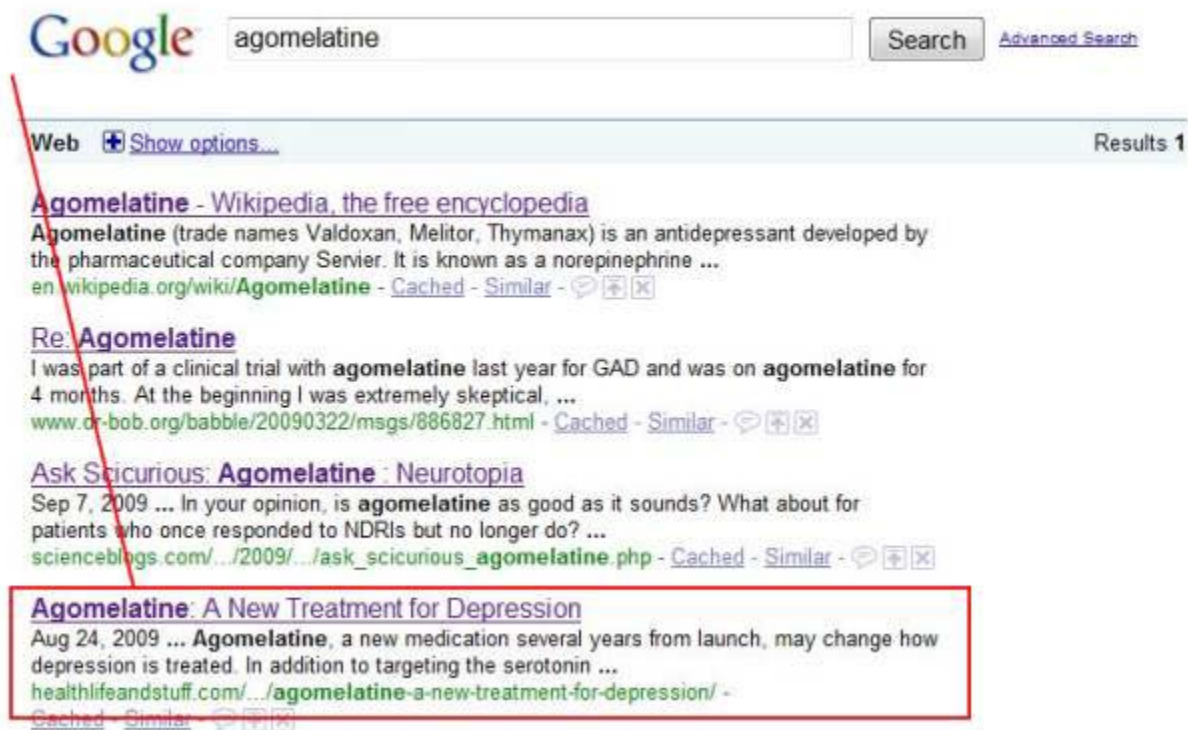


# The King's Rose: How to Compete Online & Win

David Gurevich

## Introduction:

Check out the following picture:



Hey, that's my website! And it has the #4 search result in Google for a major drug, ahead even of the official drug company. Not bad. Better yet - I've gotten on page one of Google for other, bigger brand-name medications.

Is it hard to be on top of Google for a \$300+ million dollar drug?

Yes, if you're trying to sell shoddy pills. Yes, if you provide just average content. Yes, if you do what you think you're capable of instead of what you can actually achieve.

*No* - if you listen to what people want. *No*, if you figure out what people want, then give it to them.

*Simplicity, quality, and respect.*

This guide will teach you 85% of what most search engine optimization pros know. You'll learn

the MCA method, how to build attention to your website, and you'll see what it takes to reach page one of Google for very valuable search phrases like “business valuation.”

By giving this guide away for free, I'm giving up thousands of dollars in sales. Perhaps I'm naïve, but I believe the core message of this guide – respect for readers and being the best you can – should be spread.

But I ask one thing of you. If you find this guide useful, share it with at least one person who could benefit from it. That can be a small business owner who is confused about how to build business through their website, or a friend who cares a lot about a cause and wants to make a difference online.

That's not much to ask for what will help you a lot, it's all it takes to ensure that material like this remains free, and it's the best way to show your appreciation. And if this guide reaches enough people, I'll write a follow-up with even more information, more tactics, and more strategy.

Because I honestly want to help you, I'm giving you my personal email, [david\\_gurevich@brown.edu](mailto:david_gurevich@brown.edu). If you need anything clarified, please contact me.

*Note:* Content with a star is highly recommended reading.

*Dedicated to my family, whom I love beyond words.*

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## **The Gurevich MCA Model**

MCA is a simple, three step method to come up with products and content that will help you dominate online. It is the most basic concept of business distilled into three words, so it doesn't necessarily seem useful - until you try applying it.

It's based on competencies. The theory of competencies is basically that firms and people aren't competitive because of what they produce. Rather it's their unique combination of skills, knowledge and capability that lead to outperforming the competition. Ask yourself, *what are my competencies?* Taking the time to answer that question will help you think on a strategic level, not a tactical one.

Instead of thinking, *how can I make my widget cost less*, you'll start to think, *am I using my skills to compete in the right arena?*

The MCA approach encourages you to take a step back, see what the market already wants, then use your competencies to respond appropriately. It's proactive. When you come up with an idea, you have to find a market for it, which is a pain. When, instead, you listen first to the market *then* create your idea, success is that much easier.

## **MCA: Market, Content, Advertising**

**Market:** *Before there can be any product, there needs to be a need.*

What do people want?

For most of history, figuring out what people wanted was extremely hard and one of the biggest limitations to starting a business. Most small business owners had to rely either on their gut instinct, limited market research, or what info they could get from larger sources, like magazines.

The internet, however, makes figuring out potential markets *so* easy. Here's how.

Imagine that your small business is dedicated to providing dog toys. You know how to get high quality dog toys, but you're having real trouble figuring out what lines would be profitable, and how to develop an appropriate portfolio.

Head over to the [Google keyword tool](#), and plug in “dog toys.” And voila, you discover an amazing variety of market opportunities: Christmas dog toys, indestructible dog toys, latex dog toys, and more.

With increased sophistication and research, you can soon develop a list of product ideas that there is an existing need for. When you pay for the most detailed keyword data, and it's not that expensive, it's almost like getting a report detailing exactly how many people are interested in just what. Market research becomes super easy.

Keyword tools also work for creating great content pages. They fundamentally tell you what people want, which is always useful.

**Content:** *Talk to me about what I'm interested in - I'll listen.*

People want “indestructible dog toys.” Now you create content centered around that idea and phrase. Content doesn't just mean a page dedicated to selling indestructible dog toys, however. It also means developing useful resources and material for readers. You've targeted a niche, now you want to dominate it by being the best there is on the web in that area.

If that sounds hard, well, yes, it isn't easy. But you'll find that niches are specific and small enough that being one of the best in that area is not particularly hard either.

The search engine optimization section discusses more about this and why it's so important, but building great content does three extremely important things.

First, it helps your reader learn more about the subject, about who you are, and what you think. This builds trust, a connection, and makes you stand out. Second, it builds presence in search engine results. This means more traffic, more customers, more money. And third, it is the only way to generate links to your website, which are essential for the long term health and growth of your site.

**Advertising:** *How come I've never heard of you before?*

You've successfully found out what people want, indestructible dog toys, and have created a product that meets their need. Not only that, you also wrote/obtained some great articles about what makes a dog toy safe and why it's important to have indestructible dog toys. Success is imminent.

You open a deluxe bank account to hold all the moola you're going to be getting.

Then you realize that no one cares. You've done everything you're supposed to, but no one is coming to your website! And without appropriate advertising no one will.

Advertising your content means getting it to the people who care about it. Once you do that, and if the content is as high quality as it should be, you'll generate links and traffic. The traffic will stop when you stop paying to get the word out, but the links stay. And that's a huge win.

The fundamental goal of advertising online is to get people to link to your site. The links do not go away and will generate good search engine results, meaning free traffic.

## **Why the Internet Means Almost Infinite Markets**

*“The firm is constrained by the size of the market,”* - Adam Smith

The great economist Adam Smith wrote this hundreds of years ago, and it's still true today.

Look at small cities. In them, you tend to get fairly boring and basic products and services. But in larger cities, like New York, some pretty cool stuff happens. You can, for instance, find a store dedicated to ceramic dolls made in the Ukraine next to a Macy's. What makes things so different?

It's all about the size of the market.

Let's say 1 out of 1,000 people are interested in ceramic dolls, a number which I'm making up, and which I hope doesn't offend any readers. With that rate of interest, in a city of 100,000 people you have about 100 ceramic fans. But in New York City with its 8,000,000+ people, you have 8,000 ceramic fans.

The more people there are, the cooler and more precise products can be. That is one of the main reasons people flock to big cities, despite high rent and congestion.

What would you get in a city that is more than a hundred times bigger than New York?

Pretty much anything. Take a product so bizarre that only 10,000 people a month in the entire world search for it online monthly. If you target it properly, it's not too hard to dominate that market, and if you, say, just get 10% of that market, you have 1,000 new customers. (This type of analysis, despite its allure is highly flawed, but the general idea is true).

No matter what it is that you care about, no matter how strange your combination of skills and interests is, there's a market for it. If that doesn't inspire you, then it's hard to imagine what will.

## **Why you need to advertise (and why it's a limited cost)**

You've invested all your energy into writing the most amazing article ever. It is exciting, interesting, and you're pretty sure that anyone who reads it will share it with ten friends. Now you put it up on your new website.

Nothing happens. You check again the next day, sure it's just a matter of time before your content starts to spread. People should be linking to you, sharing your article, and building your website's position. What went wrong?

Take a different case. You're an advertising powerhouse, and have some content that could be better, you admit, but it's certainly not total crap. You can spend thousands to draw a lot of traffic to the site, after all, and some of the people you attract will certainly buy your product. The traffic will build recognition and lead to long term benefits.

A couple of months later you're in trouble. You had expected to generate sufficient income to more than cover advertising expense, but it seems that isn't happening. Worse: when you stop advertising, no one else is going to come. What went wrong?

Variants of both cases, though less extreme, take place for all too many business owners every day. The best content whatsoever can't succeed without some initial push, whether it is from advertising or existing traffic, while advertising needs to promote something that's worthwhile.

Take the cliché goal of spreading virally. Even for viruses to successfully replicate they need to first establish an infection, and that can take a lot of virus particles. Even viruses have to try hard to spread from person to person.

No matter how much you spend on advertising, you absolutely need to provide top-notch quality content and experience for your viewers. They need to have a good reason to link to your material, to buy your product, and ultimately to feel good about it. Make satisfying your customers your goal, and it doesn't matter if a customer is just a reader or is actually purchasing something.

When done right, advertising does indeed pay you back multiple times over. Best of all, because of how Google and other search engines work, the return on your investment, links and recognition, is permanent.

## **The relationship between Market and Advertising**

Market dictates how you should approach advertising.

Imagine that you were targeting the market “yellow tomatoes upended microtheory.” You could create a page with that title and related content and, pretty quickly, be the number one result in Google for that phrase.

Congratulations! You've conquered one market. And it will yield you the rich dividend of, say, no visitors monthly, translating into zero profit. The smallest markets require no advertising.

Most phrases take more effort. As a general rule, the bigger the market, the more the competition, and the exponentially harder it gets to do well by organic methods. Which means advertising.

## **Community: What it is, Why it's Important**

The large numbers of potential customers can blind you to several important factors. First, you can forget to see that every group is the sum of individuals, with their own wants and desires. Then you can forget that the 10,000 people interested in indestructible dog toys have a lot in common. They form a *community*.

Your website should be as friendly to the community as possible, while working with what already exists.

When you enter or develop a new product/content, you need to find out what are the existing communities and websites that fulfill the needs of the niche. And then you need to go out, and get

connected. Join forums. Comment on Blogs.

Make new friends. As you provide your content, they will help spread the word and save you a lot of effort. It's the ultimate win/win. You provide what people are interested in and like, and they help you out by spreading the word.

Don't forget the power of the existing relationships in your life. Your friends, mentors, and colleagues can potentially help you out in many ways with your online business. Often times, you just have to ask.

## **Search Engine Optimization – how to get *thousands* of free visitors**

Search engine optimization, SEO, is a set of strategies to get top results in Google and other search engines. Unlike most, I claim it's actually pretty simple. By the time you finish reading this guide, you'll know more than enough to sharply increase the performance of your website.

This guide will teach you 85% of what a typical SEO pro knows. If you want to skip the more technical details and just see the campaign strategy to rank well in Google for a search for “business valuation,” jump ahead about 15 pages to the JP Katz & Associates Case Study.

The executive summary:

- 1) **Create amazing content**
- 2) **Get people to link to you**
- 3) **Make your page titles damn awesome**

### **Keywords**

All of SEO stems from keywords because those are what people put into search engines and what you want to compete in.

*Definition:* A keyword is a word or combination of words that people often search for or “think.” It can be as simple as “poker” to “free strategy guides to play poker well.” Both are keywords of varying specificity.

By targeting the right keywords, you're trying to register in people's minds for something specific. And you'll appear in search results.

## **How do you choose keywords?**

Choosing keywords is a combination of brainstorming, strategy, and analysis.

First, brainstorm phrases that you'd like to rank well for. Think about what you do, or what you can do, and turn those ideas into 1-4 word phrases. Then plug them into keyword suggestion tools like Wordtracker and Google. The last step is to figure out which of those phrases you can rank well for and that will still provide significant and wanted traffic.

Targeting the right people is important because doing otherwise wastes time, resources, and bandwidth. If you're selling airplanes, you don't want 10,000 visitors a day searching for “beanie babies.”

We'll go more into how these decisions are made over the course of the guide. In the end, however, you have to develop an intuition for it, which only comes with experience. To help you with that, we'll work through a case study in the end.

## **Links – what they are, what they mean, and how to get them**

Links are super, super important. What they are isn't too hard to get - they're the typically blue words on a website that, when clicked, take you to another site. But how to get people to give them to you is a lot harder.

Fundamentally, Links are the key to success online and not only because almost all of SEO comes from them. The fact is that if you don't have sites linking to you, it's going to be very hard to attract traffic.

In terms of SEO, links decide your page rank (PR). Google and some other search engines calculate a PR for your website that decides how “trustworthy” or authoritative you are. You can use a [PR checker](#) to see what yours is right now.

PageRank is on a scale of 1-10 for Google, and is based off both the number of links pointing at your website, and the quality of the sites that have the links (basically what PR *they* have).

Google and the other search engines are judging you. And your pretty smile isn't enough; you need to have links to your site. To top it off, those links should be from pages that are high ranking themselves. To extend the metaphor, it's like being voted into a fraternity or sorority. You need to get members votes, and the vote of the president weights more than a newly joined freshman.

And all things being equal, a site with PR10 will outrank a site with PR2 in search engine results. Does that mean, however, that you have no chance of competing with higher PR sites? Absolutely not.

The problem, that other websites have better PR, almost certainly applies to your site, but can be overcome.

Why? Well, the second factor that links play, and a much more powerful one, is as a direct vote for your page.

Let's break it down like this. Imagine that your PR2 site <http://badfakesite.com> and the PR2 site <http://greatfakesite.com> both have subpages called “Ice cream pie catering,” which is the phrase which you want to rank well in Google for.

Now the PR10 obviously has great links pointing to the *base* page, or pointing to <http://greatfakesite.com> otherwise it wouldn't have such a good ranking. Imagine, however, that our

golden boy website doesn't have links that point to greatfakesite.com/ice-cream-pies.html.

That's a sign of weakness, and you know that you can exploit it. You look through this guide, find the relevant part, and build 20 links pointing to the subpage badfakesite.com/ice-cream-pies.html of your crappy-PR site. And those links look something like this: “I read this great article that discusses the problems of *\*start link\** ice cream pie catering */end link* that you should check out.”

Those 20 links, or votes, send a clear message to Google. It means that people like your content, and that means you are highly likely to outperform the other site. Despite being at a PR disadvantage, you can outplay your competitors. You can become competitive for whatever search phrase you want, within reason, of course. You just have to get the links that the bigger players aren't getting.

## What are good links?

Links to your site and subpages should ideally be good links. The very best links are from pages with high PR that talk about the subject and have relevant anchor text. The very worst links come from websites with hundreds of links with no context. That type of site is called a link farm, and getting attention from them is almost worthless.

Never forget how vital anchor text is. The anchor text tells Google which search terms you should rank well for.

**Bad link:** I love eating potatoes! And here's a wonderful <link>post</link> on handbags. But potatoes are great. You can cook...

**Why:** The link is contextually irrelevant. Your article on handbags is inside a paragraph about potatoes, which is not ideal. Plus the anchor text, “post,” doesn't help you out because it'll improve

your ranking for the keyword “post.” (Case study: Adobe PDF reader is very often linked to with the text “Click Here to Get Adobe Reader.” Google “click here.” First result at time of press? Adobe.)

**Good link:** I've read a variety of posts on designer handbags, but recently found a great one. This post discusses [what makes a great handbag](#). Handbags...

**Why:** It's relevant. And the link anchor text is relevant and helps you rank well for a variety of phrases from “handbag” to “what is a great handbag” and so on.

## How do you build links?

By now you probably want to know how to build links.

The key idea behind building links is *create value*. Help people. Give them something so useful, so well written that they'll eagerly share it by linking to it. Quality counts. A similar article I wrote on SEO like this one attracted more than 10 links within a day because people thought it was useful and wanted to share it.

“Content is king,” is the concept, and it's very true. Quality speaks for itself, goes the argument. Look at Skype, a proponent might say, or Google. Both didn't have to advertise; people just flocked to them because they provided something that was miles ahead of the competition.

If you are as good as Skype or Google, then you can just focus on doing a great job and the customers will flock to you.

There is a slight problem, which is why the strategy isn't just MC – market and content. Are you as good as Google or Skype?

Thought so. Experience, the cruelest and most effective teacher, has taught me many times over that quality alone isn't enough. The article I wrote attracted some nice links because it was posted on a

website with a steady stream of interested traffic. That doesn't say anything about its quality, however. Had I posted it on a less popular site, with the exact same quality, it would have attracted less links. And had I posted it on the biggest site possible, it would have attracted more.

Building links grows from the full force of MCA. You can't forget advertising!

As such, here's the general formula for building links. We'll go over each detail:

1) Create very high quality pages

Then,

2) Make them interesting/linkbait

3) Finally, advertise!

**How do you make linkbait**, or posts that people just *love* linking to?

1) Create a list of things. People love articles like “50 Ways to Increase Your Energy Today”

2) Be controversial. Contradict what people believe, or attack a widely held belief.

A strong opinion on a popular idea from a contrary slant can cause a lot of conversation.

3) Be the best. When you write your article, see what other people are doing/have done, and outdo them.

4) Provide an interesting idea or metaphor. People love it when complexity is simplified, and an appropriate metaphor can spread like wildfire. (Using animal/color combinations is oddly popular, probably because we can instantly relate to animals. For instance, Seth Godin's Purple Cow meme and Taleb's Black Swan. Or even The King's Rose. \$10 to any reader who figures out why the guide has that name.)

5) Be funny as hell. Include hilarious comics or jokes in your content or make something that's really boring a bit more interesting.

6) Give away something useful for free, like your expert knowledge, analysis or technique

7) People link to other page because they find them useful and want to share it with their own

audience. Make sure you meet those requirements.

8) Write about something that is popular or being talked about.

9) Be the first to notice something

10) Write great headlines. No, scratch that. Write amazing headlines. They're that important.

Here are three articles on building links, ranging from beginner to expert.

1) [Smashing Magazine: Rules of great linkbuilding](#)

An excellent big picture post with a lot of details. Read it to gain a deeper understanding of linkbait

2) [Making effective Headlines](#)

Discusses the types of headlines that make effective linkbait. Not as general as the first, but still useful.

3) [4 Free Great Linkbuilding Ideas](#)

This is linkbaiting at a high level. Read for some inspiration as to what the pros are up to, and remember the basic lessons: build great content and let people spread the word for you.

## **How do you promote your post?**

There are a lot of ways to promote your post. You can submit it to social bookmarking (SB) services like Digg, Reddit and StumbleUpon. That typically won't do anything even if your content is great because of how competitive those sites are unless you are backed up by a horde of friends.

Make sure to have SB buttons on the page itself, however, to help your readers spread the word.

Twitter is very popular these days and very effective. People love to share useful crap on it via retweeting.

Another idea is to find relevant blogs and let them know about your post by contacting them directly. It's a pretty grunt-work level to promotion, but occasionally pays off. I wrote an expose style

post on antidepressants that I honestly felt people should read, and found some fellow bloggers who agreed.

The key to that is to pitch yourself well. And for God's sake don't try to promote crap. Quality must always precede promotion, otherwise all your advertising is a waste that makes people antagonistic to you.

It's also possible to join Blogging communities like BlogCatalog and use them to spread the word about your best posts.

If your quality is excellent, then you shouldn't feel bad about investing some money promoting it in Google Adwords or other advertising media. The key is to target keywords that lead to link building behavior, and that, dear reader, is an article in and of itself.

## **10 more ideas to help you build links**

- 1) Submit your site to directories that are relevant. There are websites that solely exist to provide links to other websites. Yahoo! is kind of like that. While submitting yourself to every directory ever is a waste of time, there are a few that are worthwhile.
- 2) Be a guest blogger on related blogs. Finding blogs in your niche is something you should do as a matter of course, and finding ones that accept guest bloggers can be done as follows. Try to Google a related phrase and include “guest blog,” “guest post,” or just “guest.”
- 3) Submit articles to sites like Ezinearticles and include relevant links. This gives mixed results. It can be quite effective, but is not as good as guest blogging.
- 4) Regardless of what you do, form a relationship with bloggers in your field, and links will

follow. Plus you can get positive coverage of newsworthy events you do.

- 5) Answer questions on sites like Wikianswers.com and add reference links
- 6) Run a contest
- 7) Possibly add references – or in rare cases direct links – on Wikipedia. This only works if you're relevant to the page and is spam if you aren't. It works not so much because Wikipedia gives you traffic or link authority, but because of how many sites steal from Wikipedia and replicate your link
- 8) Give out awards
- 9) Interview experts in your field. Good interviews are interesting and give a context to information. And they're linkable.
- 10) Join relevant forums and provide a link - when appropriate only.

### **Link building Resources:**

<http://www.seobook.com/archives/001792.shtml>

A list of 101 ways to build links. Mostly basic concepts but presented at more of an intermediate level.

<http://www.searchenginepeople.com/blog/the-definitive-list-75-of-link-building-techniques-in-2008.html>

75 ways to build links. About same level as the above.

<http://wiep.net/talk/link-building/link-building-strategies/>

A list of 69 ideas. Not particularly different from the other two posts, but also a quality post.

<http://collinlahay.com/2007/11/13/the-link-building-cookbook/>

More advanced than the others, this website offers many ideas, each of which can lead to valuable backlinks.

## **Big question: How do you make boring topics linkbait?**

This is one of the hardest questions I've encountered. The fact is that “boring” subjects are precisely the ones that are most valuable, yet they are the hardest to get links for.

This probably directly relates to you. You might want to get people to link to your website with the anchor text “mortgage services in Boston” but the fact is that almost no one is going to spontaneously do that.

How are you going to compete for keyword phrases that are very valuable but near impossible to get links for?

I encounter a very similar problem almost daily on my blog. Take an article like [Agomelatine: a New Treatment for Depression](#)

It's an interesting and important topic, but very few people are inclined to spontaneously link to it.

There is an easy out. I could have made that article an expose style kind of thing. Like, Agomelatine – a new medication that's going to kill people. *That's* linkbait. But it's also misleading and morally unsound.

One approach is to use forums. I could, for instance, try to find forums that discuss antidepressants and link to the article. This is boring, annoying work that feels very spammy and doesn't always have great return on investment.

Another approach is to find blog posts that are on a related topic and try to convince the blogger to link to you. Tools like [Blogpulse](#) can help out with this, but it's again a very uphill battle.

A very powerful tactic I've used is advertising with Google AdWords. This can catch people who are directly interested in your article's topic, and can, if done well, have a solid return on investment in terms of raising awareness and gaining links.

For my blog, as a test \$80 investment in Google AdWords, I managed to get 1-2 links, 1 guest post, and an invitation to get involved with a larger project. To be honest, the links and the guest post wouldn't be worth it, but the larger project seems like a great opportunity. Measuring the ROI of that campaign, is made more complex by the introduction of unexpected benefits.

Here's some really good news, however. If it's hard for *you* to get people to link to your article on Mortgages in Boston, then it can't be easy for your competitors either. And best of all, you can always use backlink checkers to figure out what your opponents are up to. You're just going to have to

use your creativity and the tactics mentioned to pull ahead.

One of the best ways to get links is to build relationships with people in your niche. When you are friendly with people who are doing what you do, I promise you that opportunities will just arise, and not just in the realm of SEO

Volunteer! Help other people in your field out. The free help I've given out, solely because I like helping people, has repaid me many times *and* in unexpected ways that make my life more interesting and fun.

## **More on Writing the Best Titles**

Make sure to never forget that people are reading your content and/or using your product. Don't lose focus from meeting their needs! Still, don't forget to think how you can optimize. Combining your creativity with keyword tools can massively increase your potential market.

A bad example is as follows. My analytical data showed that a decent amount of people were searching for the phrase "Back of Knee Pain Causes." Which was great, (except for the people with the pain) because I had learned about knee pain in a Biomaterials course, so it was relatively easy to whip up a page titled, surprisingly enough, [Back of Knee Pain Causes](#)

That title met search engine goals, but I had sacrificed readability. Most importantly, it meant I wasn't respecting my reader.

By contrast, I feel pretty good about a recent post of mine. With one word change I tripled my potential market, while listening to potential readers' needs, not trying to make them fit mine. Here's how.

It started when I realized that I wanted to have a resource that went through what the current treatments are for depression. This is an extremely important topic because so many people suffer from depression at one point or another in their lives. At the same time as people should be aware of their medical treatments, I strongly feel that they should also know how little we know about the antidepressant pills, and that lifestyle changes – as well as therapy – are also viable treatment options.

Doctors almost *never* tell patients that antidepressants can double their risk of attempting suicide and that some are quite addictive in that stopping can cause serious problems.

I wrote a rough draft of the article during Calculus class (in my defense it was mostly review – boy, I wish I could slack off these days!), did some more research to make sure it was accurate, edited it and almost posted it as “Treatment of Depression: an Overview.”

My gut said I should wait. I headed over to Google Keyword tool and analyzed “treatment of depression” in terms of traffic: 9,900 searches monthly. Frustrating. That's not particularly much, and it was highly unlikely that I would rank well for that phrase despite having a decent post (any medical organization that put out an article on that topic would outdo me most likely). Still, I cared about the issue, so it was more than worthwhile.

Skimming through the numbers, I noticed that a change to “Treatment *for* Depression,” by contrast, had 27,100 monthly searches. Interesting.

And while “an overview” was accurate, I decided that changing it to “in 2009” would reach more readers. Best of all, it was more honest. With the pace of medical discovery, in 2010 we could discover a miracle treatment, and my article would be woefully outdated. Or a current treatment could become less used.

The end result? [Treatment for Depression in 2009](#)

*Tip:* Use keyword data to enhance your titles and guide content. Don't abandon readability.

*Tip:* Favor longer titles because they can use more keywords. But keep it within reason.

## 10 Miscellaneous SEO Tips

1) SEO is a marketing tool. Like all marketing, it needs great follow up.

The fact is, it doesn't matter how great your SEO is if your site sucks. If you don't have great content and easy to understand plus powerful calls to action, you aren't going to be successful. Your website needs to be good looking and effective. Otherwise all the traffic just wastes bandwidth.

2) Make your site search engine friendly. Search engines index websites that are done in HTML, PHP or other basic languages. If your website is heavily based off javascript or flash, those parts may not be indexed. What that means is that they aren't going to be findable in search engines. Bad!

3) Take care of the small details like make sure to include keywords in the actual file names. Instead of having `yoursite.com/page3` have `yoursite.com/all-about-blue-widgets`. This can have a significant impact on your SEO.

4) Images: use useful file names, title tags, and use the alt attribute. Mentioned separately because these efforts can pay off by doing well for searches for images.

5) Type in your website url without a www: just <http://yousite.com>. Then type it with a www. Do both resolve separately? It seems like a minor problem, but can have serious SEO impact. If it happens, make sure to pick one format and use an `.htaccess` file to keep it consistent.

Sounds complex, but honestly would take your tech guy less than 10 minutes, and, if you know

a little about web stuff, shouldn't be too hard for you either.

6) Have a presence on YouTube and other sites. We live in an era where the internet includes many, many social networks. Make sure to get involved with as many as you can while still bringing something of value. Remember that SEO is just part of your online approach.

7) You need to know stuff about the visitors to your website. Tools like Google Analytics give you a lot of free and useful information. Plus, you're flying blind if you don't have that information, and you certainly don't have a good way to measure the performance of your SEO/marketing.

8) Have a blog and have someone prominent write to it, like the CEO.

9) Help your readers spread the word. Include ways to share your useful content.

10) *The Don'ts* Don't have broken pages on your website. Don't link to spam websites, and don't join crappy link exchanges. Don't spend money on mass submission to directories (though there are some which are worth considering). Don't abuse your visitors trust.

Most of all, don't make things more complicated than they need to be!

### **Some links with SEO advice:**

<http://www.searchenginejournal.com/55-quick-seo-tips-even-your-mother-would-love/6760/>

Useful and easy to understand. Worth reading.

<http://searchengineland.com/21-essential-seo-tips-techniques-11580>

Not as comprehensive, but also worth a read.

<http://www.johnon.com/144/seo-and-attention.html>

An interesting article on attention and how important it is to get it and use it.

## **JP Katz & Associates case study:**

Dr. Katz is a friend/business associate with a thriving consulting service that provides financial and economic analysis. Basically, he looks at really complicated numbers and makes them understandable. So if you need to know how much your business is worth, or how much an injury should get in court, he can tell you.

He's so good that he can probably place a value on almost anything. The problem is that his small business website – [JP Katz, Financial, Economic Analysis](#) - is not generating significant amount of traffic. This is pretty common for small businesses. They simply don't have the “oomph” and the web presence to find new clients and new sources of business.

One of the services he provides is “business valuation,” and he'd naturally love to rank well for that term. You probably have very similar concerns. So, how do you do it?

The first step is deciding if targeting it is worthwhile. Do enough people search for “business valuation” for us to target it?

Let's run it through [Google Keywords suggestion tool](#).

Go ahead and do it yourself. I'll let you decide if there is significant enough traffic to target that term. Note: Sometimes you'll want to use Wordtracker's keyword tool, though it doesn't seem to be as accurate.

Regardless of whether or not there is enough traffic, let's go on to the next step.

It's time to check out the competition.

Load Google in a new tab and search for “business valuation.” Take a moment to look at the results and think about what they mean, about the strategy's the owners used to reach the top, and how you can compete with them.

It's really interesting how such a simple thing, a search engine search, can reveal so much about strategy and tactics.

I'll discuss what I see, which may be different from what you see due to time differences and variance in how Google ranks pages.

**First result:** *Business Valuation - Wikipedia.*

Darn wikipedia! It manages to get top ranks for almost everything, but at least it's not 2007 when it dominated Google searches for anything. Competing with it could be easy or it could be very hard. Easy if it's ranking well just because of the brand name, and very, very hard when people use it as a reference and link to it in copious numbers.

Guess which is happening here?

**Second result:** *Business Valuation 101: The Five Myths of...*

Excellent! Annoying to have to outdo it, but effective use of technique like that is just plain tasty. This page acts as an informational resource which it signals with the 101 word, and it presents Myths. People love both. The title of this page is a winner.

**Third result:** *Business Valuation - Discounted Cash Flow - Financial Calculators*

More classic tactics. Giving away a free tool = free links, lots of them. There is always a potential downside, however. Giving away a free tool might also mean tons of useless traffic that takes

up a lot of bandwidth, but still, quite the clever way to build links.

Now we know what we're up against. Initial analysis of them is pretty simple, (though can be done on a higher level with more sophisticated, but not free, tools) and you can do it too, which I recommend if you want to see the details in action. The initial first step is to run the search results from the top ten through a backlink checker <http://backlinkwatch.com/>, and their main site ([wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org), not [wikipedia.org/whatever](http://wikipedia.org/whatever)) through a PR checker.

Result #1: Wikipedia's article has about 91 backlinks. Not bad, but not impossible to overcome, either.

Search result #2 has only 32 links, which is downright pitiful. Something must be going on, which I confirm with the PR checker. Its PageRank is an astronomical 7.

Result #3: 64 links, PR 6

Result #4: 6 links, PR 3

We can stop there. Result #4 is clearly in a weak position, and that it performs so well either means something weird is going on, or that the keyword is open for competition. Either way, there is a strong reason to fight for this keyword, even if getting a top rank would be hard. Remember how I changed the wording of my depression article to increase potential readership?

We can do the same here. "Business valuation" can be added onto: "small business valuation" for instance, and almost all of the variants are also very high value.

That satisfies the M component of MCA – onto the CA!

To develop appropriate content and advertise it, Dr. Katz and I have to finalize an appropriate article title then get to work on the content. Here we combine our skills: he writes an amazing article on the subject using his extensive knowledge of the subject, while I craft it for a more general audience and SEO results.

Our goal? Create an article so useful that people who are interested in the subject feel

compelled to bookmark it and share it. And once we do that, we have to make sure that they do in fact get our article so that they can do so.

At this stage, you can expect to spend 1-2 weeks developing an extremely useful article/post. It is labor intensive, but for big name terms like this which can lead to a near endless supply of work opportunities, worthwhile.

Done properly, within 1-2 months of work the site could rank very well for “business valuation.” But because we carefully design the page to include other valuable lower level keywords, a strong ROI is expected. And finally, because this SEO effort coincides with other projects, they'll all help each other out.

## **Advertising Online**

You're going to have to spend money to make money, and that's too bad. Because the fact is that advertising well is very, very hard. It doesn't take any effort at all to spend thousands of dollars and not get anything.

You need to enter any advertising effort with a clear understanding of how to measure success. The very best, and when this happens it's amazing, advertising effort yields immediate ROI. You can point to 100 visitors brought in by spending \$X, 5% of whom bought your product which costs \$Y dollars, yielding you profit.

It's wonderful because there you spend money and see instantly the benefits.

On the other spectrum of advertising is the much harder to measure goal of raising awareness. Let's say, for instance, that your goal is to build brand name recognition. That's a pain because it takes

a lot of hard work to measure ROI.

One mainstay of online advertising has very easy to measure ROI, but is *hard* to do. That is, advertising aimed at building links. As you now know, links pay you back many times over: they give you a permanent boost in the search engine rankings.

*Rule of thumb:* When you advertise online, set a budget, a timespan, and specific goals to meet. If those goals aren't met, reevaluate. Possibly try something different.

## **Google AdWords:**

Google AdWords is responsible for the little blurbs that appear when you search Google for something.

An ad on Google looks like this:

[Check Out This Medical Blog!](#)

Read this Blog, or Else

Your Socks Will Fall Off

The ads are contextual, which theoretically gives you incredible control over your spending. What that means is that you can control exactly when and where your ads appear.

So if you want to only appear to people in Boston searching for “environmental dog toys,” you can.

You pay for each click on your ad, and can set daily budgets. How much each click costs depends on two factors: the “quality” of your ad, and how much your competitors are willing to pay. So if you have a high quality ad for a non-competitive term, you can pay almost nothing per click.

On the other hand, if you're competing for a term like “lawyer service in Boston,” you can expect to pay \$1.00+ per click.

Thoughts on AdWords:

This can be a very powerful tool. The tools Google gives you are versatile and useful. On the other hand, you want to avoid getting mired in spending lots of money on something which isn't giving a good return.

*What Determines AdWord Quality:*

The simplest way for Google to know the quality of your ad is by how many people click on it. So if no one clicks on your masterpiece, expect cost to increase. Owch!

Google also analyzes how the text of your ad and sees how it relates to the term which you are advertising for. Finally, it checks out the page which you are advertising for, and analyzes how relevant it is.

**StumbleUpon**

StumbleUpon is an add-on to your web browser that lets you click a button and take you to a random website. It's addictive and fun.

Each site you see, you can rank as good or bad. Theoretically, the tool learns from your input and eventually only gives you random pages that you are interested in. The reality is that you see a lot of stupid spam you don't particularly like, and a lot of offensive crap like monkey balls.

The way the website funds itself is by allowing advertisers – like you – to pay to have their websites appear randomly. In theory, and theory-land is a magical place, the ads can be targeted so that your interesting page on Quantum Physics will appear to only people interested in Quantum Physics.

That is very loosely true. The reality is that your ads are only barely targeted to the most basic of interests.

And StumbleUpon users have the attention span of ants. The vast majority that come to your site will leave instantly, wasting your money. In theory, and you know what's coming, if enough users like your page it'll attract more without paying anything.

There is one use of StumbleUpon that is not a complete waste of money. If you spend enough, you can attract the same user to several of your pages, which can build good brand awareness. Naturally, this only works when you have a worthwhile brand.

Otherwise, I wouldn't recommend it.

## **Press Releases: Get the Media on Your Side!**

If what you're doing is important, and even if you don't feel it is, the press should know about it. The fact is that many news-organizations are constantly looking for news, and if you package whatever you're doing as news, they'll treat it as such. The basic way to make that happen is through a press release.

As always it's a spectrum. “David Goes to Bathroom,” probably won't make the cut, while

“New Health Website Targets Depression Prescribing Habits” might. Here's something to inspire you, however. All that it takes for President Obama to hit the news is to make a comment off hand, like his opinion that Kanye West behaved like a jackass. Clearly what is news ultimately depends on how much of a story there is, and I promise you that you have your own interesting and important story.

And submitting a press release is a lot easier than you might think. It's pretty much just a page that details who, what, where, when and why, the famous 5Ws. You can write one whenever something happens that is newsworthy, like a new product, major deal, redesign, offer, or whatever.

There are basically two types of press release, formal and informal, one which tells the facts, and one which is more interpretative and creative. Choose whichever works better for you.

Once you write it, you'll want to submit it to the relevant places. The easiest places to get it accepted are websites that are dedicated to press releases like PR.com. The online press release services range from free to paid, with varying distribution. Paying can be worthwhile, so don't rule it out.

You can also submit it to your local paper. How local you go really depends on ultimately how newsworthy you are.

Of course, if you want major media attention, you'll have to get your press release to a major venue, and, more importantly, have it read and considered. This is a lot harder.

One writer on the subject recommends building relationships and networking your way to gaining media attention. He says doing so eventually enabled him to get attention in the New York Times. You can too, just that it's a long process, takes effort, and requires that you are actually newsworthy.

*Tip: Treat yourself seriously, think big picture, and put things in a story format. If there isn't a story or goal behind your organization, you're probably not thinking hard enough - or you don't appreciate yourself enough.*

## The Juicy, Secret Advertising Methods

Entering the dirtier side of the internet, there are many so called dark-side advertising methods. Some have spoken of the ability to buy votes on sites like Digg and other promotional tactics that yield awesome results. You can also buy links to your website on various websites.

Know that these methods can work. They are so-called “Black Hat” methods, and I shall not speak further of them because they are borderline unethical. And they work because most people don't know about them, so speaking of them widely detracts from their effectiveness. Additionally, Google and other sites are very serious about fighting such tactics. Case in point? Google once banned BMW's website because it took the advice of a Black Hat SEO practitioner.

If you want to learn more about “quick and easy” methods to rank well, I suggest you reevaluate the value of what you provide. You can do well without any gimmicks. On the other hand, knowing what's out there can't hurt, and joining appropriate forums online can let you in on the darker secrets...

### A Lesson on How to Waste Advertising Money:

Don't expect people to respond well to material that embarrasses them, even if they enjoy or find it useful. I learned this the hard way.

My page, [50 Tips to Make friends](#) was perfect, or so I thought. It's on something almost everyone is interested in, and almost everyone feels at least somewhat bad about their social skills. It's just how people are. So if I just got the word out about this post, people would naturally want to share it and link to it. It was the perfect marketing opportunity.

To make sure it went as planned, I wrote a brief introduction on the page explaining that if people found it useful, showing their appreciation with a link would be great.

And so I set it off.

A week – and hundreds of paid visitors later – not one link or mention was picked up by my detection tools. What went wrong?

Simple. People don't link or mention stuff that they're embarrassed about. For instance, no one mentions their porn habits, something that I was recently reminded of. Looking at the 50 most popular websites, I saw two porn sites that I had never heard of, and almost certainly never will, despite their huge popularity.

The fact is people aren't going to link to something they aren't proud of reading or using, even if it is high quality. The "Content is King" doesn't always apply, not even when combined with marketing, which is an essential part of success even on the internet.

There is an interesting addendum to this point. Another article, titled something like "50 Ways to Make Friends if you Have ADHD" actually did manage to get some good backlinks. I thought about it a little and realized that there was a key difference. That article had a rational for people to link to it. It fit in nicely to websites that were trying to provide resources for people with ADHD.

And because ADHD is recognized as a problem you can't control, and ostensibly shouldn't be shamed about, people were willing to link to it. Even if that article was basically the same as mine – ideas to make friends – one slight difference made it that more marketable.

Take home this message. When you want someone to link to your material, make sure that it's high quality, well written and interesting. But also make sure that it's something that people are happy to have associated with them when they link to it.

## **Converting Traffic into \$\$:**

### **Selling Products**

Selling products are a great way to make tons of cash. And if you do it right, it's almost just a

numbers game. You attract X amount of visitors, 4% of which buy your product, and that gives you profit margin of whatever. Products tend to make lots more money than ads too, which is a plus.

But you have the downside of having to create the product and handle shipping. This problem is solved by affiliate marketing: you sell the product that someone else makes/deals with, and you make a percentage of each sale. On the other hand, the downside of selling someone else's product is that you make less than you otherwise would, and you don't have quality control.

### **Google AdSense:**

The AdSense program is that you run ads on your website that consist of links to advertised sites. The links are based off the content of your page, so that they are of maximum interest to your readers.

It is a decent method and can make good money. It is both an introductory and an advanced level technique. You can see Google ads on the most basic blogspot blog, and even on major sites. Make sure to follow the Terms of Service, of course, or else not only will Google ban you: they won't pay the money you made.

The amount of money that you get paid for each click depends. Sometimes it'll be a dollar, sometimes it'll be a cent. Because the ads are based off your content, the niche plays a large role in deciding profit.

So if you write about Lindsey Lohan, your ads will almost certainly pay very little, while if you write a review of legal services in Boston, your ads will pay a lot more. The sword cuts both ways. Hundreds of times more people are interested in Lindsey Lohan than are looking for legal services in Boston.

Ultimately, the money you generate is decided by the formula: Cost per Click (CPC) \* Clicks, or Cost per Click \* (Number of visitors \* click rate).

A quick example: Assume 5% of your readers click an ad, which is pretty good. So if you have 1,000 visitors for your Lindsey page with a CPC of \$0.10, you'll make \$5. And if you have 100 visitors for your Lawyer page with a CPC of \$1.00, you'll make \$5.

## **10 Quick Ideas to Make Money on Your Website:**

- 1) Sell books and make referral money from Amazon.
- 2) Use Chitika, an alternative to AdSense
- 3) Sell ads custom developed for your website
- 4) Sell links to other sites
- 5) Write reviews of products for payment
- 6) Add a donate button
- 7) Add a forum to your site and use it to generate traffic and revenue
- 8) Sell an eBook
- 9) Be an affiliate marketer: sell someone else's productivity
- 10) Let companies pay to write content for you. (Savvy readers should drool at the thought, though you must always maintain your integrity!)

## **The Secret to Damn Good Marketing:**

I looked at Mark. What could I ask to stand out, show I was smart?

Mark was a star business professor, with a lot of experience, including selling a company to Apple. I was a freshman with roommate troubles, in an advanced class that I had demanded entry to.

“Mark, what’s an important business idea I might not know?”

He looked me right in the eye: **“Give people a compelling reason to believe you.”**

His words seemed too simple at first. With time, I’ve gained perception and understand more what he said. It’s **100% the key to success** at marketing.

Why?

Imagine your good old friend, Sam.

He’s trying to sell his brand of soap. He could sell it as boring old Sam’s Soap. Or he could add an ingredient and sell it as Sam’s Soap *with patented sud formula*. Then his selling point could be how his formula cleans more efficiently, leaves less stains, and means you spend less time cleaning.

Adding a convincing reason to believe is how we humans fall for things. In some ways, it takes very little to convince people of things that they want to believe. How else could all those Nigerian email scams trick the smartest of us, lawyers and doctors?

### **What are good selling points?**

Certifications, like ASA or MBA, are important for sure. They can be exclusionary, however. My plumber sure as hell better be certified.

Awards and results are great, depending on how relevant they are and how noteworthy. If you sell a product, and customers get amazing results, testimonials can be very powerful in making new customer. Case studies can also be extremely effective in conveying what you do and why it matters. Best of all, in a case study it’s not always you who’s pitching, so it’s even more effective.

But coming up with an amazing selling point takes more. It needs to be unique, crafted from the specifics of what you do. You have to dig into your soul, your mind, and come up with a creative way to convey your value.

A great example of this is Lifelock. The owner is so confident in his service that he widely

publishes his social security number. Talk about a convincing reason to believe his product is good!

Now, how can you do something similar?

**Some questions:**

- 1) Have you won any awards or any reviews or positive feedback?
- 2) Do you have any significant publications?
- 3) What offer can you make that saying “yes” is pretty much the only logical choice?
- 4) What makes you different?
- 5) How do clients and friends describe your services?
- 6) Did anything excite you lately? A work of art, an event or something altogether random? Now connect it with what you do!

## **Blog: What they are, Why you need one**

A blog is an informal place for you to express your thoughts, emotions and reactions.

They've become very popular for a good reason. They are a great way to combine your expertise with your personal experiences. You can present yourself professionally and as a person.

Blogs make adding new content to your website easy and, because they allow comments and are informal, help build community. They can build your reputation and improve your search engine results.

As such, they are highly recommended.

## **The 7 Worst Mistakes Your Blog Can Make**

If you do have a blog, make sure not to make one of these mistakes!

### **1) No value provided**

Why should I read your blog? There are hundreds out there doing exactly what you do – no?

You need to have a unique value proposition, or you have to do what it is you do better or different from everyone else. This isn't easy, but it becomes a hell of a lot easier when you focus on your reader, and on providing him or her with stuff that is relevant and interesting.

Make lists of things that are useful! Write from new angles, be controversial! Think, what can I write that I myself would want to read, hold onto, save and/or share? Now start producing that material.

The trick is you don't have to be amazing every post. What you need to do is provide a combination of OK material with jaw-dropping, damn that's good, useful articles. If you can't write every few weeks an article that is damn useful, you're not trying hard enough or you've backed yourself into a bad niche.

If you want to learn a lesson in what works on the web, visit the front page of a major site like [Digg](#) for a few days.

### **2) Poor design**

If you want your blog to succeed, you need to have a good design. Your stuff must be easy to read. It must also be presented in a way that is interesting and useful to the most important people – the folks reading your stuff.

Avoid annoying animations, pictures, whatever. You want to connect to your niche while staying readable and professional. If you're writing for stay at home moms, pink and cupcakes might be OK; but animations of dancing babies NOT.

Don't let your advertising ruin the design of your site.

### **3) On someone else's server**

Buy your own domain! It's surprisingly easy, makes you professional, and gives you control over your blog.

#### **4) Lack of connection**

Make your posts interlace. When you write a topic, expand from it, and have other posts link to each other. This is essential to maximize the amount of life you get from a casual reader. If someone comes, sees that you have other relevant posts, they're going to keep on reading and maybe become a more permanent guest.

#### **5) Lack of easy conversion**

You need to make it as easy as possible for people to save or share or whatever your website. That means making it really easy to become a follower or share it on social websites.

#### **6) Poorly Written**

Yes, the vast majority of bloggers don't have degrees in English. But that doesn't justify the terrible writing that is present on most websites.

Write to your audience. Make it interesting, snazzy and keep readers coming back for more.

#### **7) Forget the reader**

This is the most debilitating and serious mistake. You absolutely can not forget who your audience, what they find interesting, what they want. It is only by making them happy that you can succeed.

Make it your mission to satisfy what your readers want. They'll repay the favor.

## **7 General Business Tips**

### **1. Reward participation**

When a consumer reaches a certain benchmark, give 'em something! This of course works best when the goal involves habit forming behavior such as posting on a forum and creating relationships.

The reward for participation need not be anything big. Becoming a featured author, for instance, may motivate someone to a high level of activity and it doesn't cost you anything.

Best of all, if you make the rewards social in nature and you'll drive the creation of a vigorous community.

## **2. Tell 'em what to do!**

Efferdent, a popular denture cleaner, includes the following line on its box: "Clean with Efferdent at least once a day to[...]" This command is ingenious because it makes sure that the user keeps on using it. Imagine if a pain-killer box had that line on it: "Use at least once a day to keep headaches away." Of course, they can't say that, but if they could, they'd burn through their stock a lot, lot faster.

Not only that, the copy says "at least," hinting that using it even more often could be better.

Do the same in your business. If you want a website to be returned to, tell the reader to link it. Of course, the more you demand the more trust you need to have built. And you need to stay within the guidelines of politeness. But sometimes a directive can produce great results.

## **3. Thank 'em**

Always thank the customer. Unless you're a monopoly, they have other options and they are doing you a favor by choosing you. GoDaddy, an internet hosting provider, takes this seriously. When they get a new customer, that customer gets a phone call - from a real person - thanking them.

When possible and in good taste, send a physical thank you note.

## **4. Give 'em free stuff that...**

keeps them involved and builds trust. An example of this is Wordtracker's free lesson that you sign up for during registration. Every day, they send you the next installment in the lesson, teaching you how to use their product to maximum efficiency. This increases the amount of time the consumer thinks about the product and also builds excitement about the product.

Think of a similar technique for your own business.

### **5. Make a million dollar ceiling**

Say you have a shirt for \$60 and a shirt for \$300, with marginal differences in quality. You'll probably lean towards the \$60 shirt.

But research shows that the \$300 shirt's existence can change your price ceiling, your natural feel for what something should cost. What that means is that if you had a choice between a \$60, \$100 and \$300 shirt, you are a lot more likely to choose the \$100 shirt than if there were no more expensive option.

Clothing stores use this principle to increase their profits by having outrageously expensive clothing that makes their other prices seem normal. You can use this principle too by having premium services that raise the price ceiling higher than it might otherwise be.

### **6. Create perceived value**

This can take many forms, but basically means make the reader believe they are getting a deal. When you have a great product, make sure the customer *feels* the same way.

### **7. Tie ins**

If they want to buy your product, make it very easy to buy more. This can include coupons, or just having suggestion links on the bottom of the website. Whatever it is, you want to provide as many

options to buy your product as possible.

## **Conclusion**

It's a big world, with so many wants, so many needs. So many people. Passions, dreams, fears and hopes all combine daily everywhere in the drama known as humanity.

As a business owner or entrepreneur, your goal is to make clarity out of the confusion, to create something where there was once nothing. Each step you take is like walking through a forest at midnight – unclear, uncertain, yet you must take it to find your way home.

**What can you do to make the world a better place?**

**How can you make people happy?**

**How can you perform better than everyone else?**

*“The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.”*