



Main Street Climbs To The Top Of The Search Engines

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Introduction

This eBook is intended for the typical business person. But...this book isn't for everyone. It might not be for you.

It's meant for main street businesses. By that, I mean it's for any business who's primary business activity is not internet based. But who now use, or intend to use the internet to attract customers. Although those who do focus online will benefit as well.

It is for business people who recognize that their prospective customers no longer use the Yellow Pages to find suppliers. It is for those business people who want to get their web sites found. And who realize that they need to be on top of the search engine results if they are to stay ahead of the competition.

And it's for those who realize that being on someone's directory of web sites is no substitute for standing on your own two feet in the internet marketplace. For those who have decided to put their oar in the water and intend to make the internet work for them.

The material we will cover will touch upon some web design elements and is informed by my personal bias as to what the purpose of a business web site is. However, we will not for the most part get into web design issues. And since I mentioned my bias, I will share it with you right now.

I believe the purpose of a business web site should be about getting customers to identify themselves so you can more effectively market to them. Too many business web sites are little more than electronic yellow page ads. Too many others are electronic monuments to their owner's egos. Way too many businesses spend fortunes to get fancy-dancy web graphics that actually make it harder for their prospective customers to find them.

To my way of thinking, most business web sites should offer their visitors a relevant ethical bribe in exchange for their name and email address. That ethical bribe should be something of real value, usually in the form of relevant information. It should also serve to better educate the visitor on why they should do business with you.

In exchange for your giving them this information, they give you permission to send them a series of follow-up emails. These emails should be automated, and should over time further educate your prospect with information they need to make the logical decision to do business with you.

This is not the only possible model, but it is my primary recommendation I share with my clients. At the back of this report, I provide a series of recommended products and services. I have written a report called, "Why Most Small Business Web Sites Stink!" that expounds further on the topic.

I'm not into fancy web sites. I prefer ugly and productive over beautiful and barren. Now your site doesn't need to be ugly, but If your web site meets the customers needs, and looks professional, it will do the job just fine. **The most important thing is that your customer finds your site**, when they need it. And that's what this report is all about.

What's a top listing on Google worth?

Whether you are a HVAC contractor in Philadelphia or a shoe store in Omaha, or a Dentist in Los Angeles, getting your business to the top of local search engine results can make a significant difference to your profitability.

By top of the search engine we are referring to the organic search results, rather than the paid ads that appear when a search is done on a set of keywords.

Depending on the keyword, the companies paying for the pay per click ads may be paying as little as a nickel or less to as much as \$20 or more when someone clicks on their ad. Assuming you are in a moderately competitive market, the keywords important to you are more likely to run between 50 cents and \$2.00. If 20,000 people a month search on the keywords in question, that means the potential cost to a pay per click advertiser could theoretically run from \$10,000 to \$40,000.

If that were the case, being the top free ad is arguably worth at least \$10,000 maybe more.

The economics vary for each keyword or keyword phrase. Some are very competitive, others are less so. Most businesses need to compete on a wide range of keywords. A rule of thumb suggests you may want to test anywhere from 300 to a thousand keyword phrases for most businesses. And while this may seem outlandish at first, many businesses will be well served by competing for more rather than fewer keywords.

There are a variety of keyword research tools available to assist in this process. When the dust settles however, there tend to be a set of highly used keywords, and a set of seldom used keywords that you want to compete for because most likely no one else is.

Keyword research is beyond the scope of this report. Although we will have a few relevant asides regarding it as we go along. For the most part, we will think in terms of a dentist for example wanting to get a high ranking for the word Dentist, although they may well want to also rank for Teeth, teeth brightening, dentures, etc.

Now if you are a dentist in my home town of Minneapolis, you might want to pay particular attention to ranking high for the term "Minneapolis Dentist." This one concept that I call a geographical long tail keyword may well be worth the full price you paid for this report. It is surprising how few main street business people set up their web sites to rank for their local markets.

As we go forward you will learn how to take advantage of this in more detail.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "Carpet". At the top, there are three sponsored links (ads) highlighted in yellow. A red box labeled "Paid Ads" has arrows pointing to these three ads. Below the ads is the organic search result for "Shaw Floors: Carpets, Hardwoods, Ceramic, Laminates and Area Rugs ...", which is the top organic listing. A red box labeled "Top of the Listings-Free Where You want to BE" has an arrow pointing to this result. To the right of the main results, there is another column of sponsored links, including "Carpet Installation Offer", "Carpet at Wholesale Price", and "Minneapolis Carpet". The browser's address bar shows "Done" and the taskbar includes "start", "twitterTweets - Note...", "Carpet - Google Sear...", and "OpenOffice.org".

In the above search for the keyword “Carpet”, google shows three ads at the top of the page highlighted in color to indicate that they are ads. To the right are another column of ads. Sometimes there are no ads at the top, other times Google serves them up as above.

These top ads will be seen by everyone who comes to the page. When they are clicked on, Google makes money. But Shaw Floors which has the number one organic position will pay nothing for its number one position. Since all these other players are willing to pay for showing up on this page, it stands to reason that there is economic value to being here.

How much value? That depends on the keyword. Literally every key word is different. Even the addition of a “s” at the end of Carpet would make a difference.

When we ran the search for “Carpets” Shaw was again Number one followed by Empire, but the pay per click ads varied significantly.

How does a number 2 listing compare to the top dog?

How much more traffic does the top listing get, compared to the number two listing? I don’t know. It varies. But I have seen estimates that claim the top listing can expect from 1.5 to 3 times as many visitors compared to the number 2 listing. These same estimates suggest that the number three listing suffers roughly the same drop off compared to the number two listing.

What's that mean in numbers?

Say on a given day or week, 100 people search for "Chiropractors in Minneapolis," the odds are that 70 of them will look at the top listing.

Typically about 25% of searchers will click on one or another of the pay per click ads. And roughly 5% will click on one of the lower ads for what ever reason.

If the ratio of drop offs is one and a half - on the low end of the above estimate, that means about 30 people would go on an click on the second listing and just 12 the third listing.

If you are on the second or twenty third page you can count on getting virtually no traffic from the search engines. That's why, its important to find keywords that you can score high on and why you need to learn how to take advantage of the tips and tricks we are going to share with you in the coming pages.

What's that mean to your business?

Fewer eyes on your website results in fewer eventual conversions, which is marketing talk for sales. No matter how effective your web site is, it can't sell to customers unless people see it.

Now some web sites convert better than others. And just getting a lot of traffic isn't a substitute for having a web site that produces, but that is another topic. The first objective is to get eyes on the page. Then we will worry about getting those eyes to do something.

If that first website is a dog, the second one will see more traffic as a result. If it's great, the second site may see even less traffic, as it scoops up all the business right then and there. This and many other factors may affect the actual drop off in your market, for your specific keywords.

The bottom line is that there is a drop off, and it matters to you and your business whether you are on top or not.

Now, what if you are no where near the top? Your web site can still be useful if you drive traffic to the site by means of other advertising efforts. So don't give up on your site. But there are ways to climb from page 3 or 23 to the top in many markets, once you learn a few of the tricks to search engine optimization.

For many locally based businesses, getting on the first page of the search engine listings is very doable. The reason I say that is because the majority of your competitors don't understand search engine optimization either. If you apply the ideas I will be sharing with you, most of you will be able to make some significant progress.

On Page Factors

There are two main areas of attention when discussing how to move your website to the top of the search engines. The first are the on-page factors and the second are the off-page factors.

The on-page factors are the easiest and quickest to deal with. That is where we will start to focus our attention. They are critical but not the most important. The off-page factors will in the long run carry more weight. But that said, if your on-page factors aren't set up properly you can and will lose much of the benefit your off-page efforts could supply.

We will talk about 10 on page factors. Of these four are invisible to your web site visitors, and of the six that are visible, one may already be cast in stone for better or worse.

The invisible elements are the Meta Tags. The meta tags are in the hidden code that the search engines can see, but your visitors normally don't see. You will learn how to see them, and anyone else's when we discuss them in detail in our next section.

The meta tags include your title tags, your description and your keywords. The fourth of the invisible items is called an H1 tag. The results of it are visible, but since it's also HTML code (of the simplest kind) I am listing it as one of the invisible factors. Almost all of you will be able to make improvement to these elements on your web page. For some of you this alone will make a significant difference in your page ranking. So stay tuned.

I've been surprised at how few websites I've reviewed have had adequate meta tags. Even those done by expensive web designers are often poorly done, and in far too many cases are missing altogether.

Now you may wonder why that would be the case. It turns out most web site designers fall into one of three groups. Group A is the son, daughter or nephew who learn how to do websites and built yours on the cheap. Group B are the techies, and group C are the graphic artists. Nothing wrong with either group, they just aren't marketers by and large and are often oblivious to that which you need as a business person.

The visible elements include your first 50 words specifically, and the total number of words altogether. The total keyword count within your text and the percentage of the whole they comprise. We call this keyword density. The visible elements also include the internal links you have on your site and the way you link them, as well as the originality of your content.

The one item that may already be locked in stone is your domain name itself. As we will discuss, you will do better with the search engines if your web site includes your main keywords in it. If your site is already up and established you may not want to change it.

That's understandable. But if you are just now starting up and or are considering a complete makeover of your web presence, give serious thought to including your keywords and geography if appropriate in your new domains.

The Hidden Essentials

The hidden essentials to attract the search engine bots are your web site are:

- Title tags
- Your keywords
- Your meta description.
- <h1> tag.

We will discuss each in this section.

First let's talk about where to find your hidden code. Go to a place on your website where there is text and not an image. Right click on your mouse, and a box will appear with a number of options. Look for one that says "View Page" or "View Page Source", click on it. It should bring up the HTML code that is behind your web page.

Near the very top will be a header tag. It looks like this <head>.

A variety of different types of code can be placed here. For our purposes, the three important items are the title tag, the keywords, and the description. Sometimes one of more of these will be missing.

This section of code always ends with an end tag that looks like this: </head>

The next section of the code starts with the body tag, <body> and this is where the parts of the page that are visible appear. This is where you may find the <H1> tag if your site has one.

Title Tags.

Each page of your web site has a title tag. The title tag will show at the very top left of your browser when you are on the page. When you go to some people's web page you will see the word "Home" in the top left. That's because they named their home page "Home." Frequently you will might see the company name, ABC Jones & Company or something similar.

In terms of search engine optimization, you would be better off to include your primary keyword and your primary geography. So if you were ABC Jones, I would consider putting

“ABC Jones Co, San Diego Wedding Caterers” or “ABC Jones, New Jersey’s Best Rug And Drape Cleaners.”

The title goes between the <title> and the </title>.

Each page has a different title tag so you might add a Pipe sign after that and use, About us, Contact us and your other page names on the relevant page. This may lead to some relatively long titles for pages. If I were to cut anything off on the titles it would be the “ABC Jones Co.”

That’s because the search engines are looking at the title tag for clues as to what your page is all about. Most people will be searching for run cleaner and when they get several million responses, they will modify it with a town name. That’s the term you want to be known for in the eyes of the search engines. And that’s why you want it to be on your title tag.

If someone really wants to search for ABC Jones Co, the odds are they will find you anyway.

Now since you may have more than one main keyword, consider using an alternate on your second page, and another on your third page, etc. on multi-page websites.

Keywords:

You should also see a line of code that starts with, <meta name="keywords" content=" and then a series or word separated by commas.

Most businesses have more than one keyword that people use when they are trying to find you. Hopefully you have identified the primary one or ones. Keyword research is a major topic on its own, and one you should pay attention to. For example, while home staging is the dominant keyword to use in the home staging business, about 10% of people will type in “house staging” when looking for a home stager. You want to include the keyword “house staging” in your keywords.

Note that this two word phrase is still a keyword. Internet marketers have long known that you want to use keyword phrases, because that’s what some people type. Two and three word phrases and sometime longer yet can generate positive results for them. If you are the only person who puts “best specialty cold cuts in Chicago” in your keywords, and also in the body of your site, there’s a pretty good chance you will pop up pretty high if someone actually searches for that term. Now don’t go hog wild, as relatively few people will use that phrase.

The key here is to focus on what people who don’t really know what to ask for are likely to use when they are trying to find you.

Finally, I recommend that you use not only “fresh cut flowers” as a keyword but “Toronto fresh cut flowers” if you are a Toronto florist. Use the suburbs you sell to as well. When someone searches for Pizza in the search engines, millions of sites appear. When they search for Pizza, 55417 (a zip code), they get those pizza places closest to home.

Description

Similar to the Keywords, you should see a line of code in the meta tags called description. This should be kept to no more than 160 characters. Some search engine results display this description when your site comes up in their listings. As such you may want to make it a sales pitch. You want to come up with a coherent statement using as many of your best keywords as possible, especially including your primary geographical reference points.

If you say, “Dog Walker in Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Edina....etc.,” even though you might not come up number one on the listing yet, a person from Edina or St Louis Park will recognize that you are in their bailiwick. They may check you out before the top guy, just because they can see that you are local to them. This is a side benefit, worth getting, but your primary intention is to rank high when the search for “dog walker Edina,” rather than “dog walker Minneapolis.”

While you want to focus your site on your largest geographical target, consider using the smaller ones as well, but don’t get carried away, you only have 160 characters. When advising my clients, I try to include at least the top three keywords and then work as much geography as I can, all the while trying to make a strong sales pitch. It’s an art form.

<H1> Tags

You may have a graphic header on your web site that may include text. Some web sites will consider this their headline and launch right into the body of their message on their main page. This is a mistake. The search engines cannot read graphic images, just text.

They are looking to find your headline, as this gives them a good idea as to what your web site is all about. So even if your header graphic contains a headline like statement, you want to start the body portion of your web site with a formal headline.

That headline should include, if at all possible, your primary keywords including your primary geographical market. This is done by using <H1> tags in the HTML code for the headlines. Thus while the headline is visible the code isn’t.

So if you are a Hair Salon in South Omaha, you might top your page with “<h1> South Omaha’s Premier Hair Salon </h1>” in the meta tags. This will automatically make it headline size on your actual page. More importantly, it will let the little bots searching

your page know that these are important words and what your page is all about. And that is what you want.

The four steps outlined above are crucial first steps to getting your page optimized for the search engines.

These invisible factors are important. You will occasionally hear from those who claim otherwise. It's true Google is thought to pay less attention to these factors than they once did. While they are the dominant force in the search engine arena, they are still just one of about 40 major search engines. Most of the other guys still use these meta tags and that means that you will get better results when you use them properly. Finally, Google may use them more than some think. They don't actually say.

Visible On Page Factors

In the last section, we discussed the hidden or invisible “on-page” factors that can help or hinder your ability to rank high on the Search Engines. Today we will look at some on-page factors that matter as well.

From a search engine optimization standpoint, the key factor for any web site is your selection of keywords. These are important in both the visible and hidden portions of the page. They should be in your meta tag title tags, keyword list, description and headline. They must also be on your page.

If the search engines see keywords in the hidden code that aren't on your page, they will discount them and possibly even penalize your site.

Specifically you want to have your primary keyword(s) appear in the **first 50 words** of your page text at least once. In the past some internet marketers tried to game the system. They would stuff their keyword on the page over and over to get a high ranking. Such tactics worked for a short while but Google and the other search engines changed their algorithms to punish keyword stuffing. The rule of thumb now is that you want your main keyword to appear between 1-4% of the time. If you have a thousand words on your page that would mean you would use your primary keyword from ten to forty times. For five hundred words of text that would be five to twenty times. This is called **keyword density** in the trade.

This is usually not a problem for most sites, but it does require keeping in mind which keyword you want your web page to rank for, and then being sure to use it when you are writing your page. One of my clients who was a home stager wanted to rank for the term “Home Staging” on her main page, but in her actual text used the term “home stager” repeatedly. Little errors like this can happen quite easily. That is why it is imperative that you make a conscious choice about which key word you want to rank for, and then if necessary rework the text of the page to use that term and not a similar one.

By the way, if you have a top three or four keyword variations that people search for, you may want to have one page of your site optimized for one term, and another for the second, etc. When you do this make sure the keywords and title and description in the meta tags match the page as well.

So, my home stager above might have stressed the term Home Staging on her home page, but talked about House Staging or Home Stagers on another page talking about services provided, or on a third page listing her certifications, Qualifications etc. This takes a bit more time, but helps raise your sites ability to rise to the top not just on your main keyword but on other keywords as well.

It appears that the magical **number of words** on a page that the search engines like to see is 425. I have read other experts quote other numbers, some as low as 350. In my experience most business web sites don't have that many on their home pages, while most information sites do. The search engine like sites that provide more information, so it's not hard to understand that they would tend to reward sites that appear to be "meatier."

It's my recommendation that you go with more words, rather than fewer.

As we discussed earlier, it's a good idea to list not just your principle geographical area but also the adjoining areas in your meta tag keywords. We also mentioned that you need to repeat the meta tag keywords on the visible page as well. It can get a bit awkward trying to use all the different town names on the page. One workaround would be to add a final paragraph at the bottom of the page as sort of a footer. That could be a statement that ABC company is the premier chimney sweep service in Minneapolis, Richfield, Bloomington, Edina and St. Louis Park, etc. It will look like a standard plug for your company. You may decide to separate it by a dashed or solid line, or just space to set it off from your main text.

The identical or similar phrase using alternate keywords could be added to the bottom of each page, which will help add words to your existing pages, and reinforce your geographical long tail keywords at the same time.

One final comment on words on the page. Words that are placed on images or graphical elements such as on your header are invisible to the search engines and don't count as keywords on the page, or in the total page or first 50 word counts.

If you put your cursor on your header and right click and do not see View Source or View Page source in the box that appears, you are probably on an image that cannot be read by the search engine bots. There's nothing wrong with that, but you need to keep it in mind when designing the rest of your page so it can compete in the search engines.

This fact is why so many of the fanciest web sites do so poorly in the search engines. Such web sites are designed to look good to the viewer, (and the client who is happy to pay big bucks because it looks nice) with lots of flash and dazzle. But since the search engines can't decipher images, it doesn't know what to make of them. Such sites are not very successful on the search engines, and as a result are not seen. Their owners may be proud of the sites, but I would rather have customers.

This is why I say I would rather have an ugly web site that gets seen, than a beautiful one that no one sees.

So far in our discussion of the visible portion of the on page factors we have talked about keyword density and the need to have your keywords appear on your page, frequently but not too frequently. The need to do so early on your page, and some suggestions on making

sure you have enough words overall to appear substantive to the search engines and pointed out a need to have keywords that appear in your meta tags also appear on your page.

These are all important factors visible on your page. Next we will talk about three more elements of on-page importance. Your URL, the originality of your content and finally a bit about internal links.

You probably already have your **URL or web site address**. So this first topic may seem pointless, but let's dig in anyway. If your business is financial counseling for women going through divorce, you may be better off trying to get www.DivorceeFinancialAdvice.com as your URL rather than www.JBBrown.com.

Way too many business web sites use meaningless business names as their URL in the hopes of creating some branding value. While some will take issue with me here, a URL that includes your major keyword will do you a lot more good. The only exception would be if your brand is already deeply ingrained in your marketplace.

Similarly, MinneapolisChiropractor.com may be superior to WellnessClinic.com, although MinneapolisWellnessClinic.com may be worth a shot.

If you are wedded to www.yourname.com you might still want to consider buying domain names of the better combinations of your major keywords and geographical areas and redirecting them to your web page. This also serves a defensive purpose of keeping them out of potential competitor's hands. Once you own these domains you can have them point to your existing web site. It's not the ideal from an SEO standpoint but will help drive traffic to your site for the relatively minor cost of the domain name.

Originality of content

This shouldn't be a problem for most independent business websites. But if your website is a template and you are using essentially the same text as another website, you may not get your site indexed at all. Google and the other search engines want to see unique new content, and not a duplicate of the same old thing. They will index the first copy they find and ignore the duplicates. You don't want to have your site ignored. Make sure you are not using a carbon copy of someone else's web site.

A lot of corporations, and other groups create such templates for their members. These short cuts allow you to get a site up on the internet, but if you want to be serious about generating significant business from your website you need to create your own site.

Even when you have your own site, the search engines like to see new content. You can do that by adding new pages on occasion, or by making changes to existing pages. Is there a

portion of your page that can be updated from time to time? If so, make sure you do so. This lets the search engines know that your site is active. That said, if you are going to do it, make sure you do. No one is impressed with a site that is talking about an upcoming holiday from two years ago.

This need for constantly changing content has led many businesses to abandon static web sites altogether. The use of Wordpress blog sites is clearly being driven by the need to provide the search engines with a steady stream of new material. If you have a well established site, you may want to add a blog to it. If you are new or decide its time to start all over to create a stronger web presence, you may want to just do a blog.

Internal links

Internal links are the links on your site to your various pages on the site. Most web sites have a home page and links on almost all their pages to “Home.” A better strategy is to use your major keyword, be it “Minneapolis Dentistry Home” or “St. Louis Sewer Repair Home.” By adding your keywords, you let the search engines know that that’s what your pages are about. It reinforces all your other keyword efforts.

This may be a bit tricky in some cases where space is tight in a traditional navigation box. Your longer title names won’t fit. But with some creativity, you can include links to your various pages within the text on your pages. When you do, you want to use anchor text links like this. This is a simple bit of HTML code, <a href=“<http://MinneapolisDryCleanerHomePage.com>”>Minneapolis Dry Cleaner Home Page

By the way, for the most part you only need to know about a dozen or two bits of HTML to be able to take care of 99% of your web site on your own. It’s easy, once you spend a bit of time with it. I learned from a useful ebook called [HTML in Simple Terms](#). If you decide to get hand’s on with HTML, be sure to print out a copy and keep it by your computer.

Internal links are completely within your control. When you link to one of your pages and use a keyword as anchor text, the bots assume you know what you are talking about, as long as the destination page appears to be relevant to the keyword phrase. When it is, the robots take note. And you begin to rank for that term.

At this point we have reviewed the major factors that matter to the search engines on your web site. These are all within your control. Taking care to set these up properly will make a significant difference in how your web page ranks. If you are in an industry, where most of your competitors are not very tech savvy, these may make enough of a difference on their own to get you to the top of your local rankings. For more competitive markets, its necessary to take advantage of what are called OFF PAGE factors.

These are considered to be three times as powerful as ON Page Factors. But don't be fooled. If you haven't taken care to optimize your ON Page factors, the off page techniques we will discuss in the next section will not work as well as they should.

Off Page Search Engine Optimization

Up till now we have focused on what I call “On Page” search engine optimization. We are now ready to move forward to discuss the “Off Page” factors that affect how Google and the other search engines rank your site.

It was important to deal with the On Page factors first. They are the easiest to change and or fix. You have complete control of the on page factors. Second, the off page factors require work. Now some of you may go running and screaming because of that four letter word. While this next section will take some effort, it will be worthwhile. But I reiterate, first things first. Make sure you have your on page set-up up to snuff first.

If you only have 60% of it done, all the work you will be doing on off page factors will only get you about 60% of the effect they would have if you had fully completed the front end on page things. Clear enough?

At one time, getting your keywords, meta tags, titles and etc. done correctly was enough to get you to the top in the search engine rankings. In narrow niches it still may be, but if you are playing second fiddle to a competitor or two for your favorite keyword you have some homework to do.

Professional search engine optimizers use a wide array of tools to get their client sites to the top of the search engines, many of which aren't necessary for most small business operators serving a local market. You can largely count on your geographical keywords to get you in front of most of your customers.

While there are a variety of tools, the key concepts of off page search engine optimization is focused on one concept: Back links. And when discussing back links the two major components are Focused Keywords and Anchored Text.

There are many different ways to generate back links to your web site. In discussing this topic we will return to talk about the content on your site, social media sites like Squidoo, Twitter, Hubpages, directories, article marketing, forums, press releases, blog networks and more.

In the next section we will talk about Google in particular, and ask why Google ranks one site higher than another. Or at least my best take on that topic.

Google Centric

Now keep in mind that Google is just one of about 40 major search engines. And what

applies for Google doesn't always apply to all the others. But also keep in mind that Google has about 60% of the search market in the US, so it really is the elephant in the room.

The key distinction that lead to Google's ascendancy in the search engine business is not just the speed with which it found relevant sites, but the relevance of the sites it found.

Google understands this deeply, and it remains their paramount objective to deliver the most accurate results to their search engine customers as possible. Most of the people who go to their computers to look up something are looking not for something to buy. Most are looking for information. And most are looking for free information, if they can find it. I bet that true of you as well.

Now if Google finds more than one site that appears to be relevant to a particular keyword search, they need to find a way to determine which one is the more valuable site. Their ability to do that is what has made them famous.

One of the factors is size.

That's why we suggested you might want to get your main page up to at least 425 words of text when we were talking about on page factors. That suggests to Google that your site contains some material of relevance. It's also why we suggested that you try to have your keyword appear from 1-4% of the time.

When you do that, you are offering Google an indication that the content on your site is relevant to what the searcher may be looking for. In internet marketing circles the mantra is, "**Content is king.**"

It's one thing for you to say your site is about the keywords you put in your meta-tags and on your page. Too many people have tried to fool Google before by stuffing keywords on the pages and in their meta tags. Google learned and adapted. It now looks outside those factors to what others have to say about your page. Do those outside factors confirm what you have listed on the page? And who is it that is confirming the authenticity of your site and your keywords. We will discuss all of this, but the first message I want you to understand is that the more and better the content of your site meets the needs of the searcher the better your chances of ranking higher in the search engines.

You may think your visitor is looking to hire you or buy your wares. Maybe they are, but what they are more likely interested in is information about the type of product you are selling or the service you are providing.

They are searching for information, and that is what Google wants you to be giving them. The searcher has questions in their head, they may not even be fully able to articulate them. You must answer those questions on your site, in your content.

Google looks to your site and those sites that link to you for clues about the quality of the content on your site. If you appear to be answering peoples questions, you will rise in the ranks compared to other sites.

I hope I have made myself clear. Way too many web sites are brochures about the company or person portrayed. Instead they should be about the questions their likely visitors have in their minds. Google isn't a mind reader, but they do everything they can to figure out if your content answers those questions or not. Make sure your pages do.

I've done a fair amount of work with people in the Home Staging Business across the US and Canada. I tell them that their web sites will perform better if they answer the questions: "How much does it cost?" and "Is it worth it?" Or, "Do I need to de-clutter my house first and then invite the stager in, or can I call her first and get her to help me," and a myriad of others.

If you spend at least some of your time answering these questions, Google will notice the content and you will probably rank higher. More importantly, you will be giving prospective customers the information they want and need. That will cause them to spend more time on your page, and the search engines definitely take note of that.

There are a lot of tactics to getting links to your pages, and thereby improve your ranking in the search engine. The first and foremost way is to provide worthwhile content on your site.

What is a back link?

It's time to stop talking about back links and explain just what they are.

According to Wikipedia, back links are incoming links to a website or web page. In the search engine optimization (SEO) world, the number of back links is one indication of the popularity or importance of that website or page. In basic link terminology, a back link is any link received by a web node (web page, directory, website, or top level domain) from another web node. Back links are also known as incoming links, inbound links, in links, and inward links.

Thus when I create a hyper-link in this blog post to my Blog site dedicated to small business marketing, <http://MicroBusinessSpecialist.com/blog> it appears blue in most web browsers. Most people will know that when they click on it, they will be taken to the site. This is thus a back link to my blog and when a Google bot or one of the other search engine bots scans this page it will follow that link to the blog and note it as a back link. Notch one up for me.

Now even better would be a link to another of my blogs that focuses on Article Marketing.

If instead of using the web address or URL, I just sent you to this link: [Article Marketing Hints for Better Internet Marketing](http://ArticleMarketingHintsforBetterInternetMarketing.com). In this case, the link is being made to <http://ArticleMarketingHint.com> in the form of what is known as **anchor text**. This anchor text, “Article Marketing Hints for Better Internet Marketing” tells the bots that this back link is about Article Marketing and reinforces the keywords on on my site. While both are back links, the anchor text is much more powerful.

As a general rule, whenever possible you want to use anchor text with relevant keywords. Only use the URL format when you specifically want to let viewers know how to type in your site name in their browsers. And even then, find a way to do both.

Unfortunately, since we are now dealing with off page factors, you no longer have direct control over how others will link to you.

Not all back links are equal

Thus we come to realize that not all back links are equal. Some are more valuable than others. A back link from a blog that’s been published regularly for many months is going to have a somewhat more valuable link than one started today with just a single entry.

Even more valuable is a link from a site Google considers to be an authority site. Google has devised a series of page rankings that it uses to provide guidance as to the relative standing of various major web sites. A back link from a site with a 6 rank may be worth dozens of back links from unranked sites. That said, there is still a great deal of value in having back links from a large number of sites, even if smaller.

So while we will be talking about some places where you can get some relatively highly ranked back links, don’t neglect getting links from lesser lights as well.

How Many back links do you have?

So how do you tell how many back links a site has? A good question and one I can answer.

First thing you want to do is go to Yahoo.com rather than Google or MSN and search for the term “linkdomain:” and then the web site you want to inquire about using the Yahoo search box. This will take you to Yahoo’s Site Explorer site.

When you do this for your site you will see two boxes at the top of the page. One will show

the number of pages on your website, and the second will show the total number of inbound links to your site. These are your back links.

Now if you want to see what you need to do to outrank that pesky competitor of yours, it wouldn't hurt to enter their domain name the same way and see how many pages they have on their site and particularly how many back links they have.

You might want to pay attention to who their back links are from, because there is a good chance you may be able to get back links from some of the same places.

Now as we mentioned before, not all back links are created equal. Some have higher page rank and are thus weighted more than others. So it's possible that someone with fewer back links could rank higher.

As an experiment, go to Google and enter the keyword "Home Decorating" in the Google Search Box. When I did it for this article the top three "organic" listings were www.home-decorating-made-easy.com; www.tuscan-home-101.com and www.hgtv.com

I looked at each site with the Yahoo Site Explorer and found the top ranking site had 627 pages of content and 1726 back links. The second ranked site, the Tuscan one, had 88 pages of content and 794 back links. I believe the number of back links to be the major determinant in the higher ranking by home decorating made easy site.

But what about the third place site, HGTV? It has 203,974 pages and 7,285,773 back links. A behemoth by anyone's standards. This is where relevance plays a role. HGTV has a lot of pages and back links, but not all of them were specifically relevant to the keyword term "Home Decorating." At least not in Google's eyes.

If you enjoyed this exercise, play around with a few other keywords, and see if the number of back links doesn't seem to play a role in most of them. As you do, you will come to appreciate how important back links are to ranking.

Getting High Powered Back Links

Once you have your on-page ducks in a row in terms of search engine optimization the next step is to get back links to your site. All back links matter. They can all deliver traffic and most will be tracked by Google and the other search engines. Some back links are considered to be more valuable by Google however. These are back links from relevant authority sites.

There are two aspects to that. **Relevance and authority.**

If you are a home stager and get a back link from my favorite site on ice fishing it will not

“weigh” as much in Google’s calculations of your rank as it would if it were coming from a site dealing with interior decorating. I don’t think I need to spend much more time on this aspect. The link is still worth having, just not as valuable. The key point here is that the Google bots know what’s on the page the link is coming from, and it matters.

More to the point is the perceived “authority” of the site. This topic is far more actionable. Some sites have been online for a decade or more and are the “go to” sites for specific types of information. For example in the health care arena, WebMD is an established player. Your website about Weight Loss will get much more benefit from a link from WebMD than it will from a link from your cousin’s three month old blog no matter what its topic. And when you think about it, it should.

Some years back, Google started giving web sites what’s called page rank. Web sites are ranked from zero to ten based on some internal process at Google. I have a Google toolbar on my Firefox browser that lets me see the page rank of any web page I am on. Now the bulk of what I read on SEO these days says Google no longer uses page rank in its formula for ranking the value of back links. That may be, but page rank can still be assumed to be a pretty good indicator of relative weight.

So here’s the bottom line. You want to get back links from relevant sites that have high or at least relatively high page rank. Fortunately, that’s not hard to do.

With the advent of the Web 2.0 era, there are lots of new authority sites that are easy to access and that carry significant page rank and more importantly seem to convey significant “Google Juice” or weight to their back links.

Some of the more popular of these sites for search engine optimization are: Squidoo; Hub Pages; Weebly; Learn Hub; Wet paint; Yahoo Answers; Google Groups; and Yahoo groups.

I am most familiar with Squidoo myself and also have some Hub Pages, so I will discuss those in more detail. If you are already familiar with any of the others, you will want to pay particular attention to opportunities to create back links to your web site.

When you do, keep in mind that you want to use anchor tags as we have discussed before. You want to link not just to your home page but also to internal pages as well. By linking to internal pages, you demonstrate that your web site has some internal depth. This is considered a positive in Google eyes.

We have established that to advance up the search engines your site needs to be set up properly in terms of on page factors, and also needs to get Back Links from other sites to boost your credibility. Ideally these back links should be in the form of anchor texts that highlight the specific keyword you want your page to rank for. For most locally based businesses it also makes sense to have these keywords and anchor texts include your specific geography such as Taxidermy in Atlanta or Minneapolis Ballet Studio, etc.

One Way Links

One point I should have made already and didn't is that these back links need to be one way back links. I've used the term "Link Juice" before. Imagine that a web site by linking to you is passing on to you some of their "Link Juice." If they are a high value web site the back link may be a gallon jug worth, if it's a lower ranked site you might just get a pint.

That's if the link is one way to your site from theirs. If you return the favor, you have a hole in your bucket dear Liza, and the Link Juice leaks right back to where it came from. Now if you have a higher ranking than the person linking to you, you may actually lose juice in the process.

At one time it was all the rage to build reciprocal linking arrangements. Unfortunately these are no longer wise moves in terms of search engine ranking. That said they may still make sense if they send traffic and business from one market to another as part of a referral system. If that's the case, you may well want to keep them even if they cost some "juice." But don't build reciprocal relationships hoping they will help your search engine ranking. They won't.

Nor can you set up a circle, where A links to B and B links to C and C in turn links to A. Such circles are readily detected by the search bots even when inadvertent. So pals we may be, but mutual admiration societies are not the way to get ahead on the search engines.

Squidoo.com

So how do you get these one way links? There are a lot of ways actually. I mentioned a few to you last time and today we will take a closer look at one of my favorites, Squidoo.

Squidoo is one of many so called Web 2.0 sites, which merely means it is part of the recent wave of sites that allow visitors to interact with the site rather than just read it like a static web page.

There are four primary things I like about Squidoo. First it's Free. Second, it allows you to put blatantly self promoting commercial messages on it. And thirdly, it's relatively easy to use. A fourth factor is that it has a high page rank of 7, which means that back links from Squidoo to your site are giant economy size bottles of Link juice, which is very nice indeed.

To get to Squidoo just go to www.squidoo.com. Once there sign up for an account. It's free and easy.

Once you have your account you are going to create your first site, which Squidoo refers to as a lens. Perhaps the most important thing to remember when setting up your first lens is that **what you name it is critical**.

For my Minneapolis Meat Market, I want to name the Lens “Minneapolis Meat Market” if that is the phrase that I want to rank for on the search engines. Now every lens on Squidoo needs to have a different name, so your favorite term may already be taken.

If that is the case try adding hyphens between words, or an extra relevant word before or after your desired name, such as: Best-Minneapolis-Meat-Market.

Many times it is easier getting your Squidoo lens ranked high in the search engines than your main web site due to Squidoo’s high page rank and tens of thousands of pages, many of which are new every day. The search engines are crawling all over Squidoo constantly, and they will find your new lens very soon after you publish it.

Should this happen to you, don't fret. Ideally, you want to eventually have as many top listings as possible for your main keywords. When you show up two, three, or four or more times in the top ten listings, your prospective customers will quickly come to recognize that you are the top dog in your market.

Once you have created your title, you need to fill in the Introduction module. Here you want to repeat your keyword/title in anchor text with a link to the page on your web site you want to drive traffic to.

For example on my Squidoo lens about [Free Internet Marketing Giveaways](#) I have used the anchor text “Free Give Away” to link to my blog about these events. The blog address is <http://AskEarlAbout.com/GiveAways>

By using HTML code to create a link on “Free Give Away” the search engine bots will learn that my blog on the end of the link is about Free Give Aways and they have good memories.

This is one of the advantages of Squidoo. Since you are creating the link yourself, you can control the way the link is created. You always want to use anchor text links. The only exception is when you are specifically letting people know what your web site address is and even then, make sure you use anchor text elsewhere in the posting.

Squidoo offers you the opportunity to create your own back links that you can custom design. By that I am referring to your ability to use anchor text that uses precisely the keyword phrase you want to rank for, and the ability to direct that link to a specific page on your web site.

Since Squidoo is free to use, there is no reason why you can't create multiple Lens, and add additional links to your site. From a search engine optimization standpoint it makes sense

to have multiple short Lens rather than one long comprehensive one.

For example one of my home staging clients could create a lens about how to stage a bedroom and another one on staging a living room and a third one on curb appeal and outdoor landscaping. You now have three different lens sending links back to your web site. Within each lens you want to include a couple anchor text links to various pages on your site.

Part of the power of Squidoo comes from its internal grouping system. You will want to join relevant groups of similar lens. If you are a potter, you will want to sign up your lens with the various pottery groups on Squidoo.

The resulting effect is that the search engines evaluates the lens as coming not just from a vast array of different lens on Squidoo, but from various groups of lens your are associated with at Squidoo.

Since these groups are tied together by common interest, they are all highly relevant to your topic. (or should be.) Thus the high power of a Squidoo lens is not because it is a Squidoo lens, but by your association with similar lens that are also on Squidoo to which you are joined by Squidoo's groups. It's this association with similar lens, that adds umph to the value of this type of back link.

I have published an inexpensive basic [introduction to Squidoo](#) if you want to get additional information on how to better utilize this powerful tool.

Hub Pages

A similar site to Squidoo are the HubPages site. Go the www.hubpages.com. Set up an account there, and jump right in. The set up is different but similar to Squidoo. You will need to create a title of 120 characters or less, which becomes part of your URL. Just as with Squidoo, you want it to consist of the keywords you want your own web site to rank for. So if you are following my advice on using geographical keywords you may want to name you site, BostonDryCleaning if you are a dry cleaner in Boston.

Just like Squidoo, you want to create anchor texts in your hub pages. You can use much of the same material in your hub pages that you did on your Squidoo pages, but you want to rework it into a different format so it is distinctly different than the way it appears on Squidoo or anywhere else. Make it unique. Goggle will frown on duplicate content, but once you've written a lens, its not nearly as much effort to rewrite it in different words. Take the time to do the rewrite.

Now while you will be including links to various pages on your web site, you also want to create some links from your Hub pages to your Squidoo pages. That's why we talked about

Squidoo first.

Remember last week when we talked about “link juice.” Hub pages have a little less link juice than Squidoo. But they are still a highly ranked site. Your link from Hub Pages pours link juice into your Squidoo lens. This link juice accumulates there and is passed via your Squidoo lens to where it links, ie. your web site.

It is important that you maintain the one way nature of this linking. As we also discussed earlier, if you reciprocate links the link juice leaks and cancels each other out. So for my purposes, I always link from my Hub Pages to my Squidoo pages and never the reverse. Since I have many different niches that I operate in this rule keeps me out of trouble.

Which one you use to link to the other is less important, than that you make sure to keep the one way relationship alive. And please remember that means you cannot link from your web site to your Hub pages as this would create a circle and negate the benefit of all the links.

How to explode the number of back links to your website.

So far we have stressed the need to get your on site ducks in a row if you want your web site to appear at the top of the search engine rankings.

We’ve talked about anchor text, and several social networking sites you can use to build back links to your site. The advantage of these sites is your ability to custom create your own back links. This gives you control over the actual keywords used in the anchor text and where they link on your site. This latter control allows you to direct links to internal pages, which bolsters your standing in the eyes of the search engines.

Now we will touch on the most powerful way to build links and traffic to your web site, article marketing.

Article writing requires a bit of work. It’s like slow feed fertilizer. The results of article marketing take time to build. The plus of article marketing is that it does ultimately flourish and will generate an exponential growth in the number of back links to your site. And as we have demonstrated, back links matter. They matter even more when they are coming from a wide variety of places and grow in number over time.

The essential mathematics of article marketing comes from posting a single article with an article directory service. Once it is accepted there, you have a back link to your site from a generally high ranking resource - the article directory. But even better, as first a couple and then many more people find your article and post it on their blogs, newsletters, etc.

As they republish your article, you start getting back links from many different places. So

instead of having one back link, you may now have six or sixty.

There are thousands of article directories, some of which are very large. You can post the same article to more than one directory, multiplying again the number of potential back links you can create for your self with one half hour of writing. Since these articles stay on the directories indefinitely, it's possible that an article you write today could be published off and on over the next five or ten years or longer.

A disciplined approach of writing an article a day or even an article a week can over a period of a year or two lead to thousands and tens of thousands of back links. That level of back link juice will put most people on the top of their respective niche even in highly competitive niches. And put them there to stay.

The best part of article writing is that it is essentially a free way of building your standings. You don't need to be a great writer to effectively use article marketing. So if the thought of writing scares you, don't despair. The power of article writing is too significant to allow your lack of skills or fears to get in the way.

You can hire out the article writing chore, if you want. A variety of services like Elance.com and RentACoder.com connect authors willing and able to write articles for you, and for the most part, this can be a quick and economical route to go.

Article Marketing – Four Wins in a Row

Article Marketing as it has evolved on the internet is a classic win-win-win-win institution that has become one of the backbones of the internet. There are four essential players in the article marketing game, all of whom benefit, each in their own way.

Like any market, article marketing is a business of supply and demand. There are end users, who get material from their local vendor who in turn gets material from their wholesaler, who in turns gets material from individual producers.

Unlike most markets, the transfer of goods in the article marketing arena is largely free. The end user wants free access to information. The magic of the article marketing model is that it has created economic incentives to all the parties to meet that demand.

There are many places online for people to get information. These include static web sites, blogs, forums, ezines, ebooks, etc. The producers of these sites, blogs etc are frequently monetizing their efforts with products and services they sell directly or on behalf of others or by various forms of advertising revenue.

Several of these, blogs and ezines in particular require a constant source of new material to

keep their site fresh and to attract information seekers with the expectation that a certain percentage of them will also take a revenue producing action. The challenge for these venues is coming up with new material on a regular basis.

Their options are to write it themselves, hire it out or find a free resource of relevance to their specific niche of readers.

Article Directories have emerged to fill that role. They are the wholesalers of articles across a vast array of topics and specialties. They recruit article submissions from individual writers and group them in easy to search categories for the blog writer to search.

Most offer this service free of charge to the blog writers and anyone else who just wants to research a given topic. They make their money the same way most of the blog and ezine writers do. They usually have Google AdSense ads on their site as well as other advertising. They sometimes offer additional premium services for article writers and users as well, but these vary widely.

To be successful, article directories have found it necessary to be editors. They want their customers on both ends to benefit from the equation. To assure this they develop specific rules for the type of material they host on their site and editorial guidelines. These vary by individual article directory. Article writers must meet these standards to be accepted into the directory. This in turn assures a quality product for the blogger and their readers.

One of the most frequent editorial restraints is to contain blatant advertising. Most article directories have strict rules that prohibit advertising except in a section added to the end of the article called the Resource Box.

So who produces all this free editorially up to snuff material? What's in it for them?

There are three primary motivators for the authors. Some are born writers who just need to write to express themselves. Or perhaps they are motivated to establish themselves as an expert in a given arena or niche.

Another major group are individual business people who seek to inform prospective customers about their product or service. In some cases they may share the desire to brand themselves as experts.

The motivation for most businesses lies in the utilization of the resource box. Most article directories allow authors to include two or more hyperlinks in this appendix to their article. These offer two major benefits to the submitting business. They can send people to your web site, called "traffic" in internet circles. They can also serve as back links to a specific page on their web site. These back links are helpful in getting attention from search engines and serve to help increase the targeted web sites ranking

As articles get picked up more and more bloggers and ezines these back links appear in more and more places increasing the relevance of the site in the eyes of the search engines. They are like votes for the targeted web sites.

As importantly for many businesses is the traffic they bring. As more and more people read the articles and go to the sites, a certain percentage will buy products or take other desired actions.

This entire arrangement is interdependent on each of the elements. The fact that it has evolved as an essentially free service for the most part is one of the marvels of the internet. The end user gets information, the blogger gets readers, the article directory traffic that they convert to revenue through ads, and the authors get recognition, traffic and search engine ranking. A win-win-win-win situation.

Learn more about [how to do article marketing](#) on my blog dedicated to the topic. I also recommend the following eBook, which goes into greater detail on [Understanding Article Marketing](#).

Black Hat and Gray Hat

There are a lot of businesses that have developed around helping people get to the top of the search engines. For popular mass market products and high margin items the competition to gain top billing in organic search has led to intense competition. This has resulted in constant innovation, and many efforts to out smart Google and the other search engines.

At one time, just getting your meta tags right was enough. Then keyword stuffing came into vogue with some Viagra sites repeating their selected keyword hundreds of times. That's why you now want to use your keyword from 1-4% of the time today. The search engines are constantly changing their algorithms to keep ahead of the Black Hatters, who try to game the system.

Today with the emphasis on back links, there are black hat and less offensive but still "gray hat" techniques used by some to cheat their way to the top. These include various services that can get you thousands of back links for a fee, or article spinners that use software to automatically rewrite your articles so they appear to be different. And many more.

Most main street businesses don't need to use black or gray hat techniques to get to the top of the search engines in their local areas. While these techniques can work for a while, they are almost always shut down by changes by the search engines. That's because the goal of the search engine is to be as useful as possible for the searcher. If they offer up an article that is clearly pigeon English, they lose face, and eventually market share.

In the long run, you will earn your top listing by providing useful information to your

prospective customers in as many venues as possible like your web page, Squidoo, Hub pages, and through blogging and article marketing.

These approaches will work now and for the long haul. The sooner you build a base of such useful content, the sooner you will gain an insurmountable lead over your competitors.

Right now, even at this seemingly late date in the evolution of the internet, in most industries, your competitors are asleep at the switch. You have a temporary advantage if you are the first mover in your industry, in your marketplace.

But this eBook and many others are beginning to reach out beyond the internet marketing world into main street. You may already be behind. If so it's all the more important that you develop a plan of action. But beware of those who will try to sell you black hat and gray hat solutions. While they may work for a while, they won't in the long run.

One final comment on the subject. Many firms will try to sell you a package of services that include getting you listed on the "Directories." This used to be important, but is not anywhere as important today. If you set up a back link from a Squidoo Lens to your website, Google will find you. In fact if you merely tweet a reference to your website on Twitter, Google will find you site.

There search bots are all over these services and once they see the link to your site they will find you. In my opinion, there is no reason to pay for such services.

Conclusion:

Getting to the top of the search engines is important and valuable. You want to be on top of the search engines for as many different keywords that people might use to find your business. This may well be hundreds or even thousands of keywords.

While you want to win on all of them, it makes sense to identify the most important ones, and fight your way to the top if need be.

To do so, you need to first take care of the on page factors that some if not all the search engines use to rank websites. These include hidden code called meta tags and the words visible on your pages. All of these are very keyword intensive, and it is imperative that you know what keyword you are trying to rank for on each page of your site.

Once you have your web site squared away, the name of the game is to get back links from relevant authoritative sites.

Some of this you can create for yourself using social networking sites like Squidoo, Hub Pages and many others. The key to using such sites is to use anchor text reflecting the keyword you want your page to rank for, and to maintain one way linking.

From a strategic point of view, you want to create strings of links pouring link juice to your web site, but must avoid circular linking as this could negate all the benefit.

In the final analysis, what you put on your page is the most important factor to your success. However it counts for nothing if no one see the page. By systematically employing the strategies and tactics disclosed herein it is possible for most local businesses to achieve significant improvement in their free organic search listings, which will in turn assure that their site is seen by prospective customers in their local markets.

What we have discussed is not voodoo magic, nor gray or black hat. It may take a bit of work, and commitment, but when implemented, it will win for those who take action a distinct competitive advantage in their market place.

Earl Netwal

[Micro Business Specialist](#)

Resources

Below I have assembled a large number of resources. For some I am an affiliate and will get paid should you choose to purchase them, some are my own products, some are free resources and some I am recommending even though I do not have a fee relationship with them. My selections are based on my personal experience and are on this list because I believe they could be of benefit to you.

Web hosting:

If you do not already have web hosting, or if you are paying for web hosting from two of more web hosts, I recommend [Host Gator](#). They allow you to host multiple web sites on one account for the same price or less than many other services.

If you are an internet marketer, or anticipate that you will be creating an affiliate program as part of your business model, you may be better off with the bundle of services including hosting available from the [Ultimate Marketing Center](#). They don't allow an unlimited number of web sites like Host Gator, but their other services more than make up the difference. I actually use both Host Gator and UMC, myself. That way I can send my own links from one site to the other and I don't have all my eggs in one basket. But that's because I have a lot of different web sites.

Cpanel

One of the reasons I recommend the above two hosting services is because they both use Cpanel as the control for their sites. This easy to use interface has made life much easier for millions of web users. Understanding how Cpanel works and how to use it is one of the most liberating things one can do in the arena of internet marketing.

I learned how to use Cpanel from a series of videos called, [Discover C Panel](#) by Chris Morris and Bob the Teacher. I will recommend more of Bob The Teacher's materials below. If you are going to get "hands on" with your web site, you need to understand how your Cpanel works and this video series is a great place to start.

Auto-responder

If you get the hosting package from the Ultimate Marketing Center, you will also get access to an auto-responder. I'm sure it's good, but I have been very happy with my existing auto-responder and have never used that feature at UMC. I have an account with [Aweber](#) and I can attest to their reliability and ease of use.

As I said in the introduction, every business web site should use some form of an ethical bribe to get visitors to leave their email address so you can follow-up with them. A dependable auto-responder is the linchpin to that strategy.

To learn how to effectively use Aweber you can rely on their online tutorials which are quite good. Bob the Teacher also has an excellent course that may help you get you up to speed even faster. I learned a lot from his course, even though I had been using Aweber for several years. This course is called [Discover Auto-Responders](#) .

I was able to teach myself the basics when I started out. You can too. However, Bob's course showed me additional features, I hadn't taken the time to learn. Even if you already have a basic understanding of Aweber, you may want to grab this one.

HTML

As I mention in the report, HTML Code is a lot easier to learn than I thought at first. It turns out to be fairly simple once you understand a handful of formats that you need to use on a regular basis. Knowing how to make minor adjustments yourself can save you a lot of time and money you otherwise would need to spend on your computer person. Even if you do decide to delegate these tasks, it's good to know how simple much of this is. I acquired the rights to a handy little report several years ago called [HTML in Simple Terms](#) .

If you find yourself “hand's on” with your website, blog or Squidoo, I recommend that you get a copy and print out the back section to keep by your computer. As of this writing, I've distributed over 900 copies of it, and use it myself from time to time to this day.

HTML is the basic code behind the internet, and how you will form your H1 tags, and anchor text. There are also a lot of free resources online. Just Search for Free HTML in Google and you will discover a variety of resources. I like the printout of my little book because I find it easier to find what I am looking for and easier to read the information when I have it on paper in front of me.

Keywords

Identifying the universe of keywords that apply to your business is a critical part of your challenge. The obvious ones are easy to come by. But people are funny, and many of your customers will use circuitous routes to find you. The most important keyword tool to use is Google Free External Tool. <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

While this is a great place to start, serious research into keywords will come up with many more keywords that people use that Google free tool just will not find. The king of the keyword tools is probably WordTracker. <http://www.wordtracker.com/>

This is a relatively expensive tool, but does offer a free trial. Take advantage of it. You can find a lot of keywords that you might not have otherwise thought of for your business. Remember each keyword is a potential source of customers. It's often the more obscure keywords that yield results since your competitors may miss them altogether.

Rather than use Wordtracker, I use a less expensive service called [Keywordtopia](#). What I like about Keywordtopia is that it actually uses WordTracker as one of its resources. It's like getting cut-rate access to this tool. While it may not have all of the bells and whistles, it gets me the keywords which is what matters most to me. Keywordtopia also has a free trial.

Squidoo 101

As I mentioned in the report, Squidoo is an excellent way to get high powered back links to your site. It's also another way to find and direct traffic to your site and can be profitable in its own right. [Squidoo Basics](#) is a good introduction to using Squidoo to market and promote your sites. It goes into much more detail that I could here.

Bob the Teacher's Internet Marketing Library

I've already mentioned two of Bob the Teacher's courses above. I've taken almost a dozen different courses from him over the past few years. He used to be a high school teacher, and has an effective teaching style. He goes over each step methodically, and as a result he doesn't skip things others might "assume" you know. He has established what he calls Bob the Teacher's [Internet Marketing Library](#), which is a membership program where you can access most if not all his course for a low monthly fee.

It's a superb bargain, you can access courses that would otherwise cost significantly more.

Through his many different and ever growing library of courses you can easily learn how to control the most important pieces of your online business with step-by-step how-to tutorials that you can watch and listen to from your computer.

If you're like me, and want to learn how to do things for yourself, there is no better resource. The membership is a great deal, particularly if you are able to dedicate some serious time to learning as much as possible in the shortest amount of time.

Understanding Article Marketing

While this reference is primarily aimed at people building their businesses as internet marketers, the lessons taught by Doug Champigny in the [Beginner's Key to Understanding Article Marketing](#) apply across the board. He takes you well beyond how to write an effective article, even if you can't write, and how to hire a ghost writer to significant strategic ideas on how to make article marketing work for you.

Doug has been one of my personal mentor's, and has been one of the "go to" people on line since the mid 1990's. He knows his stuff. Article marketing is one of the keys to success online and this eBook will get you there faster and surer.

Article Directories and Article Submission

If I were to post an article to only one article directory that would be <http://ezinearticles.com>. It is the largest and most respected directory out there.

There are thousands of article directories. Virtually none of them accept a bulk posting. That means you need to log in and post your article one by one, which can be a time consuming task. If your goal is to create an exponential growth in the number of back links

and/or traffic you want to post on as many directories as you can.

There are two basic approaches to automating this process. One involves buying software that helps process the one by one submissions. This involves your uploading your article, the title, your keywords, and resource box as well as author name etc once to the software. The software then automatically fills in the forms for each directory when you get to it. It greatly speeds up the process. But you will find the need to pay attention to details along the way. I've used Brad Callen's [Article Submitter](#) for a long time and can recommend it. He has constantly improved it over time and the Platinum version is superior. He even has a free version.

While the software speeds up the process significantly, it still takes time and effort and as I said, you will still have to accommodate glitches. The alternative is to use a service that does everything for you. This is what I would recommend. The time saved is well worth the expense if you are going to pursue a serious article marketing campaign, and you should.

There are many such services out there, but the one that I recommend and that has received high grades from all the people I know who use it is [Article Marketer](#). They offer a variety of different subscription terms from 3 months to life time. The major advantage with them is that you can submit an unlimited number of articles, where as the others either charge more or a per article fee. They also submit your articles to more sites than any other service I am aware of.

Blogging

I didn't spend much time on Blogging in this report. It is a huge topic in its own right, and another highly effective way of developing your presence online. My "go to" Blogging expert is Mike Paetzold. If you are new to blogging, I recommend his eBook called [Blogging for Seniors.](#)

It is misnamed. While the thrust of the book was aimed at seniors, it is actually a very good how to get started in blogging eBook, whether you are 70 or 17. Once you've hooked up with Mike after buying this book, make a point of subscribing to his blog Word Press Made Easy. Word Press changes constantly, and Mike is always in the forefront of how to best keep on top of the changes.

I read Mike's blog regularly. He has helped me figure out what plug ins to use, and how to set up various settings that are so much a part of the blogging experience. It's a good idea to find an expert or two to follow. When it comes to Blogs, Mike is one of the best.

My Blogs

Speaking of Blogs, I invite you to monitor my blogs as well. My flagship blog is <http://MicroBusinessSpecialist.com/blog>

I also blog on article marketing at, <http://ArticleMarketingHint.com>

I also have a number of other blogs in a variety of niche markets. You may however also be interested in my internet marketing giveaway blog. That blog is located at <http://AskEarlAbout.com/GiveAways>

Internet giveaways have proven to be an excellent way for internet marketers to grow their lists. They offer a free information product, in exchange for getting a person's email address and permission to email them. Very much like what I recommend you do yourself on your web sites.

Many main street businesses could use these same internet giveaways I write about on my blog to offer information relevant to your particular product line. Anyone who signs up for the information is likely to have at least some interest in your products.

Once you capture their email, you can follow-up with additional information and or special offers to convert them into a buyer. This works well for eBooks, software and graphics in these giveaway events. There is no reason it couldn't work as well for hard goods as well.