

Successfully Launching an Internet Business

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Introduction

This first ebook in a series of Online Business Education ebooks will give you an overview of the necessary components to start your own online business. After reading this you will have an excellent foundation from which to begin planning your successful online business.

Not only will you learn what you need to plan for and do, but you'll also enjoy the rewards of the successes and failures of many who have gone before you. You'll learn the critical psychological and behavioral components that truly can make the difference between stunning success and dismal failure.

Did you know that most successful internet marketing businesses, those who sell information on how to be successful in online business, estimate that 85-90% of the information products they sell are NOT read? It doesn't matter if the product is an ebook or a full-blown \$1,000.00 course.

That's an amazing but sad statistic. And the simple fact is this...if you do not learn what you need to know to succeed in business, how can you succeed?

The reasons for that phenomenon mentioned above will be discussed in this ebook.

We at Royal Atlantis WANT you to succeed. That's why we want to prepare you in every possible way. We want to minimize as many surprises as possible. We also want to you to know we're standing by to assist you in every way. So do not hesitate to contact us with your questions.

Before we begin...lets take a quick look at the global web landscape.

It's difficult to accurately determine the number of new online business startups on a monthly or yearly basis. The picture is further complicated when you consider it on a global scale and in different languages. But just to give you an idea of the extreme dynamic involved...

Lets consider the .com TLD, only. The most desirable and search engine friendly domain name extension, or TLD, is the globally recognized dot com domain name.

During the month of October 2007, in a given **24 hour period** there are 74 million active domain registrations, almost 230 million deleted domains, a little over 551,000 new domains, and almost 45,000 domains become expired.

Half a million new domains are registered each day. So it's a safe assumption that there are probably tens of thousands of new business startups every year.

230 million deleted domains and 45,000 become expired every day. How many of those do you think are failed businesses? Probably at least 99.5% of those failed businesses contain the 85-90% statistic of those who chose not to learn how to be successful.

Why Start an Online Business?

Maybe that seems like a silly question. People who start businesses want to make money! But if you ponder that question a bit more, and you should, you'll soon realize that it isn't so silly. Here's why...

When people stop and think about the reasons "why" they want to make money, a whole new realization occurs. We'll get to that in a minute. But first, you should know that highly successful people in business engage in what they do for reasons "other" than to simply make money.

And they'll be the first to tell you that starting a business for the pure goal of making money will hinder your success.

There are minor exceptions to every rule out there. But that's true for the vast majority of people. In the long run, your mind needs a little more motivation to do what you're about to do than to simply make money.

So what are the realizations that occur?

They're as different as the number of people out there. But many are shared among most people. Reasons like being able to work at home, not having to endure the stress and aggravation of being someone's employee, taking back some control in your life, or using the leverage of the internet to earn more so you can provide a better life for your family.

Those are just a few of probably hundreds of personal reasons for starting an online business. And it's something we recommend you take some time to figure out for yourself. Why?

It'll keep you going when you're starting, and it'll keep you going when times are less than smooth. We'll be straight with you, online business is competitive and any business endeavor can be tough. But in time you'll discover that competition really is a great thing to have. And as a knowledgeable online marketer, you'll understand there's no reason to let competition scare you.

The truth is...the majority of your competition won't be as prepared as you. And you'll be able to pass them in the marketing arena.

Why else should you start on online business?

Just several years ago there were 300 million English speaking and over half a Billion non-English speaking people with internet access. Of course not everyone who goes online does so to make a purchase. Statistics vary, but the range of people buying online is from close to 40% to nearly 50%.

Perhaps you're thinking non-English web users are out of your marketing reach? Don't think that. There are ways to get your marketing message in front of them.

It has become cliché that the internet "levels the playing field" between the very small startup and big corporations. It's still true although in some areas the startup has to be creative. But the beauty of the web lies in its extremely dynamic nature.

The marketing landscape can change overnight and present huge possibilities for driving profitable traffic to your website. And the startup, or seasoned marketing lone wolf, has the definite advantage of being "light on the marketing feet." You'll be able to respond light years ahead and quicker than big businesses.

Corporations and big business move like glaciers. Extremely slow. And you'll use that to your advantage in many smart ways if you continue to learn.

What else does the web have to offer you?

Probably most people have heard the sage investing advice about diversifying. Not keeping all your eggs in one basket. And the net is perfect for doing that. But first...

You'll need to be focused and make your first startup profitable. That's an extremely critical mindset for you to adopt. So many would-be successful online marketers give in to the temptation of starting too many projects, or businesses. That's something we strongly recommend you do NOT do.

Having too many projects going at the same time is counter-productive. It takes valuable energy away from all of them and the results are almost always disappointing. There are exceptions...but they truly are exceptions.

Focus on making your first startup profitable.

Your first startup will be a learning experience in many ways. Once you're in profit, then you'll focus on growth, development, advertising, and marketing. Depending on your business model, your first online business can nearly be operated with much less time-intensive involvement from you.

Remember...focus on getting your first online business into profits.

Then...you can think about diversifying if you so desire. Starting-up a second online business and repeating what you did with the first. The possibilities truly are only limited by your imagination, desire, and energy.

The Psychological Elements of Business Success

In the previous section you read about one of the most critically important habits to success in any endeavor. But this is about success in online business. A simple lack of focus is probably responsible for the deaths of untold thousands of online businesses.

And it's unfortunate because the solution is relatively simple to implement. All you need to do is just do something every day. You'll be surprised at how quickly you'll begin to stay focused on your business.

Other common traits found among successful entrepreneurs include the ability to persevere and stay committed to your business. Once you've done your homework and have decided on your business, then make a personal commitment to your self to see it through to profits and growth.

One common fact of business life is dealing with the unexpected and occasional problems. In many ways business reflects every day life. We all deal with unexpected problems, and we all deal with them the best we can. No one in business, regardless of size, solves every problem in the best way. So don't feel perfection is required from you. It's an unrealistic expectation. Just do the best you can and learn from your experiences as you move along. That's why they call it, experience!

Speaking of perfection, the expectation of perfection in all things related to your business is a common mistake seen in people new to business. And it can be deadly to your business success! Why?

Trying to be perfect in everything you do in business leads to NON-action. Very simple.

It can also easily be used as an excuse to engage in non-action. To procrastinate. And most people know all about that. So many well-known business successes have cited inaction and procrastination as being the #1 killer of success. So avoid falling into the trap of stopping your forward motion by trying to get everything absolutely...perfect.

The truth is...there is no perfection. Doing your very best will hold you in good stead and help lead you to where you want to be in business.

Another pervasive dream killer concerns patience. The inexperienced online marketer has a tendency to want it all, today. That's not how it works in real life. People read about some 20-something selling their red-hot web biz for billions, or hundreds of millions, and people's eyes glaze over and roll to the back of their heads.

Don't be fooled!

Most have no clue about what went into that business before it became red-hot and a sizzling moneymaker. We guarantee you it did not happen overnight. In fact, there were probably many 18-hour days and bleary eyes that went into it. They earned it. And they also had the patience and all the other traits discussed in this section to make their particular dream into reality. But...

Maybe you can do the very same thing. Another web beauty is that nothing is holding you back except you.

One final element we'd like to share with you has to do with change. We know, most people don't like it very much. But the web is all about change, among other things. It's an exciting and dynamic environment. It's a place to explore, experiment, create, and learn.

And a changing, dynamic business environment waits for no one.

That includes us here at Royal Atlantic! We saw the writing on the proverbial business wall with the tidal wave that is Web 2.0. It represents business and social evolution. And it's very powerful as a business model. Web 2.0 design and development has become one of our specialties.

So embrace change, learning, and growth. Don't let it intimidate you. It's your friend and ally. If you accept those attributes and "roll with the changes" you'll be ahead of most of your competitors simply because so many people resist change. Or, they fail to stay informed and miss the boat!

But that won't happen to you.

After reading this section you may be wondering if you can succeed in online business. Perhaps you're wondering if you have what it takes to be successful. Rest easy...

You do have what it takes to succeed. Simply because you are now informed, and you know what you need to do. Recall the discussion about problems and perfection. No one enters the business arena with full-blown traits and habits of successful business people. Not even that guy in Redmond, Washington...Bill Gates.

It's about taking action, making mistakes, learning from your mistakes, and moving forward. That's really all it takes. Don't be afraid to make mistakes in your business. Each and every one of us has made them and will continue to make them. It's how we react to mistakes and problems that make the difference.

Why So Many Online Businesses Fail

You've learned about the human nature side of business success and failure and how to avoid it. You're already ahead of many thousands of people, and most of the competition in your niche, who haven't taken the time to learn and prepare. Now we'll get into some technical aspects of business success and failure on the web.

What follows is not intended to be a comprehensive discussion as the topic itself can fill a much larger book on its own. But you'll get a very good idea that will help get you off to a very strong start. And as always...you're welcome to contact us at Royal if you have any questions.

1. Lack of preparation, groundwork, due diligence...however you want to call it is one of the biggest mistakes seen in those new to online business. We've seen and read about just about every conceivable blunder. And they all are preventable with proper planning and development before you open up your online shop for business.

Many people do not take the time to correctly identify their target market and this is simply the kiss of death. Imagine making the effort, time, and money to drive traffic to your website. Then nothing happens, no sales...no conversions, and you wonder why. It happens all the time.

Or, improperly designing your website for your business model and target market. Each marketing niche, or group of people with a common interest, tends to have its own special identifying characteristics. They like their content and products presented to them in a certain way.

Those are just several areas you'll need to consider in your initial planning stages.

2. Lack of marketing incentive to do business with you. You'll need to give potential customers a good reason to do business with you. There's something commonly called "marketing or advertising roar" and it's very real. People are bombarded with marketing messages every minute of every day. And we've all learned how to tune it out...IF we're not interested.

You'll need to figure out your uniqueness so your business will stand out. For example...

Your business could offer the convenience of offering support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round. Or perhaps buying online from you is cheaper than from an offline retailer. You'll be smart to figure this out before you get too far into your actual promotions. Speaking of which...

3. Many online businesses suffer from lack of promotion. Amazing as it sounds, it's true! It doesn't matter how well designed your site, or how great your product, if no one sees it then what's the point? Visitors and surfers just won't appear on their own. Your website, your business, has to be vigorously promoted preferably every day in some fashion.

3. Lack of interesting, helpful, and fresh content will not give visitors a reason to return. Your site will need to be regularly updated with new, and good, material to make visitors want to return. And if your content is good enough, they'll tell their friends about you.

4. Poor and confusing site navigation including hard to find, or even worse, no contact information on your site. One thing is certain...if you make your visitors work too hard to find something they're gone in an instant. Another consideration in the same line of thinking of too much work is this: Not everyone wants to fill out a detailed and lengthy online form to contact you.

Unbelievable as it sounds, some sites don't even provide an email address. They don't want to be bothered. Many people have questions, and they also want to know who's behind the business. It has to do with establishing trust, confidence, and credibility.

5. No visitor metrics, tracking, or analysis. If you don't know what's going on, or what's wrong, it's impossible to improve or fix it. And online businesses that ignore their site statistics are truly missing out on profitable information. There really isn't any excuse for it because there are plenty of software applications available to do this. And a good hosting company will include these applications as part of their package.

You can track visitor information such as total visitors, number of first time visitors, total page views, page views per hour within a specified period, types of browsers used, page exits, links clicked on, etc.

6. Failing to plan ahead, or make a plan for the direction of your online business. Even if it's only 6 months ahead, it will serve you well to do this. Planning for development and growth will give you a target, a goal, something to work toward. It also reflects solid business leadership, and that's important to the success of your business even if you're a one-person business.

Here's an example of the ultimate in business planning. Large Japanese corporations astounded the business world because they had 50 and even 100-year business plans for growth and development. Impressive and serious.

7. Trying to do everything yourself...going it alone. There are many ways you can become more effective and efficient in your online business. As you become profitable you can outsource tasks such as customer service, content generation, various technical tasks, etc. Doing this will give you more time to grow your business.

And in the area of marketing...

You can forge joint venture partnerships with other non-competing online businesses. Joint ventures can be extremely powerful and profitable. They should not be ignored. But they'll be discussed in another ebook in this series.

One other item in this category needs to be mentioned. Many startups try to do everything on their own and by themselves. The truth is, very few people possess the talent and necessary skills to do everything necessary for successful startup. It's a fine line that must be traversed because if you're not careful, you can hurt your efforts simply because you didn't know. Or, you didn't execute something as optimally as you could have if you enlisted the help of outside expertise.

8. The last important item has been previously discussed. And that's failing to evolve as a business. You know the web is a dynamic, changing business environment. Marketing and traffic generation techniques often change.

Some approaches have remained the same. But even still, the manner of engaging in those approaches, such as organic search marketing, can change in an instant as soon as the search engines release updates to their search algorithms.

The ongoing Web 2.0 developments in recent years are another example of the landscape changing and evolving. There are other examples but your important take-away is to know what to expect so your online business will be successful and stay that way.

Initial Steps To Take When Starting Your Business

Most people begin with some kind of concept for their online business. You know what kind of business you want to start. You've done your due diligence and have correctly identified your target market. And we'll assume you know how you'll monetize your site. Monetize simply refers to how you'll generate income from your site.

Your website concept will develop from knowing what the overall theme will be for your website. And your theme will be determined from your niche. The people you'll be marketing to in your site's target niche.

Depending on how competitive your niche is, you may want to market to a sub-niche within the overall niche. Lets look at some examples of niches and sub-niches.

Fishing, golf, cars, and music are relatively huge niches. You can eventually develop a site and business to target such large niches more directly. But in the beginning you'll have much greater success targeting sub-niches of the larger niches.

For fishing you can begin with Bass, trout, ocean, or freshwater fishing. For golf you can target aspects of the swing, putting, driving, or golf fitness. For cars you can target individual makes and models of certain cars.

What you're doing by targeting smaller sub-niches is a long-term plan for indirectly marketing to the larger niche. And your possible goal might be to build a network of related sub-niches eventually becoming more competitive in the larger, more general niche.

There...that's a marketing plan for you. It's really nothing new as far as strategy is concerned. But it'll give you something to think about as you consider your site's overall theme and concept. And you need to have a clear concept on paper for the concept of your site. We can help you develop a strong and competitive concept for your website if you'd like some assistance.

The best place to begin planning your website is with an outline. You'll need to ask your self what you're trying to accomplish with your site. Do you want to generate a list? Or do you want to provide content for search engine rankings and to encourage repeat visitors?

If you're offering just a few products or services, then one page optimized for each product or service is sufficient. But if you're providing a range of products or services, your site navigation will be easier if you group the products or services into a separate directory for each group. Remember to make everything as easy as possible for your visitors.

Good content not only helps site visitors decide on your products or services, but it also helps increase traffic to your website. If you're selling red widgets, for example, a page optimized for using red widgets will bring you more targeted traffic. It will also provide content that webmasters of other sites might link to.

Here are some useful tips for writing your web content:

- Organize your content with headings and subheadings.
- Let readers know what each page is about near the top of each page.
- Write clear, concise sentences in short paragraphs of about 3-4 sentences.
- Use tables to show information such as product and price comparisons.
- Provide details about your products and services. Just think of what you'd want to know if you were looking for the products or services that you're providing, and make this information easily accessible.

If you don't know how to write HTML, there are many websites that offer templates for building sites. Many who are new to online business find using templates an easy and attractive way to go. Or you can use website building software commonly known as WYSIWYG, which means What You See Is What You Get. Basically you just type your content into the editor and it creates the HTML code in background for the web page.

They're easy to use and many people go with them. But they have their own drawbacks such as increased load-times due to excessive HTML code. You have much less flexibility with your site designs. Sometimes you cannot import features you want to use due to restrictions with the editor.

It really all depends on what your goals are. If you want the most professional-looking design with the greatest impact...it's best to either learn how to do it yourself or find a good, reliable, professional website design company.

Next you'll need to consider where you'll host your site. Making sure you've chosen reliable and affordable web hosting is crucial for every new online startup. All hosting providers claim to offer the "most affordable web hosting". You should find one that best fits your business requirements.

You'll need to do your due diligence with this. Be very careful with hosting providers that offer you the world for \$1 a month. You can get reliable and stable hosting with more options than you'll need for \$5-\$15 a month. And since you can find this, just avoid free hosting altogether. It's free but you'll pay the price with an unprofessional-looking website with unwanted advertisements on it.

Before spending your money, it's best to learn some of the basic options that just about all providers offer. Here's a short list...

1. At least 99% uptime guaranteed.
2. At least 50-100 GB of bandwidth...especially important for video on your site.
3. At least 1 GB of storage space. Just have some room for growth.
4. 24-hour technical support and preferably live support.
5. A basic WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) website builder.
6. Scripting languages PHP, Python, CGI, Perl, and Ruby on Rails.
7. Option of Windows or Linux hosting. Most likely you'll go with Linux.
8. Sufficient number of POP3 e-mail accounts and email forwarding.
9. Blog and forum capability.

Lets talk about your all-important domain name. It's something that will have a lasting impact on your site. So you should take some time when choosing your domain name.

You'll need to look a bit into the future of your online business when considering your domain name. You're in this for the long haul. Right? So consider the effect of branding in your choice. Also consider how your market will perceive you because your domain name will contribute to that all-important first impression.

Years ago many people were stuck on having relevant keywords in their domain names. And there were ridiculous names everywhere with multiple hyphens and keyword rich names. Like...

German-shepherd-dog-training-tips.com

You should avoid such names. Long ago the search engines expressed their displeasure with this tactic and it's no longer effective. It'll hurt you in the long run.

So just think about your product or service, your market, and how you want to present your business...and be remembered. And yes...it's still considered a good idea to go with a .com domain name extension. Do your best to find a good and appropriate one.