

STARTING YOUR ONLINE BUSINESS

(previously titled “The Website Owners Guide”)

Advice and Tips for the
Technically Terrified.

**The
Internet
Bloke**

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Who Is “The Internet Bloke”, and Why Should I listen to Him?

Hi, I'm Eric Graudins.



If you're an Australian, I'll bet you've heard the “Two Headed Tasmanian” jokes.

But that's not why I use this image.

I use it because I live in two very different worlds – Small Business, and Internet Marketing.

Many things that are common in one world are unknown in the other.

You can explode your business by learning a bit about things are done in the “other” world.

I'll show you the way.

Since 1999 I've been helping small businesses with internet advice and services.

During this time, I've dealt with just about every internet problem that you're likely to face.

This book talks about the essential things involved with setting up a website for your business. You could save thousands of dollars by taking control of this process and making your own informed decisions, instead of blindly trusting some “expert” to do everything for you.

Even if you don't do any of the work yourself, this book will give you the knowledge to understand what SHOULD be happening.

After you read it, you will be able to make sound decisions about starting up your online business, and build a strong foundation for anything you want to do on the internet in the future.

Disclaimer & Legal Notice:

The information in this guide is an original work, and represents the views and opinions of the author, Eric Graudins, at the date of publication.

Because the internet changes so quickly, the author reserves the right to alter and update these views based on the new conditions.

Changes to this guide will be made from time to time, and registered purchasers will receive free updates.

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Introduction

Just to reassure you, this book is not a technical manual. It's a couple of steps BACK from the geeky technical stuff. It's written so that the average person can get an overview of what makes an online business work.

It shines a spotlight into some dark little internet corners that you probably know nothing about – but which can bring your online business to a grinding halt if something goes wrong.

If you WANT to learn how to do the technical stuff yourself, that's great. I'll be providing links to various resources if you want to learn more. But if you choose not to, this guide will give you the overview you need to keep control of your business, and help you make sound decisions.

This guide is intended to be read from start to finish, because later sections refer to topics that have been discussed earlier.

If you're thinking "I don't need to know this stuff – I have people who do that for me", then consider this:

If you don't understand the things that happen in your business, then you've lost control. And when that happens, it's not really your business any more.

So if you don't have an understanding of what your technical people are doing – or why they are doing it – ask them questions. And keep asking until you get an answer that you can understand.

You Need to Have Control of Your Online Activities

Even if someone else sets up and maintains the technical aspects for you, you need to maintain control over them. It's important:

- to know what everything does, and how it works
- to know how everything is connected together
- to have a list of all your User Names and passwords, and be able to access every component that makes up your online business.

People starting web businesses are faced with countless options. Most people you talk to will have their own opinion about what you should do, and which products and services you should use. They will recommend things for various reasons:

- They are satisfied users themselves
- They will earn a commission if they can convince you to buy an item
- It's a product from their company
- They've seen an advertisement for the product/service you're looking for
- OR perhaps they're experts on the topic, and what they suggest really IS the best option for your needs.

You need to evaluate all this information to find the best result for YOUR situation.

I've included sections in this guide which will help you do this.

Cost of a website

The first question most people ask me is “How much does a website cost?”

This is a bit like asking “How much does a car cost?”, and the answer is the same: Somewhere between free and a million dollars or so.

If you talk to 10 web developers about putting your business online, you’ll get 10 different opinions about what you should do, and what it will cost.

I’ve read interviews where web designers say that you need to spend at least \$25,000 to build a “decent” website. In my opinion, this is total overkill, and way beyond the requirements of virtually every small business.

As a rough guide, you shouldn’t need to pay more than one or two thousand dollars to get someone to set up your first website unless you have some special requirements like an e-commerce system that handles lots of products.

If you have some technical knowledge, you could learn how to set up and use the popular blogging package Wordpress. This is suitable for normal websites, blogs, or a combination of both. It is an ideal platform on which to build most small business websites.

To build a website all you need is a domain name, and web hosting – a total of approx. \$200 per year. (Plus a few hundred dollars for someone to set it up if you don’t do it yourself.) Of course, the value of your own time must be considered as a cost if you choose to do it yourself.

Depending on your circumstances, this could be a good investment – or a total waste. There are no rules of wrong and right. Everything depends on your personal situation.

For most small businesses starting out, I would argue that it’s better to begin with something basic. After you’ve made some money, THEN invest more money and/or time as required.

Why Cheaper Can Be Better

Your online business is like a car engine – it has a lot of parts that are connected and have to work together.

With car parts, you can often choose between expensive or cheap ones. And the more expensive ones will usually last longer and work better.

It’s a bit different with your online business, though – the most expensive option is not necessarily the best. You can save a lot of money if you make smart decisions about how you set things up.

Your Online Business – First Things to Think About

What Are You going To Do?

I'm assuming that you want to use your online business to make money in some way.

To do this, there are 3 fundamental choices:

- Sell your own stuff – either goods or services.
- Sell someone else's stuff
- Sell a combination of your own and other people's stuff.

Selling Your Own Product or Service

Selling something that you have created is extremely satisfying and can be far more profitable than selling things created by others.

Your product can take many forms:

A Physical Item:

i.e. jewellery, cosmetics, craft items, a book you have written and published, DVD's you have produced. The list is endless.

A Service you perform:

i.e. giving music lessons, repairing computers, building houses, arranging weddings, writing articles for people. Again, the options are endless.

Your Knowledge.

There are lots of ways to share the contents of your head with the world.

- An E-Book like this
- A video or audio recording
- A series of tutorials delivered by email

These are items that are made once, and can be sold millions of times.

Over 40 years ago, the Beatles wrote and recorded songs which are still generating income today. I have a banjo tutorial created by Pete Wernick many years ago that was originally sold on video cassette. It's still being sold today on DVD. Pete would still be receiving royalties for those lessons he created all those years ago.

Do you have skills that could be turned into products? Write them down in a notepad.

Also make a note of whether your products are physical, electronic, or both.

What skills and resources would be needed to create these products? Would you do it yourself, or is the assistance of others needed?

The ideas and answers that you come up with will be useful in making decisions about various aspects of your online business.

Selling Somebody Else's Product or Service

Making your own products is hard work, and most people don't have skills that can be turned into marketable products.

Therefore most people sell products that are created by others.

Affiliate Programs

A common way to sell other people's products is with affiliate programs, which generally work like this:

- You attract a visitor to your website.
- The visitor clicks on a link which takes him to the website of the person selling a product. This link is coded, and tells the seller of the product that you have sent the visitor.
- If the visitor buys something, you are paid a commission.

Successful affiliate marketers can earn hundreds of thousands of dollars a year (or even more). But this field is VERY competitive, and you'll have to develop a lot of technical and marketing skills to generate an income.

Online Store

Another common way of selling other people's products is with an online store.

The things you sell can either be purchased and held in stock by yourself, or ordered from the manufacturer when sold and delivered directly to the purchaser.

Things to consider when selling products:

- How many different items would you be selling?
- How many of each would you keep in stock?
- How much money and storage space would you need?
- How would delivery be organized?

How Are You Going To Build Your Website?

When thinking about setting up a website, you also need to think about who is going to do the work.

- Are you going to do everything yourself?
- Is a friend or staff member going to help?
- How much internet experience and knowledge do you and the others have?
- Will you outsource some or all of the work to experts?

Doing Everything Yourself

To set up and build a website requires some computer skills and technical knowledge. The nature of your online business will determine whether it's worthwhile to learn these skills.

If you are producing or selling physical products and services, then it is probably better to concentrate on doing that instead of spending a lot of time learning about the finer points of website building. Learning how to make changes to a website that someone else has set up for you may be sufficient for your needs.

On the other hand if you want to become an affiliate marketer promoting other people's goods online, you'll have lots of websites and web pages to create and lots of articles to write. It will be essential for you to become very familiar with setting up and building websites, keyword research, search engine optimisation, and lots more.

Of course if you want to learn these skills for your own personal development, go right ahead. They will be very useful in many situations.

Technical Skills Needed to Manage Your Online Business

To manage a website properly, you'll need to know about most of the following:

- Compression software – needed to manage ZIP files, which can contain hundreds of files all squeezed into one file which is easy to upload and download.
- File Transfer Protocol (FTP) and File Permissions – essential for copying files and images between your computer and your web hosting account. You also need to know how to set file and directory permissions on your website files.
- Graphic Optimisation- Essential for preparation of images that are to be used on websites. At the very least, you'll need to know how to crop and resample images to make them suitable for use on your website.
- File Structure – you need to know how to set up directories, subdirectories, and files so that they are in the correct places or your website won't work.
- Security – Updating. Regular updates to various programs are necessary to prevent access by unauthorised people. Updating procedures could be fully automatic, or involve lengthy manual procedures.
- Script Installation – you can add additional functions to your website by using a variety of programs and scripts. It is useful to know how to install these, and add them to your website.
- Coding Skills – There are many different types of computer "languages" used on websites, i.e. HTML, CSS, PHP. It is handy to have a basic knowledge of the ones that are used on your website so that you can make minor alterations.
- Search Engine Optimisation. – This is the process of selecting keywords, and writing content so that your web pages are more likely to rank highly on search engines. (This is a huge topic, and will not be covered in this guide.)

- Pay Per Click (PPC) – You can get instant visitors to your website by using the Google Adwords program. You can also reduce your credit card balance at an alarming rate if you don't know what you are doing.

It's impossible to estimate how long it will take you to learn these things. You might learn everything you need in ten hours, or still be struggling after a hundred hours.

Remember that the time you spend learning web skills is time you could be working on other parts of your business, or enjoying time with your family and friends.

Only YOU can determine whether it's worthwhile to gain these skills yourself, or get someone else to do these tasks for you.

Friends / Family

It's common for business owners to accept offers from friends or family members to build their website, but in my experience these arrangements are often unsatisfactory.

If you choose this method, make sure that:

- You have a clear idea of what you want the site to do.
- The person doing the work is able to do the work required.
- You agree on what work is to be done, who is going to do it, and when it is going to be completed.

Your Staff

If you have IT people on your staff, it's tempting to have them set up your website.

Make sure that they have the necessary skills in the appropriate areas. Hardware engineers and network specialists may know absolutely nothing about setting up online businesses and building websites.

Before they start, get them to read this book and see if they are familiar with the topics that I have discussed.

If they have to learn new skills, they're going to be spending a fair bit of time away from the job they're supposed to be doing. You need to make a decision about whether this is going to be cost effective for you.

In most cases it won't be.

Outsource

There are lots of people and companies who will be willing to build you a website – and there will be huge differences in their prices, knowledge, and expertise.

Here are some possible methods of finding a developer:

- Ask your friends and business associates about their websites and their experiences with the developer.
- Check your local Yellow Pages.
- Look at some other websites you like, and contact the owners to ask about who did the work for them.

Don't get locked into an expensive arrangement with a company who spends a lot of time impressing you with how cool and technically brilliant they are, or bragging about the awards they have won.

Here's a great parody site that explains exactly what I mean. www.HuhCorp.com. (Be sure to click on the menu options and read the text.

If the web developer you want to use has a site anything like that – BE CAREFUL☺.

When you start building your online business, you'll need to make a lot of decisions. The next section will help you make good ones.

Commonsense: The Most Important Internet Skill You Can Develop

Strangely enough, the most important Internet skill has nothing to do with the internet.

Or Technology.

Or Computers.

It's Common sense.

And the ability to critically examine the things you see on your computer screen.

You need to understand that for every piece of advice you receive, there will be someone who will tell you that won't work, and is garbage. If this happens ask the person for their reasons, and to explain why their suggestion is better.

If they can provide a logical argument, use this information as input into your decision making process.

It's useful – no, necessary – to develop the ability to quickly evaluate whatever you see, hear, or read, and determine whether it applies to your situation, and your goals.

A few minutes spent on the Google search engine can reveal worthwhile information about products, services, or companies about which you need information.

If you are still unsure, it is a good idea to ask an expert you can trust. A couple of minutes on the phone – or a quick email – to an expert in the field who knows a little about your situation could save you lots of time, money, or both.

The internet appears to be full of wonderful opportunities. You'll see promises of instant wealth that will flow into your bank account if you'll only buy some eBook, or course, or private membership, or mastermind program for only \$29, \$49, \$197, or even \$1997.

You'll read convincing sales letters that tell of sitting around in your underwear and making several thousand dollars by lunchtime. Or promise that you can make tens of thousands of dollars per day with CPA programs.

These offers are carefully crafted to resonate with the automatic "human action triggers" that are within all of us.

Robert Cialdini's Automatic Human Action Triggers

There are 6 of these triggers, as defined by Dr. Robert Cialdini in his book "Influence: the Psychology of Persuasion".

The 6 triggers are:

Reciprocation: If someone does something for you, your automatic response is to return the favour.

Commitment and Consistency: If we've said something or agreed to do something, our future actions tend to be consistent with what we've done before.

Social Proof: stories of other people who have had amazing success with the product (i.e. testimonials).

Liking: We are more likely to trust someone who is "just like us".

Authority: Reference to known, respected figures. This is why celebrities are so successful when promoting products.

Scarcity: Fear of missing out on something.

Marketers, sales people, advertisers, your kids, and your friends make use of these techniques (either accidentally or on purpose) to influence your decisions, and get you to do what they want you to do.

The internet gives everyone the opportunity and a platform to say their piece. They can say what they like. Whether it's true or not.

Don't fall for the endless promises of magical "secrets" that will instantly solve all your problems, and give you the ability to earn a high income without putting in any work.

It's up to YOU to decide whether their words are true or false, based on various clues that they leave, or on additional research that you can easily perform using Google.

Be careful about the credibility of the sites from which you get your information. Many people use the internet site www.wikipedia.com as an authoritative reference – in the same way that printed Encyclopedias were used in the past.

Well, there's a big difference. The content in Encyclopedias has been verified before it gets printed. You can trust it.

The content on Wikipedia can't be trusted. It could be true – or it could be a pack of garbage, because anyone can get in there to write and edit it. You'll generally need to do more research before relying on any information you get from Wikipedia.

Think.

Use your brain.

It's VERY tempting just to give in to the syrupy smooth sales pitches that flow from the pens of highly priced copywriters whose job it is to use every persuasive trick to get you to type in those magic credit card numbers and buy a product.

Thinking is especially important in these days where governments, journalists, marketers, and all kinds of spin doctors try to influence your thoughts and actions.

If you can identify when Cialdini's triggers are being used you will be able to make better decisions about your online activities.

And in all the other parts of your life.

OK, I'll get off the soapbox now, and we'll start looking at all the parts that make up your online business.

I hope that you have enjoyed reading Chapter One of "Starting Your Online Business".

You can purchase the full version online, and continue reading the rest of it at

<http://TheInternetBloke.com/website-owners-guide>

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