The Step-by-Step System
to
Building Your Small Business

**Helping small business owners around the world build
successful, profitable and rewarding businesses**

Module 4
Create Your Marketing System

Lesson 4F
Website

Possibility and
Direction for tomorrow

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Introduction

Hello!

The purpose of this lesson is to shorten your learning curve and give you the information you need to create a highly effective website that is a perfect "car" for your unique Marketing Train.

In this lesson, you will learn:

- Why 95% of business owners benefit from having a website.

- The steps for developing and launching your website.

- How to determine the objective and scope of your website.

- Whether to do it yourself or hire someone.

- How to find the right web designer/developer.

- The critical success factors for the key areas of a website:
    - Design
    - Content
    - Performance
    - Updating

- How to attract well-paying clients to your website.

- And more!

Developing, launching, maintaining and promoting a website can be a big project. And it shouldn't overwhelm or intimidate you. Having a website is an important part of your Marketing Train, and this lesson will help put you on the right track (pun intended)!

Best regards,

Susan Brockmeier

Benefits of Having a Website

In "Lesson 4A: The Marketing Train," you learned about the importance of focusing on your Engine marketing activities. These are active strategies like speaking, networking and conducting grassroots marketing.

In general, I recommend that you have a website for your business. In today's world, aside from the many benefits of having a website for your business, it is almost expected that you have a website.

Why 95% of business owners benefit from having a website:

- Provides credibility.

- People around the world can find you.

- Serves as a 24/7 billboard that sells for you.

- Can change as often as you like.

- Virtually eliminates need for printed brochures.

- Helps people get to know and like you before they contact you.

- Is a relatively small investment that provides a big return.

- Provides the ability to earn passive revenue.

As important and beneficial as a website is, alone it rarely brings in business. So, if you don't yet have a website, definitely plan to add one in the future, but DO NOT let not having a website hold you back or take you away from active marketing!

How to Launch Your Website

This section outlines the steps for launching your website. Perhaps you are wondering where to start. For many people, a first website can be a daunting task. Go through these five steps, and think about what you want. Gaining clarity in these five areas before you start will make the entire process much smoother, easier and more enjoyable!

Step 1   Determine the Objective of Your Website

A website can be a BIG project. One of the keys for website success is determining in the beginning how big a project you want and need it to be.

I have found that there are three main levels of websites. If you are launching your first website, I generally recommend starting out at Level I. If you are looking to upgrade and further develop your site, give some thought about whether you want to be at Level II or Level III.

Level I: Basic—Electronic Brochure

The Level I website is basically an electronic brochure. This is a great place for a first website. You can always expand your Level I website in the future and grow into a Level II or Level III website.

Recommended pages for a Level I website:

- Home page
- Services
- About the business owner
- Success stories
- Contact
- Newsletter sign-up

Level II: Intermediate—Starts "Working" For You

A Level II website is more comprehensive. It is an opportunity for you to position yourself as an expert. This is accomplished by providing value and giving people reasons to visit your site more frequently. It enables you to build relationships with potential clients and gives people multiple reasons and proof why they should hire you.

Ideas for components of Level II websites:

- More value-added content
- More interactivity (give them something to do)
- Articles/past issues of newsletters
- Calendar of events
- Resources
- Free reports
- Audio clips
- Weblog
- Discussion boards

Level III: Full E-Commerce Site—Passive Revenue Generator

The main distinction between a Level II and Level III website is that a Level III website has e-commerce capabilities. Having a Level III website is exciting! This is when you actually start making money while you sleep.

The main components of having a Level III website are having a shopping cart service and having products to sell.

> *Ideas for things you can sell from your Level III website:*
>
> - Physical products (books, booklets, CDs, tape sets)
> - E-books, e-booklets
> - Teleclass and workshop sign-up
> - Audio lessons
> - Membership sites

Step 2   Determine Your General Website Content

Once you have decided what level website you would like to develop, the next step is to determine the number of pages and general website content.

> *Types of web pages found on many service-based business websites:*
>
> - Home page
> - Services
> - About the professional
> - Success stories
> - Contact
> - Newsletter sign-up
> - Articles/past issues of newsletters
> - Calendar of events
> - Resources
> - Free stuff
> - FAQ
> - About the industry
> - Fees/pricing
> - Speaking information
> - Media room

Step 3   Do-It-Yourself or Hire Someone?

Now for the step that often causes people anguish!

Many newer business owners are on a limited budget and, therefore, often want to develop their website themselves.

This can be a great thing to do IF you have a good eye for design, have an understanding of website technology (or really want to learn it) and have a lot more time than money.

You can have a Level I website developed for well under $1,000.

In general, though, I typically recommend hiring a professional to develop your site and then learning how to make text updates yourself. Just doing all the things you need to do (i.e., determining the number of pages, writing the content, deciding on colors) will take a tremendous amount of time.

Still thinking of doing it yourself? If you can answer "Yes" to the following questions, you are a candidate for doing it yourself!

- Do you enjoy computers and technology?

- Do you have a good eye for design?

- Do you have a lot of time to spend developing your website?

- Is your business-building time best spent on developing your website as opposed to engaging in some other marketing activity?

- Do you like to have a lot of control?

- Do you want to update your site yourself?

Finding the Right Web Designer/Developer

When looking for a web designer/developer, it is always best if you can get a referral.

- Ask people you know who have websites if they were happy with their designer.

- Visit other industry websites, then email the business owner and ask if they would recommend their designer.

- For people who are more price sensitive, you might want to barter your service for web design.

Ideally, you want to work with a web designer who has expertise in these three areas:

1. Experience building technically well functioning sites.

2. Experience creating visually attractive layouts and designs.

3. Understanding of sales and marketing.

The last point is critical. Many designers enjoy creating visually attractive sites with lots of fancy bells and whistles that may detract from a site's marketing effectiveness.

When interviewing web designers, ask the following questions:

- What experience have you had developing sites for other service-based professionals?

- Will the site be built to expand and grow in the future?

- Will you show me how I can update the site myself (assuming you want to)?

- What type of update support do you provide?

- What are your rates and availability for future updates and additions?

Step 4   Create Your Master Web Plan

By the time you get to this step, you should:

- Know the objective/scope of your website.

- Have an outline of the core content.

- Either have decided to develop it yourself or have met with a designer.

- Be ready to make a final decision and get started!

One of the keys to having your web project go smoothly is using your project management skills. In particular:

1. Determine Budget/Project Cost

This is especially critical when working with a designer.

Before the project starts, have a detailed conversation with your designer about exactly what is included in the quoted fee. For example, if you are quoted a set fee, ask how many initial designs you will be given and how many revisions to the initial design are included.

If the designer charges hourly (verses having a set project fee), ask for a written estimate of the number of hours required.

2. Create a Master Task List with Milestone Dates

Sit down and identify all the necessary tasks that you and your web designer must do in order for your website to launch.

For example, determine the master template/look and feel, write the content for all of the pages, select and register your domain name, choose a web hosting company, select a service for your newsletter, etc.

When creating your target milestone dates, be sure to give yourself enough time to get feedback on the design and the content before you launch your site!

3. Set a Target Launch Date and Add 1-2 Months

Creating and launching a website always takes longer than you think! Know this in advance, and put some "cushion" time in your master schedule.

Step 5   Implement Your Master Web Plan

If you have gone through the first four steps, all that is left is to implement your plan! As you are working on your site, keep these guidelines in mind:

1. Follow the recommendations in the next section when developing your content and design.

2. If writing marketing copy is not your forte, get help with your content and visit other websites in your industry for ideas.

3. Get your content as "good" as possible before giving it to the web designer. It is a lot easier and more cost effective if you make edits and changes before the content is placed in the site.

4. Have patience, and remember you can change and modify your website over time. Everything does not need to be "perfect" in order for your website to launch!

Keys for a Successful Website

There are four main areas that determine the success of your website:

- o the design
- o the content
- o the performance
- o the updates

The critical success factors in each of these four areas follows. Keep these in mind as you develop your first site to ensure that it can evolve over time!

Design

It is essential that your website have a professional look and feel. If you can create this yourself, great! If not, it is worth investing in the services of a professional who will make your website look professional. As you work on the design, keep these questions in mind:

- Is your website professional, attractive and inviting?

- Does the design appeal to your *Who/What?*

- Does the design fit with your personal branding and business identity?

- Is your website fast-loading? Have all of your graphics been optimized to be as small as possible?

- Is your design clean and simple? Have you eliminated anything that is distracting from your core message and purpose of each particular page?

- Do the graphic elements (pictures, logos, icons, etc.) add to the site or detract from it?

- Do you have good usability? Does the navigation system make sense, and is your site laid out in a logical way?

- Is your site readable on different computers and operating systems? Are you using readable fonts? Does your website "fit" within a regular-sized computer screen?

- Are people able to find what they need on your site?

- Is your contact information easy to find? Have you included a phone number and email address?

Content

Concise, well-written content, or copy, is vital to the success of your website! Write your website copy as if you are speaking directly to the reader.

And really speak to the reader! Use the word "you," and ask questions. Focus on the results/benefits your service provides and/or the problems your business solves. If you were your ideal client, what information would you want to see? What would compel you to contact the professional?

Home Page Copy

The goal of your home page is to capture the visitor's interest and attention. You don't need to tell them everything on the home page, just enough so they want to know more. Then make it easy for them to find the page with the information they want next.

"About You" Copy

On the page about you, be personal. Include your picture, a professional biography and some personal information.

Provide Proof

Include client testimonials, success stories, case studies, industry statistics or reports that demonstrate that your service can deliver the results you are promising.

Provide Value

Include articles you have written, links to other sites, resources, assessments, book recommendations, etc.

Use Compelling Headers

Most people scan websites. Use headers in each section of your site that clearly state the benefits to the reader.

Performance

The more value you provide, the more your website will work for you. The big difference between a Level I website and Levels II and III is that in the higher levels, your website really starts "working" for you.

Here are some of the many ways you can make your website work for you:

- Have a free newsletter sign-up page. Even at Level I, you want to give visitors this opportunity.

- Use a free report/ebook/assessment as a give-away that also includes a free subscription to your newsletter. If your give-away is of real value, this will dramatically increase the growth of your newsletter list.

- Test your order process. Is it working well? Are you maximizing sales? Have you answered all the questions a buyer might want to ask?

- Have you done search engine optimization? Do you have the right keywords strategically placed on your site to increase the chances of being found by search engines? Are you listed in the main search engines?

Keeping Your Site Up-to-Date

Having a website that is obviously outdated is almost worse than having no web presence at all! Once you have launched your website, be sure to review it carefully every couple of months.

- Do you have new testimonials you can add?

- Is all of the information accurate?

- What changes or additions would you like to make in the future?

While you don't need to change your website every week, it is important that it stay fresh and alive.

Common Mistakes

Below are the five most common mistakes I see business owners make with regard to their websites. Don't let these happen to you!

Mistake #1

Too much about the business owner. Nothing about or for the visitor!

You know a business has made this mistake when the homepage is all about the owner and doesn't speak to the reader. Avoid this mistake by focusing on the problems your potential clients have and the results/benefits your service can provide.

Mistake #2

Being all things to all people.

This happens a lot when business owners launch their website before identifying their *Who* and *What*. They are not specific about the results or benefits their service provides, and the copy doesn't really speak to the reader because they didn't have a client in mind when it was written.

Mistake #3

Never evolving to a Level II or III website.

Many business websites start at Level I and never progress to Level II or III. This is a shame because as your business grows, you almost always have more value you can provide to your website visitors. Remember, the more value you provide and the more you position yourself as an expert, the more effective your website will be.

Mistake #4

Going too big in the beginning and not updating.

This is the opposite of Mistake #3. This is when the business owner has initial plans for a very extensive and comprehensive site, but the site never gets completed. Pages say "Coming Soon" for months. Or if the initial site gets completed, the website is so comprehensive and large that it is too big a task to keep up-to-date. Be sure to only bite off as much as you can chew!

Mistake #5

Doing it yourself instead of having your site professionally designed.

It is a good idea to get professional help for the overall design of a website. Too many business owners don't consider the true "cost" in terms of time, quality and opportunity when they do it all themselves.

How to Attract Well-Paying Clients with Your Website

By Milana Leshinsky (milana@milana.com)

As a rule, if a website looks beautiful, it has very little traffic.

Of course, there are exceptions to this rule, but most websites designed to impress visitors focus on the design aspect rather than marketing, and therefore suffer in its sale-ability.

No offense to web and graphic designers, but it's important that a professional's website is more than a pretty online brochure.

It has to be a comprehensive website that demonstrates your expertise, creates a credible image, shows the benefits of hiring you over another professional in your field and helps your visitors bond with you.

So what exactly is a comprehensive website?

Let's take a look at what some of the most successful service-based business websites include.

1. Professional Biography

This page should not only list your credentials and accomplishments but also include a high-quality photograph and some storytelling. In other words, instead of writing in a cut-and-dried manner, add some personal details. Mention your family, favorite places, hobbies, and other things that will help you come across as a real live person.

2. Information Products

Any "knowledge-based professional" should have a line of products. These could be books, e-books, reports, audio, video, manuals, kits, and anything else you can create based on your knowledge. Each product must be relevant to your target audience and have its very own sales letter (even if just one page).

3. Newsletter Archive

Publishing a newsletter doesn't have to be a big task. It can be a weekly tip, a monthly article, an update, an announcement or useful resources. What's important is that you do have some way of reminding your prospects about yourself, to be right there when they realize they need your services. Save each newsletter you write on your website to grow your content and resources.

4. Article Collection

Even if you don't want to write articles on a regular basis, you should write at least 3-5 articles on the hottest topics in your industry. The articles will show your expertise on the subject, will help you get listed with search engines and get picked up by other publishers for reprinting in their publications.

5. Client Testimonials

Testimonials sometimes sell better than anything else on a website. Make sure that you include the name and business title of each person who gives you a testimonial to add credibility to his or her words.

6. Industry Facts and Statistics

To demonstrate your expertise even further, you can use statistical data about your industry throughout the website. For example, mention how many people in the United States have ADD, how many entrepreneurs fail each year, what is the fastest growing profession today.

Adding such facts makes your website interesting, or "sticky," and holds your visitors' attention longer.

7. Calendar of Events

Teleclasses, book signings, workshops, speaking and presentations should be listed on your website under the "Calendar of Events"" section. This gives the impression that you are a busy professional and are in demand. That is attractive to potential clients.

Plus, they can see that you're updating your website frequently and serious about business.

8. Description of Expertise and Services

List each service you offer, or better yet, create a pre-designed program. Explain why you created this service, what problem you're trying to solve, what the benefits and the end results are of working with you and other essential elements of a sales letter. A Sales Letter Generator software program will help you create such a letter.

9. Contact Information

Provide your e-mail, phone number, and address or as much contact information as you're comfortable with sharing on your website. I personally provide an e-mail address only—it makes my initial contact with a prospect less urgent and allows me to think before responding.

10. Speaking Topics Page

Speaking is a great way to share your expertise and attract clients. Create specific topics that would be interesting to your ideal prospects, and list several points of discussion for each of your presentations.

Of course, make sure your images are of high quality and the website is functional. Any business owner with a website like this will stand three heads above the rest, will look knowledgeable and serious about his or her business and will attract well-paying clients worldwide.

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Milana Leshinsky is the founder of ACCPOW, Association of Coaching & Consulting Professionals on the Web. Join her to receive articles, tips and advice on how to build your client base and profit from your knowledge using the Internet—www.accpow.com.

Assignment 1   Plan Your Website Strategy

You have seen the benefit of having a website as one of the cars on your Marketing Train. Use the following pages to put your next steps on the track!

Considering the benefits, the goals I want to achieve with my website:

_____

_____

_____

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Why I feel good about my decision to either do it myself or hire professional help:

_____

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My website will have the following main pages:

_____

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My next steps:

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Concerns or challenges I have about launching my website:

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My strategies to overcome any concerns or challenges:

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Assignment 2   Implementation Schedule and Checklist

Use this chart to create a timeline for working on your website. In the TARGET DATE column indicate when you want to do each task. Use the ACTUAL DATE column to indicate when you actually complete it, and then "check it off!"

Ask your coach for feedback and to hold you accountable!

TASK	TARGET DATE	ACTUAL DATE	√
Determine website objective			
Determine pages/content			
Determine budget for website			

Hire copywriter (HW) or write copy (WC)			
HW—Obtain copywriter referrals			
HW—Schedule, conduct writer interviews			
HW—Select copywriter			
HW—Establish budget for copywriter			
WC—Schedule writing time			
WC—Write outline/draft copy			
WC—Write web copy/content			
WC—Obtain proofreader referrals			
WC—Schedule, conduct proofer interviews			
WC—Select proofreader			
Hire designer (HD) or self-design (SD)			
HD—Obtain web designer referrals			
HD—Schedule, conduct designer interviews			
HD—Select designer			
HD—Create task list for designer			
HD—Establish budget for designer			
HD—Deliver web copy to designer			
SD—Research site templates/tools			
SD—Select site template/tool			
Develop plan for site updates			