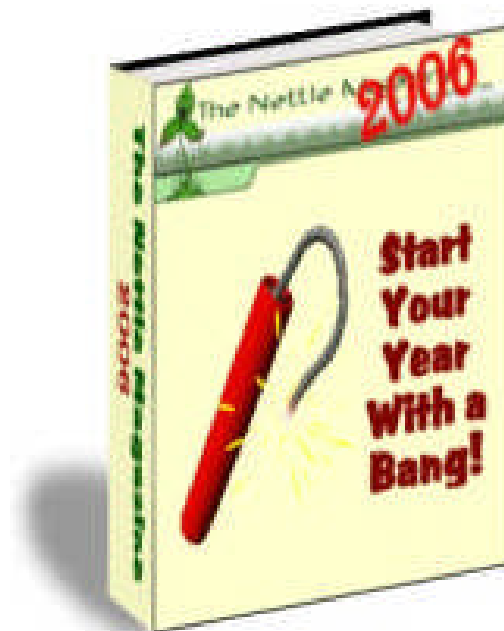


The Nettle Annual 2006

*compiled by
David Congreave*



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Viral Marketing

Editor's Note

David Congreave



David Congreave is the editor of The Nettle Magazine. He lives in Leeds and works for Paypershop Ltd, a small, family, internet business.

Internet Marketing Highlight of 2005

[Your Lucky List](#) really stood out to me because it demonstrated that it is possible to release an old-fashioned concept, but still draw people in by the thousands by putting an original spin on it.

By focussing on the needs and interests of the user, [Your Lucky List](#) created a program that can be useful to everyone and not just to a minority of “big-hitters”.

In that respect, I believe it even beats [ListDotCom](#) as the essential list-building machine.

Internet Marketing Prediction for 2006

I believe we'll see a gradual change in the focus of products moving from e-books to software.

E-books will continue to be produced and be popular, but will be quickly overtaken by software as the marketers preferred choice of product.

Resell rights will increase in popularity and will increasingly be used for list-building as well as for creating additional streams of income. If you have yet to learn how to setup and use resell rights, be sure to do this soon.

Favourite Programs/Websites of 2005

Your Lucky List

As stated above, this is really useful list-building website that doesn't rely on early adoption to make it work. If you have yet to try Your Lucky List, you can do so now and still benefit from it.

Net Marketing Exposed

The most refreshing, interesting and down-right scary, e-book that I read in 2005.

If you are relatively new to working online this e-book could literally save you thousands of dollars in lost revenue.

SureFireWealth

I can't remember who originally introduced this website to me, but I'm EXTREMELY glad that they did.

This is the best source for products with resell rights that I have found to date. Not the cheapest website around, but it proves the old adage that you get what you pay for.

Free Software Alert

Ok, so it's a little big-headed to include one of my own websites in this list, but this has far and away had the highest conversion rate of any of my previous projects.

I think this result offers an interesting insight into what internet marketers are interested in today.

Impact Pop-up

The more I use this program, the more I appreciate just how flexible it is.

The range of customisation permitted when creating these pop-ups is far in excess of my previous supplier. Plus, not having to pay a monthly fee is just perfect.

The Truth About Doublers – A Lesson in Viral Marketing

In autumn 2004 I began a vendetta against money doubler programs.

Doublers are a thinly-veiled version of the Ponzi scheme. Probably illegal and definitely immoral.

It wasn't just the prevalence of such programs at the time; it was the attitude of many people towards these online scams. Views ranged from the "don't care" variety to "they must be ok, because I'm making money with them" naivety.

After several frustrating forum discussions, I decided to write a strongly-worded article, denouncing these programs and exposing their fraudulent mode of operation. "The Truth About Doublers" was born.

At this stage I think it's only fair to admit that my motives were not entirely altruistic. Although I liked the idea of educating the uninformed about the dangers of these schemes, I also recognised it as an opportunity to raise my profile and to experiment with the concept of viral marketing.

Viral marketing is simply advertising that propagates itself. So named because of the way in which real-life viruses can reproduce and spread in rapid order.

There are many forms of viral marketing, the most common being affiliate programs. Someone purchases a product and then recommends it to someone else, who recommends it to someone else, and so on.

The most famous example of viral marketing is arguably that of Hotmail. Hotmail give away free email accounts and, because each email sent contains an advert for Hotmail, users of the service are advertising the service continually.

Essentially, viral marketing is about giving users of a product or a service an incentive to share it with others. If the incentive is strong

then the viral effect will be strong. If the incentive is weak or non-existent, then the viral effect will quickly dissipate.

Incentives can be categorised thus:

REQUIRED: Users have no choice but to promote to make use of the service. Eg – Hotmail.

REWARD: Users are offered money and/or gifts for telling others.

INTEREST: Users share it with others simply out of a desire to spread something interesting or cool.

I played around with the first category to begin with by putting the article behind a Tell-A-Friend form. Readers had to tell others about the article before they obtained access.

I soon rejected this idea, however, as I didn't want to make the article difficult for people to get to. The goal was still to educate. It was also a bit of a stretch to ask people to recommend an article they hadn't yet read.

REWARD was a possibility and, on reflection, offering a freebie in exchange for telling others about the article might have proved useful. But, ultimately, I was looking for the article to peak the reader's interest and make them feel compelled to share what they had read.

The first job was to email all my networking contacts and invite them to run the article in their newsletter or to link to it from their blog or website. The response was tremendous and many of the people I wrote to were only too happy to lend their support to the campaign.

The next job was to try and make the article viral.

I created a second page to the article and made an exhaustive list of ways that readers who connected with the article could support the campaign. These included:

Link back to the article

I asked the reader to consider linking to the article from their website. To make it easy I included the HTML so it could be copied and pasted easily.

Display Banner

Again, I included the HTML and the direct link to the banner that readers could use.

Tell-A-Friend

This was a simple form so the reader could email others. I used the free service available from Bravenet.

Traffic Exchanges

I created a simple splash page and listed the link that traffic exchange users could rotate.

Mailing List

I appealed to list owners to feature the article or a link to it.

Blogs

I invited blog owners to feature the article or a link to it and, considering how tightly woven blog networks can be, I suggested sharing it with other blog owners.

Forums

No, I didn't ask people to spam forums. I suggested the reader start a thread in their favourite forum to discuss doublers and to use this article as a spring board.

Safelist

This was aimed at owners of safelists or advertising networks and invited them to promote a link to the article.

So, it's nine months later, and how has it done?

Well, I've trawled through my web stats and, at the time of writing, the article has received 41,692 visits.

Depending on your traffic generating prowess you'll likely think this is pretty good or pretty average. Either way, it's not a bad return for a campaign that cost nothing in monetary terms.

This figure, of course, doesn't take into the account the number of visits to other websites, blogs and newsletters, that have reproduced this article in full. A search on Google for "the truth about doublers" returns over 2600 results.

You may also be interested to know that it still receives well over 100 visits every day. Mainly due to search engine traffic.

As you'll recall, I asked readers to link back to the article. But, crucially, I asked them to use the term "money doubler programs". I did this because I was looking for a similar result to the campaign that got a page about George W Bush ranked number one in Google for the search term "miserable failure" (try it).

Currently, the article ranks number one in Google for the following terms:

- money doubler
- doublers
- money doubler schemes
- money doubler programs

I get a certain, smug satisfaction from seeing my article, denouncing money doublers, sitting on top of pages promoting these crooked schemes.

So, what have we learned?

Well, as a case study for viral marketing, "The Truth About Doublers" nicely illustrates a couple of techniques and demonstrates what can be achieved with nothing more than a good idea that people are willing to share with others.

If you are looking for some publicity for your website, viral marketing could prove very beneficial. Here's how to do it:

The Idea. The more original the better and it doesn't have to be directly related to the website you want to promote.

Make a list of your skills, hobbies and passions. Look for something that you can create based around one of these. It could be an article, a video, a report, an audio file, anything really that can be distributed easily on the internet.

Next, think about the viral aspect. You can use REQUIRED, REWARD, INTEREST or any combination of the three.

Produce your viral product and brand it carefully with your name, logo, website and anything else you want to stick in peoples minds.

Think long-term. A good viral campaign will produce a steady flow of visitors for years to come. Which would you rather have? 10,000 visitors now or 100 a day for the next five years?

The second option gets you more than 180,000 visitors.

If you'd like to see the original "Truth About Doublers" article, go to www.thenettle.com/doublers/truth.html

Motivation and Inspiration

Mind Manoeuvres

Andy Henry



Andrew Henry is a 34 year-old UK Internet Marketing and Online Business consultant, and author dedicated to helping other find new ways to take their business and personal success to new levels. Andrew runs a website over at www.moneyandmotivation.com where he provides information, resources and advice to people while sharing power strategies for success.

Stop Watching and Spot Liars

In this article I'd like to share with you something that recently became clear after I attended a Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) workshop.

If you're not familiar with NLP, one interpretation could be a system for modelling human communication and can be applied to your own beliefs and modes of communication (modalities), or to inter-personal communication.

For many people, just scratching the surface of NLP is enough to change their life.

The aspect of NLP which addresses modelling other people's communications refers to the way that you can elicit information about peoples preferred modalities. In other words, you understand the way they communicate and modify your own communication to be more 'in-line' with theirs to improve your results.

By asking them particular types of questions, and then assessing the language they use, their pitch, tonality, etc, you can appreciate how they communicate, and then package your own communication accordingly.

The non-verbal component of communication is larger than that presented by the words themselves (you've seen this, when someone tells you yes, but you know they mean no - because their whole body language disagrees with their words).

As you can imagine, if you could find out exactly how someone would need to receive your communication to give you the outcome you desired - this would be VERY useful (especially in a sales environment).

There are certain things that generally apply to non-verbal communication which you can use to get some information. These include such elements as the direction a person's eyes move when answering a question (there's a difference between when they're recalling information or creating it), as well as pupil dilation and a host of other things.

Hopefully you can see how if a series of guided questions were asked, it might be possible to get quite a bit of information about the way a person communicates - and even if they're telling the truth or not.

The new information which I'm sharing now is that you can get all of this same information without that person saying ANYTHING.

That's right; they don't need to say a word. You can even find out what their favourite colour is, which of any list of options they would choose - anything you want to know, you can find out without them speaking a word.

This requires that you be able to go into a more 'peripheral' state (being less focused and more aware of your surroundings) so that you are able to sense more of the non-verbal communication.

I did several exercises like this, all with great results. (I correctly identified 9 out of 10 answers as true or not, identified someone's preferred animal, favourite colour - and you can do this with ANY information).

In my next article, I'll let you in on how to get yourself into that state, and give you some hints about things you might notice.

Working with Clarity

Following my last article where we discussed putting yourself into a more 'open' state in order to take in more of the non-verbal components of the world around you, this article will describe how you can achieve a more aware state of mind for yourself, and why you might want to.

You can use this exercise yourself or teach it to others. I've found it is particularly useful when listening to something you want to remember fully (children can also use this to pay better attention in class and remember the lesson more effectively).

1. The first thing to do is sit/stand comfortably, with your body relaxed.
2. Focus your eyes on a point directly ahead and slightly above you.
3. As you stare at your chosen point, gradually become aware of (without moving your focus) the things around that point.
4. Gradually become aware of the area further and further out from your focal point, to the point where you're aware of your entire peripheral vision (as far to the sides of you as you can), all the time keeping your focus on the original point you chose.
5. If you're doing this to listen to someone and to increase your receptiveness or learning of what someone else is saying, bring your focal-point down to them while keeping your peripheral awareness.

This might feel strange when you first do it, but if you just go with it you should find that you take in more information than usual and that you are better able to access that information at a later date.

If you have a child who has trouble remembering how to spell, then getting them into a more aware state before teaching them can make a huge difference.

You'll probably find that if you ask your child to spell a word, their eyes will move up and to the side while they try to recall the word and its spelling. Taking a card with the word(s) on and holding each

card up in front of the child (as though you're placing it where their eyes appear to be looking when they recall it) will help them access that information more easily and their spelling will often improve drastically.

If you spend a lot of time on your PC and often have trouble being creative when you need to write something, try this little exercise:

1. Open up your word processor of choice.
2. Think of the subject you want to write about.
3. Turn off your monitor.
4. Then type for 5 minutes about whatever comes to mind about your chosen subject. You can select words that you must include (such as 'excited' 'suspense' and 'pleased', to give your subconscious some creative food).
5. After 5 minutes is up - turn on your monitor and see what you have written.

This is often a fun and interesting exercise because it prevents you from watching the monitor and constantly interrupting your 'flow' to go back and correct spelling errors.

Engineering a Successful Environment

What am I talking about? I'm sure you can guess a little of what I'm referring to.

Have you ever decided that "enough's enough!", you're going to knuckle-down and really start to do the things that you know will improve your life?

Maybe you've seen the opportunity for making money online and you've learned a bit about how to find what people want and where to get things to sell them. Then you've thought "That's it, I'm going to spend x number of hours a week working on making extra money"?

Perhaps you've had a great idea for a new product and thought to yourself that lots of people would probably buy it if you had it manufactured and put into shops.

The world has never been so full of opportunity, and you've never been in a better position to be able to take advantage of those opportunities.

Having a PC and Internet access guarantees everyone the possibility of becoming rich.

Yes, I do mean that!

Don't believe me? That's part of the problem.

I know it's easy to say that making money is easy, and that anyone can do it. I've wondered about the reality of it myself, but here's the thing - I AM making money online, every single day. And you can too.

If you've ever made a single dollar, then you already know you can do it.

So why then isn't everyone making loads of money online?

Let me answer that by asking you this. Why don't overweight people eat healthy food and exercise regularly? They KNOW that's all that's required.

It doesn't make sense does it? We know everything we need to do, yet we still don't do what's required.

The simple answer is - we don't want to pay the price.

Everything has a price and, if you're not prepared to pay, you won't get the results.

"What does this all have to do with the environment you mentioned in the title?" I hear you say.

Well let me share something with you that helped me change my life.

In previous articles I've covered the concept of the Map and the Territory and the fact that your external environment is something completely different to the internal environment you create for yourself. Hopefully we're on the same page with this.

Changing either of those environments can have dramatic effects on your life.

Here are some examples that have helped me:

External Environment

Eat more healthily: This has given me more energy, and I now wake up and go to bed with energy.

Remove distractions from the home work area: All games removed from the PC (the "I'll just have a quick game" syndrome affected me for a long time).

Keeping my desk area tidy, and having things organised around me gives me a more productive attitude.

Affirmation reminders: Having projects and goals on a board next to my PC means that I always know what I should be doing (although I was running late with this article because it wasn't on the board).

Put EVERYTHING on the board!

Lighting: Having decent lighting so that you're not straining can make you more productive.

Equipment: Having the equipment you need (Printer, scanner, microphone etc..) ready and useable (no empty cartridges, lack of paper etc.) can help a lot.

No Television: Don't try and watch television while you work - you'll distract yourself no matter how good at multitasking you are.

Internal Environment

Sleep: Make sure you sleep well. Relax before you go to bed; don't work into the night and deprive yourself of sleep.

Positive Expectations: Expect success, expect to have energy, and they'll come.

Juicing-Up Your Internal Voice: Don't settle for whiny little negative voices when you think about things. Replace those with a chorus of singers and an orchestra that announces to the world that you're here and you mean business.

Worthiness: Don't kid yourself that you're not worthy of success, or that it couldn't happen to someone like you. There's more than enough success to go around.

Don't Make Excuses: The main thing stopping you from having what you want are the excuses you make about why you can't have them. You have 24 hours a day, just like everyone else. Don't kid yourself that you're special and you don't have time to create success.

Can you see the difference combining these things could make to you?

Can you feel the difference that taking control of your environment(s) will have?

Give yourself permission to be disciplined.

Discipline is not a limiting thing. Not being disciplined and suffering a life of being less than you can be - that's a limitation!

Take charge of your environment and watch the results.

And let me know when things have improved.

Pay It Forward

I've spoken previously about assessing your current situation and making vital decisions about the things which need to change.

In this article we'll take the next step and look at the important principle of creating your own abundance by giving to others at every opportunity.

Henry Ford is famous for many insightful statements about creating success. Today we'll refer to a particularly relevant one which concerns 'giving':

"The man who will use his skill and constructive imagination to see how much he can give for a dollar, instead of how little he can give for a dollar, is bound to succeed."

We could discuss just how this relates to delivering products and services to hungry markets, but I believe there's a much more powerful lesson to learn from this statement.

Giving is not just an action, but a mindset.

If you conduct your life from a mindset of giving, there's an amazing side-effect of actually receiving far more than you give. What comes back may be in a different form than what you gave, but I believe that by giving you are putting yourself into the 'flow'. You're feeding good karma into an eternal system which has the sole purpose of magnifying and returning your good karma back to you.

I'm not talking just about business, sales, customers etc. This principle applies at every level of your life.

Have you heard the expression "Smile and the world smiles with you"? Don't wait to react to someone else's smile - start your own and offer it to others. Whether it's a smile you're giving, some thanks to a friend (or to God), or you're giving your best performance for your favourite sport or hobby - the more you give, the more you'll receive.

As a short example, this week I was browsing one of my favourite online forums and I noticed a posting from a young guy who was trying to raise a couple of hundred dollars to buy a piece of software

to help him build websites. Rather than complaining about the price, he'd gone to the trouble of putting together a package that he was selling to try and raise money for the software.

Since I get really pleased when I see people helping themselves, I respected his efforts and decided to buy him the software he was after. What I asked of him in return was that:

- (a) he actually make a point of using the software (you'd be surprised how many people buy things online and never use them), and
- (b) he take any opportunity that he gets to help other people in any way he can.

At that point, I was happy. I'd helped someone out and asked him to pass that good karma on to someone else too.

But that same day I received a message from another of that forum's users who'd seen my gesture and wanted to thank me by offering me something. Now I know I said karma comes around again, but wow! That was fast :)

This concept of passing-on goodwill is something I urge you to adopt in your life, and was encapsulated brilliantly in a film entitled "Pay It Forward", which I recommend you watch if you get the chance.

Web Marketing

Click Thru Marketing Explained

Dan Moses



Dan Moses is a 27-year old family man living in Redmond, Oregon who came online over five years ago, and like most of us, planned to set out on a journey of finding his riches on the Internet. Of course, he quickly realized it wasn't as easy as most would have you believe. But that didn't stop Dan... Throughout his journeys he has become quite the entrepreneur by owning and operating close to 10 sites online

Killer Testimonials

What's the quickest way to get your name, email, and or website URL added to any sales page for free? Yes, this is almost the most valuable real estate on any website and you can be there for free!

Ask yourself, when you go to a website for the first time what do you look at? Most people look at the headline first... then the testimonials.

Today we're not going to talk much about how to get testimonials, but instead we're going to learn how to write killer testimonials any webmaster would practically 'pay you' to put on their website.

Why would they do that?

Because testimonials give us (the viewer) a real sense of what to expect out of the product or program at hand. And it builds more trust for the program or product we're viewing.

Not to mention that many times we will click on that persons URL in their testimonial to see who they are (if we don't know them) and what kind of product and service they offer.

The truth is, you never know how much free traffic you will receive from a killer testimonial on a popular website that is seen daily by thousands and thousands of people.

Now we know how valuable testimonials can be and we know that webmasters want them. Not only do they want them, but all you have to do is write a better testimonial than what's currently on the sales page and you should get yours added every time!

It's that simple!

Now you might not get the best spot, but it should be good enough. This could be because the webmaster personally knows the person whose testimonial is on top and doesn't want to replace it. Or that person is well known and is giving his site great credibility.

Okay, now we know we want to write some killer testimonials and, if we can write the best testimonial on the web page, we now know we stand a great chance of getting ours added.

So let's talk about how to write killer testimonials.

Okay, pay attention, this tip I'm about to give you will help you write anything you want on any topic you want including killer testimonials.

What you do is collect as much information about the topic as you can. It's best to copy and paste this content onto a notepad document, or word file.

Usually, collecting about 10 articles or testimonials on a topic you want to write about is good enough.

After you have collected enough information you will need to study it and learn all you can about that subject. Your goal is to absorb as much information about that topic as you can so that, when you sit down to write it, it will just flow out of you in your own words.

It's also a good idea to test or try what you're teaching before writing about it for more clarity on the topic. In other words, doing it is much better than just knowing about it.

That's the best way to do it, but an easier way would be to take sections of what you have collected and place them on a notepad or word document. Then splice and dice them around until it's not only in your own words, but it sounds good as well.

Of course the more that comes out of you on its own, the better your article will be. Keep in mind, the worst thing you could do would be to just steal someone else's writing or testimonial.

So, make sure you don't just change the words, but change the flow of the testimonial as well.

Okay, now for writing testimonials. First you want to study the testimonials they have on their web page and if you can, try to find something that is missing.

What I mean is, if they have a lot of great testimonials about their product, then write about their affiliate program.

Or, if you love their product, and everyone else is talking about how easy it was to sell, you talk about what you like about the product.

Try to put yourself in the webmasters shoes and ask yourself, "What is this site missing? What kind of testimonial would complete this sales page?" If you can do this right, you will increase your chances of getting your testimonial added.

Of course you also want to be honest about what you're writing and make sure that site is worthy of your comments before you write them. Especially as your name is on that website for life in most cases.

Once you have written that killer testimonial, then send it to the owner and let him know how much you appreciate his product or service.

Remember, EVERY owner loves to receive killer testimonials.

Go write one today and try to do this every few weeks. You'll be amazed how your traffic will increase and along with it your link popularity and name awareness will soar.

Okay. Get out there and get your name known. :o)

Making a Full-Time Living from the Traffic Exchanges – Part One

Are there really people out there making a full time living from the traffic exchanges?

Of course there are and, even though most of them are program owners themselves, there are people out there doing very well financially within this industry without having to own a program.

I want to talk a little bit today about making money using and promoting traffic exchanges. Something I personally like to call “Click Thru Marketing”.

Now I’m assuming you all know what Click Thru Marketing is but, just in case...

Click Thru Marketing is marketing a service or product over the Internet by generating visitors to view your web page by way of click exchange programs, better known as traffic exchanges, start page programs, and hit exchanges.

Click Thru Marketing is a specialized niche market with the demographics of biz op seekers, MLMers, small businesses, and hundreds of thousands of people trying to make money online and looking for quality products to sell and buy.

Click Thru Marketing, as a market, is still very young and small in size (500,000+) but, despite that, there are those of us who have learned how to make a living from this industry.

And now our goal is to teach other marketers online (with a drive to succeed and willingness to learn) how to make enough money from this market to quit their jobs and come home for GOOD!

I did it! So can you... :o)

Now I want to be completely honest with you. This won’t be a walk in the park.

This isn’t something you can jump into and expect to make thousands each month within a few weeks. On the contrary, it will most likely take you years. Yes, you read that right!

It has taken me 5 long years to accomplish all I have (which is quite a lot) and within 3 of those five years I was able to quit my job and come home full time (how wonderful it has been to be home with my family every day).

Now the good news for you is that there are people out there willing to help you do what it takes to come home full time (I know because I am one of those people wanting to help you become successful by sharing with you what to do and what not to do).

That's right! With some help you can shorten your learning curve by years and years.

Listen up. In the next few minutes I'm going to share with you what's been on my mind for some time now. You see, I've been listening to how people inside this industry feel about it and where our future lies within it. The one true feeling that is very apparent to all of us is, we all want our market to grow!

It's unanimous! We want more and more people to get involved in our market. Naturally, the more people in our industry, means more money being circulated throughout this industry.

Okay, now that we've established the consensus of growing and expanding our industry, let me share with you my idea that will greatly increase the activity of our market.

By teaching people how to make money from within this market, we will explode this market. Let me explain. If I taught you how to quickly make a few hundred dollars a month from within this market, would you tell someone?

Of course you would. You would tell friends, neighbours, relatives and anyone else that would stop and listen. Well, maybe not anyone, but you would tell a lot of people.

Well, that's how I feel. I want to share with you what I'm doing to make a full time living from Click Thru Marketing.

Here's an in-depth look into my idea. I'm going to be changing focus very soon (actually I have already). You see, for the last few years I've been teaching people how to build up their residual traffic networks, build their mailing lists, and make a few bucks online.

Now I feel it's time to start focusing on the programs that make the most money within our industry. Let me say that again. It's now time to start focusing on the programs that make YOU the most money within the traffic exchange industry!

Doesn't that make sense? It amazes me how so many people can twist that around to making us think that's a bad thing to make money online. Isn't that why you're on the Internet building a business anyway?

Then why do you think so many people take advice and listen to others that aren't successful or have no real track record of making great income from the Internet?

I've been seeing a transition within our industry. More and more traffic exchanges are adding ways for their members to make more and more money from their programs.

This is awesome! You see, these programs are already set up for building downlines and referring new members. And they all have amazing referral programs that allow you to build residual traffic and commissions using their systems.

Boy I love these programs! Folks, it's fun to build this business! I absolutely love watching new downline members join below me every day. Why? Because I know that each one that surfs I'll receive a percentage of their traffic (we call this building our marketing arm).

And, if they upgrade, (which more and more are doing) we make some % of residual income. Folks if you haven't figured out the power of working hard once and then profiting from that month after month, you're really missing the boat here. Residual income is truly golden!

Personally, I feel this is just the beginning. This industry is so young (4-5 years) it hasn't even reached it's explosive phase.

The key is to not just think about making money with your own program or related product. Think outside the box!

Don't focus all your efforts on one program. Make money from many programs and then you'll never have to worry about any one

program going out of business (huge secret of the rich - multiple sources of income).

That's it! That's where my focus is going (and has been for all of 2005) I just want everyone to realize that they too can make money from 30+ different programs online, month after month, year after year.

If we can do it, why can't you? (keep in mind that this is a slow process). You must focus on one program at a time until that one is built up enough to move on to the next.

Okay, I would hate to leave you hanging here, but our time is up for now. The good news is I'll explain how to proceed in more detail in the next article, by showing you how to start off by following the game plan in detail.

The game plan consists of joining the traffic exchanges that will allow you to make the most amount of commissions from referring new members, then promote, promote and promote some more!

I will go into detail in the next article which programs these are and which one's I've made the most commissions from.

Until then, surf, surf and surf until you earn enough to pay for upgrades and more quality traffic. You must stay focused on building downlines in the best programs. It's a fact that the most successful marketers in our industry have huge downlines and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. :o)

Making a Full-Time Living from the Traffic Exchanges – Part Two

In part one we briefly talked about ways to make money from the exchanges, but today we're going to go into more detail on how this is accomplished.

First off, you must understand that this is going to take some time. I say this because, without the downlines in place, you aren't going to receive much in the way of commissions and residual income. Your set-up plan consists of building downlines as your primary focus.

Think of it this way. Each new downline member you receive puts you one step closer to your end goal that, in this situation, is residual income in the thousands, every month.

Fact: Each downline member adds more potential to reaching that goal and should be treated as an important part of your focus.

And there are ways to motivate that downline member to get more active so you can reach your goal faster. We will get into that in the future with effective ways to email your downline and motivate them to surf every day.

The most wonderful aspect of the traffic exchanges is the downline building capabilities that are programmed into their systems. Every time a new downline member joins either your downline or your downlines - downline (usually 5 levels deep), you benefit.

Keep in mind that the most benefit comes from your first level downline since this is where you make commissions. But, since you receive residual traffic from the other 4 levels, this can be a huge benefit to you as well.

So your efforts should always be to generate more first level downline members and then teach your first level downline to do the same. Once you teach them, they will teach their first level downline and that will keep them active and surfing the exchanges everyday. This is important so that you will always have them helping to grow your business.

Once you have put into place this system of everyone helping everyone build their downlines, you will always have a steady flow of residual traffic building up month after month.

This is very important to make sure your business stays stable and continues to grow for the long-term.

Now the second very important part is where you send your traffic. Remember you will receive more and more residual traffic as your downlines grow and you need to know where to send that traffic to create an ongoing, compounding process.

You must have a URL (a website) that grows your business. This is the central location from where you not only send your traffic, but where you can best use that traffic to the fullest.

From personal experience, this main URL needs to be a downline builder program or list builder. Preferably a downline builder that helps build your downlines in the best traffic exchanges online.

For myself this has been FreeClickThruClub.com (a club designed to help you build your downlines in the top traffic exchanges online).

This program accomplishes three things right off the bat.

1. When a member joins FCTC you receive the name and email address of that person (you can also add that name and email into your personal autoresponder and send out emails to get to know them and help motivate them to the fullest).
2. Through the program they have access to the best traffic exchanges you want them to join. In other words, this program does the work for you. It gets the person to join, it suggests to this person to join 20 other exchanges and puts them right into your downlines in the best exchanges online. Not to mention it teaches them how to do it so you don't have to.
3. Making money... yes, FCTC has a list of the best Paid traffic exchanges that pay out commissions when a new member joins. This means that when a member joins one of these programs you will make commission on the spot.

Now let me quickly share with you what it really takes to generate referrals. These are the averages for FCTC I have tracked and tested out.

Right now it takes about 300 page views to get a new member to join my FCTC downline. 1 out of 10 of my FCTC referrals will join all the programs inside FCTC. 1 out of 5 will join at least one program in FCTC. These are the average numbers.

In other words, there's no hype here and there's no fluff. This is what you can expect as an average.

You might do better than this or maybe even worse. I just want you to know what to expect before you get going. Okay, so let's go over some more figures here.

Let's say it takes 10 new FCTC members to make a commission of \$5 (this tends to be the worst case scenario). That would mean it takes 3,000 hits to make your first \$5. But keep in mind, that even though it might take 10 FCTC referrals to get a sale for a paid exchange, there are other huge benefits we're not discussing right now for the other referrals that join some programs. One of those benefits is the residual traffic aspect when your downline surfs.

Let's say that you do get 10 FCTC referrals and that you did get a \$5 commission. What else are you receiving?

One: a serious referral in your downline that is willing to spend money online.

Two: You get 10% in residual traffic of what this person surfs.

So if he surfs 100 sites a day, you receive 10 hits to your URL. Multiply that by 30 days and that's 300 free hits for you each month. Wow - that's just one referral!

Remember, this all adds up each month. The more downline you refer, the more free traffic and commissions you make.

And this is just the beginning. Out of those 9 other referrals in the example above, you will receive residual traffic for the one's that surf. It's truly amazing how this can build on itself.

Now let's talk about how you can make this move faster for you. There are other ways to speed up this process and get you to the point where you are making money faster.

1. Emailing your downline.

Once you have their name and email address you can send them a welcome email with information on who you are and ways to help them get started. This is one of the most effective ways to build relationships with your downline and the most prosperous in the long run.

Plus, once you build those relationships, it makes it much easier to share and endorse products with them to make commissions in the future. This is key to building a profit producing list.

2. Make commissions when they upgrade.

These days there are more and more free and paid traffic exchanges that offer commissions to you when one of your first level downline members, upgrade to a Pro member in that program.

This is how I personally make extra money each month and is another huge benefit to growing large downlines and teaching them how to do the same.

Now, in 'part one' of this article I said I would share with you what traffic exchanges I make the most commissions from. Hands down it's the paid exchanges I make the most money from, but I also make some from the free ones.

Let's start with the free exchanges first...

So far this year (2005) I have made over \$1,800 dollar from TopSurfer.com. This program offers a wholesale membership that pays out directly to the member when someone buys into it. Another important point is that I only have 352 first level downline members and it costs me \$10 a month to have the opportunity to make money in this program.

Next is HitSafari.com where I have made close to \$300 dollars this year. HitSafari pays out 10 and 20% commission to the free and Pro members when someone buys traffic or upgrades. I am a Pro

member and I pay \$5 a month for it. I also have 336 first level referrals.

MysticalMaze.com is another one that has a great commission plan in place for its members. It pays out 50% commissions to its top-level pro members and that costs me \$10 a month. I have made close to \$200 so far this year and I have 423 first level downline members.

Then there's ClickinFingers, DeepSeaHits, ProHitsPlus and TrafficTribe where I've made over \$400 this year in combined commissions.

All of these free exchanges are just a few of the many exchanges that now offer commissions to their members. Just make sure to take a close look at the exchanges you join and see if they pay.

As far as the paid exchanges go the numbers are much higher mainly because they not only offer a front end commission, but also offer ongoing residual commissions for upgraded members. Many more people upgrade in these types of programs.

So far this year I've made a little over \$3,000 combined commissions in GoneClicking, PowaSurf (before I owned it), RoyalSurf, ProClickEsate, CashinPro, TEB, and MoreActualVisitors. Keep in mind, I'm not including the one's I own... which are ClickMaster Pro, ProClickExchange, and ProTrafficShop.

Naturally, you make a lot more commissions from the paid exchanges and this is where a lot of your focus ought to be when working towards making serious money from the exchanges online.

Some other points to keep in mind. Once you have built a number of downlines you can send emails to, you can promote other products and services related to their needs and make more commissions and profits each month. This is another area I personally profit from in the thousands every year.

There are other programs like WebmasterQuest and CashClicking that are harder to make commissions from, but are the best for producing results from advertising. They also have other benefits that most people won't tell you how to use like their "email your first level downline" feature. I've personally made many sales and grown

my lists sending emails through this system. Of course you must build your downline in these programs first.

Now, let's discuss some tools out there that are absolutely necessary to take you from A-Z in the shortest amount of time...

1. You need an autoresponder where you can upload emails to and have them sent out to your list on specific intervals. This is part of the relationship building process and is critical to keeping yourself organized and automated.
2. A PayPal or StormPay account. This is where you will receive commissions that you can forward onto your bank account.
3. You need a professional edge. This can be best accomplished by getting your own domain name and email address. It's much more professional if someone receives an email from YourName@YourSite.com then 47732_joeblow@hotmail.com. Without it you will have a harder time building those key relationships.

Bottom line? You need that professional presence online.

That's it. Those are the three main tools you need. There are quite a few more that will help like Rotators, Trackers, Splash Page Creators, Multi-Tabbed Browsers, and so on, but those first three are the most critical.

Now let me leave you with this. Once you have built up thousands of downline and list members, you will have many more doors opened to you and your business. Once you have a list, the sky's the limit.

You could then learn things like...

- How to create 7-15 page reports that can make you quick money from your existing lists.
- How to turn your subscribers into "Marketing Partners".
- How to get a flood of profit with one "Super Partner" you find from your list.
- Setting up JVs with your downline

And so on...

Remember. This all starts and continues by first setting up, and then managing your exchange accounts while you surf them every day. Just set up a game plan and stick to it until you succeed.

How to Help Others Succeed in 3 Easy Steps

Did you know that the saying, “If you help enough people succeed, you yourself will become successful,” is true?

Well, not only is it truth to the fullest, it is one principle used by the most successful people in the world.

Every person that has become successful has at one time or another helped someone else with his or her success. And in the process, those other people have helped make them even more successful.

Think about it. If you invest in people they will invest in you. They will also be the most loyal people you will know, especially in business. When something goes wrong in your business they will be the first people there for you. When you need help they will be the first to come to your aid in any way they can.

Helping others is so important that it's key to your success with your online business.

Here are 3 steps you can do to start helping other people with their success online.

1. Be Empathetic

Think back to when you started working your business and how hard it was to understand the lingo or how you felt when you first started trying to make money online.

What helped you the most? What was a waste of time? What did you learn by trial and error that could've been made easier if you'd only had someone to show you the way? What are some tools you didn't know about that would've been the most helpful in getting your business off the ground?

2. Make a List

Write down the things you did that helped you learn how to do different tasks. Don't forget to include the things you found that didn't help or proved only to be a waste of time. Make a list of those do's and don'ts and put them into a word document, note

pad, or on a web page. Be sure to take your time and perfect the list until they are very easy to understand and follow.

3. Show It Off

Show your list to people every chance you get, even if you think they are more knowledgeable than you are. It really doesn't matter who they are, because if you can help them in any way, you've begun your path to success.

Exchanging phone numbers is a great way to build relationships and trust in people, and to find those who are truly interested in what you have to offer. You can communicate your information to a lot of people at once on a website, but you can only talk to one person at a time on the phone. That quality time with one right person could be the best investment you will ever make.

As time goes on and more people you come into contact with and are able to help, you will notice that they will start helping you in return. This could happen in a variety of ways. They may show you things that they've learned. They might refer more people to your page or content. Or, they may turn out to be your most loyal customer.

This can be very easy when you take this one step further and add affiliate links into your free do's and don'ts list.

For example, if one item on your list is how you have learned to use an autoresponder system and your success with following up with people who use it, then make sure you include a link to that autoresponder service that you use in your content.

There are many terms people use for this kind of marketing. They might call these free reports, viral e-books, or mini-reports. The key factor here is that you are honest and genuine and that you make sure to include any affiliate links you can for the products and services you use and share with people on your do's and don'ts list.

If you write it in a manner that is truly helpful to others (which is what your focus is) they will respond in the way you want. The extra time you spend creating a quality page with helpful content and not merely a bunch of links will be well worth the effort in the long run. The easy path is not necessarily the best path.

When you're first getting started, all you want to focus on is the most helpful do's and don'ts list you can write. When you've got it perfected, then add links where it's appropriate.

Here's a personal story on how I was able to pick up hundreds of dollars worth of products absolutely free and how I met my mentor who was the key factor in my success.

If you can remember back a few years ago when there was no real encryption software for PayPal and, if you knew how, you could steal any product online that used their services.

I did something that most people wouldn't do. But, because I did I built some lasting relationships that were key to my online success.

What I did was very simple. I went looking for products that I could steal.

No, I didn't steal them, I just found products I COULD steal easily if I had chosen to. All I'd have to do was find a product that used PayPal and look at the source code. If I found the source code with the PayPal info, I could copy and paste the download link and, voila, I'd have had the product in no time.

However, since I'm such an honest person, instead of stealing them I emailed the owner and let them know I could steal them and how.

I would say something like... "I found your product and wanted it so bad I almost stole it. But instead, I decided the honest thing to do was to send you an email and let you know about this security breach in your system." Then, I gave them details of how I could've stolen their product and gave them ideas for how to make their sites more secure.

Do you know what happened? Every one of those people GAVE me some of their products for FREE and went on to share with me how amazed they were that I was so honest and took the time to help them with their security issues.

Yes, I received close to \$1,000 dollars worth of products and earned the respect of several business leaders, one of whom went on to become my mentor. She taught me how to build web pages, write ad-copy, create e-books, and many more things that I needed to

become successful online. We even did some joint ventures and created many online programs I still own and operate today.

In conclusion:

What I shared above is only scratching the surface of all the ways to help people. Try to put yourself in their shoes and follow the Golden Rule at all times... "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you".

Find any way you can to invest in people and their success and by doing so you will become successful.

Guaranteed! It's a fact!

Now get out there and help someone today! :o)

Web Marketing

Dylan Campbell's WYSIWYG

Dylan Campbell



Dylan Campbell has been involved in online marketing since 2001. Since his views on popular marketing techniques frequently swim against the tide, Dylan has chosen to write under a pseudonym.

The Genuine Article

Have you noticed that good marketing ideas are often ruined by the greedy?

Reciprocal linking, traffic exchanges and search engines are all great ideas that have been damaged in some way by people trying to manipulate them to get more than their fair share of traffic.

The latest example is article writing.

It began with the idea of writing articles within your field of expertise and inviting others to place it on their website, or in their ezine.

You get a link back because your website is the bio.

Then came the article directories.

List your article and even more people will find it, add it to their website and give you another link back to your website.

Now there is software that will write articles for you. Bang in some keywords and, hey presto, another article.

And then, of course, there are the articles about how to write articles. These will lead you to believe that anyone can write hundreds of articles and get hundreds of visitors to their website in return.

Apparently, you don't even need to know how to write good. That's watt a spell-checker's their fore, rite?

You see people are copying articles to their website because they believe it will get them good search engine rankings, not because they think the articles are any good.

They're putting it in their newsletters because they don't have the skill or the time to write their own.

So you finish up with lots of people, writing a lot of sub-standard articles, that no-one is reading.

A good idea wasted then.

If you want to write articles and see some benefit from them, here are some REAL suggestions.

1) Have at least an average understanding of spelling and grammar

Otherwise, consider taking a short college, or home-study, course.

If you don't have time for that, just try reading more books. Fiction, non-fiction, it doesn't matter, just increase your word power. A badly written article will do your online reputation more harm than good.

2) Have an original voice

If you're going to stand out from the crowd, your writing should have an individual style and should never read like something out of an encyclopaedia.

You could even write as if you are angry or opinionated. Not everyone will like it, but it will get you noticed.

3) Experiment with different presentations

Don't be satisfied to write an article called "Six Steps to bad writing" or "10 ways to put your readers to sleep".

Again, be original.

Tell a story, write in the form of a letter, write as if you are someone in the future looking back to the present. Use your imagination and you'll grab the imagination of your reader.

4) Have a good title

Short, snappy and attention-grabbing.

One of my most popular articles is called "How to Cheat Traffic Exchanges".

The article is actually explaining why you shouldn't cheat traffic exchanges, but the title draws people in.

5) Short articles are better than long articles

When you've finished your article, proof-read it AND have someone else proof-read it, go through it again and take out every unnecessary sentence.

Writing articles for your own website or for others to use is still a good way to gain a good reputation and draw visitors to your website, but don't think you can write dozens of quality articles a month.

Have an idea, meditate on it, develop it, write it, tweak it, edit it and maybe, just maybe you'll finish up with the genuine article.

FREE

Everyone's favourite price. Right?

FREE! FREE! FREE!

What goes through your mind when you see these words on the internet?

Hype? Scam? Low quality? Useless?

It stands to reason that no-one is going to give away anything REALLY useful for free. It must be old, out of date, or, at the very least, a trap to get you to buy something else or give away your email address.

That's the common line of thought and, for the most part, it's true. That is the reason why people give away freebies. It's so that you will join their mailing list or hear their sales pitch at a later time.

And it's a technique you should be using. Offering a freebie in exchange for an email address works.

Just because people are becoming wise to the motives of free products, doesn't mean they don't take them when offered.

The difference these days is that people won't take a freebie JUST because it's offered. There is an endless stream of free stuff being offered and if you were to accept it all, your PC would collapse under its own weight.

You have to offer a freebie that people are genuinely interested in. One that they really believe is going to be of use to them.

A million free ebooks and a bag full of free, one function, software programs just isn't going to do it any more.

Like anything else on the internet you have to sell the freebie. You just have the added advantage of not having to ask the visitor to get out their credit card.

You also need to offer sharper, original, more interesting and more appealing freebies. Here are some ideas to get the creative juices flowing.

Be Focused

People will pay for a package containing many items but, if you offer it for free, it's perceived value dips.

Pick one item to give away and sell its benefits. Make it clear how useful this item is and how easy it is to get hold of it.

Be Original

If the freebie you are offering is available in a few other places, it's not a big deal. But if loads of other people are giving it away, the chances are that the visitor has either got it already, or has been offered it and turned it down.

Google the item you are giving away to get an idea of how common it is.

Reports

If a person buys an e-book they will read it to make sure they get their money's worth.

If a person downloads an e-book for free, they will likely file it away for later and forget all about it. If the e-book is the point of your freebie (to promote affiliate links) then this will do you no good at all.

Reports, on the other hand, are a whole different story.

They are immediately perceived as being shorter, less time-consuming and more time sensitive.

This fits in well with being more focussed as you can tailor the report to address one particular point and, from the reader's point of view, the shorter the better. Most importantly, a useful report should actually explain to the reader how to do something they didn't know how to do before.

Think of it as an in-depth article on a current topic and, if you pitch it right, you will have your freebie-hunters attention for a full 5-15 minutes. A long time in internet terms.

You can still create this in PDF format but, because of its reduced length, you can also opt for an HTML page instead. Easy to

create and easy to distribute, this is a great way to produce a freebie and all you need is a bit of knowledge that you can share with others.

If you don't have the knowledge yet, half-a-day surfing and reading on a subject should give you enough to write something useful.

If you have an e-book that you've written already, try breaking the chapters up into individual reports that are each tightly focussed on one thing. A word of warning though, don't break up an e-book that you don't have the copyright on.

Membership Sites

Membership sites are growing in popularity. They are easy to set-up and there are endless themes you can base them around.

Try offering one or more free months subscription to your membership site. Not only will that boost your membership level, it will offer the chance to convert these into paying customers in the future.

Lite Products

If you are selling an e-book or a piece of software, offer a trial version.

The free software could be a full version that only allows use for a limited time.

The free e-book could be a couple of chapters to give the reader a taste of what they're missing. Better yet, give the reader the start of the chapter and end the trial just as things are getting interesting.

Video / Audio

If you have a digital camcorder you could videotape yourself giving a short lecture on a topic of your choice. In fact, even if you only have a cheap digital camera, it likely has a video function on it that you can use.

Offer the finished product as a streaming video or a zipped Windows Media File.

You'll need to be a pretty lively speaker to pull this off but, again, at least it's something different from the usual range of freebies that are out there.

If you don't like the results of your video, isolate the audio and put that up instead.

Screen Recording

This is a variation of the above whereby you can record your PC's screen activity and a voice-over.

Essentially, this means that rather than just telling someone how to do something, you can show them as well.

There are lots of products around that can help you do this. Just Google "Screen Recording Software" to see what's available.

Got some ideas yet?

Hope so. Give it some thought, develop the idea, create your freebie and then get it out there.

You can:

- Put it on your website
- Write to newsletter editors and invite them to give it away to their readers
- Write to webmasters that are selling a product and invite them to add it as a free bonus
- Keep an eye out for promotional campaigns for large scale giveaways and upload your product.

People in the internet are becoming increasingly jaded, but FREE will always grab their attention, even if just for a minute. Make the freebie interesting, however, and you can turn that minute into several.

List Building Is For Everyone

When I first got into web marketing back in 2001, the “secret” that everyone was dying to tell me was that the “money was in the list”.

In other words, if you build a list of people that don't mind receiving emails you can advertise to them and make lots of money.

our years later and, although I hear it talked about less, it still seems to be the most effective way of building on-line sales.

Many of the new websites and software programs that are released are still variations on capturing the contact details of internet users with the intent of turning them into customers at a later date.

The problem is that many people don't want to make money on the internet in this fashion. They would rather have a product, or a website, or a program that people really enjoy, or find useful, and then build their business around that. The idea of doing nothing but building a list to which you can flog stuff is not going to appeal to everyone.

In fact, to do business on-line in this fashion takes a pretty sizeable, and responsive, list that most would struggle to build, even over several years. Not to mention that fact that you would be competing with thousands of others.

But to simply dismiss this angle of web marketing as “not for you” is limiting your business and, quite frankly, is short-sighted.

There really isn't a website in existence that couldn't benefit from an email capture form.

Consider:

Sales Websites: Well this is probably obvious. If you are selling something from your website, invite your visitors to submit their email address in exchange for a discount off one of your products. Whether the visitor then decides to take advantage of the discount or not, you are building a list of people you can email about new products or new special offers.

Effectively you are turning one-time visitors into repeat visitors.

Information Website: Not selling anything? Making your money through advertising and affiliate programs? No problem. Invite your visitor to submit their email address to receive a special report on a subject related to your website, or to receive occasional updates on new additions to your website.

Again, you're building a list of people that will become repeat visitors and will be exposed to your advertising again and again.

Non-profit websites: Just because you're not making an income doesn't mean you don't want visitors. Invite your visitors to submit their email address to receive occasional updates on the progress of your website. When you update your website, inform your list by sending them a link.

Altogether now... "you're building a list of repeat visitors".

Have I missed anything out? Is there a website in existence that couldn't benefit from capturing the email addresses of its visitors?

This example may seem kind of obvious to many, but start thinking outside of list building for a moment.

There are new and effective marketing techniques appearing all the time. If you're waiting for help to come along that fits in perfectly with your business, then you may be waiting a while. Sometimes you have to think laterally.

Don't reject an idea, just because it wouldn't work with your business. Instead, think of how the technique might be adapted so that it does fit in with your business. You might even come up with an idea that no-one has thought of before.

I'm a big fan of "The West Wing" television show. In one episode, Charlie, the Presidents aide, was being encouraged to share his idea on how to get more people interested in becoming teachers. He said something to the effect of:

"If it was an idea, someone would already have thought of it".

The Presidents response was,

"I find a flaw in that reasoning".

Don't just wait for the great ideas to arrive via email. Take existing ideas and put your own spin on them. Work out how to make it work for you and your business.

Do that, and you might just find what your website's been missing.

Keep A Proper Perspective

In one episode of the UK sit-com, Father Ted tries to explain to Dougal the concept of perspective.

“Now, let’s try it again, Dougal: these are small (points to toy cow), but those are far away (points to real cows in the distance). Small...far away. Small...far away.”

You see, most of the time, it’s not the world that’s changing. It’s just you.

There is no spoon.

See what I’m getting at?

Have you ever visited somewhere that you’ve not been to since you were a child, only to find that everything looks so much smaller than you remembered? Don’t worry, it’s not some kind of Lewis Carroll-inspired, Wonderland phenomenon. You’re just taller than you used to be.

Unless of course you started smoking before you reached puberty. Then everything would probably look the same.

That’s perspective.

As you change, the way things look, sound and feel alter. Sometimes subtly, sometimes significantly.

And, crucially, if you don’t change, your perspective won’t either.

The same is true of your mental perspective. The way that you view things from an intellectual point of view is shaped by your experience.

Think back to when you first started using the internet for business purposes and make a quick mental list of all the things you’ve learned since then.

Using email, registering domain names, finding a host, building a website, installing scripts, generating traffic, making profit, to begin with, all of these things seemed complicated and confusing. Now, however, you can do many of these things with ease.

Have these jobs got simpler or have you merely learned how to do them?

Once you've learned how to do a task and performed it a few times, what once seemed complicated or even impossible to achieve, suddenly becomes easy. You were determined to learn how to do it so you put the effort in, practiced, maybe got some help from someone else, and finally mastered the job.

My point, (and yes it may have taken me 300 words to get there, but I do have one) is that if you use your understanding of perspective and apply it to the future of your business, you can open up wider possibilities for you and your business.

How many times have you had an idea for your business, only to reject it because you don't have the expertise to accomplish it? Perhaps you wanted to do something different with your website, learn a new programming language, or create a piece of software.

Instead of viewing the idea from your perspective now, imagine the perspective you will have after completing it.

It's likely you will look back and think, "Well that was simpler than I expected it to be". Or, "It's easy once you know how."

Remember, if you've seen someone else use the idea that you are considering, you can be sure that at some point in the past, that person didn't know how to do it either. If they learned to do it, then why can't you?

Do some research, ask around on forums and then consider hiring a programmer or web designer to help you develop the project.

When it comes to your online business, you don't have to stick with what you know, or develop ideas that are restricted by your existing knowledge and experience.

That's the beauty of the internet. If it's possible to do, then it's probable that you can find a way to do it.

It all depends on your perspective.

Wasting Time & Money

Recently I read somewhere that 95% of people that buy a web marketing info-product do not follow the advice or instruction held within. That's not the first time that I've heard that statistic and dwelling on it has left me a little worse for wear.

Ninety-five percent! I'm not sure who came up with that statistic or how you could possibly measure such a claim. It's a little bit like when the police say that X percentage of crimes go un-reported. If they're un-reported, how do they know about them..?

But even if the claim is half-way true, this represents a colossal loss in time and money.

Take an example. Billy-Jo Bizop writes an e-book on his ten most successful marketing techniques. During the first year he sells 5000 copies at \$49 per copy. The average reader takes 2 hours to read it through from cover to cover and less than 1% ask for a refund.

If 95% of those readers do not follow-up on what they've learnt, that represents nearly a quarter of a million wasted dollars and over a year of wasted reading time.

And that's just one successful e-book. What about all the other e-books, courses, seminars, conference calls, ezines, cd's, dvd's that people eagerly consume and then apparently regurgitate like some kind of hideous, home business bulimia.

Do all those people building or running a home business have so much time and money to burn that they can afford this kind of senseless waste?

Disturbing, isn't it?

So here's a look at some of the possible reasons for this phenomenon and what you can do to reduce its occurrence.

People are too lazy to follow the instructions

This is a possibility as many lazy people are won over by the claims of instant traffic or sales, buy an e-book that they believe is going to give them a magic formula for lots of money with no

work, only to discover that working to earning a living is still inevitable.

The irony being that if you are one of those people you will probably ignore this article as well.

But, on the off chance, that you do fit into this category AND you are listening to what I have to say, please change your ways and start working for a living. The chances are that this will mean giving up your home business dreams of working 30 minutes a day in your pyjamas and, instead, going back to work at McDonalds.

But hey, your income will be far greater than it has been lately.

Too hard to follow

This seems less likely as most web marketing info-products I have seen go to great pains to make the information easy to follow.

However, if you have ever found yourself struggling to understand a particular lesson, write to the author and ask for clarification and assistance to understand what they have written. A reasonable marketer will be happy to help or will be able to point you in the direction of a support network.

If not, claim the promised refund. There's no point in wasting your time AND your money so make sure you take the time to get your money back.

If no money-back guarantee is offered then don't buy it in the first place.

Web marketing to web marketers

So many people running a home business have other home business owners as their target market. This results in lots of web marketers creating and selling products to help other web marketers create and sell products to other web marketers so they can create and sell products to...

If everyone in this line of work uses exactly the same methods, it reduces their effectiveness and, unless you are very good at your job, taking a slice of this market is extremely difficult.

Try targeting a niche market on something unrelated to web marketing that you have some experience or interest in. The competition will likely be easier and the marketing techniques you learn will be less familiar to consumers in this area.

Unsuitable techniques

What you learn may be completely unsuitable for your business type or may involve something you consider to be unethical.

If this is the case, try and work out how you can adapt what you have learnt to suit your market. If you can't figure out a way to adapt it or make it ethical, claim your refund immediately.

Bad timing

More than ever, new products use time sensitive offers to encourage you to buy sooner rather than later. You can be lured in by promises of future price hikes or the threats of the product being withdrawn.

But you may not be in a position to use the information on offer. Maybe you are still learning the basics, or your product or website is still in development. By the time you come to actually needing those web marketing skills, you've forgotten what you've read or the techniques are now out of date.

Resist the urge to impulse buy when it comes to your business. Wait until you are actually ready to start your web marketing campaign and then carefully select the products you believe will help you on your way.

There will always be new and up to date products to buy when YOU are ready, so don't be panicked into buying the latest and greatest.

Information overload

I would guess that is by far the most common factor that restricts the pupil's progress. There are so many web marketing techniques out there and not enough time to try them all.

You also run the risk of spreading yourself too thin so that none of the techniques you've learned get fully implemented and ultimately go to waste.

Choose your battle plan carefully and select only those areas that fit in comfortably with your abilities and your budget.

For example, if you have a small advertising budget, learn about joint ventures, network marketing and search engine optimisation.

If you have a moderate advertising budget, learn about PPC, ezine advertising and search engine optimisation.

If you have a large advertising budget, learn about outsourcing and branding.

Above all, if your purchased product does not teach you anything new or anything you can use, don't be afraid to request a refund.

Most honest marketers would rather you did that and went away happy with the hope that you might return in the future, than to go away disappointed with a product you don't like and can't use.

Your time is valuable, your money more so. Do your best not to waste either of them.

Training Day

Every business does training. It's true. Of course much of it is useless.

I still have very vivid nightmares of working in customer services and being sent on meaningless training courses.

A whole morning on how to write letters degenerated into a series of bizarre exercises designed to prove that what you write may be interpreted differently by the reader. And how do you fix the problem? Dunno, the course didn't cover that part.

It covered just enough to make you doubt your abilities to communicate anything effectively to anyone, ever, and then sent you on your way.

And then there was the all-day "teamwork" course. My goodness that was fun.

Here's an egg, a balloon, some paperclips, rulers, cardboard, sticky tape and some felt-tips. Now make an aeroplane to transport your egg and, whoever can throw their plane the furthest without the egg breaking, wins. Bonus points supplied for style, design and, er, the name given to your egg transporting machine.

Our team won of course. Just. I lobbied for extra points for being the only team not to give our machine an obscene name.

Definitely a learning experience then. I learned that my colleagues were all dirty-minded perverts with less class than a happy meal. Ah, those were the salad days.

So what training do you do?

Hey, if you're reading this, then you do at least some training. In fact anything you do in the pursuit of knowledge that may benefit your home business is a form of training.

And the reality is that you have to undergo training constantly, or you will get left behind.

Think about this. A few years ago a lot of articles were about optimising your website so the pages loaded quickly. Today, the topic hardly gets a mention because with the rapid take-up of broadband, optimising your website is still necessary but increasingly less important.

If you haven't moved with the times and you're still spending hours tweaking your website to reduce the page sizes by 5%, you're wasting your time.

The chances are, you don't think of it as training, but every forum thread, newsletter and ezine you read, is a part of your online education. But this by itself is not enough.

Australian, Allan Wilson, kicked off recently as he tried to explain why training yourself is essential to your home business. Click the link below to check it out as it has great comedic value.

You could be cynical and say that this rant is to bully people into buying John Reese's Traffic Secrets, but whatever your thoughts this is a very important truth.

www.reprintrightsmarketing.com/attitude.html

I don't want to just plagiarise Allan Wilson though and I think there is more that needs to be understood about your training.

Free Training

A lot of training you obtain for free. The aforementioned ezines and forums train you in random topics and keep you abreast of the latest trends.

But these by themselves are not enough. The information is too scattered, unspecific and sometimes contradictory. These sources of training are essential, but should not be relied on for ALL of your training.

There is also the problem of information overload. Jim Edwards has a nice video clip with some suggestions on how to handle this: www.igottatellyou.com/blog/archives/2005/11/dealing_with_id.html

Try to avoid reading ezines as soon as they land in your inbox. Put them all into a reading folder and schedule an hour or two a

week, specifically to go through these emails carefully. You might want to skim them first, just in case there is anything time sensitive.

E-Books

E-books are an effective way to learn, but they aren't necessarily the cheapest with prices going as high as \$97. By contrast, real, every day, printed books can be a lot cheaper.

Mark Joyner's "The Irresistable Offer", for example, can be obtained for less than \$15, so don't ignore the possibility of finding a printed book on your chosen topic.

Try and avoid the impulse to always purchase the latest e-book when it is released. Usually when a company runs a training course (my experiences aside), they first identify what staff need to learn and put something together that will specifically improve their work.

You must take the same approach.

Take a look at what you are working on and what you want to achieve. What gaps in your knowledge are slowing you down or preventing your progress. Make a list of specific areas and schedule time for training in these areas. Spread your training schedule out so it doesn't slow down your income.

Look for specific e-books that will cater for your training need and invest in these. Make sure the e-books are no more than six months old or the information may be out of date, although this may not be the case in some areas.

Also try looking for reports on your area of interest. These are often cheaper and shorter making them far more effective for your training needs.

Home Study Courses

Usually coming in the form of audio CD's and/or DVD's, these courses are far more comprehensive than an e-book.

As a consequence they require a greater investment of time.

If you're looking for a greater depth of training than an e-book without the expense of attending a conference, home study courses are excellent.

Again, be sure that the subject matter is genuinely going to be use for your business and your training needs.

The home study course may take hours to complete so be sure to schedule x number of hours per week to focus on this training course until the material is completed. It is a terrible waste of time and money to purchase a home study course and not complete it because you became distracted.

Exhibitions & Conferences

Although this is often the most expensive form of training, it can also be the most effective.

For a start, there is little chance of getting distracted and not finishing the course. Fitting the training into a conference that lasts only a couple of days allows you to learn what you need without taking you away from your business for too long a period of time.

Focussing your training into this short time frame is also excellent for stimulating your creativity and helping you to push your business forward. You will also meet like-minded individuals that you can partner with in the future. Never underestimate the networking factor.

As useful as conferences are, the financial cost may be high so be sure that you can afford the kind of outlay involved. Don't forget to factor in travel and accommodation costs.

Whatever training you decide to undergo, take notes as you go along. Within a couple of days of finishing your training, review your notes, decide how to implement what you've learned and USE it.

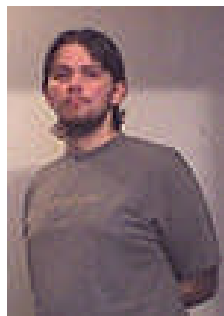
Wasted training is wasted time and money.

But above all, don't make the mistake of thinking that you can manage without training. Without it you will simply get left behind. Particularly on-line this will happen faster than you could possibly imagine.

PC Housekeeping

Format C:/

Joshua Ditty



Joshua Ditty is a web designer and programmer, and also owns TrafficRanker.

Making Windows Work for You

I got my first 'real' computer back in 2001. It was an IBM 385ED Laptop with Windows95. Seriously outdated, yes, but still better than nothing.

Before this the only other computer I had was when I was twelve, a basic desktop with Microsoft Works (no Windows), and a green monitor.

When I say it had a green monitor I don't mean that it was some ugly avocado color like some refrigerator from the 70s or perhaps some of the monitors you might pick up today. I mean that the actual pixels were green - the type of green you saw on NASA computers - also probably from the 70s.

Because there was no Windows operating system I had to use the DOS prompt on that one.

So when I got my IBM 385ED back in 2001 I was pretty excited, and pretty much out of the loop too. But working on these here computers every day has sharpened my Windows skills. Over the past four years I've found that the most useful feature by far in Windows is the shortcuts.

Windows shortcuts are a series of keys you can hold or press that will perform actions very quickly. From cutting and pasting, to navigating the programs in your toolbars, anything can be done using Windows shortcuts.

If I were particularly adept at them I would no longer need a mouse but, as it stands, I know enough to perform many of the actions I do everyday quickly, easily, and efficiently. Most software programs for Windows will also allow you to use shortcuts within them.

Here are a few you may find useful:

Highlighting text

Hold down the shift key then, using the directional keys, you can highlight text. This can also be used to highlight icons in Windows Explorer and on the Desktop.

To take this one step further, if you already have icons selected and would like to select more you can hold down the shift key and use the mouse (or direction keys) to continue the current selection.

De-selecting Icons

If you have multiple icons selected and want to de-select just a few, then you can use the CTRL key to do so. Press and hold the CTRL key and use the mouse (or direction keys) to deselect items just as if you were selecting them.

Copying

If you right-click on a piece of selected text or icon, a menu will come up. One of the options in this menu is “copy”, a well known and often used action, but there is no need for the menu. Simply press CTRL+C to copy anything you have selected.

Cutting

In the same menu you’ll find by right-clicking is an option to “cut”, an even more popular and well known action. To do this using Windows shortcuts press CTRL+X.

This can also be done on selected text using SHIFT+DEL but, if you press SHIFT+DEL on an icon or other such object, it will delete it without moving it to the recycle bin.

Pasting

What is cutting without pasting? Another option in that right-click menu. You can do this simply by pressing CTRL+V.

The Menu

In fact, if you don’t feel like right-clicking then you can bring up that menu by pressing SHIFT+F10.

When I first wrote this article, the Editor emailed me and said his greatest shortcut is ‘Windows Key + D’. What this does is minimize all of the windows and shows your desktop. Unfortunately my laptop doesn’t have a windows key so I can’t do this, but it’s a great shortcut.

I have a feeling that everybody has their own greatest shortcut.

What might be the most useful function for me might not be useful to you. Everyone uses Windows differently, and that's what makes Windows the most used operating system in the world. It is diverse and flexible.

The ENTER key is another that I use quite a bit for online forms. Not elaborate, or overly special, it is the same as clicking your mouse button and done with a tap of my pinky rather than a flick of my wrist and forefinger.

With 'CTRL + S' I can save a file. This saves me a few seconds that would be wasted by opening the File menu and clicking on save, but when I do need to open that file menu I can do so by pressing 'Alt + F'.

There are many great shortcuts, but what is the greatest to me?

It's simple, really. Undo!

Normally, this is done with 'CTRL + Z', but some applications -- like my browser - will use a variation like 'Alt + Z'.

What this little shortcut does is nothing less than amazing.

With two keys I can, in a sense, go back in time and undo all of the stupid mistakes and typos that I do in a day. Some applications will only let you go back one step and undo the last action. Some others will let you go back a few steps. There are some applications though, like the text editor I use for writing web pages and PHP files, that let me go back as many times as I want.

I use this shortcut many times throughout the day, and sometimes wish I had something like this in real life. How much easier would our lives be if we all had a proverbial 'CTRL + Z' key floating nearby to press whenever we made a mistake. The number of traffic accidents would certainly go down.

Temporary Trash Removal

*****DISCLAIMER*****

Please note that any attempt to follow the instructions below is done so at your own risk. Do not adjust your computer's settings unless you are confident about doing so.

*****DISCLAIMER*****

Is your PC running awfully slowly? It wasn't this slow when you re-installed windows, so why is it so slow now?

One of the culprits could be your temporary files folder.

Usually located at C:\WINDOWS\TEMP this lovely folder is filled with many files such as Zkt15574.tmp and it's bigger brother ZKT02b19.TMP. Your PC most likely won't have files exactly like those, except by some miraculous stroke of coincidence, but will undoubtedly have files with similar looking names.

These are temporary files. They hold random bits of information from all the various tasks and projects you may have done since you last deleted these files. They can grow to be considerably large and when this happens your PC will slow to a crawl.

It's actually quite annoying.

So, today I'm going to show you a simple step to automatically delete these files every time you turn on the computer. This does not hurt your PC and should cause you no harm unless you regularly retrieve old information from programs that you use.

To do this we simply make use of a file called autoexec.bat. This file should reside at C:\autoexec.bat.

Before you do anything else, make a backup of this file. Simply make a copy of autoexec.bat and save it as autoexec_bak.bat.

Now that you've found the autoexec.bat file, right click on it and select 'edit'. This should open up notepad.

Inside you may see a few lines of cryptic code that make little or no sense. Things like SET PATH=C:\WINDOWS. Or you may see nothing at all.

At the bottom simply add the following line:

DELTREE /Y c:\windows\temp*.*

This will delete everything in your temporary file folder.

You can also add lines to delete your history, cookies, recent folder – all automatically.

DELTREE /Y c:\windows\history*.*

DELTREE /Y c:\windows\recent*.*

DELTREE /Y c:\windows\tempor~1*.*

Very easy. Save the file and check it out by restarting your computer.

Please note that if you make a mistake in following the above instructions, it may cause your PC to crash.

If you ever find yourself with a computer that hangs and refuses to boot up, press and hold F8 when you first turn it on. This will bring up a menu where you can choose to boot in Safe Mode or do a Step by Step confirmation.

Then simply replace the autoexec.bat file that you amended with the backup that you made.

Batch Files

In my last article I talked about the autoexec.bat file and how to use it to automatically clear out your temporary files. Now, I'm going to tell you a bit more about these types of files like autoexec.bat - they're called batch files.

Batch files are files that you can put commands in that you might normally use at the command prompt, or DOS as it is also called. For example, you can use batch files to run programs, open files, or do other system processes.

Here I'm going to show you an easy step to improve your life.

Every time I boot up my computer, I open up Maxthon, my web browser, and then I open up Mozilla Thunderbird, my email client. How much time could I save if I had a shortcut on the desktop that would open both of these programs at once?

To begin, let's create a new folder to place our batch files in.

From your desktop, click on 'My Computer', and then head to 'C:'. From here, either right-click or press SHIFT+F10 to bring up a little menu. Hover over 'new' and another menu will come up. Select 'folder'.

Name this folder BATCH. This will be the folder you place your batch files in. Go into this folder and create a new text document by right-clicking or pressing SHIFT+F10, hover over 'new', and select 'text document'.

Rename this newly created file with something you can remember, like primary_programs.bat. The extension must be .bat, which is a batch file. Right-click on the icon now and select edit to bring up notepad. Here, you will type in the commands to open two programs, your browser, and your email client.

I use Maxthon and Thunderbird, but most people use Internet Explorer and Outlook Express as their browser and email client, so we'll use those as an example. Customizing this to open different programs is easy, and I'll explain this a little later.

First, let's put in some comments to help keep us organized. At the top of this file, put the following:

```
:: primary_programs.bat  
:: Opens up my most common programs  
::
```

Notice the double colons. This signifies a comment, and tells the Window's Command Prompt, or DOS, to bypass this line without reading it. There is also REM, short for Remark, and while this won't be executed, Windows will still read it and this could slow things down a hair. If you want to keep things fast, use double colons when inserting comments.

After this, we'll turn off the echo with this:

```
@ECHO OFF
```

By default, Windows will output commands and results from your batch files to the browser. Adding @ECHO OFF prevents this and keeps you from seeing useless text.

Now, let's run Internet Explorer. In order to do this we tell Windows three things - where to start, where to go, and what to do.

```
c:  
cd\PROGRA~1\INTERN~1  
iexplore
```

This is ancient code, however. The first line will go to the c: drive, second will change to the Program Files\Internet Explorer folder, and the third line opens up the program. This type of code is uncommon. We are fortunate in that we can usually just say where to go and everything is done.

```
C:\PROGRA~1\INTERN~1\iexplore.exe
```

Either one of these pieces of code should open up Internet Explorer. To test this, save your batch file and then double click on it to see what happens. This should not melt your computer.

Now, you've probably noticed the weird ~ squiggly lines in that command, and that you don't actually have folders by the names PROGRA~1 and INTERN~1. Technically, you do - or you should. MS-DOS assigns special names to folders that are too long or have spaces. These things are prohibited in the command prompt so you

will need to use the MS-DOS names in your batch files instead of the friendly Windows names.

To find out the MS-DOS name of a folder, right click on the desired folder and select 'properties'. This will bring up a little menu showing all sorts of info about that folder, including the MS-DOS name.

This works for files as well.

Now that we've successfully opened up Internet Explorer, using a somewhat complex code, let's do the same with Outlook Express, which is at C:\PROGRA~1\OUTLOO~1\msimn.exe

Your batch file should now look like this:

```
:: primary_programs.bat  
:: Opens up my most common programs  
::  
@ECHO OFF  
C:\PROGRA~1\INTERN~1\iexplore.exe  
C:\PROGRA~1\OUTLOO~1\msimn.exe
```

Test it by double clicking and, if your computer is still solid and everything goes according to plan, you should have successfully opened two programs at one time. To add other programs, simply follow the same procedure - finding out what the path (MS-DOS style) to the program is and putting this at the end of your batch file.

To make this file accessible from the desktop simply right-click on it and select 'create shortcut'. Place the newly created shortcut onto the desktop.

Imagine a batch file with all the websites you visit daily, sitting, ready for you to click on whenever you need? Use it to save time, to surf a few traffic exchanges, or to make your life so much easier.

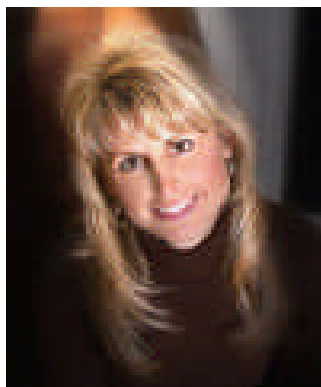
Yes, what I've shown you is just the tip of the iceberg.

Before I leave you, I made some comments about your computer melting by doing this - it's a joke. If you follow these steps it should have no ill effect other than opening up an annoying command prompt for a few seconds. But if your computer really does melt then I accept no responsibility. It was probably very old.

Small and Home Business Coach

Coach's Corner

Laurie Hayes



Laurie Hayes, "The HBB Source," helps home-based business owners and those who are considering starting their own home-based business, get clear on their goals, excited about the possibilities, and organized in their thinking, planning and actions.

Laurie is not only a Professional Coach, but also a Mentor and Resource to her clients and readers. Laurie has authored numerous articles on work/life balance and small and home-based business practices and strategies. She is regularly invited to contribute articles to online, small business magazines.

Internet Marketing Highlight of 2005

It's all about your list and attracting targeted qualified leads. Focusing your efforts on building a massive list regardless of whether or not they are your ideal client or customer is a waste of effort and money. It's important to know exactly who your ideal client is and where to find them.

Internet Marketing Prediction for 2006

It's all about relationship building. We are bombarded by requests to subscribe to publications every single day and are now being much more cautious in whom we give our name and e-mail address to. Years ago, it was easy to get subscribers. Today, you really have to stand out and offer quality information and value.

In order to attract and keep qualified leads on your list, you will need to focus your attention on building a relationship with the reader. Find out what their most pressing need is or problem that need's to be solved and find the solution for them. It's no longer about bombarding people with information overload, but creating relationships and filling needs.

Favourite Programs/Websites of 2005

[Jay Abraham Insider's Club](#)

[Ali Brown's Boost Business with Your Own Ezine](#)

[David Frey's Marketing Bible](#)

[Michael Port's Product Factory](#)

[David Wood's Build Your Practice While You Sleep](#)

Q&A With Laurie

What are the three best ways to keep and grow our affiliate base high while lowering the attrition loss from the back end?

Assuming I was not provided with details on the program or affiliate percentages, I would provide the following recommendations.

1. Provide a very generous percentage to your affiliates

Make it worth their time and effort to promote your product/service. They can even make the majority of the profit of each initial purchase because your real profit will come through the back-end when these referrals start purchasing products and services through your promotions.

Your product or service has to be perceived as a benefit to your affiliate, so always strive to provide absolute value and benefit to your clients / readers / customers, etc., otherwise, your affiliate may no longer see the value in promoting your product or service.

2. Allow affiliates a percentage of all subsequent sales you make on products and services indefinitely

Many programs offer commissions on referrals up to 60 or 100 days only. This is very unappealing. If anyone they refer makes a purchase of any product or service outside of the initial purchase and at any time afterwards, allow the affiliate to benefit as well.

Also make commission payment easy and provide alternative payment options. Some programs pay only through PayPal. This does not appeal to everyone. Some prefer a cheque instead. Always think of what will provide the most value for your affiliate.

3. Educate your affiliates and provide necessary resources

Provide them with text and banner ads and great copy so they don't have to do the work. Make it as easy for them as possible to promote to their lists.

Not all affiliates will be technical gurus, so, if they require, provide support and guidance on how to insert promotional tools into their e-mail messages, newsletters and websites. Also, provide ongoing support through newsletter articles. Dedicate a column or small space with an “Affiliate Tip of the Month” for example.

Help them, while at the same time keep the value of your affiliate relationship at the top of their mind. Place testimonials from affiliates in your newsletter indicating profits made over a certain period. People need to see and hear success stories.

What are the best ways to contact prospects prior to their initial incentive expiring? Phone? Email? Snail Mail?

If I understand building rapport as being a critical step in developing a downline, can you talk about relationship building musts to help move warm prospects into long time users of our products and services?

To increase your success rate, a two-step process is best.

Step #1: Contact your prospects via e-mail with an informative, helpful communication designed to provide value. This communication may provide educational tips, success stories from previous or current clients, exciting future promotions, etc.

Within this e-mail, notify your prospects that you will be following-up via phone call.

Step #2: Extend additional support and to measure how your initial incentive served them.

During this conversation, find out what benefits they experienced, what they’d like to see more or less of, and whether the experience was more or less than they expected and why.

Communicate your intention to make your relationship as profitable and rewarding for them as possible and that in order to carry out your part of the deal, their honest input is required and valued. Listen to what they tell you and then do what is necessary to meet their needs.

By following up your written communication with a phone call, you will increase your success rate by 30 to 50 percent.

You're not just building rapport, you're building a relationship.

To build strong, lasting relationships, you must find out what are your prospects' biggest frustrations and challenges. You need to help them find clarity by asking, "What would it look like if things were operating the way you'd like to see them?"

Once they are clear on what they want, you need to educate and motivate them. Don't just give them information, but give them action steps, support them in creating the results they seek. Providing information alone is not enough.

Create a level of trust. Never put your interests ahead of your prospects. Always provide what is in their best interests and not only will your relationship grow stronger, they will start singing your praises to their friends, family and business associates.

In the words of the brilliant Stephen Covey, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Listen to your prospects and truly understand what they need. Put yourself in their shoes and see their situation through their eyes then ask yourself, "How can I have the most positive impact on this person?"

Sometimes prospects won't make a decision because they don't want to feel foolish. You want to show them that your product or service or relationship will make them feel good about themselves.

Remove as many obstacles as possible in order for them to work with you. Sometimes concepts are too confusing for prospects the first time, so instead give them examples to help clarify.

These are just a few strategies that are powerful in creating lasting, rewarding relationships.

The most important underlying message here is, "I am here to serve you, to help you, to be your partner in realizing your goals." It has nothing to do with you or with selling. It's all about them and how you can benefit them.

My challenge to you is to review these strategies and measure them against your current practices. Are you currently using them? Can you expand on them or make minor (or major) changes?

Implement and test these strategies and see what kind of response you generate from your prospects. As always, measure your results and test and tweak as necessary.

I'm having such a hard time finding customers, I thought it would be much easier than this. Although I'm getting a lot of visits to my web site, the conversion of leads to sales is much less than I had hoped for. What am I doing wrong?

One of the biggest mistakes new home-based business owners make is not having a clear idea of who their target market is. Instead of narrowing the marketing focus on a specific niche, they try to be everything to everyone.

You may get a whole lot of visitors to your web site, but many may be "looky-lou's". In others words, just curious folks with no specific problem or need you are prepared to fill.

To get better-qualified leads and, in turn, more customers, you need to know who your target market is. This is the group of people who have a problem or need that you have a solution for. The problem they have has to be important enough to them to make them want to spend money on finding a solution.

More people will make a purchase to solve a problem than they will to fulfil a desire. Keep this in mind when deciding what you are going to sell and to whom.

When choosing your target market, be specific. For example, "I work with Canadian female entrepreneurs who have decided to start a home-based business after retiring from the corporate world."

You can even take this one step further ...

"I work with Canadian female entrepreneurs who have decided to start a home-based business in the health services field after retiring from the corporate world."

Having a really clear vision of who you want to work with and who have problems you can solve, will help you target your marketing efforts effectively. By knowing who makes up your target market, you will be able to determine where they hang out, what they read, what interests them and what keeps them awake at night.

Knowing exactly who your target market is will also let you know if they have money to spend.

Creating a web site and expecting the sales to roll in is unrealistic. You want to identify your target market, then find them and invite them to your site. Participate in related discussion boards, join the Associations your target market joins, subscribe to the same publications, have the copy on your website speak directly to your target market instead of just anyone.

Write articles and submit them to article directories. Other publishers will pick up your articles and distribute them to their readers. These readers will be specifically interested in what you're offering and will be seeking a solution to a problem when they visit your site.

Be very clear as to whom you want to work with and sell to, then customize your efforts to reach them. Once you have your target market identified, your efforts will be much more focused and the right people will be drawn to your business.

My business isn't progressing at the rate I'd like it to and I'm getting burned out by the continuous demands on my time. I can't seem to get into a groove or get any one thing done. I've got 20 projects on the go, yet nothing is being completed. How do I stop this merry-go-round and get onto a clear path?

You may have too much on your plate right now and an absence of real structure. When this happens, confusion overwhelms and downright frustration results.

One thing you can do right now is to stop focusing on getting things done. Yes, that's right. Stop thinking about everything you have to do.

Now ... shift your focus for a minute, and start thinking about what will bring you closer to your success as a home-based business owner.

Might it be completing a special report to offer as a free gift to new subscribers or customers? Taking one of your newly learned marketing strategies and implementing it immediately? Creating a new product that will provide great benefit to your customers?

Take five or ten minutes and make a list of all of your daily activities. Once complete, review these items and determine how much time out of every day is devoted to each of them.

Now, how many of these tasks have a direct impact on what is needed to bring you closer to success?

If the majority of these activities are not moving you towards your goal, you need to make changes. Your time must be spent completely focused on creating your vision. For activities that take you away from your vision, you must either delegate them to someone else or remove them from your daily activities.

If this is just not possible, then set up a specific window of time during the day or week to deal with them. Assign a time limit for these tasks and don't deviate from it.

Mastering self-discipline, creating structure, and clearly identifying and acting on those activities that must be carried out to move forward in your business will allow you to focus your attention where it needs to be and will get you off that merry-go-round for good.

Small and Home Business

Sensei Says

Robert Agar-Hutton



Robert Agar-Hutton (who was born in 1953) has a varied background as an accountant, a computer programmer and systems analyst, a business and marketing consultant, a website designer, a trainer, an after dinner and motivational speaker, an author and a martial artist with over thirty four years of experience.

Make Your Website Great?

OK so you know enough to avoid too much 'stuff' on your website. You avoid the pop-ups and graphics and pictures plus fifty-three other things on each page that makes a site look too busy and uncoordinated. You've also done your best to optimise your site for the search engines, included meta-tags (yes I know they are not what they used to be but you should still include them), you have relevant content; you have checked keyword density, etc, etc.

Of course you check your site regularly to make sure all the links (both internal and external) are working properly and you know that updating your site's content regularly is important too.

So with all these things and many more done and dusted, why, oh why, do you not have a great website?

I suggest that this is because of the following reasons.

1. You have not taken the time to accurately figure out WHO your potential customers/clients actually are.
2. You don't proactively contact your customers/clients to draw them to your website.
3. You haven't educated or encouraged them so that they will return to visit your website regularly.
4. Your content does not significantly give value to your customers/clients.

Let's look at each of the above in a bit more detail:

WHO are your customers?

You need to know exactly which market segment(s) you are trying to sell to and you need to have a very detailed knowledge of exactly who it is that you want your website to appeal to.

Look at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/> and compare it with <http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/default.stm>.

One is BBC news for adults and the other is BBC news for children. Compare how the same story is given a different treatment so as to be relevant to the target audience. Do you tell your 'story' in the best way to educate and entertain your target visitors?

Proactively contact potential customers

Don't just rely on search engines or Google AdWords. Think of all the different ways you can let people know about your site.

- Is it printed on your business card?
- Is it on your car?
- Do you write letters and articles to magazines and newspapers that are seen by your target audience?
- Do you mention your website when you write letters?
- Is it mentioned on invoices and statements?

Basically, do you do everything you can to drive people to your site?

Encourage visitors to come back to your site

Make your site information rich. Make it topical. Offer regular 'freebies' to visitors (A freebie can be something as simple as an informative report that you write or a monthly newsletter).

Give value!

What do you give a visitor to your website that they consider to be of value and which will tempt them into doing business with you? It can be something as simple as relevant information.

However beware of giving too much. If you want your prospect to make contact with you, then you need to tempt them not over-educate them.

If you look at a lot of websites (as I do) you will be aware of the trend that has grown up in the last few years of giving 'bonuses' away. I don't like this. Does it work for some sites? Yes, but it devalues the original product or service being offered. Make sure that everything that you offer is GREAT value for money.

Break Down the Barriers to Success

Would you like to know the number one thing that stops you being successful?

Of course you would. I bet you think the answer is something like 'My lack of knowledge' or 'I need more capital' or 'The market place is too mature for a new player like me' or...

Well all of those reasons and a thousand more may well be true but the number one reason that stops you being successful is:

Lack Of Focus

Let's start right at the beginning. Have you really focused in on what 'Being a Success' actually means to you? Is it to own a Ferrari? If so, how much money exactly will you need to pay for insurance, maintenance, etc, etc? Is it having a bigger house? If so, how much bigger exactly and where will it be?

You see you need to know IN DETAIL exactly what you want. Exactly what being successful means to you. You should write it down and then review your success statement regularly because things change.

Next, and this is often overlooked, does your definition of success meet with the approval of those it's going to affect? Have you really focused in on what those around you (who are important to you) want? You want to move to the country but your kids want to stay in town with their friends. You want a bigger house but your partner doesn't.

Even more importantly, have you focused in detail on your core values and checked that they support your definition of success?

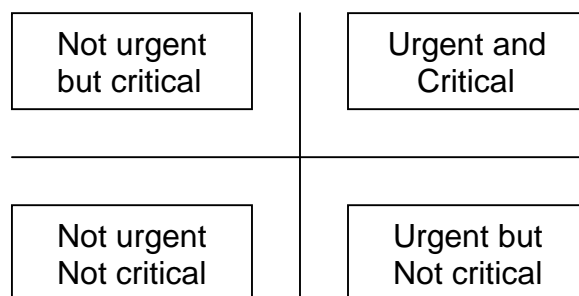
You might, for example, be much more interested in people than in things so a success statement that lists things like £1,000,000 in the bank, a Ferrari 456 and a six-bedroom house may not actually be important to you at a core motivational level. Write down the answer to the question "What are my core values?" and see if they support your success statement.

Next you have to focus on strategy. Most people in business (myself included) get bogged down in the day-to-day running of the business. That's called Tactics. It's critically important but it should always be subservient to your strategy. Strategy is the master plan which shows where you are and where you want to be and (in broad terms) how you intend to get there. You simply cannot focus enough on this area of your business!

So having got your strategy in place you have to focus on the day-to-day tactics and here again lack of focus lets us down. The phone rings whilst you are designing a webpage or an important letter arrives and you have to reschedule your morning or...

So what can you do?

There is a very simple little tool that you can use. Look at the following diagram.



Then look at all the things you are intending to do in the next few hours and divide them into the four quadrants. Things that are 'urgent and critical' do at once, then do 'critical but not urgent' then do the 'urgent but not critical' and finally, if you have enough time left, then do the 'not urgent and not critical' tasks. It may seem like quite a simple set of rules but I guarantee that you (just like me) often find yourself wasting time doing 'non urgent non critical' tasks when you actually have 'urgent and critical things' to do.

Success generally does not come from being a lot better it comes from being a little bit better nearly all of the time. Apply the right amount of focus to the right things and your ability to succeed will improve exponentially.

Strategic Planning – Tomorrow's job

What is the thing that I guarantee more business people put off doing than anything else?

It's Strategic Planning, that is long term planning that defines what you want to do and where you want to be in one, two, five and ten years time. Now we all know that we want to be rich, famous and good looking but how the heck are you going to get there without a plan.

Why do we tend not to have strategic plans (or if we do, we forget to regularly review them)? It's because it is so easy to get bogged down in the day to day tactical considerations of running the business.

So, let's be ruthless – grab your diary and cross out the next two free days that you have (even if it's a weekend) and mark them 'Strategic Planning Session'. Go on, do it.

Now some research, go to Google and type in "strategic business planning". You will get some interesting websites, possibly including the following – please note that I am not giving any endorsement and you should not rely on anything you find on the web as the sole source of your business decisions:

www.barclaysmicrosites.co.uk/start_up/startup.html

www.planware.org/strategy.htm?source=trpanel

www.businessballs.com/freebusinessplansandmarketing...

www.sba.gov/managing/strategicplan/guide.html

So you start to read up on the subject and I can almost guarantee that the first thing you will find is that a lot of plans do NOT seem to be relevant to your business. They might talk about management structures and there you are thinking "It's only me..." Don't worry, you are enough, and if you are the management then it makes really good sense to know your own strengths and weaknesses, skills and shortcomings so that your strategic plan (warts and all) is realistic and achievable.

The thing that people sometimes forget is that Strategic Planning needs to have a goal. It's not (most of the time) about producing

some large bulky document that looks good to your bank manager. No, it should serve the purpose of signposting for you all the major events in your business future. It acts as the overview against which you measure all the day-to-day tactical decisions that you make. Does doing 'X' take me nearer or further away from my strategic objectives is a question that should ALWAYS be close to your heart.

So let's look at a few specifics:

1. Know what your desired business outcomes are.
2. Know why you need a strategic plan.
3. Continue to allocate sufficient time and resources to develop and maintain your plan.
4. Your plan needs to exist in hardcopy on your desk so you can refer to it over and over again.
5. Check that EVERYTHING that you do conforms to your strategic plan.
6. Stay with the plan.
7. Change the plan if you must but only when the change will improve the plan. Even then, don't change STRATEGY too often. Changing tactics is fine and necessary but changing strategy means that you haven't started off in the right way.

In order to keep to your strategic plan you will need to be ruthless. Look at the work you did today – were you interrupted? Did you look at a website (the BBC news website is my own personal downfall) and get sidetracked into doing something else?

Did some glib salesman (or email advert) get you to spend money on something that will 'make you rich' but in a totally different direction to that which you actually want to go?

It's SO EASY to get sidetracked in business and you need to stay on track if you are going to be a success. A bad plan that is kept to and is well executed will out-perform a great plan that is ignored or constantly changed!

Internet Security

Smoke & Mirrors

Tim Whiston



Tim Whiston is a network marketer who lives in the south eastern U.S. He works hard, meets new people, has fun, and makes some extra money in the process. Since joining his first affiliate program in the spring of 2003, Tim has learned numerous valuable lessons, and has come to realize that, quite often, things are not what they appear to be here in cyberspace.

Internet Marketing Highlight of 2005

The high point of 2005 was without a doubt the No Limits event in Charlotte, NC. I not only got a chance to learn from guys like Mike Filsaime and Gary Ambrose, I was able to meet some of my online friends in a face-to-face forum.

The whole experience was awesome, and has done wonders for my bottom line.

Internet Marketing Prediction for 2006

On a personal note, 2006 is going to be bigger and better than any previous year. I look forward to releasing numerous products and services that will improve the internet marketing arena for those within my reach.

I also foresee 2006 as being a huge year in terms of joint ventures between some of the big hitters. There are going to be a lot of big info products released this year, and there are some very innovative changes in store for the traffic exchange community as well.

I also expect to see more pod-casting in the net marketing sector, and a continued emphasis on the value of live interaction like web conferences, tele-seminars, offline events, etc.

Favourite Programs/Websites of 2005

[Net Marketing Exposed](#)

[Focus4TheFuture](#)

[Email Aces](#)

[Doctor Traffic](#)

Recognizing and Avoiding Pyramid Traps

The inception of the world wide web has proliferated the pyramid scheme in the same way the fast food industry has exploded the production of french fried potatoes. Millions of dollars are lost each year by victims of these multi-level “business opportunity” scams.

According to a report published by the FTC, over 1.55 million U.S. citizens lost money to illegal pyramid schemes in 2004. The total incidents of such loss exceeded 2.55 million, indicating that many consumers were duped more than once by this type of scam.

Over 90% of all acknowledged cases involved either an email communication or a print reference (newspaper, magazine, etc.) to a web site where consumers were exposed to an income opportunity that turned out to be a fraudulent, multi-level marketing plan. It is clearly safe to say that the internet has become the number one courier for this particular form of deception.

So what exactly is a pyramid scam? It’s a fraud model that generates revenue through the exponential recruitment of opportunity seekers, all of whom are required to pay a fee for joining the organization.

The majority of these membership fees are collected and divided among the new recruit’s upline. The higher an individual is positioned within the pyramid structure, the more income he or she will receive as a result of the recruiting efforts of those on the lower levels.

Ultimately, the pyramid system will collapse as the market for new members is saturated. Those at the top will walk away with considerable profits, while the overwhelming majority of participants will have lost their entire investment.

Criteria set forth by the FTC to define an illegal pyramid scheme is based on the following primary consideration: Is the consumer required to pay anyone for the opportunity to operate a work from home business and, if so, is the consumer led to believe that most of the money earned through the opportunity will be from recruiting others to the business model and/or from purchases made by these recruits?

For good reason, pyramid schemes have been made illegal in most countries. Sadly, this legislation has done little to curtail the problem, and the constant resurgence of unethical, multi-level confidence tricks can be observed daily via the internet.

Many of these programs attempt to obscure their true nature by centering their program around a product. However, it's not very difficult to see past this thin disguise if you apply a bit of sound judgment.

For instance, many of the products attached to pyramid scams are nothing more than brochures, audio tapes, or e-books that instruct new recruits as to how they might refer others to the opportunity. A collection of names and addresses, represented as a list of potential referrals, or "leads", is another bogus product offered by many pyramid scams in exchange for their membership fees.

Some multi-level income plans, broker more substantial products, such as vitamins or functional PC software. However, when these products are sold at well beyond fair market value, and the majority of retail activity is actually the result of new recruits buying from their upline, there is a fair chance the business model is an illegal pyramid scheme.

As a new opportunity seeker, how can you avoid becoming a victim of illegal pyramid systems?

By keeping it simple.

There really is no reason to complicate the process of doing business. You sell a product or service and, in doing so, you collect a prescribed amount of currency.

Maybe you own the product you are marketing or maybe you are an affiliate marketer who promotes other people's products in exchange for a percentage based sales commission. Either way, there is no need to involve a forced matrix, a three tier referral network, a power leg, or any other superfluous gathering of people who are willing to surrender a portion of their earnings to their upline structure.

Honestly, why bother with a system that uses a complex, referral based compensation plan to obscure the simple process of profiting from direct sales? You are far better off looking for an affiliate

program that is based on a quality product, and compensates you through a straightforward commission plan.

Allegedly, not all multi-level marketing systems are pyramid scams. I'm not a lawyer, so I lack the acuity required to validate or debunk such an assertion.

What I can say with confidence, however, is that the majority of multi-level payment plans I have encountered bear a startling resemblance to pyramid models. For this reason, I have personally decided to steer clear of any affiliate program or income opportunity that functions from a multi-level platform.

Fool Me Once...

I've often wondered when in human history the concept of the scam originated. At what point in civilization did the first man or woman decide to broker an exchange of currency and goods on a deceptive premise?

Was it a corrupt Egyptian chariot dealer who sold poorly refurbished vehicles at top market value? Or perhaps an unscrupulous Babylonian alchemist who sold colored water in the guise of powerful love potions? There is no clear historical indication of when the act of cheating an individual out of their money, wares, or other assets was pioneered.

The American Heritage Dictionary cites the origin of the word "scam" as unknown. Some scholars have suggested the word derives from "scamp", which is the 19th century British slang for cheater or swindler. Other sources indicate the word first enjoyed common usage in the 1960s. I have yet to find a study that actually pins down the coining of the term.

Despite the ambiguous background of both the word and the practice, one thing is certain. Scamming, swindling, hoodwinking, and duping of all kinds does not by any stretch appear to be a short lived phenomenon.

We are warned on a regular basis about some kind of shady operation that has cheated victims out of x amount of dollars. For confirmation of this, just tune in to the evening news or click on over to your favorite news site.

Regrettably, it is common knowledge that cyberspace is brimming with identity thieves, con artists, ponzi schemes, email phishing, and an endless array of unethical "business opportunities". Millions of dollars each year are lost by victims of such scams.

If you're like me, you probably get angry when you hear about a life insurance scam that targets senior citizens and disappears into the night with thousands of dollars, or a false charity that solicits massive donations from middle to lower class households before vanishing without a trace. I mean, it's appalling to think of these

crooks who, for whatever reason, feel they don't have to work an honest job like the rest of us.

How can these people call themselves human when they go to such despicable lengths to steal from people who probably need every dollar they have just to pay the light bill and feed their households?

On the other hand...

Life is a two way street. We can't push all the responsibility for the outcome of an interaction onto only one party.

Clearly, I'm not justifying the actions of those who operate scams at the expense of the innocent. I am saying, however, that "it takes two to tango".

In many cases, a little common sense, or some time spent on careful investigation of the circumstances, would dispel the efforts of a would-be scammer before any money changed hands. All too often when people are conned, they are hoping against hope, and buying into an idea that is obviously too good to be true.

I'm sure you've received at least a couple of emails that fit into the "Nigerian Scam" category. These messages usually run along the lines of:

DEAR SIR,

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS PROPOSAL

HAVING CONSULTED WITH MY COLLEAGUES AND BASED ON THE INFORMATION GATHERED FROM THE NIGERIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, I HAVE THE PRIVILEGE TO REQUEST FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE TO TRANSFER THE SUM OF \$47,500,000.00 (FORTY SEVEN MILLION, FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND UNITED STATES DOLLARS) INTO YOUR ACCOUNTS. THE ABOVE SUM RESULTED FROM AN OVER-INVOICED CONTRACT, EXECUTED COMMISSIONED AND PAID FOR ABOUT FIVE YEARS (5) AGO BY A FOREIGN CONTRACTOR. THIS ACTION WAS HOWEVER INTENTIONAL AND SINCE THEN THE FUND HAS BEEN IN A SUSPENSE ACCOUNT AT THE CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA APEX BANK.

These emails then go on to explain how the recipient can receive this enormous transfer of funds within a few business days. All that is required is a routing number so the money can be easily wired into the correct account, and an advance fee of between \$1,000 and \$10,000 for “administrative purposes”.

Let’s see. An email from someone you have never met, who claims you are entitled to 47.5 million dollars, if you’ll just shoot them your bank account info, complete with wire access number, and an administrative fee of up to \$10k.

Could this be a scam of some sort?

Would you believe the “Nigerian Scam” model had resulted in losses exceeding 6 billion dollars by 2002? Absolutely incredible that anyone could be duped by such a transparent ruse.

Another point of interest is that, according to an FTC study conducted last year, nearly 20% of all consumer fraud victims were scammed on at least two occasions, and almost 10% were duped a third time.

Impressive learning curve for a twelve month period, eh?

If so many people weren’t allowing themselves to be robbed blind by anyone with a trick up their sleeves, maybe there would be less scams to worry about. Without victims who are (apparently) willing to buy into even the most absurd pitches, I imagine many con artists would be forced to get day jobs.

I’ve been a little coarse in an effort to make a point, but now I’ll be honest. I’ve been scammed myself on multiple occasions.

Granted, I’ve never fallen for anything quite as ridiculous as the “Nigerian Scam”, but I have done my share to fund the scam industry by taking risks despite my better judgment. During the first eight months I spent in the net marketing arena, I blew more money than I care to admit on stuff that I knew deep down would never pay off.

Why did I do it? Because I wanted to believe that I was in the right place at the right time, or that I was somehow entitled to a lucky break.

I'm not ashamed to tell you this, because I know I'm not alone. I know quite a few intelligent, successful people who have allowed themselves to be fleeced on at least one occasion.

The important thing is that we learn from our bad decisions, and accept at least part of the responsibility for our loss. It seems personal accountability is not a popular ideal in our society, but pointing fingers and laying blame has historically done very little toward creating a real solution to any problem.

As the saying goes...

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

Something for the Weekend

The Best Movie Stuff of 2005

Scott Eggleston



Scott Eggleston lives in Salt Lake City, Utah with his wife Marne and their dog, Klinger. He not only likes to watch movies, but also make them, and hopes to someday review his own film in The Nettle Magazine.

Every film critic has a list of their best films from the previous year, and most have a “worst list” as well. That is all well and good when you see every single movie that appears in a theater, but I’m not so lucky (or burdened).

My selection is a bit more sparse, so an all-inclusive list of good and bad would certainly suffer from neglect, so I won’t even try. What I will do is give a list of bests that I did see, and why -hopefully with a different spin than you’re used to.

You may notice that I did not include all the movies that I gave high marks to, but these are the ones that meant something to me, in one way or another. The envelopes please...

Best Romantic Comedy That Can Be Enjoyed by a Guy

Mr. & Mrs. Smith

A blending of several genres (romance, action, comedy, espionage) Mr. & Mrs. Smith is a big, loud, funny studio picture that works very well when it’s not taking itself very seriously.

Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie play incredibly well off of each other, generating a little-seen chemistry that helps gloss over the preposterous story (they are both contract assassins, oblivious to the other’s profession).

The action is first-rate, but the comedy and the one-upping the two leads engage in is very funny, especially if you’re married, and can totally relate to the perverse way these two engage in their own form of domestic dispute. Haven’t we all wanted to take a fully automatic weapon to our spouse at one time or another?

Best Animated Film that Really Made Me Laugh

Wallace and Gromit and the Curse of the Were-Rabbit

Easily besting all other animated fare of last year, (with maybe the exception of *Corpse Bride* which I did not see) *W&G* is Nick Park's claymation British romp into the world of a goofy inventor and his amazingly level-headed pooch who have their own business ridding their town of a pesky rabbit infestation.

Problems arise when Wallace tries to re-program the bunnies and inadvertently creates a super-rabbit ten times more hungry than the entire bunny population combined.

Inventive, funny and told with pop culture references no kid will ever get, *W&G* is simply a great time. Also note the fine voice talent, especially Ralph Fiennes as the wonderfully snobby Victor.

Oh, and don't forget the cheese!

Best Straight-Up Thriller

Red Eye

Wes Craven's suspenseful plane ride (which was much better than the similar-themed *Flightplan*) is more evidence that the horror-meister could easily exist in the mainstream.

Star-on-the-rise, Rachel McAdams, plays a workaholic hotel exec who is flying home from her grandmother's funeral. She has a "meet-cute" with another passenger (Cillian Murphy), but things get sinister when he reveals his true purpose - to coerce her into a murder plot.

McAdams is a great, resourceful heroine against Murphy's slimy creep. A tight, taut screenplay by Carl Ellsworth keeps things moving and keeps us where we should be - on the edge of our seat. Hitchcock would be proud.

Best Historical Drama that is Also Very Contemporary

Good Night, and Good Luck

A stark look into a dark time in American history, *Good Night* follows Edward R. Murrow (David Straitharn, in an Oscar-worthy turn) and his news staff as they take on Senator Joseph McCarthy and his communist/witch hunting tactics in the 1950s.

Director, co-writer & co-star, George Clooney crafts an excellent story, complete with a tense atmosphere and actual footage of the McCarthy hearings.

McCarthy himself isn't played by an actor - we see him as he was, perfectly integrated into the black and white cinematography. It's a grim reminder that blanket paranoia can ruin lives if we are not careful, and those who stand up for the truth are the real heroes.

Best Reason Not to Go to the Movies

The Island

I don't want to be petty, but this is the only movie that made me mad last year.

It's one thing to just be a bad film (*The Dukes of Hazzard*, *The Man*, *Elizabethtown*), but it's a far greater sin to be a good film for the first act, then plummet into a stupid, unbelievable, over-directed abyss that leeches your time and depresses you about becoming a filmmaker.

Ewan McGregor and Scarlett Johansson star in this derivative tale about a society raised for nefarious purposes.

Blame director Michael Bay for not only making this mess of a movie, but bankrupting DreamWorks when it flopped. Way to go Mike!

Best Movie I Saw Last Year

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

What? A family film is the best movie of the year - come on!

Yes, this is an unconventional choice which flies in the face of film snobbery everywhere, but I can't find fault with this very well done fantasy flick.

First time live action director Andrew Adamson (his previous credits are the two Shrek movies!) does a great job of assembling excellent effects, a fine cast, lush settings and well-paced story for a very satisfying experience.

The film revolves around four kids during World War II who are shipped off for safe keeping. When exploring their new large home, they stumble across a wardrobe leading to the magical world of Narnia, filled with mythical characters and epic struggle.

A wonderful tale of unity, courage and redemption, let's hope the box office will be good enough for another Chronicle to come to the big screen.