

How to Start, Operate and Maintain a Successful Web site Business



By:

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THE 10 STEPS ARE REVEALED FOR WEB SITE BUSINESS SUCCESS

www.StartWebsiteBusiness.com

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Introduction

In 2006, David J. Castle created the popular LearnMagicTricks.org Web site. Today this Web site receives approximately 10,000 visits each day from people all over the world who enjoy the art of magic. The Web site business has been effective at generating revenues by focusing on selling products as well as advertising space. This experience afforded Castle the opportunity to understand the process of how to start, operate and maintain a successful Web site business. Castle has decided to share the secrets to creating a successful Web site business with the world with the expectation that this information will help to create more jobs, improve the standard of living for many individuals, make the work experience more flexible and fun, and increase the entrepreneurial spirit world wide.

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How to Start, Operate and Maintain a Successful Web site Business

Step 1

What are you interested in? This is a very important question and must be answered before you move forward with your Web site business. Not only should you be interested in the theme of your Web site but you should also be knowledgeable about it. For example, I am both interested in and knowledgeable about the art of magic. Therefore, I decided to create a Web site that helps people learn how to do magic tricks.

It is also important to ensure that the market you would like to pursue has enough interest to make creating the Web site business worthwhile. One method for discovering the demand for a specific niche would be to utilize the Google.com search engine. For example, if an individual was considering creating a Web site business for the weight loss industry, he or she could simply type the keyword *weight loss* into the Google.com search engine and press the search button. The Google.com search engine would then display the results for the keyword *weight loss*. In this example, the Google.com search engine shows that there are 98,300,000 pages on the Internet that are relevant to this keyword. Also, you will notice that there are many advertisements displayed at the top and the right side bar of the page. Whenever you search a keyword on the Google.com search engine and you discover a high number of relevant pages and many sponsored advertisements this is a good indication that this specific niche has the demand necessary to build a successful Web site business.

Step 2

Registering a domain name is a very important step when you start a Web site business. An example of a domain name would be *learnmagictricks.org*. A domain name is the address that people will utilize in order to visit your Web site. You will need to purchase a domain name from a *domain name registrar*. Some examples of domain name registrars include: namesecure.com, godaddy.com, register.com and networksolutions.com. When deciding on which domain name registrar to utilize, you may want to consider the following: (1) How affordable is the company? (2) How reliable is the company? (3) Does the company offer customer support? and (4) Does the company have a good reputation? You can answer these questions by visiting the various domain name registrar Web sites, contacting these companies and conducting some research on the Internet.

Before you purchase your domain name, you may want to consider having a popular keyword or keywords appear in the name. For example, the domain name *learnmagictricks.org* contains the keyword *learn magic tricks*. By including a popular keyword or keywords in your domain name your Web site may have the opportunity to rank higher in the search engines and this could lead to more people visiting your Web site. The Google Keyword Tool is a great resource to use in order to find out how popular a keyword is in the Google.com search engine. This Keyword Tool can be accessed for free by following this link:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

I personally utilize this marketing technique regularly and have found it to be very effective at helping my Web sites receive more traffic.

When you register your domain name you may also want to consider making your domain private. You may have to pay a little extra money for this privacy service; however, it will prevent visitors from obtaining your personal information from the domain name registrar. You may also want to consider registering your domain name for a 10-year term. Not only will this action show the online community that you take your Web site business serious but some Internet experts report that search engines will take your Web site more seriously and this could potentially lead to better placement in the search engines.

Furthermore, you should also receive a better domain name registration annual price when you contract for 10 years versus 1 year. It is also important that you try to register either a .com or .org domain name. I have found that these two types of domain names perform the best in search engines and garner the most respect. Finally, do not forget to renew your domain name. If you do not renew your domain name, someone else could register it and this could lead to your Web site losing all of its traffic.

Step 3

In order for you to display your Web site to the world, you will need to purchase web hosting. The web host provides you with server space and allows you to make your files available on the Internet. When you start a new Web site, it is a good idea to start with a basic shared hosting plan and you can upgrade as your Web site grows. Shared hosting with most web host providers generally starts at about \$4.95 per month. I highly recommend you consider using Steadfast Networks (www.steadfast.net) for your web hosting. I personally host

several Web sites with them and have been very pleased with their affordable prices, reliability and quality customer service.

After you purchase a web hosting package, you will need to forward your domain name to your web host. By implementing this process, visitors will be able to type your domain name into their browser and arrive at your Web site. To forward your domain name to your web host, you will need to contact your domain name registrar and ask them how to do this process. In my experience, it has always been easy to forward my domain name to my web host. Typically, this process involves logging into your domain name registrar administrative area and setting your domain name up so that it forwards to your web host domain name servers. For example, the domain name servers for Steadfast Networks are NS1.Steadfast.net and NS2.Steadfast.net. So if an individual was utilizing Steadfast Networks as their web host for shared hosting, he/she would simply configure the domain name to use these two domain name servers mentioned in the example above. Normally, it will take several hours for these settings to take place; so if your domain name does not forward to your Web site immediately, just be patient. Once the settings have officially taken place on the Internet, you will be able to type your domain name into a web browser and arrive at your Web site. Of course, once these settings do take place you may see a blank screen or an under construction / coming soon page; this is normal and will remain until you create your Web site.

Building your Web site can be accomplished one of three ways: (1) You can build your Web site yourself, (2) You can hire a Web site designer or (3) You

can do both. If you decide to build your Web site yourself and you do not have a lot of experience in this area, I highly recommend you consider using the WordPress software. WordPress software is free and can be downloaded at www.wordpress.org. I also recommend that you learn how to write *html* code. There are many free tutorials on the Internet that teach you how to create and edit web pages using html code.

Another option is to hire a professional web designer to develop your Web site. I recommend you interview at least three different reputable web design organizations and ask them to provide you with samples from their portfolio, references, prices and their policies and procedures. After you select a company, make sure that you provide them with a clear understanding of how you want your Web site to appear and function. Do not give the web design company more than a 50% deposit and only pay the balance once you are satisfied with the finished product.

The third option is to develop part of your Web site yourself and contract the rest of the project to a professional web designer. For example, you may decide to create a WordPress Web site by yourself but need assistance customizing the look and feel of your template design theme. Therefore, a web designer would be hired to customize a template design for your Web site. After the design for the Web site is completed, your Web site would be complete and ready to be updated with content for your visitors to enjoy.

Successful Web sites provide valuable content that is updated regularly and is often free for the visitor to access and enjoy. There are many different

things you can put on your Web site to attract and maintain loyal visitors. First, I highly recommend using videos on your Web site. You can search for videos on services such as youtube.com or metacafe.com and then embed them on your Web site and you can also encourage visitors to submit videos to your Web site and then once approved they will appear on your Web site. Furthermore, you can also subscribe to a service called WP VideoTube (www.wpvideotube.com) and have relevant videos automatically posted to your WordPress blog.

A second way to have new content added to your Web site regularly is to add a message board. I personally use the vBulletin (www.vbulletin.com) message board software package and have found it very effective at creating a community of members who interact with each other regularly and create new content for my Web site. This is a great inexpensive way to get people to visit your Web site on a regular basis. The vBulletin software will take you some time to learn and a message board community should have a few moderators; however, the time invested to learn how to use this software is well worth it. Also, I have found from my experience that you can simply ask some of your loyal members to help moderate your message board for free.

The third way for adding content to your Web site is by using articles. There are several ways for you to get the articles for your Web site: (1) You can write the article yourself, (2) You can hire someone to write an article for you, (3) You can ask visitors of your Web site to submit articles to you, and (4) You can visit Web sites such as ezinearticles.com and articlecity.com and find free articles to use on your Web site.

The fourth way to add content to your Web site is to use grazr.com. This Web site provides code that allows you to display RSS feeds on your Web site for free on the topic of your choice. The great thing about this service is that you can customize the look of the widget that displays the news on your Web site and the information is automatically updated on a regular basis.

The fifth and final significant way to add content to your Web site is by adding pictures with a description. For example, perezhilton.com is a blog that provides new celebrity news daily and utilizes pictures to help tell a story. Pictures are a great way to engage your audience and then the description below it helps to further explain what is taking place.

Step 4

The next important step to implement when starting a Web site business is to properly optimize your Web site for the search engines. When a Web site is effectively optimized for the search engines, it can result in the Web site receiving a large amount of free traffic from people finding the Web site in the search engines for given keyword searches. In order to successfully optimize your Web site for the search engines you must implement search engine optimization (SEO) strategies. These strategies include both making the necessary changes to your Web site and engaging in the link building activity.

The first component of SEO is conducting the necessary changes to your Web site that will help you receive free search engine traffic. The Internet marketing guru who helped me understand how to properly do SEO was Brad Callen. I highly recommend that you download and read Brad's ebook, which is

entitled *Fool Proof SEO Elite Success Blueprint*. This ebook can be downloaded for free at the following link:

http://www.learnmagictricks.org/ebook3487/SEOElite_FoolProof_Guide-as.pdf

By following the information presented in this ebook, you will be able to make the required changes to your Web site that will ensure that the first component of the SEO process is completed successfully.

The second component of SEO is engaging in the link building process. It is important for your Web site to have relevant (one way) links pointing towards it from popular Web sites. One way to measure the popularity of a Web site is by using the Google toolbar, which will allow you to see a Web site's PR ranking according to Google.com. The Google toolbar can be downloaded for free at the following link:

<http://www.google.com/tools/firefox/toolbar/FT3/intl/en/index.html>

One way to get quality links from Web site's is to build a Web site that offers high quality content. Naturally, other quality Web site's will link to you and this will create many one way links for your Web site. A great tool to utilize to measure Web site link popularity is located at: <http://www.linkpopularity.com>. The second method for generating high quality one way links to your Web site is to hire a professional to help you out. One resource that I have personally used and have found helpful is <http://www.linknet-promotions.com>. The owner of this company is Rick Hendershot and he is a super nice man who is well trained in online promotion and link building for online entrepreneurs. This company offers many different packages that are customized to help you promote your Web site

business. Rick's business has helped me generate quality links to several of my Web site's and I enjoyed working with him.

Step 5

There are several methods you can implement to generate traffic to your Web site. Here are some of the approaches that I have found very effective: (1) viral video marketing, (2) referral programs and (3) contests.

Viral video marketing can be accomplished by featuring your videos on popular free video sharing Web sites such as www.youtube.com and www.metacafe.com. To obtain video content to use, you will either need to create your own videos or find a company who will put videos together for you (i.e. linknet-promotions.com). I personally shoot my own videos using an inexpensive digital camera (Canon PowerShot A460) and then edit these videos utilizing the free Windows Movie Maker software. It is important to remember that you should always add your Web site address to your videos in an effort to help generate more traffic to your Web site. I personally have several videos on www.youtube.com that have been viewed more than 100,000 times and have helped me generate a lot of free traffic to my Web site. If you would like visit my YouTube account, please visit this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/learnmagictricks?ob=4>

Having a referral program on your Web site is a great idea. Once you start getting traffic to your Web site you want to encourage your loyal visitors to tell their friends about it. I personally subscribe to the Referral Blast software and have found it very effective, easy to use and affordable. More information on this

software at this link: <http://www.referralblast.com>. I use this software on my <http://www.learnmagictricks.org> Web site. If you visit [learnmagictricks.org](http://www.learnmagictricks.org) and click the *Tell A Friend* link, you will be able to see how this software works. Utilizing this software, I generate referrals every day, which has lead to additional loyal visitors and more money.

Finally, having contests is another great way to get more traffic to your Web site. For example, in 2007 I held a contest where people uploaded videos online and attached my Web site link to their videos. The contest ran about 8 months and at the end the person who followed the rules and had the most viewed video won \$500. This contest was well worth the investment for me because I had tons of people uploading videos all over the Internet and marketing my Web site and still a lot of these videos are up and running long after the contest. Also, keep in mind since this prize is a promotional expense, you can write it off against your taxable income thus lowering your tax bill.

Step 6

Now I will share with you all of the popular ways you can make money with your Web site business. You will probably find this section to be the most fun to read because we all like to learn how to make money. Here is a list of the popular ways you can make money: (1) Selling affiliate products, (2) Selling your products, (3) Google Adsense, (4) Sell advertising space, and (5) Donations.

Selling affiliate products can put a lot of money in your pockets. I recommend you sell affiliate products that are available as digital downloads because often these types of programs pay you commissions that are 50% or

more of the total product price. One company that allows you to sell your products as well as other people's products as an affiliate is <http://www.clickbank.com>. There are several ways for you to promote products to earn money as an affiliate. The traditional way to earn money as an affiliate is to simply place a banner or text link on your Web site with your affiliate code and if a visitor clicks this link and purchases the product you will receive a commission payment. Many affiliates will provide you with all the marketing materials free of charge because they want you to help them promote their product.

Another method for selling affiliate products is to e-mail your mailing list. To build a mailing list that captures your visitors' names and e-mail addresses will involve you using a contact management system. I personally use <http://www.1shoppingcart.com> and overall have been pleased with their services. If you visit my Web site <http://www.learnmagictricks.org> you will notice that on almost every page I have an area where people can opt in to my mailing list to receive free magic tricks. Once you start building your list, it is important to send these individuals something of value on a regular basis to keep them subscribed and occasionally also send them an offer to purchase an item that they may be interested in.

A third way to make money selling affiliate products is by reviewing them using software such as <http://www.camstudiopro.com>. Once the product is reviewed, consider placing it on a popular video sharing Web site such as <http://www.youtube.com>. As visitors watch your review, if they are interested in purchasing the product they can visit your special affiliate link on the video or in

the description box next to the video and this can lead to you making more money. A great way to disguise as well as make your affiliate links shorter is to use a service such as <http://www.tinyurl.com>. If you would like to see an example of how I make money reviewing products, please visit this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkbcNIRjuNk>

Finally, another method to use in an effort to sell affiliate products is to distribute ebooks with your affiliate link embedded throughout the pages. When I use this strategy, I convert the ebook to a PDF file and I use Adobe Acrobat Pro to edit the pages inserting my affiliate code as well as links to my Web site. This strategy can lead to people reading your ebook and then purchasing the product through your special affiliate link, which will make you money. I often convince my partners to provide me with free ebooks about their products that I can give away and I customize them and then distribute. Once your ebook is customized for your needs, I recommend you distribute it to your e-mail list as well as posting it on the Internet to Web sites such as <http://www.scribd.com> where users search for content that interests them. If you would like to see an example of an ebook that I customized and distributed, please visit the following link:

<http://www.learnmagictricks.org/ebook/TravelingAshesbyBryanDean.pdf>

Selling your own physical or digital products is another way for you to make money. If you sell a physical good, you might consider using a merchant such as <http://www.paypal.com> to process payments and then ship orders to the confirmed address. It would be a great idea to store these customers in your contact management system in order to stay in touch for future sales.

You can also create and sell digital products. Clickbank.com is an example of one company that allows publishers to easily distribute their digital products. The reason I like Clickbank.com is because they help market your product and they also take care of making sure your affiliates get paid and they also handle all refunded purchases. Another huge benefit to selling digital products is the fact that you do not have an inventory of physical goods that need to be manufactured and stored.

If you own a Web site business you should definitely consider using the Google AdSense program to monetize your Web site. AdSense is a program that allows Web site publishers to make money from visitors clicking relevant advertisements that are displayed on their Web site. If you would like to see some sample AdSense advertisements to give you an idea of all the different types of advertisements you could display on your Web site, please visit:

https://www.google.com/adsense/static/en_US/AdFormats.html

You can become a member of AdSense for free by visiting

<http://www.adsense.com>.

Once you are a member, you can start placing advertisements on your Web site and earning money every time someone clicks your advertisement. It is important that you constantly test and track your results with this program because you should always be striving to improve your click through rate as well as the amount of money you receive per click. The AdSense program allows you to set up a campaign for each advertisement you display on your Web site in an effort

to track how effective the advertisement is performing. I highly encourage you to utilize this helpful tool.

Selling advertising space can be very fun and profitable. Once your Web site is generating a decent amount of traffic and has a healthy PR ranking with Google, you are ready to start promoting that you sell advertising space. You will most likely not begin selling advertisement space until your Web site is at least 6 to 12 months old. However, there is always an exception to the rule and if you have the opportunity to start selling advertising space sooner that is great. If you would like to see an example of a Web page that lets people know that advertising space is available, please visit this link:

<http://www.learnmagictricks.org/advertise.html>

It is important to let your visitors know that you sell advertising space by setting up a page on your Web site that promotes this service. Once people start contacting you regarding advertising on your Web site, you will need to provide them with some information and prices for your standard packages. It is a great idea to have some standard advertising packages and then if someone wants to customize a package or do something different that is fine but at least you will have a starting place. The price you charge your advertiser will depend on many variables and you will need to do some research to get an idea of a fair price for each of your packages.

Now I will share with you my strategy for successfully dealing with advertisers. First, after someone has contacted me who is interested in advertising, I will ask them to send me a sample of their advertisement for

review. Second, after I review and approve their advertisement, I send them some packages and prices for running their advertisement on various spots on my Web site. Third, the individual who wants to advertise will reply with the package he/she selected. Fourth, I will ask for payment in full sent electronically and once I receive payment their advertisement will be live within 24 hours. Fifth, after I receive their payment and put their advertisement on my Web site, I send the advertiser an e-mail confirming that I received payment and that the advertisement is live on the Web site. Sixth, I create a record in an Excel spreadsheet for the advertiser so that I know who all of my advertisers are and when their advertisements expire. Seventh, occasionally review your database of past and current advertisers and try to get them to purchase more advertising space.

Asking for donations is yet another way for you to make money with your Web site business. I occasionally receive a donation from individuals who visit my Web site. One method for accepting donations is to join <http://www.paypal.com> and put a donation button on your Web site. Please keep in mind that there is no guarantee that you will receive a donation but since it does not cost you any money to ask you might as well try it. This strategy is utilized a lot by Web site owners who give away something of value such as a free software program.

Step 7

It is very important to conduct regular maintenance on your Web site business to keep it running smoothly. One task that you should never forget to do

is back up your Web site regularly. Believe me, you do not want to put hours of hard work into your Web site and then lose all of the information that you created. You should also review your Web site periodically to ensure all of the links and other applications are working. Doing these types of tasks on a regular basis will help ensure that your Web site business operates successfully. I personally do several tasks every week to ensure that my Web site business operates smoothly. Some of these tasks include: (1) Update Web site daily, (2) Make sure that Web site is backed up, (3) Work to get more traffic to Web site, (4) Try to increase the total amount of subscribers on my e-mail list, (5) Try to get more people to advertise on my Web site and purchase products, (6) Distribute free gifts to my e-mail list members, (7) Check business calendar to see what needs to be accomplished and (8) Check in with all of my partners (other Web site's) I have a relationship with to see if anything needs to be done.

I keep my Web site business organized by using a 3 ring binder. Inside the binder I state my goals for the year, keep important passwords, remind myself of the daily and weekly tasks I should be doing, have a calendar to record important things and when they should be done and I also have a miscellaneous section where I record important information such as the companies I work with – passwords – helpful resources, etc.

Step 8

Consider structuring your Web site business as either a limited liability company or as a C or S Corporation to gain legal protection as well as other possible benefits. There is more information on this topic at the following link:

http://www.bankrate.com/brm/news/biz/Biz_ops/20000831.asp

After you have decided on the best legal structure for your Web site business you will want to open a corporate account at the bank of your choice. Most banks offer free checking and will even give you free checks as well as other bonuses when you create an account. It is important to keep good business records and to not mix your business and personal money. I personally record all of my company financial information in a binder. My binder is divided by year and within each year there are sheets for me to record company: (1) Revenues, (2) Advertising Costs, (3) Expenses, (4) Mileage, and (5) Capital Investments.

Step 9

If you want a long-term successful Web site business it is very important that you always look for new opportunities for your company to expand and become more profitable. I invest time each week looking for new ways to make more money with my Web site business and you should too. Also, please do not be afraid to try out new things (i.e. a brand new affiliate program that could make you an extra \$1,000 a month) and always remember to test and track your results.

Step 10

Take action, make money and never give up.

Additional Resources

- Alexa Web Search (alexa.com) – Allows you to check the popularity of a Web site.
- AddThis! (addthis.com) – Great social bookmark and feed button builder.
- Word Press Templates (<http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/>) - Free design templates you can use for your Word Press Web site.
- CafePress (cafepress.com) – They take your designs and print them on t-shirts, apparel, gifts for the home, stationery, gear as well as many other things that get printed on and you get a percentage of the sales. The best part is you have no inventory because after they manufacture the item they ship it for you.
- Revver Video Sharing Network (revver.com) – You can earn money sharing your videos on their network.
- Shopping Ads (shoppingads.com) – Monetize your Web site with live merchant listings.
- The W3C Markup Validation Service (<http://validator.w3.org/>) - This Web site will let you know if your Web site has any errors.
- Word Press Support Forum (<http://wordpress.org/support/>) - This forum is free to join and will help you answer any questions you have regarding the Word Press software program.
- Google Analytics (<http://www.google.com/analytics/>) - This free program allows you to identify areas for improvement on your Web site so you can turn more clicks into customers.

- FreeFind (freefind.com) – This company provides several free services such as a site map and search engine for your Web site.
- PayDotCom (paydotcom.com) – This company allows you to both sell your digital products and sell other people's digital products as an affiliate.

Contact Information



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Thank you very much for purchasing my book. I hope that you found the information inside very helpful. Please keep in touch and let me know when your Web site becomes a big success! If you do need any help during your journey, please do not hesitate to contact me. My company provides professional services to help individuals start, operate and maintain successful Web site businesses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Castle". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Dr. David J. Castle, Ph.D.

