your customer
- develop **product** and **traffic**, the other two keys to succeeding on the Web.

And now it's time to...



... tie it all up into a nice, neat package...



20.1. When to **Break** the Rules

There are times when you will break from the advice in this book.

Think hard before doing it. But once you're convinced it's right, do it.

After all, the Web is the perfect testing ground. Be daring -- **go ahead and rearrange a few electrons**. Post it to the Net. Doesn't work? Put it back the way it was.

For example, one of the most basic rules is to provide access to your **MWR Closer Page** from every page of the pathway towards your **MWR**. PennyGold didn't

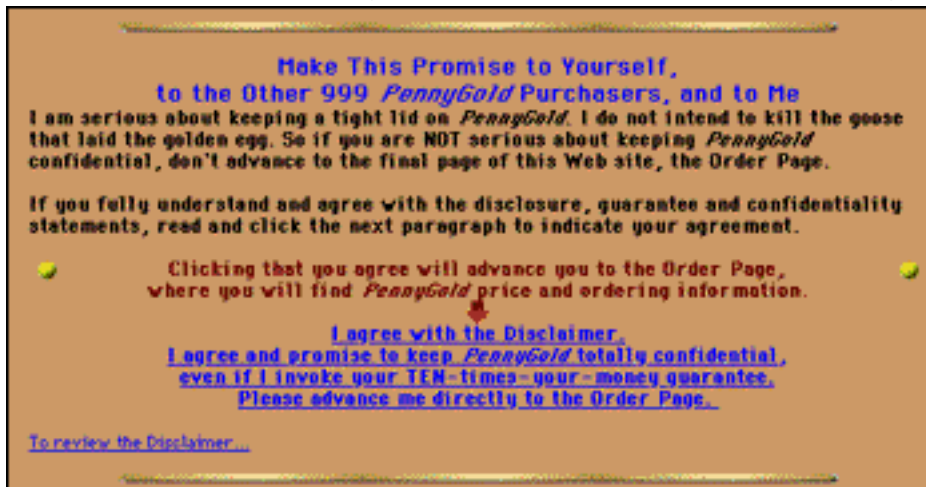
do that. Why?

With PennyGold, it was important for the customer...

- to know that we were only selling 1,000 copies
- to click his agreement to keep it confidential.

So the site only provided access to a critical **Content Page**, my “pre-order page,” from every other page of the path. The customer had to click his agreement to access the **Order Page**.

I realized that I would lose some people because of this. Our log files confirmed that we lost about 20% of the people who arrived at the “I agree” page. I accepted that. Since we were only selling 1,000 copies, it wasn’t really costing money, just time...



A Very Exclusive Club

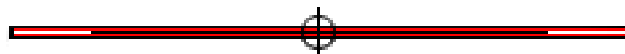
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/600.html>



So, to repeat...

Think hard before “breaking the rules.”

But once you’re convinced it’s right, **do it**. If you were wrong, put it back the way it was.



20.2. Manipulation **vs.** Ethical Sales

The tools in this book are powerful ones. They can be used wrongly to...



... cheat and fool people.

Please use them ethically.



For example, it was not my goal to manipulate or **fool** people into buying PennyGold. After I qualified people who were interested in my USP, I blended good sales copy with heavy, verifiable, documentation.

Why? Because the site's goals were to...

- **weed out the dumb and the “get rich quick” people.** The process required work and judgment.
- **convince the smart and the careful that PennyGold was for real.** These were the people who would use and enjoy the tool.

Net result? **Visitors simply could not make a wrong decision.** Here's why...

If penny mining stocks didn't interest them, if they were too lazy to gather onsite evidence to overcome their doubts, or if they were just not smart enough to understand why PennyGold worked, they wouldn't buy the product. **And “not buying” was the correct answer, in that case.**

If you spent hours on the site, cross-checked some of the proof, called me to ask a question or two, and then concluded that it was all for real, you were the right person for PennyGold.



Using the tools in this book, I could have written the site far more

aggressively. We could have sold 50,000 copies at \$50. But PennyGold would have stopped working (too many investors in a tiny niche). That would have cheated a lot of people -- and that's no way to live.

So use the power in this book well. But use it fairly.



20.3. Practical Nuts-and-Bolts "To Do List"

The pros call the practical nuts-and-bolts issues the "infrastructure." **Infrastructure covers everything from your Web hosting service or in-house server, to your accounting system, to your fulfillment and tracking systems.**

It's the boring "to do" stuff that's necessary to get **and** keep you, up and running.

If you tried to **get everything in place at once...**



... you'd go nuts and give up. So instead, start with a minimal set up. Do only what you have to do, in order to get going.

Then build as you succeed.

The details of infrastructure are beyond the scope of this book. The master, as always, is Ralph Wilson. Be sure to visit his site, the [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#).

But let's get you started here...

First, we'll review the **minimal infrastructure** you need to start a business that sells one or two infoproducts. Then we'll look at the **total package** required for a full-blown, big-company Web effort.



20.3.1. The Min -- Enough to Get You Started

If you are selling only one or two infoproducts (i.e., non-hard goods), you need the following systems in place before opening your virtual doors...

- **Hosting** -- a Web hosting service or in-house server, and Internet connection.
- **Web Site** -- displays and sells your products. **K-I-S-S.**
- **Promotional Program** -- Search Engines. Use them to generate targeted traffic to your site.
- **Order taking system** -- every way possible. Be able to take an order by every communication device known to mankind.
- **Money** -- merchant credit card account. You must be able to accept credit card orders. Without this capability, you're spinning your wheels.
- **Systems** -- "as needed" basis. You can get away with simple "do it yourself" systems for order tracking, packing, shipping (downloading), purchasing, accounting, etc.

Don't spend a lot of money on infrastructure -- just get the basics up and running.
Reinvest profits to build infrastructure as you grow.



20.3.2. The Max -- The Whole Nine Yards

For a major Web effort...



... the "to do" list grows considerably.

- **Web Site** -- the Web pages can be static HTML, dynamic HTML, database-driven, or whatever. No matter how sophisticated it becomes, never lose sight of the bottom line...

... the site must **SELL!**

- **Ongoing Web site maintenance** -- develop a program to continuously update and freshen the site.
- **Promotional Program** -- list with the Search Engines. Know how to use them to generate targeted traffic to your site. Above and beyond that, develop a comprehensive [traffic-generating program](#).
- **Order taking and retrieval system** -- as you grow, a [secure server](#) becomes a **must**. A one-product company that offers a sharp, in-demand product to motivated customers can get away without a secure server. **You can't**. You need a [shopping cart](#) and a secure ordering and retrieval system.
- **Money** -- your credit card capabilities include real-time verification.
- **Systems** -- while you can get away with a rudimentary spreadsheet when you're small, bring in the pros as you grow. Integrate your accounting software, inventory tracking, and order-taking system.
- **Warehousing** -- how you store, track, and manage your inventory.
- **Shipping** -- how you pack and ship the goods (postal, courier, etc.). Offer "immediate shipping from inventory."
- **Tracking fulfillment** -- how you track the goods, from order entry to delivery.
- **Tracking sales commissions** -- including affiliate programs.
- **Customer service program** -- a combination of Web-based, e-mail, and telephone support.



Many of the above systems already have "off-the-shelf" software. Some packages integrate many of the above systems into one large "store-building" package. However, some parts still require custom software, a far more expensive option.

Research available [store-building software](#) carefully. Begin with the basics, then integrate other systems as needed (and as justified by profits). Choose the correct store-building software **for you** -- it's vital to your success.

More and more of the above infrastructural systems will be integrated into total all-in-one packages. Stay up-to-date at Ralph Wilson's [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#).

[**SIDEBAR**]

If you're a one-product netrepneur, it's still important to read the above. Understand the issues. Don't wait until you **suddenly** need the above **tomorrow**. Plan ahead.



20.4. Building Your Web Team

Like any team...



... you need people with specialized skills. A well-rounded Web design team has three major capabilities...

- 1) copywriting** -- generate sharp, tight, sales copy.
- 2) design** -- [HTML](#) and graphics skills. Design a classy, appealing, usable, professional-looking site, yet still remain within today's low bandwidth constraints.
- 3) technical** -- handle the more advanced techie stuff... CGI, database, server side includes, etc.



If you're a one-man-band, you may **be** the team. More likely, you need the help of at least a techie. Obviously, you are the one who will use the info in this book to design your site.

If you can code some HTML, so much the better! If not, you will also need a Web designer. Remember this... **you** will be the one telling the Web designer what needs to be done, and **not vice-versa**. A commercial Web site is not a painting, it's a sales tool.

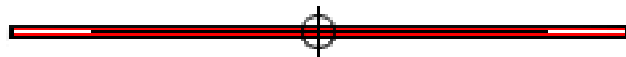
Remember, **you** are the expert. **So what** if you don't know HTML? Consider yourself as the architect and your Webmaster as the "guy with the hammer."

The rest of this chapter is aimed more at the person who works in a larger company, **but has relevance for the entrepreneur**. So read on...



If you're heading up a large division or company, who should you put in charge of your Web site?

Ready for a surprise?



20.4.1. Sales V.P. as "Head Designer"?!

Who should **oversee** the development of a sales-oriented Web site. **Simple...**



... your Sales V.P.!

If a key sales executive is not responsible for your site, **you're making a mistake**.



... "SALES V.P. AS DESIGNER?!" you scream?

Yes, I know he wouldn't know a great graphic if it bit him on the eye! And he couldn't program his VCR to save his life. But **he is totally response-oriented** -- and that's what it takes.

Don't worry about his lack of Web knowledge. If he reads this book and spends a few hours doing a general surf of the Web and [checking out the competition](#), he'll know enough.

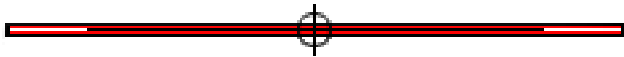
Web-selling is one-to-one selling. The model is **not** the TV commercial. It's one-to-one, **get-the-order**, selling. That's "sales territory."

Your marketing department should be responsible for generating targeted **traffic** to the site. That is consistent with marketing's traditional role. **But "sales" should do the selling!**

Let the pros sell your product. Put the sales force in charge of the site itself.

When Marketing whines, explain to them that their job is to **bring traffic to the site**. This division of labor is closer to that of the offline world!

Your Web site is not a TV commercial -- it's a sales tool. Let sales handle it.



20.4.2. Hiring or Assembling a Team

OK, time to choose your team. You can either...

- hire a preassembled team (i.e., an agency)

OR

- build your own.

Either way...



... you're the maestro!



Hiring an agency -- Before hiring an agency, ask to see a few of their sales-oriented sites. **But refuse demos.** If the design firm explains the site, you have lost the "virgin eyes" opportunity!

Visit their sites yourself, **unguided**, the same way a typical Web surfer would. **Pretend you are the customer.**

Assess how well those sites meet the criteria outlined in earlier chapters. Is the navigation clean? Do you get excited about the product? Is there a **MWR** for each product line? Does the site make you want to hit the **MWR**?

Once you've chosen a team, make sure it is on the same wavelength as you. Give them this book. Better still, get them to buy it -- thanks. 😊

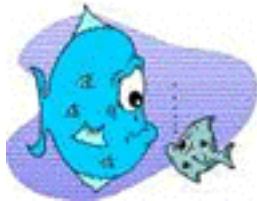
Tell them that the quickest way to lose your business is to violate any of the major principles in this book. If they are uncomfortable with that, you are heading towards a designer-driven Web site.

Look elsewhere.



Building a team -- It's more cost-effective to build **your own** team.

Whether you're a big fish...



... or a small fry, outsource your copywriting, design and technical needs. There are thousands of sharp people working out of their home offices. They work at reasonable rates due to competition and low overheads.

Your major job will be to **find them**, and build them into a team. If you locate the techie first, she will often be able to turn you towards a solid Web designer. Or vice-versa.

Don't forget to search online, too...



Guru.com

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

The bigger challenge will be to find a good **copywriter with Web experience.**

There aren't many of these animals. You have a few options...

- If you're an entrepreneur, learn to do this yourself. Be honest with your capabilities, or you could do some serious damage here.
- Find a freelance writer, best if she has some general copywriting experience.
- If you have an internal copywriter on staff, recruit her to the team.

Whoever you choose as Web-writer, they must study this book, especially the [chapter on sales copy](#). **It's the words that ultimately do the job.**

As you interview each part of the team, ask your candidates to read **MYSS! 2002** (Geez, is this a clever way to generate sales, or what?). Inform them that this is your philosophy. Once again, if they're **uncomfortable with important areas...**



... choose someone else.



20.4.3. Experience Counts

Whether you hire an outside agency or build your own team, you need someone with solid experience in building sales-oriented sites. This book, **MYSS! 2002**, turns you into a Web sales expert.

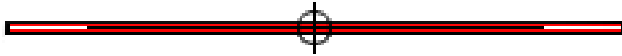
But, until you've succeeded at your first Web sales venture, you're a "theoretical expert." If this is your first Web sales effort, real mistakes will be made in the **real world**.

So hire an agency that has built many sales sites. Or make sure that one of the members of the team (that you build) has this experience.

And **then** remember, you've read this book. **You're the one who best knows the product, the customer, and what you want.** Direct them, while making maximal use of their experience.

Don't struggle through someone else's learning experience, on **your time and money...**

Hire experience.



20.4.4. The Legals

Outside parties must specifically convey copyright ownership to you by written agreement (unless they are employees of the company). The agreement must specifically state that the work is a work-made-for-hire. In addition to the "work-for-hire," get a written outright assignment of all proprietary rights to you.

If your designer codes his own CGI, the design fee must also include a license to use the CGI forever, and that you have access to the source code in the event that your relationship is terminated for any reason.

Lay out the Web site specifications (number of pages, features, etc.) in detail in the agreement. Specify what criteria must be met to consider the work acceptable.

Develop a three or four step process. Allow for termination of the agreement at the end of each step. Do not make a large "upfront" down payment. Do cover the cost of the first step, once it is done to your satisfaction. The first step may be fairly expensive, as this step involves doing research, then developing concepts and original designs.

Withhold payment for the last step until all pages have been tested and accepted -- withhold half of that amount until 30 days after going live, to make sure no unforeseen problems arise once your site is "live."

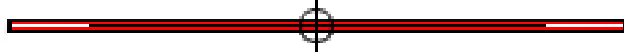
Obtain warranties that their work for you will be their own, and that they will not violate the intellectual property rights of another party. They should indemnify you against all suits related to these issues.

[SIDEBAR]

Reassess your working relationship with your team at regular, defined intervals...



... **Are you pulling teeth?** Or are you sailing along smoothly? Choose someone else if you feel like a dentist (your agreement with your design firm must allow you to bail upon the completion of each stage).



20.4.5. Maintain Your Site

As discussed earlier, your site is never done. You must constantly update content, optimize to maximize your **Conversion Rate**, build traffic, and test, test, test.

If yours is a large company, you can either do this in-house, or use the same outsourced team.

If you're smaller, it makes more sense to keep your designer on a monthly retainer. Use your techie and copywriter as needed.

If you're a one-or-two person operation, you really must learn some basic HTML. If you don't like the way you've worded a phrase, you must know how to modify it and ftp it, so that you are "live" with your new version in 5 minutes. And, as we said earlier, you must be able to update your shopping cart easily and quickly.

Leave the major programming like advanced HTML, new CGI features, navigation, etc. to your developer (under your supervision, of course). **But if you can't do the quick-and-easy necessary changes, you've got a problem.**



20.5. Web Sales Newsletters & Sites...

The Cream of the Crop

Like most other matters, online Web Sales resources follow the 80-20 rule. **Here's the cream of the crop.** These are truly extraordinary sites and e-mail newsletters that deliver **original thoughts** and **valuable content**.

The Web's a big place. If I've missed any that deserve a spot here, please e-mail me at kevoy@sitesell.com.

We'll start with sites and e-publications that focus on **SELLING**, then go a bit further afield to round out your education.



20.5.1. **SELLING** on the Web

The following sites stand out -- they deliver original, top notch, and **useful** Web-sales-oriented information. The first three are the “**crème de la crème**,” as the French say...



Wilson Internet Services

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

This Web site covers it all. Ralph Wilson writes well, thinks originally, and sifts through hundreds of sites and articles to bring you **the** most relevant info. If you only visit one site, visit this one. There are tons of outstanding free content, including a free subscription to the **Web Marketing Today** e-mail newsletter.

And subscribe to his (paid) **Web Commerce Today** newsletter. The subscription fee gives you access to the paid sections of the site. The newsletter alone is **more** than worth the price -- add in access to the Research Room, and you get one of the best bargains on the Web.

Don't even hesitate about whether you'll be happy with it. **Subscribe now.**



Sell It! Your Web Commerce Resource

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

Paul Lang produces an outstanding newsletter dedicated to online sales and e-commerce in general. This is a “must subscribe.”

Paul distills current Web commerce news down to a few “most relevant and interesting” nuggets. He features excellent interviews with Web store owners, product reviews, and lots more Web-sales-related info. The site is full of invaluable info, too -- much of it drawn from past issues of the newsletter.



I-Sales Digest

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

The **best** Web-sales-related discussion group. This [moderated mailing list](#) discusses online sales issues, with excellent questions and answers from those on the front lines... like you and me. Daily, via e-mail. In fact, Adventive now publishes over 15 different lists, each moderated by a recognized expert in that particular field. Sign up for any that tickle your fancy... they're all worthwhile.



ClickZ Today

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

Frontline tips, techniques and strategies straight to your e-mailbox. And the Web site is developing into a terrific resource for Web marketers.



The A.I.M. E-zine

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

Kevin Needham puts out a twice-weekly newsletter. Don't miss his Feature Article which is generally a well thought out, original piece about Web sales or marketing.



20.5.2. Traffic-Building

The following sites will deliver just about all you need to know about building targeted traffic to your site. You should **review both these sites and subscribe to their newsletters...**



Search Engine Watch

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

Danny Sullivan is "it" when it comes to Search Engines (SEs). Go through his site with a fine-tooth comb. Then subscribe to both his free and paid e-mail newsletters. Round out **MYSS! 2002's solid, traffic-building SE info** with his up-to-the-minute SE data and sharp-thinking, well-researched articles. That's about **all you'll need to do** to nail the SEs!



Gazette World

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

Jim Wilson is the master of Web marketing and promotion. His newsletter is valuable, original, **useful... and free!**



Fantomaster

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

Ralph Tegtmeir's newsletter is challenging and brilliant, full of cutting edge info about the SEs, spiders and more!

MYSS! 2002... Wrapping It All Up...



Planet Ocean Communications

<http://www.searchengine-news.com/>

Planet Ocean's paid service includes monthly updates that keep you on top of changes in the SE world, plus access to their information-packed members site.



20.5.3. General E-commerce

Interested in **Web sales?** Stay up-to-date with general happenings in the world of e-commerce. These newsletters will fill that bill.

The single best resource to keep your finger on the world of e-business and Internet technology. This e-mail digest summarizes Internet World's hard copy newspaper...



Internet World Weekly Digest

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

Still a pretty good read. Thoughtful, provocative, original...



ZDNet's AnchorDesk

<http://www.zdnet.com/anchordesk/>

The CNET Dispatch carries all the latest tech news online, with links to important Internet stories of the week...



CNET.COM

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

A weekly, free e-mail newsletter, it reports on the major Internet trends and surveys of the week. It also offers sharp editorials to put things into perspective. It's well-done. It's intelligent. It's a cut above.



Nua Internet Surveys

<http://www.nua.ie/surveys/moreinfo.html>

Good general e-commerce coverage, with original-thinking commentary at the end of every issue...



ICONOCAST

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

Dana Blankenhorn is the moderator of the Audette Media I-Strategy list. His own newsletter, A-Clue, is always refreshing and insightful...



A-Clue.com

<http://www.a-clue.com/>



20.5.4. Miscellaneous, but Important...

And finally, check out this collection of important e-publications. They don't really fit into one particular category. Let's call them a class of their own...

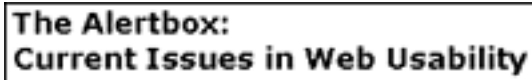
The **eRetail.Net Daily News List** offers Internet merchants news and information about Internet retailing in a simple, straightforward reporting style...



eRetail.Net Daily News List

<http://www.etail.net/maillist.htm>

Jakob Nielsen is **the** usability guru. Notice (above) that I couldn't find a graphic from his site to "screenshoot"? 'Nuff said. Subscribe to his biweekly newsletter. Read all the back issues, or at least the ones that he **highlights** as the most important...



Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/>

Whether you plan on writing your own site or not, you should learn at least the basics. **CNET's Builder.com** is your one-stop shopping solution. And while there, subscribe to their free BUILDER BLAST e-mail newsletter...



BUILDER.COM

<http://builder.cnet.com/>

A truly well-rounded newsletter, this weekly covers it all... news, HTML, e-commerce, techie stuff...

MYSS! 2002... Wrapping It All Up...



Webreference Update Newsletter

<http://www.webreference.com/new/>

The evolution of eBoz, **iBoost** is a good solid reference site, and a worthwhile newsletter. It's no longer written by Michael Wong though, which is a shame...



iBoost Journal

<http://www.iboost.com/promote/?from=eboz>

I read this to absorb "great use of the Net" sites. I'm always looking for concepts to adapt for our own use. Larry saves me hours of surfing by finding that sharp, cutting edge for me...



Larry Chase's Web Digest For Marketers

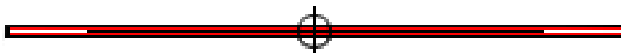
<http://www.wdfm.com/>

These chronicles have a whole host of contributors, anchored by Michael Fortin. **IMC** usually features at least one article that teaches me something...



The Internet Marketing Chronicles

<http://marketingchallenge.com/>



20.6. The Future is Slo-o-o-o-ow...

'til 2004

Many people who read the preceding chapters will rebel at the **K-I-S-S** concepts outlined in this book. Especially designers and marketers who love bells and whistles.

They'll argue that users will soon want more than a presentable-but-minimalist, usable structure.

Well, they'll be wrong. **Your customers want info...** they want enough info to decide to purchase.

And they want it delivered fast. They not only want it fast, but **they want to understand it fast.**

So keep your site simple and predictable. Users do **not** want innovations in Web design. Ultimately, they want **ease of use**. They don't want to lose time figuring how your site works, nor do they want to interpret what you're saying. **Be clear, both in navigation and in meaning.**

It doesn't matter whether you think this is a good thing or a bad thing... or whether it upsets your artistic sensitivities. **Keep it simple and you will sell more.**



20.6.1. Bandwidth Forces **Everyone** to K-I-S-S

Fast access will be slow to come for the mass market.

Bandwidth is the amount of data that can be transmitted per second. New, high-bandwidth technologies, such as ADSL, DSL, and cable modems, will eventually be widely available. **But it will be years before they are cheap enough for the mass market to buy.**

And don't believe what you see on T.V. Less than 10% of North Americans have broadband access.

And guess what?...

The user base broadens as the world connects. Newbies **today** are more likely to be low-end users, so the **average** connection speed is actually decreasing. Also...

...**The greatest numbers of new Internet users are connecting outside North America.** Here, broadband access is even more rare, access time is expensive, and the backbone is even less rugged.



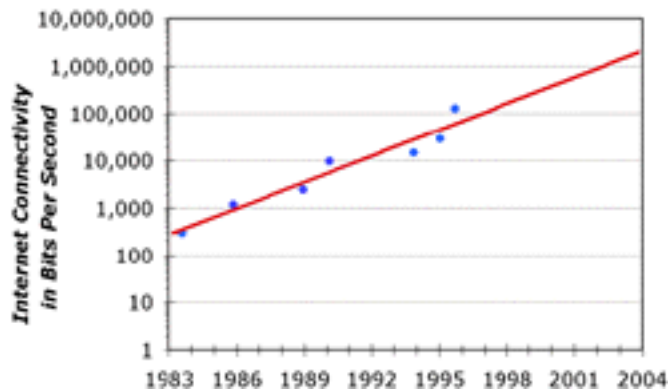
Even if you upgrade to a high-speed connection, **you don't get the full benefit.** That comes gradually... as the Internet and the host servers improve, as the telcoms improve the infrastructure, etc. And it will be **very** gradual, since the number of people surfing the Web is skyrocketing, slowing transmission to a crawl at times.

If your customers are high-tech companies who all have T1 access, you can ignore the low bandwidth advice in this book. But if you are after the typical Web surfer, **you must design for slow speed connections for years to come.**

Your site cannot survive if you don't cater to the mass market, which means 33-56K circa 2002.



A high-end user's connection speed grows by 50% per year, according to **Jakob Nielsen**, the usability guru...



Nielsen's Law of Internet Bandwidth

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/980405.html>

But the mass market lags years behind the high-end users. Mr. Nielsen doesn't foresee fairly widespread high-speed connections until approximately 2003.

So for the next couple of years, as Neilsen says, “**Minimalist design rules.**”



Bottom line? We’re still at least 3 years away from being able to effectively use the phenomenal multi-media potential of the Web.

And that’s **great news** for the little guy. If the Web was flying at gigabytes per second, great Web design would be ruled by those with the dollars.

Right **now**, a good Web site is cheap because we must stick with the simple stuff. All you have to be is... **smart.**

And you are. After all, you’re reading this book!



No matter how prolific broadband becomes in the future, there will always be a significant percentage of your customer base that will remain on dial-up connections. First...

DSL experiences a problem that severely limits its distribution to those outside of urban areas -- the DSL signal fades out within 3 miles of the central source.

Cable modem connections are available only where expanded cable service is available (you may have cable T.V., but no high speed internet access). To make matters worse, cable is fighting for its life with low-cost satellite systems.

Satellite access is expensive, and still requires access to the Internet through a regular dial-up connection. (Works downstream only!)

Lastly, unlike you and I, not everyone in the world is intravenously connected to the Net. 😊

Yes, it’s hard to believe, but for some people, a dial-up modem serves their surfing needs just fine, thank you very much! For many, the Net is a tool, not a necessity, and many can’t justify the extra cost.



20.6.2. And Don't Be Tempted by "The Latest and Greatest"

Users have been downloading newest versions of Netscape and Explorer at a slower rate than previous browsers. There are several reasons...

- 1) In the early years, the Internet was populated mostly by techies. Today's users are **not** the "propellerheads" of yesterday. They care about content, not about bells-and-whistles technology. Older versions satisfy those needs.
- 2) Today's "non-techie" users do not know how to upgrade their browser. And they don't care to learn.
- 3) Previous browser upgrades delivered truly useful, quantum leap improvements in benefits. The new ones can't say the same.
- 4) The new applications are gigantic. It's a pain to download, and that's **if** you have the hard disk space.

Combine all of these reasons, and **it's not practical to design for the latest and greatest versions of the major browsers. In fact, most people surf with the browser included with their operating systems.**

And, if your visitor **does** use the newest browser, for example, and if you **do** design a site to deliver the special "advanced HTML and other features" that it supports, there's a big drawback. It's slower than straight and simple [HTML](#).



So... the most cost-effective use of your time is to **design for the lowest common denominator... versions 4 of Navigator and Explorer.**

Tell your Web designer not to take advantage of the "advanced features" of the newest versions of Netscape or Internet Explorer for now. And that goes for Java too, **for the same reason...**



... it's just too darn slow!



20.7. A Great Way to **Know** You're Succeeding!

How do you know you're succeeding? Easy. **Listen to your customers.** They'll tell you!

Do you remember the **MWR** of the PennyGold site? To **get the order** straight off the site.

But since we were only selling 1,000 units, and since PennyGold is a serious tool, we also wanted to **eliminate** the get-rich-quick junkies, the lazy, and the not-so-smart. They would not be happy with PennyGold.

Of course, **I couldn't just put up a billboard that says...**



... But I **could** structure the site so that the overall look and feel, the sheer amount of data, the location of the Order Page, and a variety of other techniques **would all combine to find the right people**, and repel the rest.

Your customers will **tell you** what they think of your Web sales efforts. We often get letters like this...

I am writing to compliment you on the way I have been treated in my effort to acquire PennyGold. I found your site by accident while looking for small cap stock sites and found myself somewhat engrossed, and almost frustrated.

It took no small effort to get through all the information on your web site. I also found it reassuring that your Website virtually discourages the casual observer, as if a "weeding out" process was occurring.

Your staff was quick to respond to my net request for contact to purchase, extremely thorough, and entirely pleasant to deal with.

More businesses could take a lesson in customer service from you and your staff.

While I am relatively new to investing and totally unfamiliar with mining stocks, I find it an exciting opportunity and look forward to the learning process. Thank you for your generous efforts in providing so much for so little.

- Rick Sinclair, rick_sinclair@cityling.com

That's when I know the site is "spot on." If you're not getting great feedback, **totally unsolicited**, from your customers, take a hard look at your site, because...

... something's wrong.



20.8. 11 Steps to a Site that SELLS!

OK, we're getting pretty near to...



... **the end!** Congratulations! If you've reached this far, you know how to construct a site that **SELLS!** You can do it better than 99.9% of all people on the face of this digital planet.

Now it's time to take that theory and **use it.** To help you, let's boil it all down **to the essential steps to... Make Your Site SELL!**



20.8.1. Prepare... Don't Repair

First though, a little **preliminary research...**

Do it even if you're a one-product company, and you're designing your own site.

If you've got a team, do it with them. They must understand your business, customers and competition. And if you have a number of product lines, you should answer the following questions for **for each one**.

The answers will form the core of the program that will turbo-boost your Web site into a high-sales tool.

1) Nature of Product

First, evaluate your product and make sure it's [appropriate for Web sales](#). If it's not, modify it (or modify the **Most Wanted Response (MWR)** -- remember the [coupons for ?](#)), or kill and start over.

Next, think deeply about your product...

- **Features** -- What exactly is this product and what does it do?
- **Benefits** -- More importantly, what is your target market looking to get out of your product?



2) Determine Your **USP** (Unique Selling Proposition)

What makes your product(s) different, better, or more desirable than other similar products available? How will you convey this to the customer? How will you prove that this is so? How will you stand out above your competitors?



3) Target Market

Develop a [thumbnail sketch/profile](#) of your target market(s).

4) Offline Marketing

Outline the current offline...

- promotional mix
- product price
- channels of distribution.

Consider how the Web effort fits in. If you do not currently have an offline program, will there be one in the first year?



5) The Competition

Do a **brief competitive analysis**. Find the Web site **URLs** of your three most important competitors for this product. What are they doing on the Web? How are they approaching matters?



6) Goals of the Site

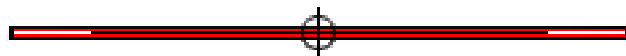
Obviously, your first goal is to get the **Most Wanted Response (MWR)**. Next, to get the **Backup Response(s)**.

What **other functions/goals** do you have for the site (tech support, customer service, etc.)? These may or may not contribute to getting the **MWR**.

If they don't, they must help develop a long-term relationship with your customer. Anything else just isn't contributing to your bottom line.

Careful, don't get distracted.

Your first priority is to get the **MWR**, which brings us to...



20.8.2. Set, and Get, the MWR

Set a MWR for each product (or product line) that you sell on your site. What do you most want your visitor to do?

Think hard and decide well -- you will build your whole site toward getting the **MWR**.

Once you know your **MWR**, **how** do you want your prospect to deliver the **MWR**?
Lay out the response methods.

Outline how your target makes a decision, step by step. **Where could this process get derailed?** What are the main reasons why your target market might **not** purchase this product?

What must you do online in order to get the sale, or the MWR?



20.8.3. Backup Responses...

For every customer who delivers your **MWR**, there are 10 who will come close... then reject your offer. But those 10 **will** hit your **Backup Response**. And ultimately, you have a good chance to convert a good number of these people into sales.

Develop at least one Backup Response.

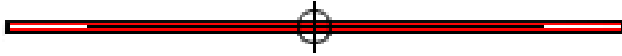


20.8.4. Design & Usability

Settle on the “look and feel” of the site. Develop a “template page” that has all the basic elements. Then...

- design the Home Page (and next LEVEL of [Link Pages](#) if needed)
- develop the site’s navigational architecture
- lay out the pathway(s) -- how you plan to lead your customer to each **MWR**.

- re-read the [usability chapter](#) -- keeping these principles firmly in mind **now** will reduce the need for post-test revisions **later**.



20.8.5. Write the **Opening Paragraph**

OK, now let's jump to the **start** of each pathway, the **Opening Page**.

Hit with your biggest gun... your [USP](#).

Also jot down other important benefits and points that you want to cover in your **Opening Page** (or "pages", if you have more than one **MWR** pathway).



20.8.6. Write the Pathway

It's time for some...



... serious writing. Do the following for **each MWR pathway...**

First, surround yourself with a...

- **Thesaurus** -- don't keep saying "great." Use short, punchy synonyms like "super," "remarkable," "fantastic," etc.
- **Book of similes** -- similes bring life, excitement, and unexpected shocks to keep the reader awake.
- **Book of quotes** -- quotes are a quick and effective way to find a well-known and respected person to "support" your position. Make them short and on-target.

Ready? Good!



Second, drill the **MWR** into your brain. From here on in, everything that you do is

geared towards **convincing your visitor to deliver your MWR.**

Start your MWR Closer Page by writing down the MWR (that you set previously) -- **exactly** what must your customer **do**? If you have some initial ideas for the offer and call to action, jot them down, too. The rest will hit you after you've written the pathway pages that come before...



Third, the Opening Page. You've written your opening paragraph, your big gun. Now **flesh it out** with sales copy and headlines. **Finish with a joint...**



... no, not that kind of joint! The kind of **joint** that pulls your customer to the next page.

[SIDEBAR]

If you are a small one-product company, the **Home Page** will likely also be your **Opening Page**, the first page on the pathway towards your **MWR Closer Page**. If you are a large company, your **Home Page** has other functions. These are outlined above in **Navigation**.



Fourth, write your next 2-4 pages that lead to the **MWR Closer Page**. Develop the most critical aspects like testimonials, the guarantee, product features, headlines and joints.

If your word processor offers an **outliner** function, it's a terrific way for laying out the hierarchy of your site, then developing the text for each page of each pathway. It's especially useful for larger sites, with multiple pathways and **LEVELs**. Kind of like having a **storyboard** of your entire site in a single document!

As you type into your word processor, underline what will appear as links on the Web. Insert notes about ideas for graphics in the appropriate places. But don't write the HTML yet. That comes last.



Fifth, build an irresistible offer and a crystal-clear call to action into your **MWR**

Closer Page. Specify all the ways that your customer can deliver the **MWR**, including the **Response Form**. [Flesh out the Closer Page](#) with copy and headlines.



Sixth, same as **fifth**, except do it for the **Backup Response(s)**.

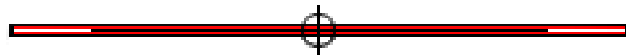


Seventh, review all pages. Divide groups of paragraphs into logical blocks of text. Develop **powerful headlines** for each block. Spend as much time on the headlines as on the overall copy. Make sure each page ends in a **joint** that pulls the visitor deeper.



Fantastic job! You've got the beginnings of a **Web Site that SELLS!**

Of course, you know that you're not finished yet. As a matter of fact, you know that **you'll never be finished!...**



20.8.7. Re-write⁴ -- Tighten and **Activate**

Now... go back to the **Opening Page** and re-read it. Like the first draft? **Make it better, even if you do.**

Make sure the **Opening Page** ends with a joint that pulls-through to the next page. Then review and re-work the next page.

Keep going like this until you have completed the **MWR Closer Page** with an offer and call to action that compels your visitor to trigger your **MWR...** or at least the **Backup Response**. Let me repeat...

... the offer and call to action must force your visitor to RESPOND!

Whoa! You're not done yet! Weren't you wondering what that "Re-write⁴" means?

It means “re-write to the power of 4.” Re-write. Then re-write it again and again, **and again.**

Remember?...



... **cut, chop, axe, and prune.**

Re-writing is the hard work. Truly hard work.

Tighten, chop, activate. Make it so tight that it squeaks... sharp, active, benefit-packed.

Rivet your reader to the screen. Make the **headlines** suck the reader through to the next section on the page. Make your **joints** pull the reader through to the next page.

Get boring for a second and whoops!... back to Alta Vista and see what else that search for “ISDN modems” turned up. **Gone... to your competitor!**

Never stop fine-tuning. This is the Web -- it’s digital. There are no printing plates. No dead trees to pay for. If you keep pushing the envelope, you’ll create some mind-bending breakthrough approaches that **SELL!**



20.8.8. The 10-Point Pathway Checklist

Finished writing, re-writing, polishing and honing? Good...

Check to make sure that all of the following are present in your product pathway, from **Opening Page** to **MWR Closer Page**.

[SIDEBAR]

If you have more than one product line, each of which has its own **MWR**, you need a product pathway for each. Do the following checklist for **each product pathway**.

✓ **1)** Does the path finish with a solid **MWR**? Do you have a **Backup Response**?

- ✓ **2)** Is your opening line a “**big gun**”? Does it transmit the major benefit, the USP, to your customer? In the next two paragraphs, do you build on that?
- ✓ **3)** Scan through each page of the path. Is there a logical progression that builds to the **MWR**? Have you covered all the other major benefits?
- ✓ **4)** Does your **MWR Closer Page** build an offer than makes the **MWR** irresistible? Did you remind your visitor of the major benefits again? Did you make an offer (product, bonuses, and price) that **you’d** be afraid to pass up? Did you develop a strong and logical reason why action is required **right now**? And did you bundle that all into a clear call to action where you tell your visitor exactly what you want her to do?
- ✓ **5)** Have you offered **proof** and major credibility-builders? Do you get an overall good, believable **solid feel** from the site?
- ✓ **6)** Does your visitor understand **exactly what she gets**? Don’t take this for granted.
- ✓ **7)** Have you eliminated your customer’s **risk** (i.e., guarantee, trial download, etc.). Is that clear to your customer?
- ✓ **8)** Did you develop and maintain a “**you-oriented**” focus throughout the site? With your text editor/HTML program, do a find for I, we, my, our, us, and we. The only place you should find them is on the “About Us” page!
- ✓ **9) Final copy test** -- Read it all out loud, to your colleague or spouse. If anything rings hollow, embarrasses you, or just plain doesn’t work, make a note. Once done, come back to all your notes and fix those spots.
- ✓ **10)** Once you have made it as good as you can, spell-check it. Then proof-read for spelling errors that your spell-checker won’t pick up (ex., “your” instead of “you”). Review it also for reasonable grammar. If you make a lot of changes, run it through your spell-checker one last time.



20.8.9. HTML and Usability Testing

OK, convert your finished product to HTML. Review the “on-disk” HTML version with your team until you’re all happy with it. Adjust usability and navigation as needed.

Drag anyone (with fresh eyes) you can find into the office to check the site for usability. Once you’ve corrected all problems, it’s time to “go live.”

Post the site.

Now it’s time for a little mini-usability testing...

Call 5 people who have a history of giving you straight, honest answers. Ideally these people should be in your target market. Get together so that you can watch them -- tell them you want “**blunt, honest opinions.**”

If they never get lost and if they ask whether they can buy your product now, **then you know you’re ready for full usability testing!**

Odds are, though, that they’ll spot several problem areas. Fix flaws.

Then proceed to more formal usability testing.

[SIDEBAR]

Your site should be “live” for usability testing (to create true bandwidth scenarios). But it should **not be accessible** to real, live traffic. Ask your techie to tuck it away where others won’t find it.

If you’ll be testing for more than two weeks, he should keep the Search Engines’ spiders away with a robots.txt file.

OK, done? Testing is great? No one gets lost! Everyone wants to buy?

Great! It-t-t-t’s-s-s-s...



20.8.10. Showtime!

You're "ready-for-prime-time" live! **Yes, it's...**



... showtime!

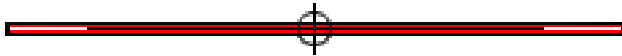
Move the site to its real online location. Then...

Promote lightly (for example, post to HotBot only, or take a banner ad or two -- just enough to generate low traffic). Use your initial traffic as a "live test." Ask customers for frank feedback -- offer them something of benefit for their help.

Watch the site closely. Is it doing what you want? Study the log files. How are the pathways? Are you getting your **MWR?**

Back in the real world, **are you responding to your customers quickly and well?** Is your **infrastructure** working well?

Adjust, adjust, adjust.



20.8.11. Build Targeted Traffic

Fantastic! Now that you've got a SALES-generating Web site, it's time to attract targeted customers... [see Traffic-Building Volume.](#)



And that's it! After all, if you've got a great **product**, a **site** that **SELLS**, and a steady stream of **targeted traffic...**

... how can you **not** succeed??



20.9. The Top 6 Rules in 17 Words

Here are **the** very top rules for a great site that **SELLS!**...

- 1) Feel customer's needs.
- 2) Make navigation clear.
- 3) Load fast.
- 4) K-I-S-S.
- 5) Write actively and clearly.
- 6) Ask for "the order."

Say them to yourself over and over, **every night when you go to bed...**



... Sweet dreams!



20.10. For the Advanced Netreprenneur...

Why Visitors Don't Buy **AFTER** You Do It All Right!

Our myss.com site has an excellent **Conversion Rate (CR)**. Depending on how well the affiliate "PREsells" (a critical concept outlined in the [5 Pillar Affiliate Manual](#)), the **CR** ranges **as high as 20%**. The site average is 4-5%.

But so what? It's kind of like the baseball player who earns \$68 kazillion for batting .333. He gets paid to fail 2 out of 3 times!

What does that have to do with sales?

Good question (as usual)!

Even with its excellent **CR**, our site **fails** to get the order more times that it **succeeds**. Why is that so surprising?

Well... a Web site is **not** like a retail store, full of window-shoppers who just “happened to be passing by.” Visitors don’t stumble into our Web site out of the ethers of cyberspace...

EVERY VISITOR HAD AT LEAST SOME IDEA THAT SITESELL.COM IS ALL ABOUT SELLING ON THE WEB. Oops, sorry -- didn’t mean to get excited about this. 😊

So why **wouldn’t** such a visitor purchase the original **MYSS!** book that...

- was priced at only US\$17.
- was widely accepted as the best book of its kind at **any** price.
- had a glowing page of book reviews and **verifiable** testimonials. No other product came close to the quality and quantity of documented, verifiable feedback.
- had a rock-solid 100% money-back guarantee.



When you consider the above **and** that there are so few “accidental” visitors, you might think that our **CR** should have been **50%**. Still, in the world of computers, programming, and e-commerce, **nothing happens by accident**. There is **always** an explanation -- the trick is to figure it out. **Maybe...**

1) MYSS! was too cheap = low perceived value. Sales off my first successful site (PennyGold) increased when we increased the price of the software.

Or maybe...

2) It was because the book was originally only available in Adobe Acrobat format (we later offered the Printed Version). Sure, we had good reasons for this... (http://www.sitesell.com/why_acrobat.html). But maybe visitors didn’t care about **our** good reasons. Maybe downloading Acrobat Reader from Adobe is just too

daunting for some.

Or I wonder if...

3) They just didn't care enough about Net-selling. But then why would they have been on our site?

Hey! Who knows?...

4) Some feature of the site may somehow have killed the sale. Perhaps they hated the "look and feel" of the site? Maybe they couldn't find the Order Page?

There are a **zillion** possible reasons. Remember, "**you don't know what you don't know.**"

But there was no point in **guessing** why people didn't buy -- we had to **know**. As my old med school professor used to say...

"You can't treat what you have not diagnosed."

In medicine, doctors make a list of possible diseases, just like I did above. Docs don't just "guess" that you have pneumonia. We do blood tests and X-rays to make the diagnosis.

And that's what we did on our site...

To make the diagnosis, we ran a survey to find out why visitors don't buy. It was a study unlike any other. If you visited the site at that time, you probably didn't even see it happening.



The single most important piece of information we sought?...

"Why do most visitors **not buy?"**

Think about **why** this is so important. Let's say that we survey 1,000 people. Now suppose they reply with 1,000 different reasons. Well, we know that we can't address 1,000 different reasons. So our site is as good as it can be (or it needs a total overhaul -- but we're assuming here that your site gets the basics right!).

But what if **200** people would have bought if we offered an HTML version? Or what

if **500** people found the site “too hard-sell.” Or if **300** people just didn’t trust us to refund them?

If we find **big blocks** of common answers, we’ll have a strong lead on how to improve the site. If we can overcome or eliminate common reasons, we’ll be able to multiply our **CR**.

Or so I thought!

That was before we launched our **Y-NO-BUY** survey. In fact, no huge blocks showed up, but **small, significant** ones did. The results were fascinating... and **extremely useful**.



Here’s how we ran the survey...

We offered the survey only to those who did **not** buy the book and only at the time that they left the site. A window popped up with two simple questions...

1) Why did you not buy the book?

2) Why did you not subscribe to the free e-zine?

The survey cost us over 1,000 free copies of the first edition of **MYSS!**. To encourage response, we offered a free book to anyone who would provide useful “why I did not buy” information.



Analyzing the survey was tough. To get answers that truly reflected the “Y-NO-BUY” reason, we asked **open-ended** (rather than drop-down menu) questions. We “manually” **read** every answer to pull out recurrent themes and phrases. Then we **re-entered the data** in a consistent, analyzable fashion. Finally, we built a **database tool** to “slice and dice” the data.

Once all was said and done, the survey cost us over \$15,000 in programming and analysis. But you know what?

It was worth it. Basically, we wanted a bona fide peek into the brain of the non-buyer. And we got it. The conclusions empowered us to **improve** Sitesell.com’s **Conversion Rate**.

Here's what we found...



20.10.1. Overall Results

First and **most amazing** result?

We decided to secure 1,000 responses to the survey. I figured that we would have to survey 2,000 visitors in order to get 1,000 usable responses. **Wrong again!**

We had to pop up **18,271** survey pages in order to get 1,141 responses. We rejected 141 of those due to a lack of usable data (too brief, nonsense, etc.). That comes out to a 6.2% response rate, **5.5%** after the discards.

Before we started the study, I expected about a 50% response rate -- after all, we were going to offer a free copy of **MYSS!**. Boy, was I wrong...

We tried several approaches. I played around with the wording, but left the questions the same...

- **Why didn't you buy Make Your Site Sell!?**
(Please enter only your single most important reason).
- **Did you subscribe to the free SITE-SELL e-zine?**
(If not... why not?)


Here's the first version of the survey page...

MYSS! is Now... FREE!

But only for **you...** and only right **now.** You were selected at random. Here's why...

I need the help of an expert... someone who did **not** buy from this Web site **and** who **knows** why. Which brings me to why **you** are seeing this page...

Only one in one hundred visitors who **don't** buy are chosen for this survey. And **you** are one of those ones. :-)



Don't believe me? Think maybe that this is a last-ditch effort to make the sale?

Actually, it's the opposite. I'll **give** you a **free** copy of **MYSS!** just for answering **two** questions -- this **includes** a free subscription to **Sales from the EDGE**, our private e-zine that goes only to **MYSS!** owners.

It's **so important** that you provide helpful and honest answers. So let me add this... I will also send you the **actual results** of this study -- you'll be **the first** to see them! Your help **is** that **vital**.

Yes... there's a catch. You have to **help** by telling **the truth**. Don't worry -- I can take it. So please, let me have it right between the eyes. :-)

Ready? Here are the two questions...

<http://www.sitesell.com/edge/words/1st-try.html> (Don't submit -- it no longer works.)

So what did that page generate? A measly 4.1% rate. I was astounded. How could only 4% of visitors take the time to answer two questions?



Hmmm. OK, let's make the page better...

You Just Got Lucky!

Only a small percent of visitors who **don't** buy MYSS! are chosen to see this page -- if you revisit, you won't be selected again. **But you were this time!** Here's why...

➡ I want to give you, **free**, a copy of MYSS!. Why?

I need **your** help, just two minutes of your time to answer two short questions...

To thank you, I'll **give** you a **free** copy of MYSS! -- this **includes** a lifetime subscription to **Sales from the EDGE**, our private e-zine that goes **only** to MYSS! owners.

➡ And... I'll also give you something **far more** valuable than even MYSS!...

This survey is extremely expensive... **thousands of dollars** for programming and data analysis, and we're giving away **tens of thousands** of dollars worth of MYSS!.

Originally, we planned to use the results simply to **improve our site**. But the **sheer value** of the answers to date has been stunning...

So we are compiling them into an interactive **"Why Web Visitors Don't Buy" report**. No one has **ever** accumulated and analyzed this kind of real-time data... until now. The price of this report will be **several times more** than the cost of MYSS!.

<http://www.sitesell.com/edge/words/2nd-try.html> (Don't submit -- it no longer works.)

I used longer copy, a lighter tone, and a "winners" feeling. So what did this less-than-brilliant page accomplish? The response rate rocketed all the way **down** to...

... 2.7%. I almost threw the computer out the window!



Back to the drawing board...

Help!

Only a small percent of visitors who **don't** buy **MYSS!** are chosen to see this page -- if you revisit, you won't be selected again. **But you were this time!**

Why?

I need your help, just two minutes of your time to answer two short questions. To thank you...

- I'll give you, **free**, a copy of **MYSS!**. This **includes** a lifetime subscription to **Sales from the EDGE**, our private e-zine that goes **only** to **MYSS!** owners.
- **And...** I'll also give you the **full** report on this survey of 1,000 visitors. **Only** respondents will ever see the results, totally free... as my thank you.

What's the **catch**? None at all, except to provide clear answers that help us understand. Don't worry -- I can take it. :-)

<http://www.sitesell.com/edge/words/3rd-try.html>

A short, to-the-point plea for help. This improved our response rate back to 4.0%. Yup, **almost** back to where I started from!



But I thought I could see some strong elements in each. So we kept it tight, picked the strongest of the headlines, and came out with this...

MYSS! is Now... FREE!

But only for **you...** and only right **now**. A small percent of visitors who **don't** buy MYSS! are chosen to see this page -- if you revisit, you won't be selected again. But you were **this time!**

Why?

I need **your** help, just two minutes of your time to answer two short questions. To thank you...

- I'll give you, **free**, a copy of MYSS!. This **includes** a lifetime subscription to Sales from the EDGE, our private e-zine that goes **only** to MYSS! owners.
- And... I'll also give you the **full** report on this survey of 1,000 visitors. Only **you** will ever see the actual results, totally free... as my thank you.

Please help by providing clear answers that help us understand. Don't worry -- I can take it. :-)

<http://www.sitesell.com/edge/words/4th-try.html>

Short, to the point, and our response rate jumped to **12.1%**. I did not have the courage to push it any further. So we left it like this for the rest of the survey, with the resulting average of 6.2% (5.5%) response rate.

[SIDEBAR]

Words, and words alone, created a response rate from as low as 2.7% to as high as 12.1%. A greater than 4 fold increase. Just through words.

Know all that time and/or money that people spend on **fancy graphics**? They should hire a good copywriter.

So what does that incredibly low response rate mean?

Well, conventional thinking is that anyone who finds a sales-oriented site like Sitesell.com is a potential customer. Too bad conventions don't work on the Net!

Consider this -- the Sitesell.com site converts about 5% of its visitors into buyers. Of the remaining 95%, only 5.5% took the time to answer two simple questions in return for a free book. **In other words, only 10% of the visitors to the site were serious, prospective customers.**

After all, if you won't answer two simple questions in return for a free book, there was nothing the site could do to convince you to buy it, is there? It does not matter why...

- too worried about giving up your e-mail address?
- don't believe the offer?
- just not interested enough?
- don't like the idea of an e-book?

Whatever the reason... if our free offer could **not** motivate you to answer two simple questions, there is simply no way to **overcome** that objection and convince you to open your credit card up and make the purchase.

This is a huge revelation -- 90% of our visitors were simply **"unconvertible."**

[**SIDEBAR**]

We found this so interesting that we thought of doing a second survey to find out why our visitors would not even fill out a survey in return for a free book. Only one problem...

People who don't fill in surveys don't fill in surveys!

At first, I was disappointed with the low response rate. After all, if only 5.5% responded, we could hardly feel that we were finding out why "the average visitor" did not buy. However, we found out something much more important...

Why people who **almost bought** did not buy! After all, the people who answered the survey obviously **did** want the book. But something stopped them. What?

That's what our Y-NO-BUY study discovered. **Let's start with the "big picture" first...**



20.10.2. The Major Reasons...

Sitesell.com vs. General Findings

We studied the results of **general Internet surveys** to understand how our own results compare. Here's a summary of our findings...

First, let's talk briefly about the **CR**. In general Internet surveys, the **CR** is 2.6% among **leading** online merchants -- only 5% of leading merchants reported rates in excess of 7%. Smaller sites had **CRs** of less than 1%.

Sitesell.com averages 4-5%. This is for a site that has lots of **competition**, a customer that **site-compares** like crazy, and for a **small-brand** company that sells but a **few products!**



LESSON #1 -- You **can** achieve substantially higher **CRs** than the norm by designing **sites that SELL!**

Now... why **don't** Web surfers buy?

TABLE I -- Why Surfers Don't Buy On the Internet*

Price	78%
Trust & Reliability	67%
Credit card concerns	65%
Privacy issues	58%
Navigation difficulty	35%
Delivery time	25%

* All general **"Internet"** stats have been compiled and averaged from surveys and studies done by...

<http://netsmart-research.com>

<http://cybershopper.com>

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

<http://ecommerce.internet.com/>

<http://www.emarketer.com/enews/>

<http://internetnews.com>

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

<http://www.iq2.net>

<http://cyberatlas.internet.com/>

<http://www.bbb.org/>

<http://www.forrester.com>

Let's compare with our **Y-NO-BUY** survey...

TABLE II -- Why Surfers Don't Buy On Sitesell.com*

(reasons listed in same order as general Internet findings above)

Price	16.0%
Trust & Reliability	18.7%
Credit card concerns	2.6%
Privacy Issues	0.2%
Navigation Difficulty	2.8%
Delivery time	0.0%

* All "**Sitesell.com**" stats have been compiled from our Y-NO-BUY survey.



Rather than list Y-NO-BUY reasons for easy comparison to the general surveys, let's list the **top** reasons that the Y-NO-BUY study uncovered...

TABLE III -- Why Surfers Don't Buy On Sitesell.com*

(reasons listed according to importance, cut off at 6% occurrence)

Procrastination	26.6%
Trust & Reliability	18.7%
Price	16.2%
Product Content	12.8%
Site Aspects	6.7%



PRICE was the leading reason for not buying in the Internet surveys. Potential customers expect discounts of 30%-60% over brick and mortar stores on the Net. But you can't buy **MYSS!** at your local bookstore, and the price is obviously more than fair. So the PRICE issue, while still the third most important for **MYSS!**, falls to almost a fifth of the level of the general surveys (16.2% vs. 78%).

LESSON #2 -- If you sell non-proprietary product, you will be forced to play the Wal-Mart commodity game. Instead, **sell proprietary product at a fair price.**



TRUST is the next major issue. It's the perception by 50% of Web surfers that there are many disreputable companies offering products for sale on the Web. Visitors are looking for clues to indicate the **reputation** of the vendor. Despite the fact that Sitesell.com does not have the name brand recognition of Amazon or Barnes and Noble, we cut this issue down to almost a quarter of the general level (18.7% vs.

67%). Still, it's our second most important issue. So we should examine how we could improve here.

LESSON #3 -- Build trustability and "likeability" into your site. Get your most paranoid friends to review your site -- ask them to tell you where your site "smells."



Now let's compare the next four most important "general Internet" issues... CREDIT CARD, PRIVACY, NAVIGATION, DELIVERY TIME. **TABLE I** shows that these are all significant barriers to the buy. **TABLE II** shows that these issues have all dropped off the map of concern.

LESSON #4 -- CREDIT CARD, PRIVACY, NAVIGATION, and DELIVERY TIME issues can all be eliminated with proper site design. There's no excuse for these to be issues if you design your site appropriately.



Finally, let's look at **TABLE III**. Once you have addressed the "basic issues" raised in general Net surveys by designing a site that **SELLS**, a new "layer" of issues will emerge.

The #1 reason that Sitesell.com visitors don't buy is "**PROCRASTINATION**." For one reason or another, these people all needed more time to make a final decision.

Lack of trust is the #2 reason. While we managed to cut the percentages down, it was still significant (18.7%). These visitors broke down into the following groups...

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • too many companies offering similar info | 52% |
| • too good to be true | 14% |
| • never buys from the unknown | 13% |
| • previous bad experiences | 12% |
| • doesn't buy off the Internet | 9% |

There must be ten thousand sites selling or giving away Web marketing info. That's why over half of the "trust reasons" complain that there are **just too many companies** offering similar info.

We need to address this issue. The detailed comments that we received provide valuable peeks into their mindsets (generally suspicious and cynical) and will facilitate the approach.

PRICE is the #3 reason in the Y-NO-BUY survey. Note that PRICE and TRUST are the only holdovers of any importance from the general Net surveys.

One of our worries about pricing **MYSSI** so low was that we could be losing sales due to a “low perceived value.” To our great surprise, of the 16.2% for whom price was some kind of factor, only 4% of this group thought it to be **too cheap**. The largest PRICE sub-category?... **82.5%** considered it to be too expensive (“no funds,” “on a budget,” “credit cards maxed out”). And 13.5% could not find the price on the site!

In other words, the vast majority of “price reasons” couldn’t afford it **at that specific time**. This also gives us something solid to address, especially when additional information supplied gives us insight into this subset.



PRODUCT CONTENT is the #4 reason why Sitesell.com visitors don’t buy. Many Web surfers still like to get information for free. And that’s especially true for Web marketing info -- 71% of PRODUCT CONTENT reasons contained this element. Again, based on their detailed comments, we have another strong way to overcome this problem.

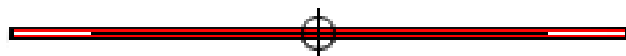


The #5 Y-NO-BUY reason was SITE ASPECTS -- the majority (55.2%) of the 6.7% who had SITE issues indicated the Sitesell.com site was too “hard sell” or “hypey” -- the mindset was generally negative and suspicious, critical of everything. Some (43.2%) were overwhelmed by the length.

Given the small size of this subset and the amount of work it would take to overcome these issues and personality types, we would certainly not start here! Still, a “look and feel and text” tuneup couldn’t hurt and might also help in the TRUST category.

LESSON #5 -- PROCRASTINATION and PRODUCT CONTENT are smaller (i.e., lower percentages) issues that emerge after you cover the basics. But they are big enough that they require addressing if you want to...

MAKE YOUR SITE SELL AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!



20.10.3. What We Did About It

Based on the Y-NO-BUY survey, here are the major changes that we made...

1) We added a quick...



...Five Minute Tour Page.

<http://myss.sitesell.com/s-5min.html>

Hmmm.. this did not show up as a reason, did it? Nope -- it shows up in our **interpretation of mindset**. Objective analysis of the data reveals an incredible time pressure. So we decided to develop a Five Minute Tour for the truly time-handicapped!

It's now our **third most popular page!** (I went the whole nine yards and played a MIDI file on it -- "Mission Impossible".)

2) We added this "PROCRASTINATION pre-closer" on the Five Minute page to combat the PROCRASTINATION issue...

Don't procrastinate...
Don't "bookmark us to come back later"...

[Click here to order
the Printed Version or
the Electronic Version
\(or best of all, the combo!\)
right away!](#)

OR, if you're still not sure...

Avoid the **paralysis of procrastination** by
taking full advantage of the Guarantee!

Here's how...

[Click here to order
the Electronic Version right away.](#)
(Usability experts have called it "an awesome onscreen read."
Marketing gurus?... "the ultimate digital Web sales reference book.")

Within minutes, you'll be downloading. Review it...
If it's not **everything** that you hoped it to be,
just ask for your money back. Yes, **really**.

Yes, you can ask for your money back **anytime**.
But if you do it **right away**,
the credit will cancel out the charge,
so it won't even touch your **cash flow!**

[Seriously, do it. It will be the single best
and most important decision you make this year.](#)

3) We brought the price **front and center** in several places on the site. It had previously only been available on the Order Page.

4) We added direct HTML links to the Table Of Contents (TOC) to combat the PRODUCT CONTENT issues. We knew that a lot of people buy **MYSS!** after reviewing the TOC.

5) We made the "**SUBSCRIBE TO SITE-SELL!**" link more obvious. And we added its **USP** right in the link -- "**The World's Most Usable E-zine.**" We did not talk about the "e-zine subscription issue" above, but "not seeing" this link was the single biggest reason for not subscribing to our free newsletter.

6) We made a lot of small look and feel and text changes to reduce the “hypey look” of the site without reducing sales effectiveness. This is a tricky issue -- some “technically oriented” visitors will always complain. If a few don’t, you’re probably **not** selling “hard enough.” If you over-react to this criticism, you’ll eliminate those complaints -- but you’ll also reduce your sales.

Personally, my best **CRs** happen when I write “past my personal comfort zone.”

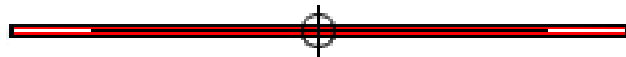


Once you’ve got it right, it’s just **the beginning**.

Constantly **test to be best**.

Survey to find out what’s wrong. Then **make it better again**.

The beauty of it all is that **it’s totally under your control**.



20.11. The Bottom Line

The goal of your Web site is to generate the **MWR...**

1) Set your Most Wanted Response.

2) Fire your biggest benefit gun on the Opening Page.

3) Pull your customer from the Opening Page to the MWR Closer Page via a tight, customer-oriented, easy-to-use-and-navigate pathway, one that is crystal-clear at every point.

4) On the MWR Closer Page, make an irresistible offer and finish with a clear call to action.



The basic response-generating strategy is timeless. Most of the information in

this book will be every bit as valid in five years. Sure the Web will be faster. But the basic concepts will remain **the same**.

You **can** succeed on the Web, **no matter how big or small you are... at least for the next 5 years**. All you have to do is...

- Get a good product.
- Make a site that **SELLS!**
- Bring in targeted traffic.

Go to it.

I **would** wish you good luck. But if you master **product, traffic and sales**, you won't need good luck...



... You'll need Brinks. 😊

With sincere wishes for outstanding Web sales,
Ken



So... What Do You Think?

I deeply hope that this book has met your needs...

Help make the next edition of **MYSS! 2002** even better! If you feel that it has excelled in certain areas, I'd love to hear about it. If it has let you down in others, I'd **really** love to hear about it. ☺

To thank you for your help, you'll receive a **free PDF copy** of the next edition.

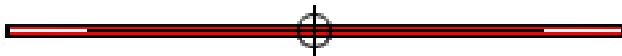
Just hit the link below to visit our "**So... What Do You Think?**" page, and let me have it right between the eyes! If you do...

... I'll let you have it, too! (A free PDF of the book, that is!)



So... What Do You Think?

<http://www.sitesell.com/views.html>



MYSS! 2002... MYKS!

MAKE YOUR KNOWLEDGE SELL! MYKS!

MYKS! is “the ultimate product development toolbox.” Thousands of people are already building **their own** profitable businesses based on **their own** brainpower.

When you think about it, the **only** way to build a business with equity is by developing and selling **your own** product. Since we all know **something** that is of value to others, this is the way to go for most individuals.

Reader reaction?...

MYKS! is a MASTERPIECE. I have made a great living in the information-marketing business ever since I gave up my job as a lecturer in Papua New Guinea. I have bought EVERY book there is on the subject. Yours IS the best, worth 10x your price. One strategy alone will earn me thousands of dollars in extra revenue in the next two weeks. Ken, the “info-gurus” should take lessons from you about CONTENT and PRICING.

Colin Almeida, Reprint Rights Authority

<http://www.reprint-rights.com/>

collin@reprint-rights.com

MYKS! is the book we’ve all been waiting for. If you’re going to achieve success, you need your own product. As usual Ken has “over-given”. Make Your Knowledge SELL! shows you exactly how, and step-by-step, how to move to the top of the Internet sales food chain. This book is so superior that it simply wipes out competitors as if they never existed. It’s the best product, at the best price.

Phil Wiley, Publisher of **All the Secrets**

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

phil@ozemedia.com

For full information about **MYKS!**, please see the site...

MAKE YOUR KNOWLEDGE SELL!

<http://myks.sitesell.com/>

[SIDEBAR]

As an owner of **SiteSell** products, you can order **MYKS!** at a discount. [Please see SiteSell Discount Directory \(below\) for details.](#)



MAKE YOUR PRICE SELL! MYPS!

Got a new product? How do you price it? Do you...

- Evaluate product features and customer benefits?
- Mark up x% over your cost of production?
- Undercut competitors' prices?
- Ask key (friendly) customers?
- Get feedback from salespeople?
- Weigh typical customers' "disposable income"?
- Solicit advice from consultants or business associates?

Most companies **stir all this soft data into their...**



... **magic pricing cauldron**, and somehow magically come up with "the number."

But what does that number mean, really? How do you know it's the perfect price... the number that's going to maximize your profit? **The answer is... you don't.** Until now.

Introducing... **Make Your Price Sell!** For more information, please see the site...

MAKE YOUR PRICE SELL!

<http://myspsitesell.com/>

[SIDEBAR]

As an owner of **SiteSell** products, you can order **MYPS!** at a discount. [Please see SiteSell Discount Directory \(below\) for details.](#)



MAKE YOUR WORDS SELL! MYWS!

Selling software on the Net? Infoproducts? A service? Million dollar cables for suspension bridges? If you want to sell more, **use the right words**.

MYWS! is all you'll ever need to write order-generating, lead-getting, sales-clinching words.

Words sell, not graphics or whirling gizmos. Your words have to grab your reader's attention and rivet their surfing eyeballs to your screen... all the way from your opening headline to your order form. It has to be a seamless process that skillfully continues to offer the reader benefits and relevant information.

MYWS! is a one-of-a-kind product, built from the ground up for the Net. It covers proven copywriting methods and techniques for a Web site, an online store, and e-mail communication.

MYWS! shows you how to make **all** your online words persuade that visitor to become a customer and get the sale -- an invaluable lifetime business skill.

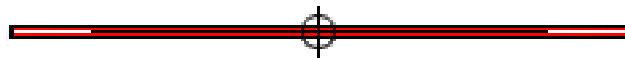
Become a great **e-persuader**... a Netwriter. Discover the power of **your** words. Skip the 2-year trial-and-error learning curve. Save thousands of dollars by not having to hire a pro copywriter. You **can** write words that **sell** and **MYWS!** shows you how.

MAKE YOUR WORDS SELL!

<http://myws.sitesell.com/>

[SIDEBAR]

As an owner of **SiteSell** products, you can order **MYWS!** at a discount. [Please see SiteSell Discount Directory \(below\) for details.](#)





Site Build It!

Site Build It! is the total, all-in-one traffic-building package for affiliates, potential affiliates, online stores and shopping portals, traffic-building professionals, Net auctions, and consultants (no matter what service you sell!).

SBI! creates a **Theme-Based Site**, jammed with **Keyword-Focused Content Pages** that rank highly with **Search Engines (SEs)**, and that “**PREsell**” effectively. PREselling gets your visitors to **click through** to your affiliate programs or main sales site with an open-to-buy attitude.

Site Build It!, a through-the-Web-browser site builder, handles ftp'ing, HTML coding, META tags, keyword density and Search Engine submission. Its step-by-step system frees you up for what's important... writing good content for your site... persuasive content that gets the click through to your affiliate programs... **and earns income.**

What does **SBI!** include?...

- the **domain name registration** for one year
- a **brainstorming and research tool** that rapidly develops a list of highly profitable, researched topics for your themed site, no matter what your theme. It even tells you how profitable each topic will be!
- a “**no-HTML**” **SiteBuilder** -- **build as many pages** as you like within your theme-based site for the year
 - Web site hosting for a full year
 - your catchall e-mail address ('catches" multiple e-mail addresses)
 - a look and feel selector (including logo-builder) -- no need for expensive designers!
 - a link library (stores any link to any affiliate program)
 - an image library (upload your own images)
 - full editing function

- An “**Analyze It**” module that reports on the Search Engine effectiveness of your page **before** you build it.
- automatic Search Engine **submission and tracking/reporting of spidering, listing and ranking**
- a time-saving tool that researches the major **Pay-Per-Click Search Engines** for you, automatically showing you the Top 20 bids at every major Pay-Per-Click (PPPC) for all of your topics. Click a button and you’re ready to mass-submit bids to each of the PPCs!
- **traffic stats**
- **click in and click through analysis** reports. You’ll know exactly what’s happening on your site, and why.

And in the very near future...

- A Digital E-commerce module -- if you’ve ever thought about creating and selling an e-book, now’s the time to start writing. Sell and fulfill your product exactly the way that SiteSell.com sells its digital books.
- An E-zine MailOut component that allows you to automatically take subscriptions and do mailouts (HTML and/or text) to your opt-in list.

What does it all mean?

SBI! is the ultimate e-commerce value bundle. At a fraction of the price.



<http://buildit.sitesell.com/>

Sidebar

Join the 5 Pillar Program and earn a **20%** rebate. Details at...

<http://www.sitesell.com/discount-directory.html>



MAKE YOUR NET AUCTION SELL! MYNAS!

At this point in e-history, you have open access to an incredibly profitable and exciting business opportunity -- one that didn't even exist a few years ago -- **a Net auction business.**

There's no initial investment -- you can begin by selling those long forgotten treasures that are gathering dust in your closet, attic or basement. No start-up risk. Build your Net auction business at your own speed. Work full-time or part-time. Retire early.

You don't even need to round up your target market because auction sites are extremely popular. They're already courting buyers from all over the world, buyers who are actively **searching** for your listing.

MYNAS! lets you skip the trial-and-error time you'd otherwise waste on the nuts-and-bolts stuff. There are comprehensive sections on...

- How to stand out with unique items
- Choosing the best auction sites for your goods (eBay's not the only one, you know!)
- How to promote your business
- Where to find other auction pros and what you can learn from them
- Strategies for selling goods in volume
- Selling high-ticket items without having to buy them
- How to start an auction site of your own!

MYNAS! helps you begin and **expand** your Net auction gold-mine. **The fun part.**

MAKE YOUR NET AUCTION SELL!

<http://mynas.sitesell.com/>

[SIDEBAR]

As an owner of **SiteSell** products, you can order **MYNAS!** at a discount. [Please see SiteSell Discount Directory \(below\) for details.](#)



SiteSell Discount Directory

We've put together a special directory page for owners of SiteSell products. It lists **all** the special discount order pages for all of our products...



SiteSell Discount Directory

<http://www.sitesell.com/discount-directory.html>

Please bookmark this page -- it's the only page that you will need to refer to. For owners of **SiteSell** products only, it provides discounts on all products, **except** for **MYSS! 2002** -- if I discounted **its** price, I'd have to pay you to buy it! 😊





"Best On the Net"

If you would like to become our valued partner-in-sales, investigate our **5 Pillar Affiliate Program (5PP)**. The **5PP** was named "**The Best Program on the Net**" by affiliatesdirectory.com, a directory that contained over 2,500 programs at the time! And #1 guru Allan Gardyne has said that the **5PP** is "**where other programs will be in 18 months**" and has called it "**the best program on the Net.**"



The **5PP** pays a generous commission on...

- 1) the first order by a customer who was referred by you
- 2) **every** subsequent order (for other products) by that customer... forever!
- 3) sales generated by affiliates who were referred by you.

Consider also...

- the rapidly growing product line
- the non-terminatable, transferable agreement
- and the limited number of affiliates -- to prevent affiliate over-competition, we'll be closing this program soon.

Together with lifetime commissions, 2-tiers and a limited membership, **this program builds equity for the affiliate.**



We're looking for people who want to **build equity**, not just join an income-of-the-day program... people who will form a Web-based group of sales professionals. These people will have more than income... they will have a business that can be sold because it really is worth something.

Analyze any other program and you'll find...

A business that can be terminated at any moment, for any reason at the whim of the other party. This has no inherent equity value, no matter how much you made last

MYSS! 2002... "Best On the Net"

week. And it describes virtually every other program. Would you buy a business that is subject to termination by whim? Or that could face you with a zillion more competitors in a year?



The bottom line is simple... empower the motivated to **build true equity**. **Join the Club** and get two free gifts...

- our **Ultimate Link Tracker** software -- invaluable for tracking link and ad effectiveness. There are no restrictions on its use -- we've designed it so that you can track the effectiveness of **any** ad or link you place for **any** possible purpose.

and

- the **5 Pillar Affiliate Manual** -- declared by Allan Gardyne as the **single best** manual about succeeding at affiliate programs, better even than those costing \$50 and up!



The 5 Pillar Affiliate Program

<http://www.sitesell.com/affiliateprogram.html>

