



The Web Newbie's Survival Guide

A 4-Step Process for Achieving Your Internet Goal

Chris Burbridge
Real Simple Success
www.RealSimpleSuccess.com
chris@RealSimpleSuccess.com

Copyright Notice

All material Copyright © Christopher Burbridge 2008

This publication is protected under the US Copyright Act of 1976 and all other applicable international, federal, state and local laws, and all rights are reserved, including resale rights: you are not allowed to give or sell this Guide to anyone else. If you received this publication from anyone other than RealSimpleSuccess.com, you've received a pirated copy. Please contact us via e-mail at support@RealSimpleSuccess.com and notify us of the situation.

Introduction

“To know the road ahead, ask those returning.”

—Chinese proverb

Who this Book is For

The particular needs of a “web newbie”.

This book is for people who have *hope*, that is attached in some way, to creating a website. Often, you have more hope than money. It is about how to use that hope effectively (along with your time and money) to accomplish something you want. And reach the finish line.

Maybe you have a day job, and a great idea you’d like to use a website to promote—maybe so that you can leave your day job. Perhaps you are envisioning the freedom that a website could bring you, and have heard stories of people who have already done it successfully. But you don’t really know exactly who to turn to; who to trust.

Maybe you already have a small business, and you have a sense that the web will help you obtain *more* business—more sales, more clients. Or maybe you are responding to pressure from people—“You mean you *still* don’t have a website?” Or, maybe you do have a website, but you have a vague sense that it could be doing a lot more for you than it is now, but you’re not exactly sure how to go about this: Who to trust; how much it should cost; and what you really need to do next.

For purposes of this book, I’m calling you a “web newbie”—just to distinguish certain characteristics I have seen, again and again, in people like the ones I have just described. If this sounds a little like you, then I hope you will take the time to read this book. I believe it will help you increase, dramatically, your chances for success in your web project.

In a corporate environment, it’s different. A team of seasoned professionals, with their own well-honed abilities, led by a project manager, interface with an experienced web designer, and tell them exactly what they want, and how they want it. The job is a line item on a manager’s spreadsheet, and everybody knows what they’re doing (at least, we hope!). In this case, the order to create a site is a

clearly-thought-out piece of a well-understood system, and all the players know what to expect.

But for you, as a web newbie, the situation can be a little different. The kinds of small web designers that a web newbie is likely to go to are likely to be pretty focused on providing that specific service, and may not be in a position to provide the greater context that the newbie needs. Ironically, the corporate client will probably work with a larger firm, with a larger budget, who *does* have more time and manpower to educate their client about the bigger context of what they're doing, do the market research, take into account the long-term factors, and so on.

So, what I see happen very frequently is that a web newbies go into their projects without all of this context, and often pay a price for it.

There's a huge amount of information out there on the internet on *how* to build websites, what software to use, different technologies, and so on. But I have not seen the kind of information I am presenting here, specifically to give a big-picture view of things to web newbies.

I started a web design company, after eleven years in the software development industry, because I wanted to help people who had a vision and wanted to use the web make it a reality; people who wanted to use the internet to create something great. I wanted to help them succeed. After three years, I found that there were certain predictable issues that web newbies encountered. And I found there was a real disconnect between what they *believed* they needed, and what they *actually* needed. And what's more, the professionals they ended up working with, frequently ended up giving them some version of what they *thought* they needed. Having done their job, these professionals moved on, leaving the newbie poorer, but still confused about how this was supposed to really help them reach their goal. More often than not, they ended up discouraged, a little bit confused, and not that much closer to reaching their actual goal.

So You Want a Website: It's a Starting Point

What You Think You Need is Most Likely a Starting Point for What You Really Need.

"How much would you charge me to build a website?"

"How much should I pay for a dynamic website?"

"I want a really amazing site, with Flash, and dynamic menus, and a blog, and SEO, and a radical new interface. Can you build it for me?"

These are the kinds of questions I hear all the time. Well as it turns out, you most likely need to build is an *internet system*, that you will utilize over time to achieve your goals. In fact, if you really do *just* need a website, chances are good that you aren't what I'm calling a web newbie anyway—you've already got a grasp of the big picture, and you're looking for a specific service provider to provide you that function.

But, presuming you are a web newbie, you may well have started out thinking something like "I want a website," and have vague idea of how that will achieve your ends. But in all likelihood, there is a series of other elements that you will need in order to achieve your ends, which you may only be vaguely aware of.

This book is for you.

The Sirens of Internet Possibility

Sure: You can do it. But will you?—Going beyond the initial excitement of possibility, and thinking about success.

Here's a basic truth about the marketing of information, how-to books, etc.: **Possibility Sells Books.** If you can persuade people that *it's possible* to make a million dollars a year working an hour a week, you can sell *a lot* of books telling them how to do it. If it's a legitimate author, then they're not lying!—They may very well *have* done it, or are reporting the news of how others have done it! And then they wrote a book about it, started a website, etc. Which is fine. "How I make \$4,637 a month working three hours a week, and you can too."

Possibility is very inspiring, and it moves people past the discouragement that stops them from trying anything. This is a good thing! *However*—for every "you too can make a million dollars" books, tapes, and e-books that are sold, how many people do you think really do it? A small fraction, right? There's nothing wrong with that, and it is all up to us. But—I think there are some hidden issues here that I'd like to explore with you.

This is not to discourage you, at all. It's just to make a point. "You can do it" books sell a lot better than books that help the person who wants to get in and grind out the real issues that happen once you *really* try to do it. Here's an example: Last Christmas, I was at Barnes and Noble, in their huge business section. After several years in business for myself, and having made plenty of the huge number of mistakes that new business owners frequently make, I was no longer looking for "yes, you can do it!" books. I had plenty of those, and I knew I could do it. What I

was looking for was books with titles like “101 Mistakes New Small Business Owners Make, and How to Avoid Them”; “How Not to Fail—Cash Flow 101 for the Sole Proprietor”; “In it for the Long Haul—The Successful Entrepreneur’s Guide to Survival and Growth”. Guess what? These are all made-up titles. (The ones I hoped I’d find.) *It was very hard to find these types of books!* “You Can Do It!” “Go For It!” “Live Your Dream!” These titles were *everywhere*, in every way, shape, and fashion.

Well, do you see where this creates a bias in the publishing industry? It means that books (and other information) that give you that initial sense of possibility, hope, and optimism, sell a lot better than books that are geared at people who really want to roll their sleeves up, get their hands dirty, and see it to the finish line. Nothing against the first kind of books—they are great! But what it tells me is that: (a) Most people don’t get past that first optimistic stage; (b) there are probably a lot of discouraged people out there who got all psyched up about how they *could* do it, but then *didn’t* do it, for one reason or another.

What I have been really interested in over the last three years is: What makes people most likely to *actually* do it? Now sure, it’s all on your shoulders; I believe it’s your responsibility to create your life the way you want it to be. However, in looking back on my experience with different web newbies over the past three years, I see that, in many cases, I may have inadvertently encouraged them (just like all the “yes, you can!” books and websites) in their “startup, you can do it” hope, without helping to see them through to a conclusion of their destination—a conclusion that they were too new to see, and that I did not consider it a part of my job to provide. The point that this book drives home, again and again, is to increase the chances that you are able to see the big picture of what is involved in producing a web project before you get started, and that this know-how will greatly improve your chances of making it to the finish line.

What I want to present to people is a two-pronged message. The first prong is: “Yes. Go for it! Just get started!” Just like the gurus out there. The second prong is a little more sobering. It is: Most people appear *not* to. It appears to me that most people tend to give up, before a project really reaches its full potential. Now, there are all kinds of reasons for this. But I think that if you start out with the idea “I’m going to really make this happen...” then, it’s good to know there are a lot of things that can derail a project—whether an internet project, or any other kind. In other words: Arm yourself with what you need to know to turn that optimism from a vague and cloudy vision into a plan for success.

Inner Obstacles

Be aware that there are inner obstacles that can block your path.

It's just good to be aware that there are a number of common human factors that can get in your way, as you proceed along. There are a good number of powerful techniques to handle them.¹ But for now, I just want to remind you that they exist, and should be considered and understood. I'll touch on various aspects of these in other aspects of the book. They include:

- **Overwhelmed attention.** Quite simply, exhausting your attention, putting too much on your plate.
- **Discouragement.** Having all your attention go to what's not working. Wanting to give up.
- **Distraction.** Not being able to stay focused enough on your goal to complete it.
- **Limiting beliefs.** Let's face it: If you believe you can't succeed—you can't! So if there are some limiting beliefs for you around succeeding, you may want to handle them.
- **Analysis paralysis.** Over-thinking things, as a means of avoiding action, really.
- **Ungrounded fantastic thinking.** This is that thing of saying, "I can do it," but then never taking the time to look at the facts on the ground. What will be required to get from where you are to where you want to be. Remember: The most fantastic things are possible, if we are willing to work *with* what is—not ignore it.

Beware Thinking a Website Alone Will Meet Your Needs

I've worked on a lot of projects that succeeded, in giving my client what they thought they needed, but did not allow them to reach their goal.

Over the years, I've worked with dozens of clients who all more or less fit into the category I'm calling "web newbie"—either startup businesses, or small businesses

¹ [If you want to know the most powerful of them, in my opinion, it's Avatar®. Go to <http://www.RealSimpleSuccess.com/what-is-avatar> for more info.]

with one or a few employees seeking to expand their existing business on the internet. I have noticed a great number of similarities in their hopes, aspirations, and assumptions. What I discovered was that so many of these assumptions were not well-informed. And very few web designers, web masters, or whoever they came to for help, had the ability to explain to these people exactly what they needed to know to get the big picture of what they needed to learn to feel successful.

I have worked on a number of projects where I gave my client exactly what they asked for—only to discover that what they asked for wasn't really what they needed. They didn't blame me—but the sites still never went up, or never did what they had secretly hoped they would do. I realized that there was very little in it for me, to do a great job for a client, creating something that wasn't really going to help them get what they actually wanted. More and more, my focus became on one single, thing: **Help people accomplish the real goal they'd set out to achieve.**

I came from a programming background—helping the members of a technical writing team in a large software company meet specific programming needs, building tools for them that would help them do their jobs better. We were all professionals at what we did. All we really had to do was do our job, our piece of the puzzle. If my job was to program, I would program. The people who requested the programming were happy, because it met the clear needs they had in mind for the program to perform a certain function. Expectations were clear, jobs were well defined, and everybody just did their job.

Three years ago, when I started my own business as a web designer, I discovered that things were very different! I loved working with clients with more dreams than money. I loved working with small businesses that wanted to become more successful. But I gradually realized that a lot of my clients suffered from a problem: **They didn't know what they didn't know.** Sometimes, I would build a website for them; they would get all excited; then, they would realize it wasn't bringing them any new business (*had they assumed it would? How did they assume this would happen? A hidden assumption that we had never discussed.*). Or they would pay me for a custom web design with no marketing help—that was what they asked for, and that was what I'd built for them—when, in retrospect, maybe what they needed was an ultra-simple website *with* some marketing help.

Unlike my colleagues at the software company, these web newbies didn't know exactly what they needed. And, they assumed that I did, because I had technical knowledge, and they viewed what they needed as the solution to a technical problem. And it seemed as if they were somewhat dazzled by technology. If someone came along who obviously knew a lot more about some aspect of the web technology than they did, they decided to believe that person, without asking other critical questions about exactly *how* that person was going to help them. They seemed to make a lot of assumptions about the power of websites that didn't really reflect how it all works—they were still in the magical thinking phase. And when the magic didn't work, I think a lot of them got discouraged and gave up. They didn't blame me; but I'd gotten into this to help people succeed--not just

make money. And the thing that was so poignant about this to me was, these were the people who were banking their *hope* for the success of their project! They so wanted it to succeed. This was a precious resource, and I wanted to help them use it wisely.

So at some point, I decided to give up producing websites myself entirely, and focus on helping these people—you—get these missing pieces of basic information I'm talking about. Gain enough context to be able to make good decisions. To tell you what I have seen that works; as well as what doesn't work. To show you what I have learned about taking a very complex process, with lots and lots of players and elements, and making it simple, and doable. How to manage your hope, enthusiasm, and motivation, to make your success a lot more likely.

Introducing the Rapid Prototyping Mindset

What are the minimal elements that will make this work?—Do these, and save the rest for later.

“Complexity kills. It sucks the life out of developers, it makes products difficult to plan, build and test, it introduces security challenges and it causes end-user and administrator frustration.”

—Ray Ozzie, software developer

“Iterative design is a design methodology based on a cyclic process of prototyping, testing, analyzing, and refining a work in progress. In iterative design, interaction with the designed system is used as a form of research for informing and evolving a project, as successive versions, or iterations of a design are implemented.”

—Wikipedia

Throughout this book, I will refer back to what I refer to as “rapid prototyping”, a term borrowed from industrial design. It's really the same as “iterative design”, a design method developed by the software industry.

The term rapid prototyping refers to the ability to quickly produce a prototype of a new product or design, and try it out—touch it, feel it, and see if it works. And the term iterative design refers to a development process that is based around cycles,

and is more evolutionary. The more traditional development process is called *top-down development*. I prefer the term “rapid prototyping,” because to me it is much more evocative of how this process works.

Here’s my interpretation of an iterative development process (rapid prototyping), versus a top-down approach:

Iterative design (rapid prototyping) assumes:

- Producing something is about having *something* to put out, and then getting feedback from our audience.
- We expect to modify our product based on the feedback. Simplicity is an important part of what makes this *rapid*. It make things easier to modify, makes fewer people necessary, and makes costs lower. It makes it easier to see the big picture. Simplicity makes it easier for the various players producing the product to maintain a common understanding of what the big picture is.
- We don’t have to know everything before we start—and in fact, we *expect* to learn as we go. We understand the production of our product as a conversation between us and the world; between *planning*, and *doing*. We assume that people like conversations where they’re listened to, and not just talked at, and so if we develop our product this way, people will like it. We are happy to make mistakes, because we know that is part of our learning, and will lead us to success.
- Things will evolve and crystallize as we go along. We have a clear end in mind, and our work will evolve towards that.

Traditional top-down development assumes:

- We already understand the project we are about to do. The various professionals involved in managing this have done this type of thing many times before. We can relate each step along the way to similar projects.
- We already know what our market really wants from us. And, we already know how to produce it, because we have produced it before. They want more of what we’re already giving them.
- Complexity is easy to handle, because we just increase the number of line items on the spreadsheet, and someone will do them, eventually. It’s a large list of to-do items. Once the items are done, we’ll ship our product.

You can pretty well see that I have a bias towards the former way of doing things! And throughout this book, I will be suggesting ways in which you can incorporate this mindset into your project.

Axioms of Rapid Prototyping:

- The complexity of a project increases *exponentially* as more variables are added.
- Complexity and minutiae can easily bog a project down before it's ever out the door.
- We all have a certain limited amount of attention available to commit to any given project.
- The temptation to throw technology at a problem without awareness significantly increases the risk of failure.
- Focus on creating a small, but scalable system that you can get out quickly, modify easily, and (when necessary) fail out of, without too much loss or discouragement. If you do decide to get out, reframe it as learning, and continue onward towards your real goal.
- If you keep gathering data, and don't take action, you'll never get anywhere. You'll put too much credence in your plan, and invest too much in it emotionally. *Assume things will not go exactly as you plan*, so don't bother planning for too long.

The 80/20 Principle: The Value of Simplicity

What are the minimal elements that will make this work?—Do these, and save the rest for later.

“Laziness is not less action. I would define laziness, also, as blurred priorities, and indiscriminate action.”

—Timothy Ferris

“There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.”

—Peter Drucker

Another principle that I'd like to introduce you to, if you haven't heard of it already, is called the *Pareto principle*, also known as the *80/20 principle*. Originally discovered by an Italian economist about a hundred years ago, it states

that the most effective 20% of inputs into a system are responsible for a full 80% of the outputs. Pareto observed that 80% of the income in Italy went to only 20% of the population. This principle is in effect in many areas of life. For instance, the top 20% of your clients are likely to be responsible for 80% of your profits. Or, 80% of your client hassles are likely to be coming from the most difficult 20% of your clients. And 20% of the actions you take for your business are likely to account for 80% of what makes you successful. Tim Ferris talks about this at some length in his groundbreaking book, *The Four-Hour Workweek*. If you are interested in increasing your freedom, your efficiency, and the deliberateness with which you create your work life, I cannot recommend this book highly enough to you.

I mention the 80/20 principle here because I want to re-emphasize the importance and benefits of paring things down to their essential components. If you regularly get in the habit of looking at things from the viewpoint of this principle, I think you will start assuming that there are things you can cut out, that are not really that necessary. And, you will start to look at what part of your efforts are *really* going to produce the results you want.

In the rest of this book, I am going to suggest a series of different methods and viewpoint shifts that I think will help any small web project succeed. I suggest you read through it, to begin to get the bigger picture that I think you'll need. Then, you can come back to different points, reflect on them more, and start to envision where you're going to need more information, or more help, to fill in the picture of your project.

I've broken the rest of the book into four steps:

- **Step 1.** Get your end goal clearly in mind.
- **Step 2.** Get the big picture, the greater context of how you're going to get where you want to go.
- **Step 3.** Understand the process of getting your project built, up, and running.
- **Step 4.** Prepare to actually *run* your system once it's built.

After you've read this, I hope you'll get the big picture that will put you in a much better position to plan, and work with professionals and take the actions needed to be successful.

Step 1: Get Your End Clearly In Mind

By far the most powerful and effective action you can take in any situation, is to clarify a muddy intention.

“If one does not know to which port is sailing, no wind is favorable.”

—Seneca

“You got to be careful if you don’t know where you’re going, because you might not get there.”

—Yogi Berra

Decide What Your Finish Line Is

What do you really want to get out of your web project? I believe it’s really important that you decide what it is, and get clear about this. In all likelihood, the process of clarifying this will actually make you become clearer about *what* is actually possible, and *how* it is achieved.

So, what do you want to get out of your web project? “A million dollars.” Sure. “The freedom to do what I want.” Okay. “More clients.” Fine. But what do you *really* want to get out of this? What’s behind *that*? In other words, when you get the big payoff you’re hoping to get from your web project—however grand or modest—what do you, personally, hope to achieve from that?

Emotional Goals and Functional Goals

Clarify your emotional goal and your functional goal.

You'll probably want to define both an *emotional goal* and a *functional goal*.

An emotional goal is the real, underlying reason why you're doing this in the first place—the personal reason. Examples of emotional goals:

- To have more time to spend with my family, so I'm not always at the office
- To sail around the world
- To get acclaim for my artwork
- To stop working for a boss
- To be able to only work with the clients I really want to work with, just doing the part of my work I really love doing

Your functional goal is the end result you envision you will get out of doing your web project. A functional goal might look something like:

- Attract ten new clients per month
- Bring in \$50,000 a year in passive income
- Sell one hundred copies of my novel every month
- Switch my business to 100% phone-base consulting

Your emotional goal is the reason you're doing this—the motivational force that keeps you going, keeps you excited, and is tied to your passion. Your functional goal is the end result you expect to get from running your system (that you expect to help lead you to the emotional goal).

Now, in some cases your emotional goal and your functional goal might be closely related. Perhaps your emotional goal doesn't involve money—perhaps you have a cause that's near and dear to your heart, and you want to get the message out to as many people as possible. Then, you might have a functional goal like, "reach 100,000 like-minded people by the end of the year with our message." In fact, it might sound like these two are really *the same*, but I think even here, they are a little different. The emotional goal simply is, to reach as many people as possible with your message. The functional goal is making certain assumptions—even if it's as simple as, "the internet will allow us to do this, and 100,000 is a reasonable number." So, I think it's probably wise to still separate these two things, and be clear on what they are.

Now, you are making an assumption—an assumption that your functional goal will result in (or contribute to) your emotional goal. Let's say your assumption is, "if I earn \$50,000 a year in passive income, I'll be able to spend more time with my family." This *might* be a good assumption. But it's good to recognize that it is, in fact, one of a great many assumptions that you are going to be making, along the way towards the successful completion of your project. Being clear on what your assumptions are will allow you to test them, and modify them as you go along, as needed.

Now, one assumption I am going to make is that your emotional goal is a core thing. That it aligns with your sense of purpose. Of course, these sorts of goals can change—but I hope your emotional goal is on some level very meaningful for you. If it's very meaningful, you will be willing to stick with it, and realize that it's bigger than *any* of the means you assume will get you there. Therefore, if you have to revisit the assumptions in your project, you will not be dissuaded from your emotional goal, even if you have to scrap the whole thing. Furthermore, when things need to be reworked, or simply get delayed, you will be able to refer back to your emotional goal to get back on track, if you need to.

Win Early, Win Often

Get your first win as soon as you can.

Small businesses and startups—anything with an entrepreneurial edge—are fueled by motivational energy as much as by money. This is a precious resource that I see as critical to foster in a web development process as anything else.

So, why not set up your system so that you'll get your first "win" as soon as possible? When I work with clients now, I try to set them up with a system that can generate that first win pretty quickly—and that they then know they can *continue* to operate, as planned, and scale up to continue getting wins. I believe that once you start to see that it's actually *working*—even if it's that first \$1 earned, or that first 25 email signups—and you see the relationship between what you have done, and that result—you will get a tremendous jolt of motivational energy!

I am amazed at how human motivation seems to work. I'll be walking around working on a project, with no evidence that things are working... chugging along... maybe my motivation starts to go down... maybe I start to forget why I was excited about that project. Maybe things start to drag. And then—for some reason—I get a win. Maybe someone says something that validates what I'm doing. Or I see that first glimmer of success. A validation—as if to say, "yes, Chris—you are not crazy after all! All of those ideas you had—you were right; there

was a purpose. Here it is. It's all going to work out!" All of a sudden, it's like, all the systems in my body (or is it my brain?) start to shift into this feeling of success. It all seems possible, and I am fueled for the rest of the day!

At some point I began to notice this and asked myself, "Hey! Why is it like this? Five minutes ago, I was just as close to success as I am right now. And yet, when that person told me that validating thing, somehow I got a thousand jolts of energy and now I'm totally inspired and feel like I could keep going all day on that one thing. Why couldn't I just feel that way to begin with, if I was already that close before? If I am generating all the negative or positive energy (you can call it chemicals, or energy, or whatever you like), why would I want to generate the negative ones, when the positive ones will move me further along?" Well—I don't know. But what I *do* know, is that we can engineer our experience so that we *do* have these types of wins, more regularly and more frequently, and that this will influence—probably *greatly*—the energy we have to put into the project. That is why I think it's so important to set up your project so that you can see the results of your efforts as quickly as possible. And it is also a wise thing to *frame* success in such a way that it is achievable easily. For example, if you've never made money online and that's your goal, why not make earning your first dollar your first big goal? You can always scale it up later!

Internally, getting the win sounds sort of like this: "Wow. That article I wrote actually brought those ten people to my website. If I hadn't written the article, and posted it, they would not have come. And not only that, one of them signed up for my email newsletter! Now... this is just the beginning! I know it wasn't that hard to write that article, really—and it will just get easier. So, it looks like if I keep doing what I'm doing, I can keep getting more, and more people to sign up, and it will keep getting easier, and keep growing!"

Now, I really think that this kind of excitement is the essence of creating your successful project. But I also think that this is a good example of what I'll call *informed enthusiasm*—that is, in the little example above, here is a person who roughly understands her system; she understands her part in it, and approximately how it's supposed to work. She understands the significance of what it would mean if her actions *scaled up*, and how that is supposed to happen. It is all based on *clear assumptions*.

In contrast, what I see with a lot of web newbie clients, is what I'll call *uninformed enthusiasm*. It looks kind of like this: "Wow. I'm so excited about getting my new website. It's finally online. [And now, I guess I'll be getting some visitors, somehow... yes, that will probably happen... neat! And, over time, I'll get lots of hits... yeah, lots and lots, and I'll put up a shopping cart... lots of people buy online, and they'll buy from my store... products. Products, money, success! Wow. This is so exciting!]" Do you see the difference? In case you did not catch it, all of the statements in brackets are composed of *vague assumptions*, about what will happen, and how it will happen.

Clear assumptions represent your informed understanding of how the different parts of your system are supposed to work. Vague assumptions, on the other hand, are largely unexamined. Clear assumptions will help you reach your goal. Vague assumptions can indicate places where you may have any number of hidden issues or difficulties that you are not seeing right now. The following table contrasts vague assumptions and clear assumptions, in regard to how any part of your project (or the project as a whole) is supposed to work.

Vague Assumptions	Clear Assumptions
<p>Often conceal obvious misconceptions, hidden by the lack of clarity, such as: “I know people will be searching on the phrase ‘Italian dining’ so we’ll optimize our home page for that phrase.”</p>	<p>Force us to examine our preconceptions, and question any hidden assumptions. For example, “oh —I had no idea that the majority of people will be searching on Italian <i>restaurants</i>, and a significant number will be searching on Italian <i>food</i>; never thought of that one. We’d better optimize our page for <i>those</i> phrases.”</p>
<p>Can conceal insecurities or psychological blocks. “I don’t want to think about that part right now. That will mean having to talk to people, and I don’t really like that. Let’s ignore this part until later.”</p>	<p>Force us to reveal <i>what we will actually be doing</i>. For example: “Oh —this plan intends me to write a blog post every week. I’m not much of a writer. We’d better think of a plan to handle that, otherwise this system will not work very well.”</p>
<p>Conceal important elements that might be missed. Example: “Let’s just put lots of dummy text here for the menus. We can fill it in later when we write the real text.”</p>	<p>Force us to get honest about the functional requirements. Example: “Oops! This menu design does not allow for second-level items. When we really sat down and figured out all the information we’ll be needing to show here, it’s pretty obvious that we’ll need to allow for two levels of menu.”</p>

Vague Assumptions	Clear Assumptions
Conceal fantastic thinking. Example: "I love cats and I know there will be a market for my cat sweaters. Let's go for it—shopping cart, custom designed site, the works!"	Get us looking at our realistic assumptions about what's going to happen. Example: "Clearly, we don't have enough initial market research to indicate whether the cat sweater idea is going to be viable or not. So part of our strategy will be to do some simple testing to verify that there'll be enough people to buy our cat sweaters, and we're prepared to shift gears if we have to."
Can unconsciously put the burden on other people. Example: "Oh—I just assumed when you said you'd set up that blog, you'd be posting the posts for me. Was I wrong?"	Get us to look realistically at our responsibility. "Okay, so I'll be the one doing the blog posting, right? I'll be happy to take that on. But we'll have to put in a piece for training, or I'm going to get frustrated."
Hard to test, since they are so vague, and often have a fogginess around them.	Easy to test, because we're sure what our assumption <i>is</i> , and what should happen if we're right, and what should happen if we're wrong.
Hard to modify, as they are hard to test. (If you can't test your assumption, you won't know whether you need to modify!)	Easy to modify, as they are easy to test.

In short, a clear-headed plan to achieve your goal combines the visionary aspects of planning, with the nuts-and-bolts understanding of how it's supposed to work.

At this point, I'll assume you're starting to have an idea of your emotional and functional goals, some idea about the rapid prototyping mindset, and are ready to start looking at ways to get the bird's eye view of the system you are going to build to achieve your goal.

Step 2: Get the Big Picture

Understand the System You're Building, and How it's Going to Achieve Your End

“Overwhelm is not due to a lack of time, it’s due to a lack of priorities.”

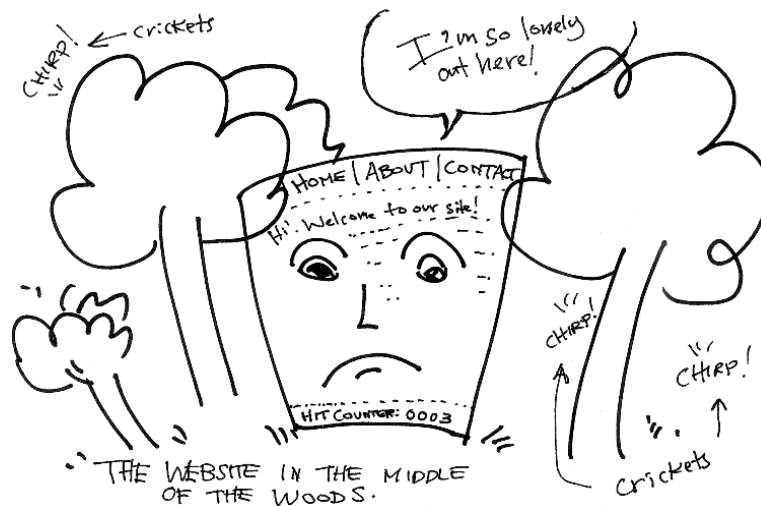
—Timothy Ferris

“The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.”

—Hans Hoffmann

What You are Building: A Marketing and Sales System

A website without a marketing strategy is like a shop in the middle of the forest.



By the end of this book, I want you to have a mind shift from thinking about your web project as “making a website,” to thinking of it as *building a web system*. If you are building any kind of website, you are building a marketing and sales platform. If you are seeking to improve an existing website, you are seeking to

improve a marketing and sales platform. If you are already quite clear on this, great! You have a leg up. But if you're like most newbies, this could use some clarification.

The following table clarifies some of the differences between these two ways of looking at your project:

“Making a Website”	“Building a Marketing and Sales Platform”
Focus on the “physical” site, its features, “cool factor,” bells, whistles, etc.	Focus on building a functional system that will be capable of producing results, of which a website is but one component.
Focus on getting the website up as the end result, with little or no thought about the bigger picture of how it will be used.	Focus on building a complete (if simple), functional system for achieving a specific aim.
Marketing is probably either (a) an afterthought, or (b) a thought for a later time.	Marketing is understood to be the core of the system. Everything is understood as moving visitors into a marketing process.
Sales, if considered, is most likely assumed—e.g., “we will have things for sale, so therefore people will want to come to the store and buy them.”	Sales is understood as the critical follow-on to the deliberate marketing process. Thought is given to why people will buy, and what will motivate higher conversions from visitors to buyers.
The interaction of parts—roles, actions, and functions—that will be necessary to convert the site into a tool for reaching a specific goal are less likely to be defined, and whole parts may be missed.	The interaction of parts is clearly understood; in fact, the system is understood as an interaction of different parts—as a system.

I hope that, throughout this book, you will gradually grow to see what I am talking about here, from a variety of perspectives—and in the end, whatever method you decide to go with to create your project, you will be further along by having seen things from this different viewpoint.

Understand Your Audience

Know who you're talking to.

A key principle of marketing, whether you are selling something, or just trying to spread a message, is that you need to understand who your customers are! It's called your *target market*. It's who you're speaking to. What are their burning needs? What's really important to them? Where do they live? What do they think like? What kinds of messages do they respond to? What makes them tick? *Why will they buy from you?*

If you can't identify these questions, you will have a much harder time selling things to your market. What's more, it's really important that you shift your thinking so that you are speaking *to them*, and not *about yourself*! The classic joke is, your audience is all tuned into the radio station WIIFM—that stands for “what's in it for me!” If you're not broadcasting on that frequency, you're not going to be able to grab their attention. Our natural inclination, when talking to customers, is to speak about ourselves. If you do this, you will bore them. So you'll need to get in the habit of speaking from their point of view, and addressing their needs.

Much more could be written on this subject, but I just wanted to whet your appetite, and get you thinking in terms of what your market wants to hear, and not what you want to say!

Understand What Makes You Special

Get clear on your uniqueness.

Another key marketing concept is called *positioning*—what makes you different in what you sell, or do, or are saying? Maybe it's your level of service. Maybe it's your free shipping. Or maybe it's your unique styles, that people cannot get anywhere else. Whatever it is, you are really going to want to hone in on what it is, and identify it. Once you do, you can use it to define your *USP*, or *unique selling proposition*. One of the classic ones is Domino's “Thirty minutes, or it's free!” That quickly and clearly identified what was special about them; you didn't have to think long and hard about it. Another of the classics is Federal Express' “When it absolutely, positively, has to be there overnight.” Again, you know

exactly why to use this company. It's crystal clear, and compelling to the market they are serving.

Again, this is just an attempt to barely whet your appetite about marketing, so that you will at least get the concept of what is required.

If you are not familiar with basic marketing concepts, it would definitely help you tremendously to become so. There is a short list of some very good and entertaining resources on this in the Resources section.

Make Sure You Have a Market

Without a market, you'll have no one to buy from you.

Yet another reason to keep your system down to its bare essentials is that it will allow you to test your market and make corrections easily. If this is a brand new market to you, and you are just speculating that there will be enough customers for you to meet your objectives, this becomes especially important.

Let's say you're really excited about selling recycled aluminum pencil holders. You're inspired. You've figured out your cost of goods, shipping, etc., and will still make a profit on each one. But... let's just say *you have no idea whether anyone wants them!* You definitely do not need to be the only person serving your market, or the dominant player. (In fact, competition in a market is a good sign that there *is* a market!) You just need to bring *enough* people to your site to achieve your aims. But assuming these people will be there is not a good idea!

There are a number of good methods you can use to start researching your market, including keyword research and Google AdWords. Just be sure, if you are basing your work on such a key assumption, that *testing* is in your vocabulary! Remember that the more experimental (new-to-you) your project is, the more you're probably going to have to adjust things as you go along, to get it right. That's fine—that's part of the process. Just expect it.

Also, be sure to develop a method of testing whether or not people will actually *buy* what you are selling—not just come to your page! There are good ways to do this.

And, if you discover that there really *isn't* the market you imagined, return to your emotional goal, and come up with a new functional goal to achieve it!

Marketing is a Conversation

High-value marketing online is about getting into a positive conversation with your target market.

“If you always give you will always have.”

—Chinese proverb

The web is about giving. It makes it incredibly easy to give away good, free information. If you plan to have more than just a brochure site (one that essentially acts as your Yellow Pages ad online), then you’ll likely be giving away information online. (Of course, you could go with a 100% advertising model, but that could get expensive.)

Assuming you’re going to be providing information, you’re going to be starting a conversation of some kind. You’ll be establishing your “brand”—how you, or your company, is perceived on the internet. If you write a blog, or an email newsletter, or produce videos, you’ll be establishing this presence with your audience.

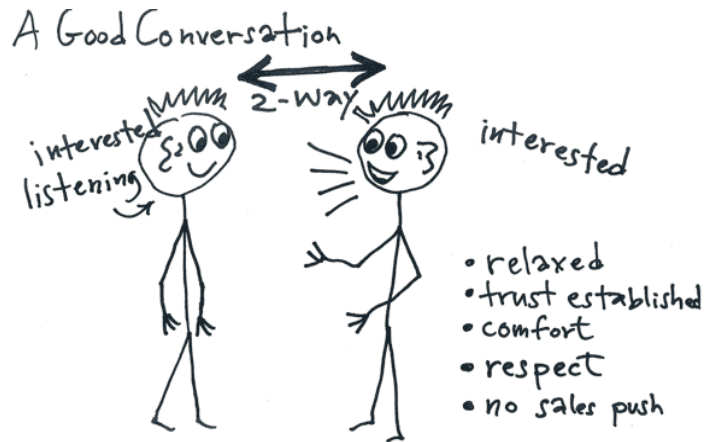
When people hear from you over time, a number of good things will start to happen:

- **You become familiar, a known quantity.** Known quantities are more credible (and credibility is everything in marketing).
- **You establish trust.** For instance, you said you’d send an email every Tuesday with tips about carpet cleaning, and you *do* send the email. Or you promised not to sell their email to spammers, and you didn’t.
- **You establish your expert status.** If you’re giving tips, or answering questions, or just talking about your subject in some helpful way, you’re establishing that you really do know what you’re talking about.
- **You stay on their minds.** Maybe they didn’t *need* their carpets cleaned when they first heard of you, but they stayed on the list, and now, seven months later, they do. Maybe they haven’t really read the email for a while, but still—you’re the first person that comes to mind, now that they need their carpets cleaned.

Of course, in order to gain all the benefits from this ongoing conversation, you’re going to have to turn that one-time visit to your website into an ongoing thing—whether it’s a subscription to your YouTube channel, a signup on your email list, a podcast subscription, etc. (Otherwise, all that work of getting them there in the first place is sort of a one-shot deal. They don’t know you from Adam, and you

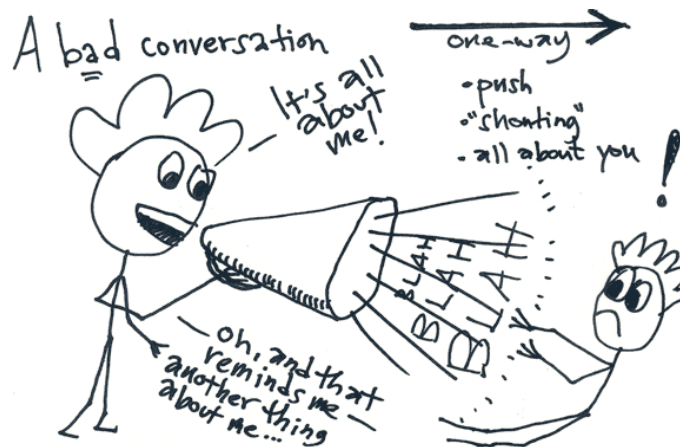
have to establish all your credibility, trust, etc., all at once on that one single page.)

What Makes Up a Good Conversation?



On this note, it's a good idea to consider what makes a good conversation. Some of the characteristics are:

- You are listening to the other person at least as much as you are talking
- You are genuinely interested
- You respond to their energy, their pace, and what they're to be interested in
- You are flexible
- You reflect back to them that you've heard what they have to say
- They become genuinely interested



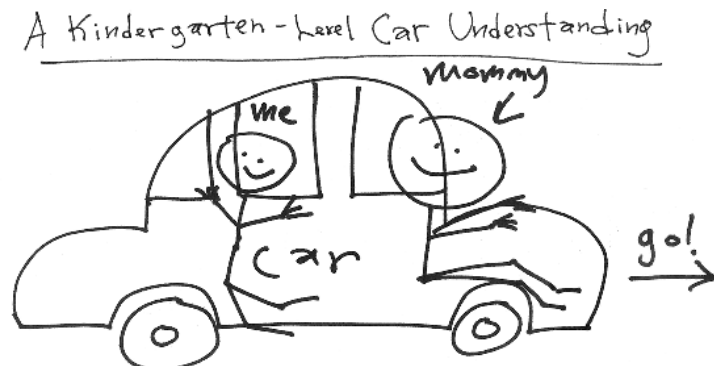
In contrast, what makes up a bad conversation? Some of the characteristics are:

- You go on and on about yourself
- You don't really care what the other person has to say, and when they're talking, you're just waiting until they finish so you can start talking about yourself again
- You want to take more than you give; you want something from them
- It's uncomfortable, unrelaxed; they are probably just staying there to be polite

Can you see how this relates to your website? The web gives you the opportunity to engage in a real "conversation" with people. And what's interesting is, if you show your personality, and are cordial, and conduct a good conversation, they will begin to feel like they *know* you. They will begin to trust you. You will begin to have trust with them. They will begin to like you. And of course, people want to buy from people they like and trust. And all this can happen without them having met you.

Understanding the Parts: The Car Analogy

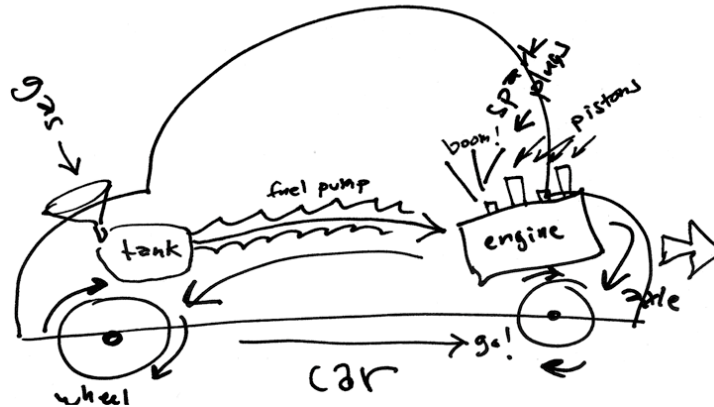
It's important that you have a basic understanding of how the different parts of your web marketing system will work. I'm not talking about a deep, thorough understanding—just a rudimentary, "sixth grade" level understanding.



As an analogy, take the car. A kindergarten-level understanding of how a car works could be summed up as follows:

“Mommy drives me where I need to go in the car. It goes vroom for a while, and then we are where mommy takes us.”

A Sixth Grade Car Understanding



On the other hand, a sixth grade understanding of how a car works might look something like this:

“Gas goes into the gas tank, and a pump pumps it to the spark plugs, which make an explosion. The explosion makes the crank turn, and that makes the wheels go.”

There is no need to get more sophisticated than this. However, when you come into the showroom with *no* knowledge of how the pieces work together, you will make the job of your helpers very difficult. You will also make it very hard to get your expectations met. And, you will be very susceptible to the wishes—whether ethical or not—of others! Remember—the kindergarten level of understanding things is very magical, and kindergartners aren’t all that capable of helping grown-ups do actual work. The web is complex, and you’re unlikely to have great results without a rudimentary understanding of how things work.

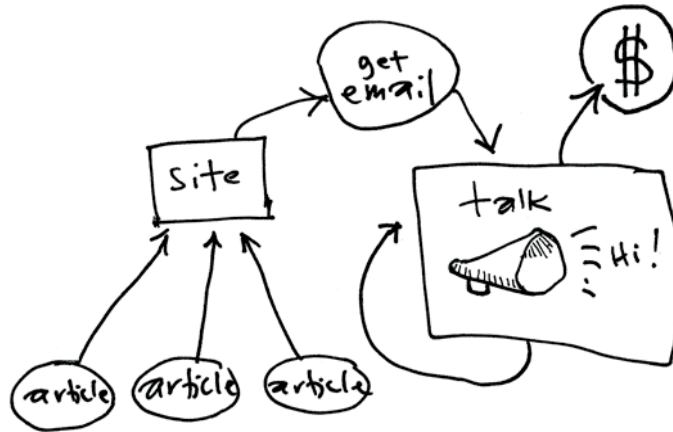
A Kindergarten understanding of the web



Many people have this same level of understanding of how the web works. In web terms, a kindergarten-level understanding could be communicated as:

“A web designer does his magic, and makes a cool and amazing website. Some technology magic happens, and money comes out the other end.”

I suggest that it’s really to your great advantage—as well as anyone who works with you—that you upgrade your knowledge of how the web works to a sixth grade level.



A Sixth Grade Understanding of the Web .

Know Your Expectations

Understand what it is you think you’ll to be getting, once you get what you think you want.

Know your expectations going in, otherwise, nobody is going to be able to meet them. Most professionals in any field are trained to perform a function in that field. They are not trained as business consultants, therapists, or personal coaches. You’re going to have to identify the various functions and roles you’ll need help on, and which ones they can do, and which ones can’t. If there are major gaps, you’re going to have to fill them somehow.

How much should a website cost?

This is a question I hear often. It’s surprising, because this is the equivalent of asking, “how much should a car cost?” If someone were to ask you that, you’d presumably want to know a lot of things before you’d want to give them any answer:

- What *kind* of car?
- How old?
- What do you have to spend?
- How are you going to use it?
- How reliable does it need to be?
- How much does cosmetics matter to you?
- Are you planning to do any of the work yourself, or are you planning to pay someone to do all the maintenance for you?

The answer for the question, “how much should a website cost” is “somewhere between free and a million dollars.” In other words, it has no meaning. When I was still doing my own web development (until recently) and a client was at this level of understanding, it would raise a lot of questions for me:

- “What is this person really expecting?”
- “What do *they* consider a ‘good’ website?”
- “What are they really expecting to get out of this?”

“How much should a website cost” is coming from a kindergarten-level understanding of how websites work. Nothing wrong with that! It just means we need to upgrade our understanding of what we’re dealing with here.

Now, here’s a good sixth-grade-level version of this same question: “How much should a five-page brochure website cost, that I can easily make my own changes to as needed, as well as adding or renaming pages, and with a level of design equivalent to, say, a local cable TV station, but not CBS?”

This is a good start towards getting helpful answers.

Now, this person might *still* have some hidden assumptions in here that would need to be refined—assumptions such as:

- “When I get my website, a lot of people will come to it, and I’ll make some more money.” [—*How?*]
- “My new website will be a start. I’ll just get something up there. Then, I’ll promote it somehow.” [*Where does that leave you? Do you have a plan?*]

Understand Your Business Model

Know how the parts are supposed to work; a business model is a realistic path to success.

You will want to start looking at your web project as similar to a little machine. It has various parts. When the parts are functioning together as expected, then everything goes fine, and page views are converted into sales, or email signups, or whatever it is you want people to do. In a crude way, this machine is your *business model*—how you'll make your money.

At its root, all businesses come down to the following two factors: *Traffic* and *conversion*. Traffic is the number of people who come to your web page. Conversion is the percentage of those people who actually *buy* something. That ratio is called your *conversion rate*.

Let's say you want to make \$100 a day online, and you have a conversion rate of 1%, and your product gives you a product of \$10 per sale. Your formula would look like this:

Total earnings (\$100) / profit per product (\$10) = \$10, so you'd need to sell 10 products a day.

If you have a conversion rate of 1%, that means you'll need 1,000 visitors a day to come to your website, to make you your \$100 a day.

So, how are you going to get these 1,000 visitors? There are two main *online* ways, and there are some other on- and offline ones as well: The two main ones are search engine traffic (SEO), and pay-per-click advertising (PPC), such as Google AdWords.

SEO uses articles with cleverly-placed search phrases, or *keywords*, embedded within them. When people go into Google and search on the phrase associated with your article, they find your article, and go to it. (There's a lot more to it, but that's the basics.)

PPC, such as AdWords, also responds to keywords that a searcher types in, but the result that is displayed is a little advertisement (in Google, it's on the right-hand side of the page). You pay money for this.

Service Model or Product Model?

Will your success mean doing more work you enjoy, or having more money to do other things you enjoy doing?

Another thing I would caution you to be aware of: Are you developing a service model or a product model? That is, is your little machine going to give you lots of sales of something—in which case your hourly effort is not largely involved in the process? Or, is your business model going to drive more service business to you? That is, more clients?

For example, let's say I write an e-book, and sell it for \$39. I put up a web page that gets 100 hits a day, and 1% of these buy the book. Now, once I've made the book, I can sell that same information again and again, with very little additional effort. That's called a product model. On the other hand, let's say that page asked people to call a phone number, to buy my consulting services. So, let's say ten people a day called me—I'd have to find a way to respond to every one of them with my time, get an employee to do it, or hire a new employee. That's a service model.

I point this out because for many of us, there is such a strong cultural belief that ties our production of money to our expenditure of time. Even when I decided to start my web design business for *independence*, I continued to work as hard as I could, seven days a week, building custom projects for each client. Until one day, I realized this was not how I wanted to spend my time.

This is a very personal choice, obviously. But I just wanted to point out that, if your web project involves creating more *freedom* for you, then bringing you more clients may not give you this. However, if you want to be serving more people, then that's probably what you want.

Although I haven't gone into all the details of building a new web business, I hope I have given you some a better idea of what to expect, and what you may want to learn more about.

In the next step, I will talk about the things I think you need to know about setting up and building a successful project, hiring the right people, and when to put your efforts to get it out there.

Step 3: Build it Quickly, and Get it Out There

“Good thoughts are no better than good dreams, unless they be executed.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

“The critical ingredient is getting off your butt and doing something. It’s as simple as that. A lot of people have ideas, but there are few who decide to do something about them now. Not tomorrow. Not next week. But today. The true entrepreneur is a doer, not a dreamer.”

—Nolan Bushnell, founder of Atari and Chuck E. Cheese's

Set a Milestone

Set a definite target for the first version of your system—one that you can win easily. (You can scale it up later.)

Before you start your project, now’s the time to set some milestones to achieve. For instance, let’s say your functional goal is “earn \$50,000 a year in passive income.” And let’s say you’ve researched your marketplace, and you’re all ready to go like I’ve outlined above. You’ll want to set at least one initial milestone for your launch.

Let’s say your initial strategy is to build an email list, so you can start a conversation with your prospects. Let’s just say you set your initial target at building a list of 300 emails (leads) by July 18th.

Again, keep it simple, and get it out there. But set a milestone so that you and any professionals you are working with have a clear target. Also, note that the milestone in this example is driving *specifically* towards a functional goal—“earn \$50,000 a year in passive income.” As the client, I understand the relationship between these two things—“build leads, converse with them, make them offers that convert to sales, and make money.” See how it all fits together? Your model will be different, but understand these basics. An example of a *not-so-good* milestone would be “beautiful website built by July 18th.” Why? This milestone

may have value to you, but it's not a useful target in itself, for the completion of your project, because it doesn't relate directly to your functional goal.

Use Technology Effectively

Make correct use of technology, and don't be dazzled or intimidated by it.

As a web newbie, it is very easy to be dazzled by the technology. "This one guy says he can do the entire site in Flash, and it will be hooked up to a database back end (whatever that is), and that is the best thing for my type of site. He seems to know what he's talking about. At least, he sure could talk about it for a long time." It's also easy to be intimidated by it. "The other guy told me if I did not go with Microsoft technologies I would be putting myself at risk to known vulnerability, and I would definitely need the \$250 a month Site Protector Seal of Approval, for added invulnerability."

And of course, it's also easy to become just plain *confused* by all the technology as well!

Here's another place where our rapid prototyping philosophy comes in! You need to use the minimal technology to accomplish your ends—and no more. While this doesn't mean you'll become an *expert* at the technology, of course, it does increase the chances that you'll have a basic understanding of what it works, and why it was chosen.

According to our keep-it-simple philosophy, you'll want to look at your little system, and decide what you're actually going to need. For instance:

- Do you really need a custom web design? Maybe you can get away with a template for now.
- Do you really need your own integrated e-commerce system? Maybe you can get away with using Yahoo Stores, and let them deal with most of the hassles.
- Do you really need an 800 number? Maybe you can get by with putting your own number on the page for now.

I've gotta tell you—here is one of the areas where it will most pay you to educate yourself a little bit about how all this works, because this is really the area where you're going to start breaking out the checkbook. And for all the honesty and integrity of most web designers, programmers, and marketers, most will be happy to sell you a fully-designed website, if that's what you tell them you need!

They won't necessarily consider it their job to tell you about the full picture, which is why I am doing it here.

Now, I'm not saying you *shouldn't* get a full web design. Maybe you should (although even here, be clear about the *level* of design you need—that's important). What I'm suggesting is that you look at the whole system you're building, remember that *you* (or possibly your employees) are going to be running it, and decide what is really essential here, for you to make it to the finish line.

Get the Right Help for the Job

Just because someone knows a lot more than you about something, doesn't necessarily mean they will be able to give you what you want.

"The first 90% of the code accounts for the first 90% of the development time. The remaining 10% of the code accounts for the other 90% of the development time."

—Tom Cargill, computer programmer

If you are not armed with knowledge about what you want, you will most likely be at the mercy of various experts (of varying degrees of expertise). Web development is still a bit of a "wild west". There are a *lot* of different skills sets that can go into the development of a modern website. What I have seen, again and again, is that people don't know where to turn. Once they find someone who seems able to do a lot of what they think they want, they'll often end up going with that person, even though they really didn't have enough information yet to make a good decision. The scenario usually goes something like this:

Theresa (the client) gets an idea for making a website. Perhaps she feels the pressure of the lack in their current site; or perhaps she has an idea and she has an idea that the web will be the way to help promote it.

She goes online and searches under "web design". Argh. So many companies. None of them scream "authenticity," the way she is looking for. How much should it cost? How do you know if someone is good?

She asks a few friends. She knows that her brother-in-law has done websites for a few people. How much would he charge? Hmm... Not sure if he's really going to be able to handle this job.

Finally, she runs into a guy, Ted, who's a friend of a friend. "I'm a web designer. Yep, I can do the job for you, no problem."

"Okay," Theresa says. "How much will that cost?"

"Oh, I can't do it for less than \$3,500. But that will include submission to 500 search engines, full meta-tag placement, and I only work with a web safe color palette. What's more, you will have unlimited email accounts, and it comes with three years of web hosting."

"Thanks," says Theresa. "I'll think about that. I'll get back to you."

Six days go by. Theresa has asked around a few more friends, checked the web some more. But there seems to be this barrier—there's a *ton* of people she *could* go with.—But who should she *trust*? She's heard some horror stories—of people paying thousands of dollars and still not getting what they wanted. "Well," Theresa finally says to herself, "maybe I'm being too picky. Ted *does* seem like a pretty nice guy." She calls Ted up and says, "okay, let's go for it."

My sense is that a lot of web newbies decide on a web designer with a process that is not all that different from this one. Incidentally, many of the things Ted offered were totally bogus in the development of a modern website. And yes, I have seen all of them offered in the past couple of years. My main advice here on finding the right web designer, or other professional to work with, is basically: Read this book. The first step you want to do, is educate yourself about how the process works. Frankly, it can be just as hard for a professional web designer to work with a newbie as it can for the newbie to work with the designer. If I were you, I'd look at the whole picture presented in this book, and then get a sense of what kinds of assistance you feel you will need on a professional level.

Remember that web design is really a huge variety of different disciplines, all blended together. And remember that no one person who calls himself "web designer," or "internet guru," or whatever, is going to know everything that every client will possibly need help on. Furthermore, some of the skills a professional web designer employs are a matter of taste—design being the biggest of them. Furthermore, your web designer may not consider it his or her job to provide you with the kind of overall context I am trying to provide you here. Again, I think that here is another place where the corporate client has a leg up, because she will likely have the funds to work with a larger firm, with a larger budget, and may therefore be supplied with a wider variety of perspectives and a greater sense of context.

(If you are interested in some help in finding the right professionals to work with on your project, or general consulting around the topics of this book, you can see the Consulting Services section at the end of this book.)

The (Un)Importance of Design

Use the minimal design that suits your purposes, and have it reinforce your brand.

I find that a lot of web newbies (and others) think of their project, start by envisioning their project as a “beautiful”, custom-designed, “cool” website. True, some could care less about design—but for many people, design represents the most visible, palpable thing about the web. The positive impression they get when they go to a certain website, based on the cool design, positive imagery, and so on, leave an impression on them.

A few points I’d like to make about this:

- **Beauty is very subjective.** One person’s gorgeous, cool website is another person’s hideous mess. So, be careful at labeling design as “good” or “bad.”
- **Start with the minimum design you need.** Because a lot of people think so much about the design, I think they put a lot of emphasis on how the site will *look*, and ignore other aspects. As I keep emphasizing in this book, I think you want to distribute your resources (of time, money, and motivation) carefully, and construct the minimal system you need to get the job done. If you’re making a high-end jewelry site, you’re going to need a pretty nice looking website, appropriate to the what your audience is expecting. If you’re making a site to distribute lesson plans to teachers, the design can probably be a fair bit less fancy. In either case, you may really want to consider whether you need any custom design work. There are a huge variety of web templates available at little or no cost.
- **Some of the most profitable sites are not that beautiful.** Sure, mega-sites like Amazon.com look beautiful, for the most part. But if you look at a lot of smaller personal sites that are earning very good money, you’ll see that a lot of them are not terribly well designed at all.
- **Design is not just “beautiful” or “ugly”; more importantly, it is *appropriate* or *inappropriate*.** When a professional graphic designer thinks about a design project, their first questions are not about the colors, fonts, etc. Their first questions are, “What is the client trying to convey here? What message are they trying to send? What kind of feelings do they want people to associate with their site?” In marketing, all this is considered part of your *brand*—the collection of associations that you want people to “brand” you with. For a high-end jewelry site, it might be things like: “pure, unique, elegant, and rare.” To reflect this, a professional designer might look for a design with a very clean feeling, lots of white space, and a certain look of mysterious beauty. For a plumbing site, it might be, “reliable, steady, experienced.” A designer would look for fonts, colors, and layout to reflect this.

Plan for a Maintained System

Take time to plan for the resources and time to run your system.

As you are setting up your system, it is easy to have your attention get caught up in the idea that your end goal is a website, or your end goal is to have all the parts of your system in working order. Well, not exactly! Your end goal is to have a system that you can run; and as you'll see in Step 4, the purpose of all this building is to build you a system that you (and possibly your helpers) will be able, and will want to, run, to build your online business.

Therefore, you're going to want to put some planning time into asking the following questions:

- Who will maintain your site, if you need to make changes to it, such as page additions or edits?
- Who will post to the blog, or send out the newsletter?
- Who will *write* the blog posts, the newsletters, and so on? Or, who will shoot and upload the videos?

Once again, when you understand how all the basic elements of your system are supposed to work together, it will be easy for you to ask these questions. Just be sure you plan a budget—of your time, for those things you'll be doing; and of money, for those things that other people will be doing—that takes into account the things that will be needed

This includes scheduling and budgeting for any training you'll need. For example, if your system includes you posting a weekly blog post to a WordPress blog, you may want to get some training on how to use WordPress. There are videos, books, or you could find someone to train you one-on-one.

Once you've built your system, you'll want to start looking at the long-term process: running it. This is really the goal of the whole game. And, unless you plan to outsource everything, you (or an assistant) will be doing at least part of it.

Step 4: Run Your System, and Modify as Needed

“Simple to open a shop; another thing to keep it open.”

—Chinese proverb

“Don’t confuse the complex with the difficult. Most situations are simple; many are just emotionally *difficult* to act upon. The problem—and the solution—are usually obvious, and, simple.

—Timothy Ferris

It's a Marathon, Not a Sprint—Enjoy It

Build a system you will enjoy running, and run it.

Now, if you have built a system according to my recommendations, you should be in a fairly good place: You have a clear goal in mind, you know how you intend to get there, you’ve got the players in place, and you know your role. Now, enjoy it! Part of what makes the web so interesting is that it gives you a chance to express your unique voice in some way, and reach out to your customers, your clients, or the audience for your message. I hope you will set up a system that you enjoy using, and enjoy participating in this conversation!

It’s about getting into a habit. Maybe you decide you are going to post a new article to your blog every Monday, speaking to your customers. Here is where the crank starts turning, where you start building that voice, and learning how to have fun with it.

If you hate writing, I hope you don’t plan a step that says “write an article every Monday.” Maybe you do a video. Maybe you pay someone else to write the article. In any way—set yourself up to enjoy it! From all that I have understood about internet marketing, even most of the people who make a gazillion dollars still do a fair bit of the work themselves. They love it! They got past the resistance and discouragement, until things started to work for them. They made it a part of

their system. They really appreciate their audience. And their audience has rewarded them.

I hope you will be able to do the same!

Know When to Continue, When to Modify

Exercise wisdom in persevering in your actions, and wisdom in changing course.

“Of all the stratagems, to know when to quit is the best.”

—Chinese proverb (probably from *The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu)

“Pride is stupid. Being able to quit things that don’t work is integral to being a winner. Going into a project or job without defining when ‘worthwhile’ becomes ‘wasteful’ is like going into a casino without a cap on what you will gamble.”

—Timothy Ferris

Seth Godin wrote a book called *The Dip*, that I cannot recommend highly enough to you. It is about the wisdom to quit when quitting is best, and the wisdom to stick it out when sticking it out is best. He presents many paradigm-shifting ideas in this book. He states that most people tend to quit when things get most uncomfortable—and this is often the worst time to quit; and most people tend to keep going when it’s easy to persevere for perseverance’s sake—and this is often the worst time to keep going.

What Godin means by *the dip*, is that place where you’ve already passed the starting line of your project. You’re past the initial “wow” of the start. Maybe people are no longer cheering you on. You haven’t made your first sale yet. Maybe you haven’t gathered your first lead. It seems like a *great* time to give up. This uncomfortable place is often the weird zone you have to go through when you’re trying something new, the place you go before you get to your first win. (See why I encouraged you to get your first win quickly?)

So, this is just a caution to be willing to make mistakes; to persevere if perseverance is warranted; and to be okay with changing course if that makes sense as well. This flexibility will help you reach your emotional goal.

Become a Consumer of the Type of Media Your Produce

If you blog, start reading some blogs. If you write a newsletter, subscribe to some newsletters. Participate a little, and give something back.

I hope you will participate in at least a few examples of the media you, yourself, are producing! For example, if you are producing a blog, it's a great idea to use a service such as Google Reader to read some other blogs in your field. Even if you're not doing a blog, using a *feed reader*, such as Google Reader (also known as an *RSS reader*) is a really great way to stay abreast of developments in your field. It's then easy to pass these along to your readers. You become more of an expert!

Again, if you are producing an email newsletter, I hope that you will search the web and find a few other good newsletters to subscribe to. They could be in fields related to what you are talking about, or perhaps other aspects of your business. A great example for people who market services is Robert Middleton's More Clients eZine. This will really help you understand the mindset that is necessary in order to be successful in this world.

Honestly: This whole mindset of marketing is about giving back. I think you have to give back and participate, in order to really "get it."

Participating means, if you like something in someone's blog post, make a comment. Or, use a *social bookmarking* service (such as Delicious) to bookmark it, which will increase its popularity. Over time, you may even develop relationships with some of these other authors, and make reference to each others' blogs or newsletters, giving each other exposure to related markets.

I hope this e-book has given you a taste, at least, of the kinds of questions I would ask, if I were starting out to develop a new web project. If you have any questions, or would like to see changes to this book, please see the Feedback page.

What's Next

Now that you've read this, I hope you'll have a better sense of the "big picture" you'll need to get things moving in the right direction.

Over the next year, I will be producing a number of guides, to help web newbies navigate different aspects of producing their web marketing and sales system, including pricing, technology, and how to select an appropriate web designer.

I will also be setting up a web forum, for web newbies to share information and resources, and a Resources section, where I will recommend selected books and web pages that are of particular use to a web newbie.

And of course, I'm always happy to provide consulting to you, which you can read about on the Consulting Services page, at the end of this document.

Feedback

Thank you very much for reading the first edition of my book! I really appreciate it, and I hope you got a lot out of it. If you feel like you have a better idea of how to get started, and “make it to the finish line,” then I will feel like I have been successful.

But, this is my first attempt to distill all this information in a way that will make sense to people in a book form. So, I hope you will let me know what you think—positive feedback is great! But also, I would love to know if there’s anything you’d like to see change—anything you’d like to see added, disagree with, or whatever—please go to <http://www.RealSimpleSuccess.com/reader-feedback>.

Also, feel free to email me at chris@RealSimpleSuccess.com.

Thanks again!

Chris

About Chris

Chris Burbridge started his software career at the age of 17, programming video games on his father's rudimentary CP/M computer, back in 1983. Since then, he has worked as a freelance graphic designer, a copy editor, a writer, and—for fourteen years—as a computer programmer for the software industry, developing online help systems, websites, relational databases, and custom text processing tools.

In 2005, he started an independent web design and development company, geared toward helping small businesses and startups create a successful presence on the web. He ended this business in 2008, when he decided to devote his full-time internet efforts to helping steer people in the right direction, and leaving the actual creation of websites to somebody else. Hence, you see this book.

He is available for consulting worldwide at chris@RealSimpleSuccess.com.

Resources

Here is a brief list of resources I hope you will find as useful and indispensable as I have. Please let me know if you'd like to see other types of resources here as well.

Motivation & Effectiveness

Here are three books devoted to keeping it simple, and seeing your project through to the end. You can certainly see here, some of the major influences on my philosophy!

The Dip: A Little Book That Teaches You When to Quit (and When to Stick) (<http://tinyurl.com/4bds49>), Seth Godin. I regard this as a must-have for anyone starting out on a new venture. It provides invaluable practical information on when to stick it out, and when to re-think your strategy.

The 4-Hour Workweek: Escape 9-5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich (<http://tinyurl.com/46b2zs>), Timothy Ferris. This is a revolutionary book about deliberately creating the life you want to live. For thousands of people, myself included, who had already been thinking about these subjects, I think he succeeded in opening our eyes even a lot more. He questions all assumptions, driving home the importance of simplicity, clarity, and de-coupling the idea of "hard work" from the idea of creating wealth.

Getting Real (<https://gettingreal.37signals.com>), 37 Signals. A brilliant book by a brilliant young web company, who has produced some refreshingly simple (and successful) software over the past few years. The book is meant to address the building of web applications, but it is really great advice for the wise and simple creation of *anything*. Keep it simple, get it out there, stay lean.

Business Planning

SCORE | Counselors to America's Small Business (<http://www.score.org>). SCORE is an invaluable business resource, providing inexpensive business basics courses, as well as free counseling on all aspects of running a small business. If you do not yet have a background in running a small business, I urge you to get a grounding in the basics before you really start going!

The One Page Business Plan: Start With a Vision, Build a Company! (<http://tinyurl.com/538jyy>), James T., Jr. Horan. Here is a very handy and simple way of

distilling lots of business planning information into a fun, easy-to-read visual format, that makes it easier to think about, talk about, and change. More of a book for producing a business plan for you *own* use, not for the bank's, but if you ever do need to produce a business plan for the bank, this will give you a firm footing to start from.

Marketing

Marketing Plan Workbook (<http://tinyurl.com/3sfo6p>), Robert Middleton. A helpful free resource aimed at people marketing service businesses, but a lot of it can be applied to the marketing of any business, and gets you thinking.

All Marketers Are Liars (<http://tinyurl.com/4ztvh2>), Seth Godin. Another brilliant book by the marketing genius, this one drives home what marketing is really about: telling stories that people want to hear.

The Thirty Day Challenge (<http://tinyurl.com/4kfxzc>). If you want to get started in *really* understanding how internet marketing works—for absolutely free—try this out. Every year, consummate internet marketer Ed Dale and the gang get together and *give away* an entire month-long, step-by-step course on how to make your first dollar online! Very much in keeping with my thinking (he influenced it a lot, actually!), the emphasis is on understanding the steps, not getting caught in the details, and driving home towards the finish line of a modest, but *actual* win. He knows (as I do) that once you make that first dollar, you can *scale up* to make many, many more dollars!

Consulting Services

If you are interested in my consulting services, I am available worldwide chris@RealSimpleSuccess.com. Some of my services include:

- **Internet system consulting.** I provide a basic service, based around all of the principles in this book. The fee includes a custom report, a recording of the consultation if desired. I provide a 100% guarantee: If you decide to go forward with your web project, and do not feel that working with me was worth your while, or saved you time and/or money equal to the cost of the consultation, I will refund your full cost.
- **Web designer referral service.** For an additional fee, I provide a web designer referral service, whereby I will match you up with a web designer whom I have chosen for their particular capabilities, competency, and abilities in working with web newbies. All designers, companies, and programmer are “vetted” by me—I have thoroughly interviewed each of them, and will match them with your needs, style, location, and budgetary needs. Again, my guarantee applies.
- **Ad-hoc consulting.** Additional consulting is available via telephone in 15-minute increments.
- **Free, ten-minute consultations.** I have a YouTube channel where I answer a client’s questions for free, in a call-in show format. If you are interested in being a “guest” on one of my videos, send me an email (at chris@RealSimpleSuccess.com) about your issue, and I will be delighted to answer your question if I can, on one of my videos.

Rates and details subject to change. For the latest information, please go to www.RealSimpleSuccess.com.

Please feel free to contact me about any of my consulting services. I will be happy to speak with you free of charge!

Sincerely,



Chris Burbridge