

# **8 Techniques You Absolutely Must Know Before Starting Your Online Business.**

## **Quick Start Guide**

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## 1) Choosing your domain name

Here's the first technique before you take your business online. It is all about getting your own domain name.

When you first want to have an online presence, or you are moving your business online, you will need a domain name. Simply put, a domain name is the name by which people will find you on the internet.

Your domain name will be the primary contact point for your internet business, and you will be putting it on your collaterals such as business cards, letterheads, correspondence, and in many cases, even in your logo. As such, it is very important to choose a good domain name for your business.

If you already have an existing business (a brick and mortar business), you can use your current business name, the name of your product or service, or the niche (market) that you are in as a starting point for choosing your domain name. You could even use solution or problem that your product/service solves. Or it could even be your slogan.

For example - Assuming you have a real estate business, you could consider the following domain names:

**BetterHomesNow.com**  
**XYZRealEstate.com**  
**ThePerfectPlace.com**  
**WeSellHouses.com**

If you are a coach or consultant, you can use your name as the domain name, such as

**ShafirAhmad.com**  
**YourNameHere.com**

or even make up something silly like "Yahoo" or "Google". They don't mean anything, and yet it is catchy and easy to pronounce.

In order to get maximum benefit from your domain name, here are some tips:

- **your domain name should be short** (preferably between one to three words)

- **your domain name should be easily pronounceable and spell able.** For example if your domain name is "BetterHomez.com", you will have to keep telling people homes with a "z". Most people will not be able to remember that unless they write it down.
- **Try not to have any dashes** - if you are giving out your domain name to others, try not to have any dashes as you will have to explain in person or over the phone and say better (dash) homes (dot) com. Now, a lot of people omit dashes altogether when they type in the domain, or they mistake dashes "-" for the underscore character "\_", so they will not be able to get to your website. So it is better to have "MyCookery.com" vs "My-Cookery.com".

Now, what top level domain should you get? This is the part after the (dot) in the domain name. There are various top level domain names, such as .com (which is the most commonly used online), .net, .org, .info, .biz, .com.sg (a country specific domain, in this case, Singapore).

Since many .com domain names have already been taken up, you may not be able to get the domain name of your choice. In this case, you may want to look at some of the alternative top level domains and country specific domains. For example, if your business primarily operates in Singapore, then it may be helpful to have a .com.sg domain name.

For help and suggestions on alternative domain names, you can go to the following urls to get your own domain:

<http://www.000domains.com/>  
<http://www.nameboy.com/>

These will provide some name suggestions where you can type in a domain you would like, and if it is not available, they will suggest alternatives which might appeal to you.

**IMPORTANT:** Register your domain name yourself. Do not get the so called "free domain" that many web-hosting companies provide when you host with them. It may be difficult for you to transfer your site to another host, or you may not have ownership of the domain (the web-host usually owns the domain).

With that said, now go ahead and get your domain name now.

## 2) Choosing A Reliable Hosting Company

Choosing a reliable hosting company is critical to the success of your business. when you are promoting your business online it is essential for you to be open for business around the clock. You cannot afford to have downtime (your website not online) as this will cause you to lose sales and hamper your promotions.

**Here are some points to bear in mind then choosing hosting for your business:**

1. **Terms:** Be sure that your hosting company will not bind you with a 6-month or yearly contract. Try to find one that will allow you to leave anytime without penalties and has monthly plans with a yearly plan as an option.
2. **Set up fee:** You should not have to pay a set up fee, good hosting companies will usually waive this.
3. **Does your new host back up files?** If so how often. If not, do they have an easy way for you to do the backup yourself.
4. **Extra services:** What does the price of your plan include? What would you have to pay if you need any extra services in the future?
5. **Space:** For a normal website, 250MB is usually sufficient for all the web files as well as the email space.
6. **Bandwidth (Traffic)** How much will your account allow? How much might you need? This will depend on how much traffic you might be anticipating.
7. **Price:** You can expect to be paying anything from \$5.00-\$30.00 per month. Consider your website needs. Prices can vary considerably, cheap is not always bad, however you normally get what you pay for, so research this carefully. Most hosting companies will have different plans and prices as options.
8. **Downtime:** Be careful to look into the company before you host with them. Check what sort of servers they have and their reliability. Do they have a guarantee. What do they guarantee in the event there is downtime. If there are any testimonials check them out for authenticity.
9. **Look for good customer support.** It is important to have good customer support as you never know when you might need some tech help.
10. **How many email addresses?** Always check to see if your host provides enough emails to suit your business needs. These will vary with your plan. Even if you are a one-man company, you may need more than one email address, for example, one for enquiries, one for sales, one for customer support and so on.

11. **Make sure your host has a fast connection:** You will be receiving visitors from all over the world and all sorts of connections. If your host is fast your visitors will have optimum speed even if they are connecting from dial up.

**I recommend the following hosts:**

[BigNexus.com](http://BigNexus.com)

[HostGator.com](http://HostGator.com)

**If you need to change hosts for any reason:** It is very important to avoid downtime when transferring hosts. Here are a few points to remember:

1. **Do your research into the new company** to be very sure that they can provide all your business needs.
2. **Do not let your old company know about your move until it is completed.** Some companies will hold your website to ransom and you do not want to jeopardize your business in any way or form any bad relations.
3. **Use both hosts** until you are quite sure everything is working well with the new company and all files have been transferred properly.
4. **Back up your files:** Be sure that you back up all files, as sometimes files fail to be transferred correctly and you may have to upload them or ask your host to do so.
5. **Changing your nameserver:** This is when you change from your old host's servers to your new one. This is done at your domain name service provider. You go into your account at wherever you bought your domain and change the nameservers to your new host. This can take from 24-48 hours to change over so be patient because you may experience some downtime.

**When everything is changed and running smoothly,** and you are 100% satisfied let your old company know and make a clean break.

Make sure you keep a good working business relationship with your hosting company. They are your 1<sup>st</sup> business partnership you will make online and they are your most important.

### 3) Designing Your Website For Maximum Profit

Your most important tool for online promotion is your website. Because of this it is critical to make sure it looks professional, is user friendly, optimized for search engines and projects your company's image well. Ideally your website should be tailored to your market.

Before you even begin to design your website you will need to take a few things into consideration:

1. **Who are your most wanted visitors?** Analyze them and make a thumbnail sketch
2. **What is the primary goal of your website?** Many times it is a combination of the goals below. Make your website pre-sell your visitors to achieve your goals
  - a. Selling your product or services
  - b. Lead generation
  - c. Projecting your company image
  - d. A resource site for your customers and leads
  - e. Providing company information to your visitors
3. **Presentation:** It is very important to present your website well. Many of your visitors will be coming to your website for the 1<sup>st</sup> time and 1<sup>st</sup> impressions are lasting. It does not have to be fancy, just look professional and represent your company well. A few points to remember are:
  - a. **Make sure your font** is standard (Times Roman Ariel, Veranda with size 12 font)
  - b. **Keep your text readable:** black on a pale background is easy to read and look at
  - c. **Do not use bright colors** unless it really fits your business
  - d. **Keep your design simple**-this is less confusing for visitors and looks more businesslike
4. **Make sure your site loads fast**-visitors will not wait more than 10 seconds
  - a. **Do not use large graphics** it will slow up your site and visitors will not wait for it to load
  - b. **Be careful not to use too much flash** this will also slow up your site.

5. **Keep your navigation simple and easy to use**-visitors need to be able to get around your site easily and quickly
6. **Optimize your website**-in order to submit to the search engines your website must be optimized.
  - a. Put title and description tags in your HTML
  - b. Make sure all content is keyword rich
  - c. Try to make sure your domain name has your main keyword
  - d. Make sure all titles to your page contain your keyword or phrase
7. **Write or have written a good sales page** either for your leads or your sales.

With all these points in mind you are ready to build your website. The easiest way is to outsource this task to an experienced web designer. Here are some points to look for in choosing one.

To find a local designer, you can look for them in the Yellow pages. Another way is to ask people who have already done their sites to recommend a good designer. The advantages of a local designer would be that you could sit down and discuss your requirements face to face.

Be very sure of your requirements when choosing a designer. Keep the above points in mind before you open communications. Be very sure your designer can handle your specific requirements.

Narrow your choice down to 3-4 good ones, who meet your criteria. You can check them out by looking at their websites and checking their portfolios. Look for ones who have designed similar ecommerce sites to the one you are looking for. It is very important to keep in close touch with your web designer.

Get quotes from your choices, have an idea of how much you can realistically afford and try to keep within this budget. Be aware this will probably be one of the larger investments you may make but a good web design will be worth it. Communicate with your proposed designer and get references or testimonials. These should be available on their website.

Be sure to be specific about the time frame you expect when drawing up a contract, with the designer you choose. Read the contract well and be sure it is satisfactory to both of you. Your web designer is one of your closest partners and it is very important to build up a good relationship with them.

## 4) Write A Compelling Sales Page

When you establish your business online one of your first priorities is your Sales page. It does not matter what you are selling, without a good sales pitch you will not be able to convert leads into customers. Many businesses tend to ignore this factor and lose many sales because of it.

Online visitors to your website are different than the ones that walk into your business and you can meet face to face. Internet surfers do not have time to look about and browse. They want one thing, information on what they have searched for or seen in an ad. They may or may not be in a buying mood but by the time they read your sales letter they should be ready to buy.

**Customer profile:** Before you start to write your sales letter do your market analysis and know exactly who your market is and what will trigger their buying instincts. Make a thumbnail sketch of your most wanted buyer.

**Benefits:** Next examine your product and list all benefits. Do not list features just benefits. The most common mistake in sales letters is to project features not benefits. Make a separate list of the features.

**Headlines:** Next make a list of about 100 eye-catching headlines that will grab your reader's attention and excite curiosity about your product. Divide them into 2 good main headings and several subheadings. They need to draw the reader in and compel them to read more. Most people start with the main headline and skim through the sub headings. This is why it is critical to your success to keep your readers attention with your heading and subheadings.

**Your plan:** Most sales pages have a basic plan and are variations on this:

- **Main headline:** empathize with the reader's problem and stir the pot build up urgency to solve it.
- **Your USP-**Unique Selling Point-State clearly and concisely what your product or service is
- **How does it solve your reader's problem-**benefits
- **Trust:** bring out the points why they should trust you enough to buy from you
- **Testimonials** from satisfied customers.
- **Your price-**the reader should be made to feel he is getting a bargain basement price that is time sensitive-create a sense of urgency for this great price that will not last long. This will encourage buying

- **Bonuses:** these are the icing on the cake and should be useful and of value to the reader. Make them related or complimentary to the product you are selling.
- **Guarantee**-this is an absolute must with any sales page-an ironclad guarantee
- **A PS after your signature** again emphasizing urgency

**There are 3 things that you should focus on when writing sales copy of any sort. Remember the 3 Ps:**

1. Make it **personal**
2. Your copy should be **persuasive**
3. A sales page must always look **professional** and be free of hype.

**Be personal:** Your sales page should always be personal. A good way to do this is to make it in the form of a letter. Many sales pages begin with "Dear friend," This sets a nice tone to the reader, not too familiar yet friendly. Throughout your copy remember to keep this in mind and write as if you were composing a letter to your friend or even a family member.

**Be persuasive:** Of course your sales page should be persuasive. Emphasize benefits and make use of trigger words. Trigger words are those that arouse a good feeling in your reader. They also reinforce your selling points and benefits. They help to bring home your purpose, evoke curiosity and a need for the product and service. There are over 2000 of these words.

**Be professional:** Your sales page must always be professional. Avoid hype and unprofessional language. This will cheapen your image and weaken your sales purpose. You will also lose credibility when you do this. Make sure your sales page looks professional and is well presented. A reader is not going to give your sales page a chance if it looks as if a kindergarten-er designed it. Remember 1<sup>st</sup> impressions are lasting.

With these few points you can put together a professional, persuasive and personal sales letter. Always be aware of the great importance of your sales page. You can take a look at some different sales letters before you begin to get a feel for your sales page. If you find this task a little daunting then you can easily outsource this to a copywriter.

## 5) Build an Opt-In List

One of the most important factors of your business is building your business list. One of the best ways to do this is by offering your visitors a free newsletter. A free newsletter will not only build a list of loyal leads and customers it will establish your reputation as an expert in your field.

### How will a free newsletter build your list?

- Visitors who enjoy your website will also sign up for your newsletter and become your loyal lifelong customers.
- Ad swaps with other publishers
- Article swaps and cross promoting with other publishers

**How to keep your subscribers happy**, keep them subscribed and reading your newsletter:

- **Give them quality content**-that they learn valuable information from and can also be entertained.
- **Find out what they like**: have an opinion poll in your newsletter or send one out on a regular basis to find out what your subscribers want to know about and whether they are enjoying the newsletter..
- **Constantly strive to improve your newsletter** and make it the best you possibly can.
- **Always consider your readers first**. Treat your subscribers like the VIPs they are. They will reward you with their trust and business
- **Do not send out too many ads**: Treat your subscribers well and do not think of them as dollar bills.
- **Build trust and loyalty through superior content** and establish yourself as an expert in your field.

### Increasing your open rate:

One of your main goals with your newsletter is to get your subscribers to open your newsletter and read it. Many subscribers just let your newsletter come into their boxes and just ignore or delete it. There are a couple of ways you can increase the open rate of your subscribers:

- Always put a catchy headline in the subject line (usually the title of your feature article)
- When you send out your newsletter, send your newsletter web link in a separate mailing, so that if spam filters get your newsletter your

subscriber has a chance to read it online. A number of subscribers will do this.

**Incentives to subscribe:** You can give your visitors a reward for subscribing by using a free giveaway.

- This can be an e-book, e-course, or e-report. These should be valuable and of use to your targeted market. This will encourage visitors to sign up and will also spark interest in your newsletter.
- You can also use a contest as an incentive; people love contests, especially if the prize is a valuable one.

**Marketing your newsletter/Ezine.** There are several ways to market your publication. It is important to focus on quality not quantity. Many publishers make the mistake of trying to build their subscriber base quickly without thought to the quality of subscribers they are attracting. This results in a large but not very responsive list. Here are a few ways to build your reader database with good responsive subscribers:

- Advertising on websites and publications where your prospects will be
- Announcements to announce lists/message boards. Yahoo groups and Discussion boards
- Newsletter subscription form on every web page at your site.
- Ad swaps with other publishers
- Subscription box exchanges with other publishers and webmasters
- Ad Co-ops (especially for marketing and health newsletters)
- Forums/business network sites. You cannot advertise as such on forums and business networks but you can post questions and answers and leave your sig file and website URL.
- Write your own articles and distribute them
- Offer your newsletter on every piece of promotional mail you send out to any of your leads and clients.
- Use your newsletter offer in your sig file when you send out e-mail to anyone.

Free newsletters are fun to publish and can get you a steady stream of leads who will convert to customers. Sometimes they can be your subscribers for 3 months to a year before needing your products or services, so be patient. Always focus on building relationships with your subscribers and answer their emails and inquiries within 24 hours. Always remember the golden rule of newsletter publishing. Look after your subscribers and they will look after you.

## 6) Setting Up An Online Payment System

**What is an online payment system?** When you sell any product or service online you will need to have a means by which your customer can pay you. This will include ability to pay by credit card. Depending on your business you may also need a shopping cart, for multiple purchases, and or a way for customers to pay you by subscription. The best way of setting up a payment system with all of these options is to use either an online merchant account like [PayPal](#) or a third party processor (e.g. [2Checkout](#)).

### **PayPal-how it works:**

1. Open a [PayPal](#) account – you will need a credit card
2. Once you have verified this with them you will be ready to take payments.  
Payments are set up through **Merchant tools**
  - a. You will set up price of product or service
  - b. Subscription (ongoing monthly payments etc)
  - c. Shopping cart (multiple purchases)
  - d. Single buy now button
  - e. You will then get the HTML to put on your website for whichever option you need
3. You can set this up yourself or have your web developer do so.

### **Advantages of PayPal:**

- It is free
- Easy to set up
- Easy to use
- Automatically takes the customer to a secure page to pay

### **Disadvantages of PayPal:**

- Some people just do not like PayPal.
- PayPal has been known to freeze accounts when there is any suspicion about a credit card
- PayPal will almost always return money to the customer if the customer receses or disputes a charge, even if it is not really justified
- Payments cannot be processed straight to your bank

### **2checkout- how it works:**

- Signup for a [2Checkout](#) account
- You will start by paying a \$50 set up fee
- You will set up a bank account and you can have payments sent straight to your bank.

- You will set up your list of products and prices
- You can set up subscriptions or single payments for products and services
- You will put the HTML for the payment button on your website

**Always keep at least 2 processors**, so that if anything goes wrong with one of them your sales will not grind to a halt. It is always good to keep backup in case of emergencies.

**Alternative forms of payment:**

It is wise to keep alternative ways to pay that are not online. Most customers will have no problem paying for goods online but others will want alternative methods. This is especially true for established customers who have been used to paying you with different methods before you established a presence online. Other methods are:

- By fax- have a printable form that customers can fill online, print out and fax to the number you have given.
- By Cheque – have an order form on your site that customers can fill up and send to you, together with the payment by cheque
- If you take orders by phone, you can also state that on your website.

## 7) Increase Your Credibility With Testimonials

Testimonials are one of the best ways to increase your credibility in the eyes of your potential customers. There is nothing like someone's endorsement to sway a potential buyer to close the sale.

### Points to make your testimonials effective and compelling:

- **Make them sound natural**-use exactly as your customer writes them. Straight "from the horse's mouth" spontaneous praises are the best type of testimonials. When people like your product or service they will sound genuinely excited and happy about it.
- **Stand out**- put the testimonials in a lightly colored box on your sales page present your testimonials well and people will automatically read them and they will be more impressive and give you more credibility.
- **If possible put a picture of the customer giving the testimonial**-a picture is worth a thousand words and gives the testimonial itself credibility.
- **Always include their name, business name and website URL (if possible)** This lends credibility to your testimonial. It is also polite to the person who is giving you the testimonial
- **Do not overcrowd if you have several testimonials** put your best ones to view on your sales page then add a couple more further down the page with a link to more on another special testimonial page.

### Ways to obtain testimonials

- Give a free or discounted trial of your product in exchange for a testimonial for it. People love a bargain and will be happy to give a testimonial for a free or discounted product.
- When a customer expresses satisfaction with your product ask them for a testimonial. Most customers will be more than happy to give one when they are already satisfied with your product or service.

### How testimonials help you close sales:

- **Proof of satisfaction:** Potential buyers feel more confident in buying your product or hiring your services when they see others are satisfied with the product or service.
- **Testimonials appeal to the group feeling that people have.** If someone has already tried it then why not jump on the bandwagon. This works especially well for novelty and exclusive products.

- **Confidence in you:** your potential buyers will be more confident about you the seller when they see that you have already sold products and services to satisfied customers

Testimonials are very important to your sales copy. As you can see testimonials and endorsements is a very important part of your sales tactics. They are often the deciding factor for a potential customer.

Many times a potential customer likes the product and needs your service but wants some reassurance that you will indeed deliver what you have promised or do the work to their satisfaction. Testimonials will often be the means by which you will close that very important sale.

## 8) Save Money With Low Cost Online Advertising

Advertising is one of the key points to your business success. It is critical to the development of your business that you keep your company before your customers' eyes at all times. Because if you do not your competition will.

Advertising can be an expensive part of your marketing budget. Online advertising while still considerably cheaper than other forms of advertising can still add up to a fair amount of money.

**Here are some cost effective ways to advertise and still get good conversions.**

- **Google Adwords:** Done right this is a very cost effective way of advertising and will get you highly targeted visitors with high sales conversions.
- **Online Ezine Ads:** These ads will also be very targeted and can bring visitors with good sales conversion rates
- **Placing ads on complementary websites:**
- **Ad and article swapping**-with related publications
- **Advertising in your newsletter**-your own ads.
- **Article distribution**-Although not an ad as such can be used to pre sell to your potential customer.

**Types of ads to use:**

- **Classified Ads:** They are small ads with a big impact. Their job is to excite curiosity in the reader and get them to click through to your sales page. These are used in online newsletter publications. These ads are placed at the bottom of the newsletter and are the cheapest ad to place. You can also place these types of ads on complimentary websites.
- **Top/feature Sponsor Ads:** This is another ad that is placed in publications. This ad can either be focused on selling or pre selling. It is slightly longer than a classified and will be placed in a more strategic position. Usually at the top of the newsletter just before the feature article. These are more expensive but give more exposure.
- **Solo Ads:** These ads will be longer than Top Sponsors and again will be used for Ezine ads. They are sent out on their own to the entire newsletter database. "These are the most expensive ads but give the most exposure.
- **You can save money on Ezine ads by using Ad Coops:** These coops will give you discounts on all ads in return for subscribing to the newsletter.

- **You can buy a group of ads from the Ezine publisher:** Many times a publisher will run specials for a variety of ads in an ad package. These will save you money and allow you to test ads using different types of ads..

**Save money when you track your ads:** Tracking your ads is very important and will save you a lot of money. Here is how you do it:

- Use a tracking URL- you can use software like Adminder for this. Put this tracking URL in every ad you place.
- Record how many hits you got to the ad
- Note how many click through
- Note the rate of sales to conversions.

When you track your ads you will see which ads are getting the most response, and where the best places are to advertise and get the best results.

**Test your ads** and save time and money. One of the best ways to do this is to split test your ad:

- Place 2 classified ads for the same thing in the same publication
- Track carefully, see above for instructions
- See which one is pulling the best and gets the best results.
- Expand this ad to use as a Top Sponsor ad and for Solo ads.

Always test your ads with small ones first before spending money on larger more expensive ads. This will save you a lot of money. There is no point wasting money on ads that are not getting any response.

**Tips for success:**

- Always keep records of the places where your ads were successful.
- Repeat ads and build on your successes.
- Make a note of the places that were unresponsive-do not repeat.
- Snowball your ad campaign, start small and work up.

There are several ways to save money and run a very cost effective advertising campaign. You do not have to spend a great deal of money advertising in order to get results. With these points you will be able to save money with low cost advertising.