INFO PRODUCT BLUEPRINT

WORKBOOK

Your Comprehensive Blueprint and Action Plan for Creating and Selling a Successful Info Product

CREATED BY **Kenneth A. McArthur**

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INSTRUCTION SHEET

Congratulations on taking action and starting your journey to create your Info Product!

One of the first things I would like for you to realize is that this will take work. For some people this will be one of the toughest things you have ever done in your life.

Build A Success Path

In order to get the most out of this workbook you will want to study it several times. I recommend that as you are going through the workbook you take notes and use highlighters.

As you go through each module, break the sections down to see if each area is one you personally want to tackle or will hire or partner with someone who is an expert in that area.

Answer the Questions and Design Your Plan

As you proceed through each module make sure you pay attention to the questions. As you answer each question follow through with the action steps. These actions steps are designed to make sure you stay on track and accomplish your goal-your very own info product.

Tips And Hints

Italics: Throughout the workbook if you see part of the article in italics, this means that section is from Dan Giordano the workbook editor. Dan will sometimes introduce a contributor, give an overview of the section, or add some comments at the end of a section. It's just our way of letting you know a different person is writing, not the author of the section.

Section Overview: At the start of each section you'll have an overview of the article. As we have many contributors, you'll receive a brief introduction of the author. (For a more detailed contributor information go to the Appendix for information on Info Product Blueprint Contributors).

Things You Will Learn: In the boxes at the start of each topic you will find a list of key points covered in the section. Other points will be covered, but the section emphasis is on the ones in the box.

Notes: Take notes as you read. This is designed to be a working tool for you. So mark it up, highlight and write notes. We want you to succeed and noting important or ah-ha's will help you when designing your plan.

Questions: In the workbook, there are questions included to guide you in the development of your own info product. Take the time to thoughtfully answer the questions. This is the basis of your plan. Some questions will look simple and even repetitive. But it's all part of the blueprint. So take the time and invest in yourself. You will use the information to develop your product and your action plan.

Be patient with yourself. There's a lot of information included in Info Product Blueprint. We've included audios, video and plenty of printed material to help you in your product development. We're already planned on some more updated material that will be posted on the resource page. So make sure you register for the updates (www.infoproductblueprint.com/developer).

We want this to be your reference tool, your guidebook.

YOUR Blueprint for developing an info product.

Seize your opportunity and share your success with us.

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InfoProductBluePrint.com
your blueprint for creating and launching
a profitable info product

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Product Development

Module 3

Section 1: Creating E-Books FAST!

By Fabio Marciano

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Section 1

Creating E-Books FAST!

In this section we're going to cover how you can quickly and effortlessly create e-books… FAST! We're going to cover the key steps you must follow in order to avoid falling prey to Writer's Block and get your e-book written fast.

If you think you've already read this, seen this and know it – I did, too and it led to failure.

Stop and take a second. Realize we're going to take it from the start and go all of the way through. Even the professionals start with the basics. Let's get started.

What's in Store for You?

This is going to be a quick and hard-hitting guide to helping you write, create and sell your very own e-book. If you're not the writing type, I'll show you six other ways to create an e-book…FAST! In short, I'm going to tell you how to do everything to get your e-book published and ready for sale on the Internet.

What you will learn in this Section:

◆ **Brainstorming** the winning (read: saleable) idea

◆ **Researching** the topic

◆ **Planning** the outline of the material and the formulation of a program that you can use in your seminars, speeches and other info products

◆ **Writing** the e-book as quickly and efficiently as possible

◆ **Publishing** your e-book and getting your website and sales letter together

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What Exactly is an E-Book?

If you're new to the Internet, you might be new to e-books and might not know exactly what an e-book is. There's also a lot of confusion over what is and what isn't an e-book.

For those new to the game, "e-book" is short for **electronic book**. They are nothing more than "self-contained executable files" or PDF files that someone can open and read. The best e-books are rich with links to the Internet, graphics, video, and even audio files.

My job is to teach you how to create an e-book that is loaded with information and presented in a very user-friendly manner so that you're viewed as a highly-respected author, period – not just an Internet marketer who took an average product and hooked up with a great joint venture partner and thousands of affiliates to make a killing.

Now that's a lot to cover in just one lesson, so we're going to go pretty fast here. Take the time to read through the information carefully and as always, take notes.

Pick a Topic

Do you have your idea for an e-book yet? Do you know what you're going to write about specifically – or do you have a

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bunch of ideas on the table? How do you choose? How do you figure out what makes the most sense to pursue? Let's answer that question right now.

You need to write about topics that:

- ◆ You're passionate about

- ◆ Have large markets

- ◆ Have paying customers.

I advise my clients to focus on one great idea first, and then once they've written and promoted their e-book, they can then move on to the next project. The key to being a success is finishing that first project.

As for topics, it's always best to start your writing career by picking topics that you know and are interested in, not just ones that have huge potential to make money. Once you've gotten that first e-book under your belt, then you can start the process by FIRST figuring out what PEOPLE WANT TO BUY, then you go and create the e-book, regardless of whether or not you're passionate about the subject.

The reality is an e-book takes between 12 and 24 hours to write. So if you are going to work 2 hours a day writing, it will take you 6 to 12 days. If you only have 1 hour a day to write and work on your e-book, it will take 12 to 24 days to finish.

So please take the time right now to review your list of topics and focus on the one topic that you're going to be working on over the next few weeks.

Potential Topics:

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You should never write a book or an e-book without knowing beforehand if it's going to sell. One way to find out if it's a best seller or a stinker is to send a survey out to your e-zine subscribers. Once you know what topics they want to learn more about, you can create your e-book virtually overnight.

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If you don't have a list of people yet, but want to get cracking on writing your e-book, just look into one of the consistent best-selling topics or categories.

Go to NicheBot.com and type in some key phrases that have to do with your topic or 'niche,' as it's called in the marketing world. If you find that you have more than 20,000 searches, the market is definitely big enough to go after. The thing I like about NicheBot.com is that it's free, but also that you can see how many competing web pages there are and you can figure out if you'll have a tough time cutting through the clutter or not.

Who Is And Where Is Your Starving Crowd?

Do NOT waste your time writing a book or creating a product unless you know who your customers are BEFORE you waste your time and money on an idea that has no market. Writers and product creators who want help promoting and marketing their stuff contact me all of the time, but they have no idea who will buy it or how it will solve their target market's problems.

It's much easier to start with your target market first and THEN create the product to fill their needs. Actually, there's one more step to making a ton of money with info products: sell it to them. That last step is outside the scope of this lesson.

3-Step Process to Instant Riches

- ◆ Find a starving crowd
- ◆ Find out what they want
- ◆ Give it to them

Your job is to give them what they want in a simple, easy-to-understand language and you'll soon have an information empire in your hands. That's it. You just have three steps to success.

Chances are that 99% of the niches you'll come across won't be overcrowded and satisfied, which means that you can still make money in them. If you feel that the niche is satisfied or overcrowded, you can always slice the pie a different way and go after a different subset of your original niche. But first you have to find out if you can make money by meeting some unmet needs in your chosen niche.

Is There Money to be Made?

How do you determine if there are enough current paying customers in the niche? You can do this in a number of ways. The easiest way is to look at the best-selling e-books on Clickbank.com or you can look at the best-seller list on Amazon.com to find out how well certain products are selling.

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You can also look at the data you got by surfing competitive websites. Do they have products and services for sale? What kind of products and how much are they charging?

Get a Killer Title

You must absolutely have a killer title for your e-book. This is what grabs people's attention when they hear it. It's got to be short, descriptive (i.e., immediately says what the product is about, and memorable).

How to Pick a Great Title:

- Do a search or ClickBank.com to see what's selling and who your competition is.

- Do a keyword search on NicheBot.com to see what keywords in my topic are searched frequently.

- Brainstorm some killer sexy titles.

- See if the domain name is available and if it is, buy it.

I don't generally bother with Amazon because it's not relevant to selling e-books, but it is an extra step that some of my coaching clients like to take. So I'm telling you that the order of the next steps is up to you, but you MUST do all four steps listed above; skip one of them and you might choose a marginal title. Remember…

Marginal Titles = Marginal Sales

Create Your Table of Contents

Most writers flounder around and get that scary disease called **Writer's Block** because they don't have a detailed plan about what they want to write. Without an outline, you're going to find yourself writing stuff that you don't need in the book and not writing the things you do need in your book.

Yep, that's the big, secret solution I use with all my coaching clients; it works. Break your subject or niche down into pieces. You're either going to break it down based on the number of steps it takes to cure or fix the problem or you're going to section the material into 10 to 15 different areas. Each step or area becomes a chapter in your e-book. By breaking down the material into manageable chunks, you're going to find it much, much easier to write your e-book.

Always create a very detailed outline to write from before you start writing ANYTHING!

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Yep, that's the big, secret solution I use with all my coaching clients; it works. Here's why.

Create Two Outlines: A Table of Contents Version And A Detailed Version

Why two outlines? Both serve two different purposes and, in my opinion, will help keep you organized and on track.

The Table Of Contents Outline

First, take a stab at a Table of Contents Version, also known as a synopsis or broad stroke outline of what you want to cover.

Here's an example of the Table of Contents from my e-book I co-wrote with Ewen Chia: **How to Become an Expert in Your Niche in 30 Days...or Less**:

Author's Note
Introduction
Step #1   Basic Business Tools
Step #2   Your Web Site
Step #3   Writing Articles and Publishing a Newsletter or E-Zine
Step #4a   Your e-books – Your Ultimate Viral Marketing Tool
Step #4b   Your Books – A Must-Have Marketing Tool
Step #5   Networking & Creating a Joint Venture(s) and Creating Your Affiliate Program
Step #6   Coaching Clients
Step #7a   Creating Additional Infoproducts
Step #7b   Creating Raving Fans
Step #8   Holding Seminars, Tele-seminars, and Boot Camps
Step #9   Media and PR
Step #10   Learning How to Sell and Promote Yourself: What You Need to Do NOW!
30 Day Action Plan
Afterward
Resources

With this approach, we were able to create a filing system that we used to segment any research, book excerpts, quotes, and articles that we came across while researching the e-book. We were able to create quickly and easily a binder to section out the research and keep our writing organized concerning our printout and pages written to date, as well as our electronic copies and folders through programs like File Manager on our computers.

The organized writer is the successful writer.

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The Detailed Outline

Now take that Table of Contents Outline and start adding subheadings and additional points that you want to cover. This makes it a snap to jump to a subheading in your outline and write on that topic for five or ten minutes and then you're done with that topic until you're ready for editing and the second draft (which isn't for another 30 days).

You can check off the subheading and move on to the next one. By "breaking down" your Table of Contents Outline, you're better able to know where you stand with your book, its content, and how much more you have to do to fill in the gaps.

As for how "perfect" this detailed outline needs to be, the tighter and more succinct you can be with what you want to cover in a chapter, the easier it's going to be to write your book.

Don't sweat it if the entire detailed outline isn't done during this first day or two. In all likelihood, you're going to encounter some great bits of information or data while doing your research or reading through some of your notes and you can just add to the outline at that time.

The key is to get as much of it done so you have enough fleshed out topics to write on for the next couple of days.

Caveat: But, don't spend endless hours fleshing out every subtopic you want to cover. That valuable time could be spent writing. Your outline is like a map that plots out your future course. You're creating this map in advance of actually getting to that topic and writing about it so of course there are going to be changes and adjustments that you're going to make along the way.

Remain flexible but stick to your outline as much as possible to ensure that even though you might be taking a few detours and side roads, you end up at your end destination – a completed e-book.

Okay, enough chatter. Let's talk about creating your own outline for your e-book.

Creating Your Perfect Outline

Now that you've determined the major problems of people in your niche, it's time to gather your notes and create an e-book that focuses on solving these problems. You have their exact words used to describe their issues and concerns so you can use them for chapter titles and subheadings. This is what you do during the third step in my e-book formula: Table It.

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By tabling it, I mean it's time to break your subject or niche down into pieces. You're either going to break it down based on the number of steps it takes to cure or fix the problem or you're going to section the material into 10 to 15 different areas. This is an important step and is critical to getting you in a position to write and finish your e-book quickly.

Why break it down into steps or tasks to complete? Because each step or area becomes a chapter in your e-book. By breaking down the material into manageable chunks, you're going to find it much, much easier to write your e-book. Make that FINALLY write your e-book.

What would this process look like? Well, take this e-book, for example. I have broken down the process of writing an e-book into seven steps:

1. Think It
2. Research It
3. Table It
4. Write It
5. Edit It
6. Polish It
7. Publish It

By creating these seven steps, I made it easy on myself (and you, the reader). I'm able to quickly research a particular step, open up the file on my computer and insert ideas, notes, thoughts and definitely a lot of text in that step. Then when the "well" runs dry, I can move to the next topic. Try it for your e-book or info product right now.

Major Steps or Tasks My Reader Must Take to

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I generally advise my coaching clients to stick with no more than seven to ten steps. People want quick and easy results and the more steps they have to take, the harder they think the process is going to be.

Research Your Topic

Get an Idea Journal (Binder)

First things first. Go and get a 3-ring binder and buy a set of divider tabs. This is now the home for your research, sample website sales letters, and, of course, your e-book. I like to keep all my notes and writing for a particular project in one place and I've found that a binder works best. If you happen to be in a meeting and you jot down notes or an idea on a notepad, you can simply punch holes in it and insert it into your binder.

If you find that you have too many papers and pages or notes/research, get yourself a few folders and a filing box. This will help you stay organized and reduce the amount of time spent looking for that piece of research or text you found two weeks ago.

How I Do My Research

A few weeks (or sometimes months, since I tend to collect a lot of research on a variety of topics I want to write about) in advance of writing my e-book, I hop on over to Amazon to see what the top books in my niche are and I buy them. I then scan through the books and highlight a good passage or material that I can quote for my e-book. I take notes, notes, and more notes.

Actually, right after I order the best-selling books in my niche from Amazon, I hop on over to ClickBank and see what e-books are tops in my niche. What do I do? You guessed it; I buy the best sellers and read them cover to cover. Highlighting and making notes in the margins where necessary. Then I take all my books, e-books and notes and set them on my desk in plain sight. I like having my research at arm's length. Then with all of the information I've gathered over the past few weeks, I create my outline. More on this in a moment, but first, let's talk about an important lifesaver that you should definitely have.

Get a Model E-Book

In the process of reading all of these books and e-books, you're going to come across an e-book or two that you absolutely love. What do you love: the layout, the font, the cover, and the resources the authors have included, and so on? Why do you have to analyze these e-books so carefully? Because they become your model e-book(s). Your model e-book will help

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you with everything from the research to the editing to the polishing stages.

Trust me. Keep them close at hand and see how many times you refer to them.

Make a Writing Schedule

You need to create a writing schedule for yourself and stick to it. Period. End of story.

Aside from creating your *detailed outline*, this is the second most important factor in getting your book completed.

Be realistic about the amount of writing you will accomplish every day. **I tell my coaching clients to aim for a minimum of 2 to 3 single-spaced pages per day.** This is a VERY realistic target to reach.

After 28 days, you're staring at 56 to 84 pages of solid information. Add in some white space, some filler, quotes and guest articles, take the single-spaced to 1.5 spaced, as well as chapter headings, a table of contents and intro pages and you're looking at a 150- to 200-page e-book.

That's a lot of pages. The reality is that most e-books these days are in the 100 to 150 range and should take you a maximum 14-24 days to write/create. Spend another 14 days writing your sales letter and getting your website up and running and **you can put out a product every month to month and one half!**

Now Start Writing…EVERY DAY!

Don't complicate the process. Don't worry if you've never written so much as an article before. Just pull up that detailed outline in Word, pick a subtopic and start writing. Don't edit. Don't worry if it sounds good or bad. Every writer and every editor goes through multiple drafts. The key is getting the first draft as complete as possible. Just write, write and write some more.

No editing, just writing. Don't waste your time going back through your writing or you're going to sit there and rewrite it and rewrite it and rewrite it to death. Then you're never going to get your pages done. You'll have time enough to edit your book afterwards. Even if you think what you're writing is not *bestseller material* you need to meet your quota every single day. Resist the temptation to read your work thoroughly. Just get down the bones of what you want to write about and move on to the next topic.

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Once you meet your quota for the day, you can stop writing. Seriously. I mean it. Once you get your five pages done, you can shut down your computer and do whatever you want for the day. Even if you knock out 5 pages first thing in the morning, you don't have to write any more.

Don't complicate the process. Just start writing. Period. End of story. I'm serious here. Too many people have to get a cup of coffee, put on their writing pants, wait until the mood is right and so on and so on and…you get the point. They never get started or worse, they waste valuable time. You already should know when you're at your most creative and you should be allocating that time for the next 14 to 28 days for writing and writing alone.

Turn Off the Editing Machine

The number one problem my e-book coaching clients have is that they edit too much. In the middle of their writing, they stop to read what they just wrote. They don't like it, so they start changing the words around or deleting it altogether. All this editing gets them nowhere…FAST! You must realize this and realize it right now:

YOUR FIRST DRAFT IS A DRAFT. IT'S NOT GOING TO BE:

- PRETTY

- PERFECT

- READY FOR PRINT

And that's OKAY. Seriously. Your first draft is supposed to be rough. It's supposed to have "holes" in it and have spelling mistakes and all that jazz. Trust me on this. Just keep on writing. Don't edit anything and if you want to add more to a section and can't think of it right now, use my special technique. What do I do when my brain isn't working on a particular topic? I simply write:

[ADD MORE HERE]

I highlight and bold it just like the above example. Then when I'm FINISHED, notice I said finished, with my manuscript, I can go back during the EDITING stage and fill in the holes. Does that make sense?

The Lazy Way (Alternate Ways) to Create E-Books

There are 7 different ways you can create an info product. I have listed them below and cut down on the information just so we can get through this quickly.

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1. Create your own product
2. Create a product with another writer or partner
3. Have someone create the product for you
4. Buy the rights to a product and market/sell it
5. Find Public Domain information to repackage and market
6. Chicken Soup It! – Get others to contribute to your project
7. Transforming a raw product or data you bought

Again, I'm not going to go into too much detail on the 7 different ways that you can create products without having to write a word of the e-book or write the code for them. Why not? Because this e-book is about YOU creating products quickly by writing and creating them yourself, not getting someone else to do it. But, I know the power of using the 7 techniques listed above, so let's go over them briefly.

Option 1. Create Your Own Product

No need to discuss this option because we're covering exactly how to create your own product from scratch in this lesson.

Option 2. Create a product with another writer or partner

Whether it's through doing a joint venture with an expert in your niche or finding a co-author to help you put together your product, it's not too hard to find willing and able partners to work with.

Or if you're really lazy, why not interview an expert? To use this tactic, just think up a list of questions (or post a survey on a forum asking for help in coming up with questions or look at your list of common problems your starving market has) and then ask your expert to respond via email or by phone to the questions. Now you have your content.

Option 3. Have someone create the product for you

Ghostwriters are people who write books and other materials for others but the products are published under the buyer's name. This is a quick and easy way to create a product in less than a month. How do you find a ghostwriter? Thanks to the power of the Internet, the process is very simple. Just go to Elance.com, which is a phenomenal site that will put you in touch with freelancers offering all kinds of writing, editing and other services. The site is very easy to use.

Option 4. Buy the rights to a product and market/sell it

Reprint or Resell rights to a product are a quick and easy way for you to start selling a well-established and profitable product. All that's involved on your part is plunking down the money to buy the rights, and then market the heck out of the product and

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your website. Again, all you have to do is find a killer product, buy the resell rights and promote the product. You keep 100% of the profits if you buy the Gold resell rights. It's that simple. A great resource is a site like <u>WholesaleResellRights.com</u> which has hundreds of resell rights available

Option 5. Find Public Domain information to repackage and market

When something is in the public domain, it just means that the book or written material is now part of public property and is free to be copied and distributed by anyone. Savvy Internet marketers are scouring the web for out-of-print and non-copyrighted material to market, all the while keeping 100% of the profits from selling something they got for free on the Internet.

All you have to do is write a new foreword to the book or maybe bundle the book with a few bonuses, put up a website and you're in business. Just make sure you do your homework and make sure that it definitely is public domain or else you'll find yourself on the wrong end of a lawsuit.

Option 6. Chicken Soup It! - Get others to contribute to the project

This method is just like it sounds and is named after the best-selling series of books. Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen had people contribute stories and they made books out of them. They just did a little introduction and they dealt with marketing and promoting the book. You can do the same by having a bunch of articles, stories or content from other contributors and package it all together. This way of doing things was more popular a few years ago, but it's still a great way to knock out an e-book fast!

Option 7. Transforming a raw product or data you bought

I'm talking about Private Label Rights (PLR) where you get the rights to use a product as your own. This is really a new concept and idea that Jimmy Brown first created with his Profits Vault membership site. What Jimmy did was take a hot niche, research it and come up with what he called a raw product. This was a rich text or Word file that had a very simple e-book already done for you. All you had to do was repackage the e-book by adding new content and data. Next you came up with a new title and cover and you had a product that was ready for sale.

Quick Editing

Once you're done with your FIRST DRAFT, it's now time to do some quick editing. Scroll through your e-book from start to

Notes

finish and look for all those markers that you left in it to remind yourself to add more information. You remember them. They look something like this:

[ADD MORE HERE]

NOW is the time to go out and find the remaining information that you need to fill in the blanks. Don't kill yourself wasting hours and hours. If you're having a big problem finding unique content or writing your own, find an author who has written an article on the subject and insert it into your text. Make a note to email them and ask for permission and you're done.

Don't waste too much time doing your content edit. You don't have to elaborate too much when you're writing e-books. Just get to the heart of the matter and don't worry about providing all of the footnotes and backup to what you're saying. You're the expert remember? Your readers will take your word for it.

Bulking Up Your E-Book

Is Your e-book Still a Bit Thin? If you're staring at your completed manuscript and you have 58 pages of 1.5-spaced text, then you have three options:

Don't Sweat It

If your content is really good and direct and to the point, you can get away with having a "small" e-book. Just make sure your writing is action-packed and filled with invaluable resources and you'll be good to go. Yanik Silver's best-selling e-book of all time, Instant Sales Letters, is exactly 50 pages.

Enough said.

Add More Content

Of course, you always have the option of adding some more material to your e-book. This will add to the projected completion date of your project, but it could pay off in the end. Your e-book could become very comprehensive and the industry reference guide, so the upside is worth the extra time you may need to research, write, and edit new material.

Add More Fluff

This is a favorite of some e-book authors. They wind up with an e-book that's 100 pages and so they add in a lot of

White space

between paragraphs and their topic headings or they break up their writing into two sentence blurbs.

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In addition to adding some white space, authors will add lists of things, websites, resources and other STUFF to make their e-book longer. I HATE these kinds of e-books and I always feel ripped off after I read it…in 20 minutes!

Another popular technique I do actually endorse is to **add interviews to your e-book**. You can interview five to seven experts on the topic you're writing about or a relevant topic and include those interview Q&A's in the back half of your e-book. I like this approach because it definitely adds value because it serves two purposes: the experts' responses should reinforce the main points that you've made in your e-book and it should also provide additional information and resources that your readers can use.

Final Edits

Okay, now that you're done with the content edit, let's talk about the actual editing process. NOW you finally get to turn on that internal editing machine of yours. Yes, you fought that inner demon for the past few days or weeks, but you have to turn it back on now.

Do yourself a favor and save your electronic document under a *different* file name. For example, I named the original file for this e-book: iauthorWIP.doc (WIP = Work In Progress)

When I started editing it, I called the file: iauthorWIP2.doc

Why do this? Just in case you cut out something you want to retrieve later. It's happened to me several times. Why? Because the next step in the process is to print out your e-book and you need to start to…

Cut Away Excess Words and Tighten Up the Language

Now is the hard part of **cutting away the excess words** from your e-book and **tightening up the language** that you used in your manuscript. Just print out the current version of your e-book and get yourself a **red pen** and get ready to have some fun. Yes, fun. It didn't start out this way for me with my first book, but while editing my second one I realized that **SIMPLE IS BETTER**. Forget fancy words. Use common language. Use the language you use when you talk to someone one-on-one.

Speaking of talking one-on-one, make sure you eliminate the "all of you" and other plural pronouns throughout your e-book. You're writing to and TALKING TO ONE PERSON and you want to use YOU as much as possible.

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Break up your paragraphs into short bursts of energy that are two to three sentences long. Cut out long descriptions. **Bold** words or make some ALL CAPS to add emphasis to your writing. Make your writing JUMP OFF THE PAGE at the reader and get him or her to take action and continue reading.

Use Your Model E-Book

You should already have your hands on your competitors' e-books (whether you have to buy them or they're on their sites as freebies) and studied them. And, by the way, you should have already done this…but just in case you didn't listen to me earlier on, I thought to mention it again. But back to your competitors' e-books…

- Do you like the look and feel of them?
- What would you change?
- Is the font easy to read?
- Is the writing clear? Concise?

Write down all your initial reactions and comments in your notebook/binder and then get to work tweaking your e-book if necessary. Now keep this "model" e-book in front of you. I find that I like to turn back to my model e-book to find out "How did they introduce their e-book?" or "How did they make the transition from subject to subject?"

How Long are Your Chapters?

Take a page from a best-selling author, James Patterson. I can never put down his books because his chapters are so short. I read a few pages and realize I'm close to the end of the chapter. Then I'm hooked and start reading the next chapter and realize I'm almost done with the chapter, I read the next. I do this frequently by doing "Step 4" then "Step 4a" and so on. It's a quick trick to break down your chapters into bit-sized nuggets of information: information to digest easily by your reader.

How Do You Know When You're Done Editing?

You're done editing when you're 90% done. I'm serious. The best advice I ever got from self-publishing guru, Dan Poynter, is that your book is completed when it's 99% done. What happened to the other 9%? I'll show you how you can get some other people to edit your book for you and take care of that pesky 9%…for FREE.

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Get It Ready For Publishing

Once you've handled the task of adding some additional content, filling in the holes in your text and doing simple editing work, you now have to polish your e-book. No, it's not like spring-cleaning. By polishing it, I mean that you need to take this raw product and add the bells and whistles reader's have come to expect from e-books. You need to add in some additional pages and add borders, change the look of your titles and so on.

In short, you're taking your simple Word® document and making it look like the Model e-book that you have in front of you, but let's not reinvent the wheel here. Look at each section of your Model e-book and follow the same look and feel for the Table of Contents, Chapter Headings, Headlines, and even the font if you want. Tweak the font style and layout if you want, but that's just more work for you. You decide how "unique" you want your e-book.

Title Page

This page is easy enough to create. You simply type out the title of your e-book, insert the cover shot of your e-book, type out your subtitle under the cover picture and write out your name. It's that simple. If you want to add a company logo or a brief description of the work in addition to your subtitle, you can do that on this page.

Copyright Page

On this page you add in your copyright information, your "Limits of Liability" and your "Disclaimer of Warranty" section. Don't sweat writing out these last two points. You can look at your Model e-book and several other e-books to get an idea of the language you need to insert. (Please consult an attorney or other disclaimer providers rather than risk copyright violations by copying what a sample e-book uses.) If you happen to have an attorney in the family, run it by him or her.

It is on this page that you also let people know that this e-book is NOT FREE.

How to Make Some Extra Money

If you don't have an affiliate program, then you need to get one…immediately! An affiliate is like a full-time salesperson out there promoting your e-book to the public. Beginning e-book authors generate 80 to 95 percent of their sales from affiliates.

More on this important subject shortly…

Notes

The Ten Second Table of Contents

If you're using Microsoft Word to write your e-book, you can easily build your Table of Contents in the matter of a few seconds. To build your Table of Contents, just click on the area where you would like to insert it (right after your copyright page is best), then scroll over the "Insert" button on your toolbar.

Now click on "Reference" and over to "Index and Tables" and click on the "Table of Contents" tab. You then select the desired format for your Table of Contents and start the process by hitting the "OK" button. Microsoft Word automatically begins building your Table of Contents by searching for all of the headings and sub-headings throughout your document. It will then take all that information and create your Table of Contents. Ten Seconds later, you have your Table of Contents.

About the Author(s)

On this page you're going to include a quick little bio about yourself, your company, what you do, other e-books or books you wrote and the name of your pet turtle in second grade. No, just kidding, on the last point. But you should think of something personal to include about yourself to connect further with your readers. Include a picture of yourself to add a "face" to the information your reader is poring over. I've found that this one little page can do a lot to add **credibility** to the work.

Welcome or Introduction Page

Now is the time to add that Opening Note to your reader. This could be a quick paragraph or two about why you wrote the e-book or the results you've attained because of the information contained within it. This is also a nice place to give the reader a broad overview of the material covered and what they should expect while reading the book. **Don't get too fancy** and don't think too hard about writing this page. If you get writer's block, turn to the introduction page of your Model e-book and write from there.

The main thing your introduction has to do is:

- ◆ Explain why you wrote the book
- ◆ What major problem are you addressing?
- ◆ What benefits and solutions people will get from your e-book?
- ◆ Why are you an expert in the area?

Keep your introduction under a page if possible. People who buy e-books want information and they want to get it fast. Don't spend time telling them what you're going to tell them…just tell them!

Notes

The "Capture Emails" Page

Some e-book authors are including a page in the beginning of their e-books to make sure that they capture email addresses. A free mini-course or report on a topic related to the e-book is the best way to get people to give you their email address. This is particularly important if you sold the resale rights to someone and would have no way of knowing who's buying the e-book from the reseller.

Chapter Headings

I like my chapter headings to start at the top of a new page and be big and bold. I want to tell the reader that they've just completed one step or section of the e-book and they're moving on to the next one. Use larger and bolder fonts and sometimes color will help as well to ensure that the chapter headings stand out from the rest of the headings and subheadings.

Some Additional Formatting

Besides the above pages you created, you're going to need to add a few more items to polish off your e-book so that it looks professional and is ready to sell.

The Header

If you buy enough e-books (and actually read them), then you'll notice that most of them have a header that sits above a solid line. I strongly recommend that you insert a header at the top of your e-books to give it an authentic "book-like" feel. The process is simple enough…

While in the view "Header and Footer" mode, you type in the header that you want to appear on each page of your e-book. Then click on the "Format" button and click on "Borders and Shading." When the pop-up box appears, click in the box on the right to insert a line at the bottom of the header.

The Footer

Repeat the same process you just used on the header for the footer. This time you're going to type in your copyright notice on the left side of the page and on the right you're going to include an active web-link to your website. For a solid line that will appear at the bottom of your header and the top of your footer like this e-book, just go to the "Format" button on the toolbar while still in the "View Header and Footer" mode. Select "Borders and Shading" and insert a solid line using the Borders and Shading wizard.

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Adding Page Numbers

Go to the "View" button on the toolbar and select the "Header and Footer" option. While in the view "headers and footers" mode, you can click on the "Insert Auto Text" button and a drop down box filled with options will appear. You can select "-PAGE-" or the other page numbering options and then re-format them to suit you.

Fancy Stuff

Forget the fancy borders and PowerPoint clipart. They don't add to the presentation and might actually distract your reader. Stick with the basics of page numbers, a header and footer, and call it a day.

Font Size Does Matter BIG TIME

Most e-books use a font size between 11pt and 12pt, but it all depends on the type of font used. Some fonts are naturally bigger than others are, so make sure you do a test run to see what type works best for you and your jury of peers.

I normally use 12pt Georgia font for my e-books. I like it because it stands out but it's still classy. A lot of e-books are written in Arial or Times New Roman 11pt or 12pt font.

Whatever you choose, **do a print and readability test** to see if it's easy to read. It's important also not to make your font size ridiculously big. That screams "amateurish" and your reader will feel like you're ripping them off by trying to take a little content and make it into a lot of content using the tricks others use.

Your Paragraphs – Short Burst of Information

Go through your document to see if you have any excessively long paragraphs. Remember, people are reading on screens and you want your words to be easy to read and comprehend. Take the time now to quickly go through your e-book and break up long paragraphs where possible. Aim for 3-5 sentences where possible. And remember to cut out unnecessary words and sentences. Be short and to the point.

Bullets and Lists

A great way to be short and the point is to use bullets when appropriate. Bullets are great because they:

- Call attention to themselves
- Act as mini headlines because they call attention to themselves (see above)

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- Reinforce the material in your paragraphs
- Get to the point a lot easier than long sentences
- Help break things up a bit and give your readers eyes a break

The White Space Game

This brings us to the importance of white space. Where appropriate, add in an extra space between paragraphs or subjects to make it easier to both read and keep two different thoughts, strategies and ideas separate from one another. Use this technique selectively because you don't want your customer feeling they overpaid for an e-book considered a long special report.

Lastly, Be Consistent and Keep it Simple

If you're using a 12-point font in one chapter and you use a 10-point font in another, you're not being consistent. The same goes for your headers, subtopics and other formatted areas of your e-book. When you're consistent, you're professional.

Don't get cute and don't get weird with your formatting. Create a clean looking and easy to read product and your customers will thank you…with their dollars and their referrals to their friends and subscribers.

Adding Autopilot Affiliate Cash Streams

You probably know about affiliate links and how you can make money from promoting other people's products, but I will talk about that in just a second. What I want to cover is **making additional money by promoting products *within* your e-book**. Whenever you mention a resource that was helpful for you, such as an e-book that you read, make sure you sign up for that author's affiliate program and insert the affiliate link in your e-book.

So take the time now to go through your e-book and note the e-books and resources that you mentioned. Visit the author's sites and see if they offer an affiliate program.

Actually, before you go through the trouble, visit ClickBank to see if the author sells his/her e-books there. You can easily and quickly sign up to promote products and you can instantly promote their products by generating your affiliate link and inserting it into your e-book.

Now every time someone says, "Hey, that's an e-book I need. Let me check it out." and goes to the website and purchases the e-book, you get a commission. I call this Autopilot Affiliate Riches because **you set up the link once, forget about it and you make money for the rest of your life**.

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WARNING: Just make sure you don't overdo it and load your e-books with affiliate links. That's a bit blatant and readers will tend to get angry and try to circumvent your links. That's why I always, always put in affiliate links and mention products about things it's relevant to what I'm referring.

Getting Help From A Jury of Your Peers

I highly recommend that you send out your e-book to a number of your peers within your industry for their review. You do this to secure a quick blurb or testimonial for your e-book that you can use on your website and in promotions for the e-book. Tell your peers to give you an honest review of what they see and tell them to make suggestions to make the e-book better.

These folks will act as your editors and critics, as well as your typical reader. Since you have chosen people who already wrote e-books, you'll get an honest critique about your writing, grammar and the content. They will help you by making suggestions on what to cut out and where to add some more meat.

What's In It for Them? – When you send a request to your peers and other gurus to give you a testimonial for your product, you'll get 99 out of 100 giving you a very favorable testimonial for your e-book. Why? It's the whole "What's in it for me" mentality. The guru you've reached out to is now going to get exposure to everyone who visits your website AND if you give him or her first crack at promoting your e-book through your affiliate program, **they'll make a LOT of money from promoting YOU.**

Killer Covers: Spend the Money and Do it Right

People DO judge a book by its cover or a product by its package! Don't believe me? Go into any bookstore or video store and look around. Nine times out of ten, the cover design or packaging first draws your eye to a particular product. It's at that moment you form your first impressions and the sale is made...or lost!

So do people really do judge a book by its cover? Yes! And guess what? The same is true on the Internet, probably more so. That's because everything on the Net is two-dimensional. If you want to make a good first impression, to build trust, and create value in your customers mind, then you have to present your product in a way to which your customer can relate.

Keep your cover and your graphics simple. Don't have too much going on visually on your e-book cover. You don't want to make people "work" to read your cover. You want them to

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scan it over, instantly get it and get on with reading your sales letter.

There are many graphics designers on the web, so take the time to look at their portfolios and choose wisely – that cover's going to communicate to your potential customer what's inside for them.

Publishing It – Formats, Files and Formalities

Up until now, you have used Microsoft Word or some other word processing program to create your e-book. Now it's time to convert that information into one of the two formats that most e-books come in: an .exe file or a .PDF file.

WARNING - Some of the biggest distributors of e-books DO NOT ACCEPT .EXE FILES, but they gladly accept PDF's.

My advice: just go with PDF's. Adobe® is the best PDF maker out there, but they're expensive. If you want to make the investment, go for it: Adobe.com. An alternative and cheaper software for creating PDF's at CreatePDF.com

Check out Software995.com for software that will get the job done or you can also look into using PDF995.com.

You can also check out Download.com for the latest software to convert Word® documents to PDF files.

So what can we learn from all of this? Quite simply . . .

- ◆ You DON'T have to be an expert on a topic to create an e-book
- ◆ You CAN create a product even if you don't know how to write well or fast
- ◆ You DON'T need to write the majority of your e-book if you choose to use ghostwriters or partners
- ◆ You DON'T need a lot of time to create your e-book – most can be done with 12 to 24 hours of writing
- ◆ You DON'T have to have an original idea to create a bestselling e-book
- ◆ You CAN repeat this processes over and over again – can create autopilot income streams for life from your e-book(s)

Let's just review the steps again and then I want you to close this book and get started on creating your own info product.

- ◆ **Find Your Topic and Make Sure it Will Sell** – Pick a topic that you're passionate about and know a lot about. This is critical to do for your first e-book because it makes it easier to get your e-book done

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because you know the information so well. Make sure you choose a killer title because you want to instantly grab the attention of your potential buyers.

- **Create Your Outline** – Take a look at the information you listed in your notebook and the system you just created. Now add some sub-topics under each of the steps and chapter headings. Creating a detailed outline with many subtopics makes it easier to finish your product. Why? Because all you have to do is write a few sentences under each topic and you're done.

- **Make a Writing Schedule and Write Every Day** – Don't complicate the process. Don't worry if you've never written so much as an article before. Just pull up that detailed outline in Word, pick a subtopic and start writing. Don't edit. Don't worry if it sucks. Just write, write and write some more. No editing, just writing. Don't waste your time going back through your writing or you're going to sit there and rewrite it and rewrite it and rewrite it to death. Then you're never going to get your pages done…or your e-book for that matter.

- **Alternate Methods of Creation** – If you're having trouble creating your e-book, then re-read the 7 different ways we covered on how to create products with little to no effort – creating it yourself, getting a writing partner, using a ghostwriter, buying resell rights, using public domain works, Chicken Soup method, or using private label rights.

- **Quick Edits and Formatting** – Take a look at your model e-book or product and then take a look at yours. What format changes, borders can you add, space breaks and white space can you add? Do you need to change the font type or size? Once you're done, send it out to a few of your peers and have them review it and make suggestions on how you can improve your product. Add in your title page, about the author, table of contents, copyright and lead capture pages.

- **Add in Autopilot Cash Streams** – Real quick, make sure you add in some affiliate links throughout your e-book. Make sure to focus on products that you 100% endorse and that your readers will love and absolutely need to implement the information in your e-book.

- **Killer Covers** – Make sure you get a cover and header graphics that is professional looking and immediately draws your reader in.

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◆ **Publish It** – We didn't go into detail on this step because it's outside the scope of this lesson, but I would suggest publishing your e-book as a PDF file because they work on both PCs and MAC computers.

Don't over think the process. Just get started and work on your product every day. Follow your outline, minimize the distractions and before you know it, you'll have a finished product ready for sale!

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Next . . . Adding Audio to Your Website

InfoProductBluePrint.com
your blueprint for creating and launching a profitable info product

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Product Development

Module 3

Section 2: Adding Audio To Your Website

By Curlan Moore

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Info Product Blueprint

Adding Audio To Your Website

Our next writer is actually a professional musician, so who better to talk about adding sound to your website. Through his website Mastermedia.com, Curlan Moore shows people how easy it is to get started adding multimedia to your site.

What you will learn in this Section:

◆ What you need to consider when using audio

◆ Equipment needed for recording

◆ Available audio recording programs

◆ Legalities to consider when adding audio to your site.

Overview

In this article, I'll explain some of the benefits of integrating audio into your website, what you can accomplish with audio and how to get started placing audio on to your website – including hardware and software recommendations. So let's get started.

Benefits of using audio

There are many benefits to having audio on your website. One of the biggest benefits can be an increase in your number of opt-ins and conversions (if you are trying to capture email addresses and/or sell a product or service). Audio can be a very powerful tool if used correctly, allowing you to give your website a voice and achieve better overall results.

Other benefits

Giving your website visitors another way to get your message (they may not necessarily need to read your website's copy if you integrate that into your audio message).

Allowing you to easily express yourself in your natural manner and have that heard by your visitors. (Some people don't like writing or are much more comfortable speaking than writing.)

Giving your website "character," making it more "personable" to your visitors (allows your visitors to gain a sense of your personality, emotion, etc.)

Helping to keep your visitors on your website longer (utilize audio to capture their attention immediately and keep things interesting).

Get visitors to take action. (You can simply instruct your visitor on what you want them to do, fill in forms, "click there," etc.)

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"Amplifying" your website's copy. (This can help to make good copy more persuasive and even help improve a website with 'bad' copy.)

Helping to add credibility to your website and build trust. This can lead to better results for your site as it is easier to get people to take action and do what you ask of them when they feel that they are dealing with a credible person or company – whatever your site represents – ultimately you.

Increasing the number of opt-ins and conversions from your website (again, credibility helps here). Improvements in conversion ratio of as much as 300% have been attributed to simply adding audio to a website.

These are just some of the benefits. Utilizing audio effectively adds another dynamic to your website, increasing your chances for better results overall.

A few things you can do with audio

Create an audio information product that you can sell (an interview, a tele-seminar, an audio e-book, etc.)

Present it as an alternative to reading text (e.g. audio books).

Place it on a webpage to complement your website's copy.

Personalize your web page; add elements of character and emotion to your website.

Have as an "attention grabber" (have audio play automatically when loading your webpage).

Add music with new or existing audio to give it a more professional 'feel.'

Make it available for distribution (e.g. downloadable mp3s, podcasting, streaming audio).

And much, much more. Creativity is the key here.

Something to think about BEFORE getting started

Here's an important and often overlooked issue you must take seriously when using content other than your very own, whether it be pre-existing audio or the use of written material that you now wish to convert into audible content. Ask yourself this: Do you have the right or permission to use that content for your own usage?

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Now let me preface here that I am not a lawyer so I am in no way giving you legal advice, just a friendly warning. I recommend that you learn more about what you legally can and cannot do regarding your content creation and that you seek legal advice from an attorney whenever you are in doubt about the legitimacy of your content creation.

Copyright infringement, the unauthorized use of other's material, particularly, copyrighted material (by which, practically everything that is originally authored, is protected under copyright laws), is illegal, so make sure you're not inadvertently breaking the law.

Also, be aware that in the United States, it is illegal in some states to record a conversation without first getting permission from all involved in the conversation.

Here are a couple of safe practices to follow whenever you are recording content with other contributors:

- Get permission from others that you are intending to record – before you begin recording.

- Notify all parties being recorded that they <u>are</u> being recorded – upon contact.

- Get or confirm that you have permission to use material that you did not create. (There are some exceptions to this rule, particularly when dealing with content in the public domain, but I won't get into that here.)

Again, I'm not a lawyer so don't just take my advice here. Seek legal counsel for anything you need to verify regarding your content creation. You should at least be familiar with the legal matters surrounding it. With that said, don't get "bogged down" by all of the legal "stuff" either. Be sure to have fun learning and exploring all that you can do with audio.

Let's look at a creation process for creating audio for your website.

The Audio Creation Process

In a nutshell, here are the common steps you will need to take in order to create audio content for your website. (I will elaborate on these steps going forward.)

Get the content to be used for your recording. (scripted material, interviewer/interviewee, voice talent, people, music, etc – whatever it is you are trying to record)

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Record your content

Get the audio into your computer. (If you did not use your computer to record the audio then you may require this step. I will elaborate on this later.)

Edit your audio. (This is an optional step – removing unwanted material, 'cleaning up' sound, adding background music, finalizing the audio quality to be released, etc.)

Convert the audio into a compatible format to be used for your method of distribution (flash, streaming audio, podcasting, etc – more on this later).

Upload the audio to the Internet (copy the audio file to a web server using FTP, etc.).

Provide a means for others to play your audio from the web (play back buttons on a website, podcast, etc).

Step 1 – Getting content

Obviously you will need something to record. You will want to make sure that you are properly prepared to handle recording your content (exactly what are you recording and how?)

Are you recording a teleseminar (a seminar broadcasted via the telephone), a phone interview where you'll be engaged in interactive conversation with another? Is it pre-recorded material that you wish to re-record and/or possibly mix in with a personal message of yours? Is it musical content such as a song or a jingle? Are you using intro, outro or background music?

Some of these examples may require a different approach when it comes to capturing and producing your audio, making it readily available to your website's visitors. So be prepared ahead of time.

Step 2 / Step 3 – Recording Your Audio / Get content into Computer

You could conduct your recording in a professional setting such as a recording studio where there is professional recording equipment, the proper sound environment, etc. The end result would be that you would receive your recording in either analog (tape) or digital (such as CD-Rom) form. You could then use that file for later usage. This could be a costly and probably inconvenient way to go for most and might be used when you are looking to get the absolute best recording quality available to you.

Or, you could choose your own environment to record in, where you provide the equipment for the recording. Using the proper methods and equipment, a quality recording can be easily achieved, without costing much, yet produce excellent results. Most people reading this would probably go this route so I will assume that is the case here.

Equipment Needed

Your Computer

Your computer can serve as your audio recorder provided that you have a working sound interface (most personal computers already have this built-in), the software to capture and save your audio recording and enough system resources available to meet the recording software's requirements as well as your recording needs.

The more powerful the computer, the better, especially when performing tasks that may demand a lot of CPU processing power such as using software generated audio effects (such as reverb or noise reduction) in the editing process. With that said, be sure that you have enough system resources (available RAM, disk space and CPU power) to handle your recording needs.

NOTE: The software that you choose to use may or may not state its system requirements information (minimum RAM, hard disk space needed). For the average situation, you will probably want to have a system with 256-512 MB or more of installed RAM and at least 2GB of available hard disk space (you may be able to get away with less depending upon your audio software's needs).

In general, different software programs have different system requirements so, if possible, know what those requirements are and be able to meet them before you begin recording.

System Resources Tip

When you are recording on your computer, try to close any programs that you are not immediately using. This will help to make more memory available to you as well as take some of the burden off of your computer's CPU – two things your recording software will probably demand more of. Doing so may also help to avoid potential problems with your audio recording, problems such as this example.

I was once recording audio directly to a computer that had its screen-saver enabled. Every time the screen saver would start, the audio software I was using would introduce noise into the recording which I would not hear until playback. This drove me *crazy* until I figured out what was happening. Turning the

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screen saver off fixed the issue (the problem was related to the way the sound card and video card shared resources).

Now this particular problem may never happen to you but do be aware that your system resources play a large part in helping to achieve a successful recording.

You also want to make sure that you have enough free hard disk space available. Basically, the longer the recording, the more hard disk space you will need. You obviously do not want to attempt recording 60 minutes of audio when your available hard drive space only allows for 10.

For example: Recording stereo sound in uncompressed, PCM wave file format (more on that later) will use approximately 10 Megabytes of hard disk space for every minute you record. So if you were to record in that format for 2 hours (120 minutes), you would require approximately 1.2 Gigabytes of free hard disk space to be available. If you are editing such a recording, your software may create several copies (or parts) of the audio data and may require more hard disk space (and/or memory) to accommodate the additional audio files produced while editing. For these reasons, you will want to have plenty of hard disk space available.

Your Sound Interface

Some sound interfaces (sometimes referred to as soundcards) are better than others, so depending upon the quality of sound you are striving for, you may want to upgrade to a higher quality interface if you find your sound unsatisfactory. Upgrading will most likely require adding an external sound interface in addition to the built-in interface (and avoiding the built-in one).

If you are using a computer that can internally accept actual soundcards (such as a desktop computer,) then you could upgrade using an internal card instead. However, the external interface is more versatile as it is physically easier to install (just connect a cable), and is portable, making it easy to move between other computers (e.g. desktop to laptop).

If you plan on also producing a physical, high quality audio product (DVD, CD-Rom), then you may want to consider upgrading your interface. Although not absolutely necessary, this can help to achieve the best results. With that said, if you are only creating audio content for the Internet, you can 'get away with' many of the more common interfaces available to you.

NOTE: There are a growing number of audio interface kits becoming available on the market. This may be due, in part, to the ever-growing Podcasting craze that's been happening lately. These kits generally come with all of the audio hardware you will need to create your audio content.

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Digital Audio Recorders

Digital audio recorders offer several advantages over the traditional analog recorders such as the potential for better sound quality, longer recording times, as well as the ability to quickly and easily reproduce recordings and/or manipulate them. If possible, use a digital recorder that is capable of transferring the recorded audio via a data connection to your computer. Also, try to use one that will allow you to save and/or export the audio as a common audio format such as .wav or .wma type. This will ultimately save you a lot of time. Trust me on this.

Analog Audio Recorders

We all know them, cassette tape recorders, reel-to-reel tape (remember those?), mini-tape dictaphones, etc. These recorders have served us well and still do for many of us. If you decide you want to stick with your analog tape recorder, that is fine. All we need to do is digitize the audio coming from your tape recorder's output. This is where our computer comes into play. I'll explain how to do this in a bit.

A note about recording with cassette recorders: When recording with a cassette recorder using its built-in microphone, the quality may already be compromised since some recorders pick up the mechanical noise made by the recorder itself – so make sure you are satisfied with the resulting audio quality.

Recording Methods

To record your audio, you can either record directly into your PC (provided you have the proper software and hardware) or use a separate recorder to capture the audio (such as a tape recorder, digital recorder or dictaphone/message recorder).

Let's take a look at the direct to computer method first.

Recording Method 1 – Direct to Computer

This consists of simply plugging your audio source (microphone, CD, DVD player, etc.) directly into the appropriate audio connection on your computer (line input or microphone jack) then running audio recording software that will record your audio onto your computer's hard drive. You can decide on your desired audio format from this point or worry about that later on (more on audio formats later).

Recording Method 2 – Using an Intermediary Recorder

This method consists of recording with another recording device other than your computer initially. First, you would record your material on your recorder, after which, you would

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transfer the audio recording from the recorder onto your computer.

If you choose to record this way, I highly recommend that you use a digital type recorder that allows you to copy the digital recording (reasons mentioned previously). If you don't have the luxury of being able to do this, you will need to convert the audio output from your device (cassette tape output, CD player output) to digital.

To create the digital audio, you will first need to connect the audio output from your recorder device to your computer's audio interface and record the audio being played back from the device.

Inputs – Mic or Line In?

If you're unsure of what a 'line in' jack is or what it is for, or just uncertain about how to best use the line input – here's an explanation.

The purpose of the line input jack is to accept line level signals. Wow.

(okay, but there's more…)

A line level signal is basically a stronger electrical signal than that of a microphone's electrical signal so the line input jack has circuitry behind it that is designed to handle these stronger signals (such as a CD or DVD player output, a TV or radio). If an audio device has a line output, then the receiving device with a line input is the ideal connection to connect into.

With that said, there may be circumstances where it is more desirable to connect a line level (or 'line out') signal to the microphone input jack when the signal is not really at "line level," but somewhere in between line level and microphone level.

The main objective here is to achieve a clean yet strong level of audio signal while avoiding audio distortion, so you may need to try both inputs, choosing the one which consistently produces the best sound overall.

In general, connect microphones into the "mic" jack and other audio sources (such as the line out or headphone output of CD, DVD, Cassette and other players) into the "line in" jack.

Time for an upgrade?

If you're on a tight budget, I recommend that you simply use what you have and make the best of it (provided you have the minimal items necessary to create your audio content of course). If, however, you are unsatisfied with the results you

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are getting from your audio card and wish to upgrade, I would consider upgrading to a more professional sound card, especially if you're a laptop user.

Although there are some machines that have exceptionally good sound quality, most computers' built in soundcards are not of the highest quality, tending to produce a noisy sound quality instead. You may be one of the lucky few who already have an exceptionally clean, high quality audio card in their computer. If that's you, great, but if it's not, you may want to consider getting a more professional audio interface that provides a more professional sound.

External USB/Firewire Soundcards

I recommend getting a USB or Firewire type of sound interface (sometimes referred to as an external soundcard even though it's not really a card) if you are planning on upgrading your computer's sound system. Using a USB or Firewire interface avoids the issue of having to install an audio card into your PC.

You would simply install the new sound interface and plug your headphones, microphone or other audio device directly into it. These external soundcards can be a great solution for getting around a 'noisy' computer sound card, especially if you experience unwanted noise, hiss or hum when you plug directly into your computer's sound jack.

Things to be mindful of

Initially recording into the computer typically saves us the most time since we ultimately need to work with our audio file on the computer anyway. Having to first record on another device then transfer it to our computer would, of course, be more time consuming, not to mention the likelihood of needing to convert the file format (more on formats below).

Do keep in mind, however, that when you are totally dependent upon the computer to handle things, you also run the risk of potentially loosing your recording in the event of something happening to your computer during the recording (e.g. power outages, problems or Murphy showed up).

The last thing you want is your computer going down while you're using it to record your live tele-seminar that took you months to arrange (restarting the live seminar probably won't work). This may or may not be of concern to you. Maybe you've got the most reliable PC in the world. Just keep in mind the ramifications of such an event if it were to happen and have a contingency plan ready (simultaneous recording or a backup recorder). Don't get me wrong, I actually prefer the direct to computer method of recording given the time savings and the potential for higher quality sound that it offers, just understand the risks associated with it.

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Standalone (handheld) Microphones

Standalone microphones offer the most variety of quality and price as there are so many to choose from. But you don't need to go crazy getting a $1000+ ribbon microphone setup unless you are going for a truly professional sound and will be producing CD and/or DVD quality content (for which, a ribbon microphone is great but certainly NOT necessary). Keep in mind that the quality that you gain from such a microphone could most likely be lost when preparing your audio file for distribution over the Internet.

Utilizing file compression formats such as MP3, WMA and Real Media can reduce the original sound quality captured during the recording in the effort to reduce the file size and bandwidth used).

Don't settle for the 'cheapo' $5.99 microphone either. Choose the highest quality microphone that will fit within your budget. You should choose a high quality computer microphone like a good gaming mic or semi-pro to professional condenser microphone, which should be of a higher quality when compared to a standard computer microphone.

Pro Audio Microphones

High quality condenser microphones, which are typically the next best thing to ribbon microphones in terms of audio quality, can be expensive but produce excellent results. Many of these microphones (not all but several pro-audio microphones) will have what's called an XLR connection (three recessed prongs) at its end. This type of connection typically accepts a detachable XLR cable (unlike most non-pro-audio microphones which have a permanently fixed cable attached).

You would probably need to purchase an XLR cable if it is not already included and also get a pre-amp for the microphone (this is an amplifier that boosts the microphone's signal, outputting a line level signal that you could connect into your pc with). Many external USB or Firewire audio interfaces already have pre-amps built-in to the interface.

Headset Microphones

Headset microphones, as the name implies, are headphones with built-in microphones attached. These make it easy for speech recordings because you never have to worry about where your mouth is in relation to the microphone – it is always at a close, fixed distance from your mouth so you are able to achieve a relatively consistent level of volume during use.

With a standalone microphone, you need to make sure you position the microphone in front of yourself correctly and that you speak directly into the microphone at all times. There is

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always the possibility that you may "stray away" from the microphone, which may cause your voice to sound as if it is fading in and out – something you will want to avoid.

USB Headset Microphones

You can also use a USB headset containing a microphone to record yourself with.

Although these are not of the "high-end" pro-audio type, this type of microphone can produce a very desirable, high quality sound. This is due in part because they utilize their own circuitry for audio and can produce a sound that is 'cleaner' than that of the circuitry already built in to the computer. I have found that some tend to produce much less 'hiss' (that airy sound you may hear within the audio on some computers) when compared to the sound obtained when using a traditional headset microphone, connected directly to the built-in microphone jack of the computer.

Microphone Stands

Use a microphone stand if you plan on doing a lot of recording with a handheld type microphone. Desktop stands are good as are extendable arm stands which have a retracting arm that you can swing in or out of position. You could also go for the boom type of microphone stand which will allow you to position the microphone comfortably while either standing or sitting (these are the kind that you may have seen a musician using while sitting down such as a piano player).

Telephone Recording

There are several devices available to you that support recording your telephone calls.

You could, of course, record directly to the computer or use an intermediary recording device as explained above. There are also services you could use to facilitate recording a phone call such as *AudioGenerator*. Also, many conference line services support recording so you can pre-arrange to have your call recorded by the conference service and they can send you a digital copy of your recorded call. There are also third-party companies that will record your calls for you as well.

If you have decided that you want to record the calls yourself, here are some quick methods.

Telephone Recording – Handset Recording Method

Record what you say and hear at your telephone's handset by connecting a pickup device between your handset and the telephone. This device would have connections for your phone and an audio output connection for your recorder (or computer).

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NOTE: If your handset is also the dial pad, this solution may not work. In that case, you would want to try the next method, the phone line recording method.

Telephone Recording – Phone Line Recording Method

Record what's heard throughout your telephone line by connecting a pickup device between your wall jack and your telephone. This device would have connections for your phone and an audio output connection for your recorder (or computer).

NOTE: If you are using a digital PBX phone system, this solution will not work. In that case, use the handset recording method mentioned above instead.

I have listed some links to telephone hardware devices to help you record your phone calls. Refer to the Recommended Resources section at the end of this article for more information.

Telephone Recording Tips

Prepare your environment. The goal here is to have as much control over your environment as possible, avoiding any foreseen events.

If possible, **make your calls from a designated place**, such as your office, or a particular room in the house that is quiet and away from other sounds or noises.

Alert others such as family members or friends, even the dog that you will be unavailable during the recording period (for however long you think your phone call will take) and that you are not to be disturbed. Just kidding about the dog, but you should get the point

Try to use rooms that are silent in nature. Large, empty rooms containing a lot of reverberation may add a cavernous quality to the sound, especially if you are using a speaker phone. A more direct sound is typically more desirable.

Avoid using a speakerphone unless it is necessary to do so.

Make sure that you are the one initiating the phone call if possible. If you are using a conference calling service for the call, make sure you are a moderator, dialed into the moderator line.

If possible, **turn OFF your telephone's call waiting feature.** For most carriers, this simply means dialing *70 as a prefix to the phone number we are dialing. This will avoid the beeps that are heard on your telephone, alerting you that there is another call coming through while you're already on the line. Turn it off.

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Steps 3 – 6 may be eliminated if you are using a service such as *Audio Generator*, which will allow you to record your message over the telephone and have it available for you to link your website to, with the play back buttons all ready to go. All you would have to do is choose the look of your buttons, copy the generated html code for the playback buttons and place the html code into your website. It will also allow you to upload your own audio recordings into its system provided that you have formatted your audio correctly. (I will explain formatting in a bit). You will incur a monthly fee for using this service, so make sure it makes sense for you to do so.

The benefit here is that you can simply make a phone call from virtually anywhere and have audio created instantly for use on your website. After copying the corresponding html code for the audio to your website, you're done.

Some drawbacks are that you give up some control of your audio and that you are limited to phone quality audio, unless you use their upload function which allows you to upload your own audio file.

"Testing, 1, 2, 3…"

ALWAYS test your ability to record successfully BEFORE you go LIVE, that is, before the actual event takes place. You'll be surprised at just how things can go wrong when you least expect it.

Things to be aware of

Recording time – does your device record for the amount of time needed?

Battery life – is there a fresh set of batteries in your recorder?

Removable media – Do you have enough supply? Always have extra media available (e.g. mini discs, cassettes, etc) in case you need to extend the allotted recording time. Ideally, you want to avoid having to ever change media during a recording since doing so will cause you to your recording to stop, potentially loosing wanted material (unless, of course, you had multiple recorders and was able to start recording on one before the other stopped).

"Plan B"

Depending upon how critical the recording situation is, you'll want to be sure you've taken every *reasonable* step to achieve recording success. This may mean using several recorders used for the recording.

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Noisy Connections

Sometimes connecting devices to your computer can cause a phenomenon known in the audio world as a "ground-loop" (you heard it before, I'm sure – that low level, constantly humming sound heard throughout the sound that's quite annoying, especially at loud levels). This might be heard when you connect one audio device (I'm considering the computer to also be an audio device in this case) to another where both devices are plugged into an AC outlet.

This "hum" is the nemesis of anyone working with sound and it may try to challenge you as well. The good news is that it usually can be beaten. There are several solutions for this but some can be technically challenging.

Here are a few simple suggestions if you ever come across this problem. Although these are not guaranteed to work, they may help:

- ◆ **Make sure your connections are completely plugged in.**

- ◆ **Try brand new cables (poor grounding from a bad cable can also cause this).**

- ◆ **If your recording device is connected to an AC outlet different than that where your computer is connected to, try connecting both of them to the SAME outlet.**

- ◆ **If your recording device is already connected to the same AC outlet as your PC, try connecting your recorder to a DIFFERENT outlet. (Yes, sometimes the opposite way works instead!)**

- ◆ **Use a high quality power strip, especially one that was created for digital audio and computer devices.**

- ◆ **Unplug your recording device from the AC outlet and run it off battery power, if possible.**

- ◆ **Use a hum eliminator box. (Can be expensive)**

- ◆ **Use an AC line conditioner and plug both computer and recording device into it. (Is very expensive)**

Step 4 – Editing Your Audio

Editing your audio could mean improving sound quality, erasing mistakes, eliminating re-takes or even adding background music along with your audio message. To edit your audio, you will require audio editing software such as Sound Forge,

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Acoustica or Audacity.

The editing software, at a minimum, should allow for several 'tracks' to be played simultaneously. These tracks represent your sound and should be editable so that you are able to manipulate your sound as desired (given the capabilities of your editing software). You should be able to add or delete tracks as you wish with the ability of having several tracks played back simultaneously.

If you are using another recorder besides your computer that happens to create the format you are looking to use such as .wma, then all you may need to do is transfer the audio file over to your computer and work from there. But most likely, you will need to convert the audio file produced by the device from one format to another.

For example, some digital recorders record in some proprietary format specifically designed for the device and, consequently, you cannot easily play back the audio on your computer without using that same software designed for the recorder itself. In that case, you would first need to use the device's software to convert the audio into a more common format such as .wav or .mp3, etc. provided that the software supported such a function. Most should.

Then the audio could be used either within the same program or another to manipulate the recording. Being able to erase mistakes or eliminate 'do-over' parts to adding music in conjunction with your audio message should be possible.

Step 5 – Converting Audio

Your audio editing software should allow for you to save or export in several different audio formats. I recommend that you convert and save your audio into MP3 format since it is probably the most compatible audio format available. It can be streamed and offers excellent compression capability making it a viable format for all.

Audio File Formats

(The references here are directed primarily to Windows PC users)

There are several audio file formats to choose from with advantages and disadvantages for each. Here are some of the more popular formats:

.WAV – Waveform Audio Format

This is the standard audio format used on the PC.

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The main advantage of using this format is that it is compatible with all PCs, requiring no additional software for it to be played. Practically all audio editing software programs for the PC will utilize this format.

The main disadvantage of using this format is that it typically produces very large files when compared to other formats available (1 minute of stereo audio can use approximately 10MB of disk space).

.MP3 – MPEG1 Audio Layer 3

The MP3 format is one of the most popular audio formats being used today with many software programs and hardware devices supporting its use.

A major advantage of using this format is that it is compressible, using up much less disk space than that of a PCM .wav file (about 1/10th depending upon the amount of compression used) while still providing great sound quality.

A disadvantage is that the software or hardware playing this file format needs to be mp3 compatible, however there is ever growing support for this format.

.WMA – Windows Media Audio

The WMA format is a very popular audio format compatible with several hardware devices. It provides great compression while retaining great sound quality.

A disadvantage of using this format is that it is a proprietary format so your users will need to have the Windows Media Player® or other compatible software installed in order to have it played, however practically every Windows PC should already have Windows Media Player installed.

.RAM or .RA

The RA (or RAM) format is an audio format created by Real Networks Corporation.

Advantages of this format are that it provides great compression and streaming capability for your audio.

A disadvantage of using this format is that it is a proprietary format so your users will need to have the RealPlayer® software installed in order to have it played.

.MOV - QuickTime®

This format, originated by Apple® Computer, is a versatile file format that allows not only audio but video and other content as well.

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A disadvantage of using this format is that it is a proprietary format so your users will need to have the QuickTime software installed in order to have it played.

.OGG – Ogg Vorbis

This format provides great compression and streaming capability.

A disadvantage of this format, like many others, is that it is a proprietary format requiring software with built in support for it.

.SWF – Macromedia (Adobe) Flash® – Shockwave™ Flash

Flash format supports audio, video and other data.

One major advantage of using this format for audio is that it allows for streaming.

A disadvantage of using this format is that it is a proprietary format so your users will need to have the Shockwave Flash Player software installed in order to play flash files. However, most PCs should already have the flash player installed.

NOTE: As of this writing, all of the formats mentioned have players available for free that may be easily downloaded.

Step 6 – Uploading Audio

If you have produced your audio content on your own, you will need to transfer your audio file to your website. If you have a website, most likely you are already familiar with using an FTP program. However if you're not, it is pretty straight forward.

The FTP program is similar to that of the Windows' explorer program, allowing you to manage your files on the Internet. You'll need to know the FTP user name and password that was either given to you by your host or that you were able to setup for yourself within your server's control panel.

Once you are able to connect, it's just a matter of copying your audio files and any relating files up to your server.

Step 7 – Finalize Your Audio – Audio Playback

Create a means for your audio to get played back. Here are some of the more common methods of delivering audio on the web.

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HTML Link

You could provide a simple html link to your audio file for your visitor to download from.

You would want your audio file to be of a common audio file format, making it easy for your visitors to playback after downloading. (Some might refer to this as a podcast – more on podcasting below.)

Streaming Audio

Streaming audio is basically audio that can be played without having to be completely downloaded to your computer before it can be heard. The audio data is broken up into smaller 'bits' as it is being downloaded, stored in the computer's memory buffer, and those 'bits' of audio are played back as soon as they are received. This flowing or "streaming" method of playback allows for us to send large amounts of audio data to the user's computer, but done so throughout the duration of the recording.

People using a dial-up connection would find this method of distribution more convenient since they would not have to wait very long to hear the audio stream – unlike the case of using a simple link, where they would have to wait until the entire audio file was downloaded to their computer first before it could be played. (Depending upon the size of the audio file, this could mean having to wait from several minutes or even hours!)

Some of the audio software available to us will use flash technology, allowing us to create streaming audio using the player it provides. The player might resemble that of the controls found on a CD or tape player, with play, pause and stop (sometimes less or more) buttons.

Basically, you would be able to place the player on your website and have it playback your audio file (usually an mp3 file), in effect, streaming the audio. The software would not only provide the player, but would also provide the html code necessary for it to appear on your webpage. Software such as *WebsiteVocalizer* will allow you to accomplish this.

Podcasting

By now, you've probably heard a thing or two about Podcasting. But in case you haven't, the term "Podcast" could be used to refer to either your audio content or the method by which it is distributed.

By letting others know of your podcast (through podcast directories and software such as iTunes®, Jpodder, etc.) a web user could find your podcast and receive audio your content. There are entire articles and e-books devoted solely to this subject so I won't get into detail here.

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Well that's all for now. I hope that this article helped give you a better understanding of what you can do to get started creating audio for your website.

Recommended Resources

External Audio Interfaces

Edirol UA25 USB Stereo Audio Interface

M-Audio USB Audio Interface Kit – Podcasting Package

Andrea USB

Digital Recorder

Olympus WS Series Recorders (saves in .wma format)

Microphones

Audio Technica AT3505 Condenser Microphone

Marshall Electronics MXL V57M Condenser Microphone

Headset Microphone

Plantronics USB Headset

Telephone Audio Capture Devices

Wireless Phones Pickup (requires a headset microphone for conversation)

For capturing wireless phone conversation

Radio Shack Item #17-855

Wired Phones Pickup (uses handset to pickup audio)

For capturing sound through wired handset

Dynametric – (Model # TLP-102)

Radio Shack – (Item # 43-1237)

Wired Phones Pickup (uses phone line to pickup audio – handset independent)

For capturing sound through the phone line

Radio Shack – (Item # 43-2208)

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Audio Editing/Conversion Software

Audacity® – Free Audio Editor – Entry Level Audio Editing

Acoustica

Sound Forge Audio Studio™ – Entry Level Audio Editing

Sound Forge 8™ – Professional Audio Editing

dbPowerAmp Music Converter – Can convert almost any audio file type to another

Audio Recording Services

Audio Generator

Hipcast

FTP Software

FileZilla – Free FTP Software

WS_FTP Home – 30 day free trial

WS_FTP "How To" Video

Podcasting Software

JPodder

iTunes

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However you choose to add audio to your site or product, it can add an extra plus. It personalizes your website and makes you more 'real' than just words. In an info product it makes consuming or using your product much more accessible to the buyer.

Adding Audio to Your Website Self-Assessment Questions

1. Does audio add value to your info product?

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2. What types of audio do you want to use for your info product?

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3. How could you incorporate audio, to give an added plus to your website or product?

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Next . . . Adding Video To Your Website

InfoProductBluePrint.com
your blueprint for creating and launching
a profitable info product

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Product
Development

Module 3

Section 3: Adding Video To Your Website

By Mike Koenigs and Robert 'Rocket' Helstrom

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Section 3

Adding Video To Your Website

Video is adding a totally new dimension and feel to online marketing. Depending on your niche, videos and online infomercials can reach your potential visitor. The conversion increases so more visitors become customers. Michael Koenigs and Robert 'Rocket' Helstrom are two experienced Internet marketers who have taken their offline video and production experience online with InfomercialToolkit.com. Here they share their tips on bringing video and infomercials to your info product.

What you will learn in this Section:

◆ How to set up video on your site.

◆ How to increase subscriptions and convert to more sales by effectively using video and infomercials

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Who Else Wants To…Convert 40% or More Web Visitors Into Leads or Buyers?

Impossible, you say?

Not if you harness the phenomenally powerful combination of **video** – the most effective selling medium there is – with the **Internet** – the greatest communication tool ever invented – AND the proven **infomercial formula** that has generated more than $100 BILLION dollars in sales.

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If you want proof, our video–enabled websites have consistently generated 20, 30 – even **40% conversion rates**. With the right formula, yours can too.

You don't have to spend days or weeks writing and formatting an online sales letter anymore!

Anyone who can use a word processor and a Web browser can learn how to make his or her own sales-driving Internet video in half a day.

Bestselling author and marketer **Mark Victor Hansen says**, "This is something I think is going to change the world. This is the future. **If you want to be in on the front end of what is going to be a tsunami of busines**s – p**ay attention!"**

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How Can You Make Money With Web Videos?

What if your website consistently converted 10%, 20%, 40% or more of Web visitors into leads or opt-ins?

That's exactly the kind of results we've experienced by placing Internet videos and infomercials on our websites and our client's sites.

What Are Internet Videos and infomercials?

Simply put, they're short three- to five-minute, content-rich video presentations that use the time-tested, proven television Infomercial formula to convert Web visitors into buyers.

Unlike "Web videos" you see, Internet videos and infomercials are engineered to grab your visitor and get them to reach for their wallets, place an order, register or take the next step in your order process.

In this course, we're going to tell you what you need to know to put them on your website.

If you don't know the first thing about putting video online or Internet videos and infomercials, you'll get all of your questions answered in the next several pages.

And if you DO know about video on the Web, you'll probably learn some important secrets about how to use it to improve your conversions, opt-ins, leads, sales, referrals and personal income.

Are Internet Videos and infomercials Hard To Make?

No. Anyone with basic skills can make them. If you can use a word processor, a camcorder or Webcam and have basic computer skills, you have what it takes to make one in less than a day.

The technology isn't the hard part, the message is!

It's the biggest challenge most people have – crafting their marketing messages – not the process of producing Internet videos and infomercials.

And it's also the big distinction between simple Web videos and Internet videos and infomercials: the message. Face it, anyone can turn on a camcorder and talk, but convincing your viewer to take action requires a well-organized sales message.

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Are Internet Videos and infomercials Expensive to Make?

In a simple word, no. They don't have to be. If you're willing to spend a little time writing, you can make an Internet video infomercial with as little as $100 worth of software and equipment – assuming, of course, you already have a computer and a camcorder. With a little know-how, you can even experiment for free.

What Equipment Do I Need to Make Internet Videos and infomercials?

Here are the basic equipment requirements:

- Computer (Windows or Mac)
- Webcam or camcorder
- Software for editing and capturing video (you can get it free)
- Lights
- Microphone (an inexpensive $20 unit will do)

You need a Webcam or a camcorder.

On the low end, you could get by with a $50 Webcam but we recommend you get a digital camcorder if you don't already have one.

More on hardware, software and tools later.

People Say Compressing Video is Difficult and Expensive. Is That True?

If you would have asked us six months ago, we would have said yes. But recent advances in services and technology have pushed the cost of hosting to zero or nearly zero. We're not kidding! There are now several services that compress your videos for free. And if you prefer to do it yourself, there are other tools to prepare your video for the Web that are easy to use, fast and free.

Isn't Hosting Web Videos Expensive?

Again, this used to be the case. Just two years ago, an average size website with 1,000 visitors and a small amount of video might cost $1,000 to $2,000 per month.

But due to the commoditization of these services, it now costs a few hundred dollars (if you're using a paid service) or it's free. That's right. There are dozens of ways to host your video

Notes

content at no cost. So if the main obstacle for you is a fear of hosting expenses, stop worrying!

Do Internet Videos And Infomercials Work?

Yes! Would You Like Proof?

Here are just two quick samples that took less than four hours to create and launch.

Believe your eyes – that's a **43% visitor-to-subscriber conversion rate**. The final conversion results came out to 35.5% when we stopped the test.

Here are those results:

If you'd like, take a look at the Web page that generated those results: http://businessop.infomercialtoolkit.com/

We won't apologize for the fact that it's simple and perhaps even a little rough – after all, this isn't an advertising agency video that took months to plan and hundreds of thousand$ of dollars to create.

Everything you see here – the video and Web page – took less than three hours from concept to completion.

In direct marketing, slick doesn't always sell. Just ask world-class copywriters Gary Halbert and Dan Kennedy. Many of their most effective ads and sales letters have been simple, cheap and rough.

This video generated over $2,000 in affiliate revenue from only 485 total opt-ins in fewer than 48 hours.

Want Another Example? Take a look here: http://successseminar.infomercialtoolkit.com/

This one converted 22% of our visitors into opt-ins. And like the first sample, it's simple and took less than four hours from concept to completion. It's the result that matters, right?

That's Great, But What Do the "Experts" Say About Internet Videos and Infomercials and Selling Online With Video?

Another great question. Here's what the experts say:

"Full-motion video ads are quickly emerging as the Web's next big moneymaker for advertisers. Big-name brands will spend $198 million on the medium this year – a 70 percent jump over 2004, according to Jupiter Research and that's expected to surge to $657 million by 2009 as broadband stretches everywhere and compression technologies evolve."
Business 2.0 – May 2005

"Add it all together, and video ads are outpacing the torrid growth in Internet advertising, including search."
Business Week – May 2005

"Best of all, dealers reported a 58 percent spike in Galant sales after the spot ran."
Business 2.0 – May 2005

"Audi's Site Revamp Increased Leads Generated to Dealerships by 325%."
MarketingSherpa

"Video ads are outperforming the non-video ads by about nine to one."
From article, "Video Shows Strength in New Verticals," Imediaconnections

What you need to know and remember is simple:

- More than 68% of U.S. homes have computers and Web access
- Nearly 75% of those have broadband connections
- There are already hundreds of millions of video-ready cell phones in service worldwide
- Every one of these prospective customers is content-hungry
- The storage and distribution of digital content has become inexpensive and commoditized

What Does This Mean for You?

If you know how to use a word processor and an Internet browser, **YOU** can make Internet Videos and infomercials:

- Affordably
- Quickly
- Easily
- That you can distribute worldwide

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- That access nearly any electronic device (computers, phones, PDAs, iPods® and new devices that aren't even available yet!)
- That convert better than any other medium
- Even if you're not technical or computer savvy

Computers, video technology, hosting, compression and software have become commoditized, affordable for entrepreneurs and small businesses, easy to use and increasingly powerful.

It's as simple as that.

On the Web, You Can't Tell Whether You're a One-Person Company or a Billion-Dollar Firm Anymore

The old days of expensive video broadcasting are fading away. Increasingly, you're able to share your sales message, information and products with almost anyone, anywhere, on any device.

Design and Web programming are inexpensive and easy to come by. And a person with a simple home video studio can create powerful, attractive, professional videos that get the point across quickly.

What can you use Internet Videos and Infomercials For?

- Selling your product or service
- Fundraising
- Affiliate marketing
- EBay sales
- Product demos
- Product promotions
- Conferences
- Teleconferences
- Book promotions
- Speaking engagements
- Proposals
- Video autoresponders

But, above all, for…

- GENERATING HIGHER CONVERSIONS THAN ORDINARY SALES LETTERS!

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Why Are Internet Videos and infomercials Better Than Other Sales Techniques?

There simply isn't a more effective way to present or sell, short of being in front of your customer or audience in person, one-to-one.

Most people who make Internet videos and infomercials find the process becomes easier and faster than writing a sales letter.

Why? Because most of us can talk about the things we know intimately and are passionate about!

Those are two of the most important things you need to know about connecting with your audience with Internet videos and infomercials. Your product knowledge and passion are what comes through as credible and genuine. It's what viewers connect with.

Here is some more information we've learned in our own research:

- A recent Wharton Business School study showed video outsells print by as much as 600%.

- A Harvard University study reports people remember video messages almost as strongly as they remember actual experiences. That's why TV is such a successful marketing tool.

- The broadband pipeline is already carrying online video to 75% of all U.S. Internet homes and businesses— without the high cost of TV media time.

- That means nearly anyone you want to market to is online and probably has high-speed access. The challenge is capturing their attention and developing a relationship.

- Direct response video is a well-established, extremely successful marketing tool. Since its inception on TV 20 years ago, direct response video has sold more than $100 billion of products for entrepreneurs and small business owners just like you—people with great ideas and vision.

Let's focus on the bigger question…

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Why Should You Care About Internet Videos and infomercials?

Because Internet videos and infomercials are:

- ◆ Faster to make than sales letters
- ◆ The most effective sales medium
- ◆ Easy to make
- ◆ Geared for small business budget
- ◆ Use hardware and software you probably already own
- ◆ FREE to host and compress
- ◆ And ultimately, a competition-killer

The word is out about the effectiveness of Internet video in the sales process. Do you want to play catch up or do you want to make your competitors scramble to match your new-found marketing prowess?

Why Do You Want to Use Internet Videos and infomercials?

- ◆ Video is a Powerful medium
- ◆ The infomercial formula is a Proven success (TV videos and infomercials have sold more than $100B worth of products)
- ◆ They're Fast – visitors can get your whole pitch in less than five minutes without reading
- ◆ You can deliver your message and drive home your Point more effectively
- ◆ They appeal to all of your Senses: sight, sound, motion and emotion
- ◆ They're Easy to make

But What if I Have a "Radio Face," am Self-Conscious or are Afraid of Speaking or Presenting?

Hey, look, it's a commonly quoted fact that the one thing that leaves most people white-knuckled is the idea of speaking in public. In fact, more people say they're afraid of public speaking than say they're afraid of death!

How Do You Produce an Internet Infomercial?

You probably already own the equipment you need. We'll cover the basic tools in a moment, but first let's discuss the process you go through when you want to make an Internet infomercial.

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There are seven basic steps. Here are the basics:

- ◆ Set up your equipment (plug it in, turn it on)
- ◆ Write a script (using the secret Infomercial formula)
- ◆ Shoot the video
- ◆ Edit it
- ◆ Compress it
- ◆ Upload the video to a Web server
- ◆ Put your video clip on your website

In our experience, most novices get hung up on the equipment and the process. It's a classic "can't see the forest for the trees" mistake most newbies make.

Here's the BIG Secret about making Internet Videos and infomercials…

It's NOT the Technology! It's the STORY You Tell!

As "King of the TV Infomercial" producer Tim Hawthorne says:

The More You Tell, the More You Sell

But to satisfy your curiosity about what you need and how much it costs, here's a basic breakdown of the equipment you need to make a basic Internet video Infomercial and cost ranges:

Webcam or DV Camcorder	$50 - $700
Lights	$40 - $100
Microphone	$20 - $30
Headphones for Editing	$10 - $20
Video Recording & Editing Software	$700
Cables, Tripod, etc.	$40
Total Cost	**$860 - $1,590**

The two big variables will always be your camera and software.

We assume you already have these:

- ◆ Computer (Mac or Windows PC)
- ◆ Web Browser & Internet Access

Camcorders and Webcams

We recommend using a digital camcorder instead of a Webcam. Why? Because there is a substantial difference in picture quality between camcorder video and Webcam video.

It's all right for Internet videos and infomercials to look homemade – and that's how they'll look if you use a Webcam. However, you can upgrade your video just by using a camcorder and you can find a used one for $150 or a new one for as little as $250.

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Chances are you already have a camcorder. The important thing to know is it needs to be a digital video (DV) camcorder with a "Firewire" port. This is called an IEEE-1394 port.

Just check your user guide for a breakdown of your camera's features.

Connecting a camcorder to a computer is as simple as plugging a Firewire cable between the two.

Video Recording & Editing Software

Not long ago, video editing software was expensive, slow, difficult to use and hard to learn.

Now, there are dozens of great packages available. Here are a few:

Windows Versions	**Mac Versions**
◆ Windows Movie Maker® (Free)	◆ iMovie®
◆ Sony Vegas® series ($50-$800)	◆ Final Cut®
◆ Adobe Premiere® ($100-$500)	
◆ Magix ($30-$100)	
◆ ULead® (Free-$400)	
◆ Pinnacle™ (Free-$800)	

The list goes on and on …

Each program basically works the same way.

Here's a snapshot of what a typical editing screen looks like:

The screen may look a bit daunting at first, but editing video is no more complicated than editing word documents in a word processor.

It's beyond the scope of this mini-guide to walk through the entire editing process, but all you really need to know is:

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Video editing is just a process of cut-copy-paste. Instead of words, you're moving around blocks of images and sound.

Most people get the hang of the process in about 30 minutes.

Just select a clip and move it around

Now That You've Chosen Your Software, Have Your Camera, Let's Do a Quick Equipment Test

Set Up Your Production

- Connect the Cables, etc.
- Test lights and audio
- Capture a sample video
- Play it back for review

This process will only take about 10-15 minutes.

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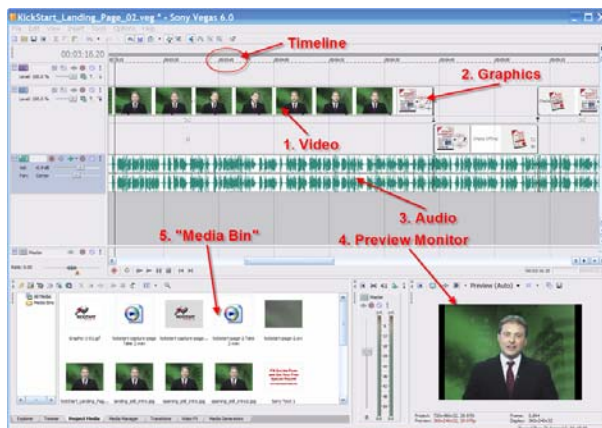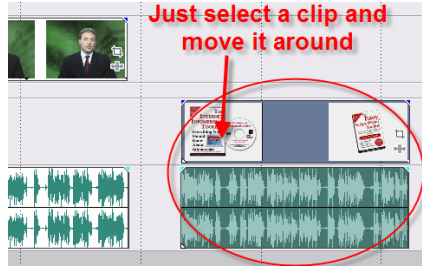
Note from Editor:

If your niche uses high-speed connections to the Internet, consider video to your marketing plan. Adding video can improve conversion and add a new dimension to marketing your info product.

Adding Video To Your Website Self-Assessment Questions

1. Does your market use high speed Internet access? If no, please go to the next section.

2. If yes, would video or a video infomercial help sell or explain your product better than just using words?

3. What equipment would you need to produce a video?

4. Can you recover your initial costs through the sale of your product? And still make a profit?

5. What three points would you cover in your video?

Next . . . How To Create Screen Captures

InfoProductBluePrint.com
your blueprint for creating and launching a profitable info product

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Product Development

Module 3

Section 4: How To Create Screen Captures

By Bob Chambers

Info Product Blueprint was created by
Kenneth A. McArthur

Alysan Delaney-Childs, Project Manager and Editor
Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Section 4

How To Create Screen Captures

There are many software programs out there today to assist with the creation of screenshot and screen video capture. Camtasia is one of the best out there for this, and of course there are several other programs that are similar. If you like free stuff, I have found Windows Media Encoder to work very well also. Simply Google Windows Media Encoder and you can download it directly from Microsoft's site for free.

What you will learn in this Section:

◆ What you need to consider when using screen captures

◆ Software needed for recording screen capture

◆ Possible ways to use screen capture as an info product

Well, now it's time to put in the skill set CD by Bob Chambers of MultimediaProfitsRevealed.com into your computer to learn more about creating screen captures. Bob, of MultimediaGuy.com, will show you how easy it is to create screen captures using Camtasia.

How To Create Screen Captures Self-Assessment Questions

1. Does screen capture make it easier for your customer to use your product?

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2. What types of screen capture do you want to use for your info product?

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3. How could you incorporate screen capture to give an added plus to your website or product?

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Next . . . How To Create Teleseminars

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Product Development

Module 3

Section 5: How To Create Teleseminars

By Gary Knuckles

Info Product Blueprint was created by
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Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

How To Create Teleseminars

Our next writer has developed many different types of info products including software, e-books and digital downloads. However, Gary Knuckles is widely known in Internet marketing circles as the congenial host of e-Teleconferencing.com.

What you will learn in this Section:

◆ How to find quality services

◆ What content you can create from your teleseminar

Gary shares his views on how to make teleseminars work for you.

Benefits of a Teleseminar

Depending upon the resources available to you, you can have a successful seminar within 2 to 5 days. Lets say you already have a list or newsletter. You have a topic and knowledge of that topic. By following a few steps, then after setting up your sales page and method of payment, you could easily shoot out a promotion to your list and hold a seminar within 2 days.

Finding Quality Services – Low or No Cost Startup

There are many companies that provide teleconference services now, and some offer free services. This means you could conduct a teleseminar for up to 99 people at no cost for the conference services. By having low startup costs you can generate a nice net profit for very little cost. A few of the free conference companies are FreeConference.com and FreeAudioConferencing.com.

There are many others that offer paid services. Some of the most popular being Eagle Communications, Black and White, and Voice Text.

Content

Create products from the teleseminar event, too.

By having the event recorded and/or transcribed you can create two products from your teleseminar.

One product is the MP3 audio file that you can have recorded.

You can have the conference call company do this for you or buy an electronic digital voice recorder and record it yourself. If you plan on doing several seminars then I would suggest

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buying a digital voice recorder. This can be used for several projects and tasks as well.

The second product would be an e-book created from your event.

This can be either in electronic format using an e-book creator software package or in PDF format using Adobe Acrobat once the teleseminar is transcribed. There are also some services that allow you to convert the document to PDF format. You can transcribe the event yourself from your audio file or have the conference call company do it.

Recordings

There are many ways to record your calls. One is to use the recording service that these companies offer to record the calls. There are also audio programs that you can use on your computer to record your calls. One that I prefer is Audio Acrobat. This is a monthly service but has many features – one being able to record teleseminars and converting them to MP3 format.

Delivery Options

You can then have these recordings delivered digitally in MP3 and/or PDF format or as a physical product such as CD's or transcripts.

Follow-up

Having a teleseminar (depending on the type you have) will allow you to interact with other people within your industry. By this, I mean if you have panelists and guest speakers joining you in your teleseminar.

Usually these guests will be experts in their field, (or should be) if you are having them join you because of their expertise. By working with them you build a better relationship for future events, e-books or joint ventures on other projects.

A teleseminar gives you exposure as well as giving you creditability. Just by hosting an event associates you with your speakers thus building your reputation. This can lead to you being invited to join other teleseminars and projects as well.

Build a relationship with your customers or list. You can use a teleseminar to build a better relationship with your current customers or newsletter subscribers, especially if it's a free teleseminar where the only cost is a phone call. Now this would be primarily for long-term benefits and sales, though the event could generate some sales for your current products as well. Provided of course you have some current products.

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If you don't have any current products then you could offer a free condensed report of important points from the event to the attendees, then list any products that you might discuss during the teleseminar. Then use your affiliate links for those products to generate sales from your free report you send to everyone or post online for them to read after the event.

Sell higher priced items from the teleseminar (free seminar)

Teleseminars are being used by many experts to sell higher priced products by giving a free teleseminar to their targeted audience. They are delivering content-rich free events and at the same time they promote a higher priced service or workshop/seminar to be attended. Some are using them to promote coaching services and private member sites.

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Start a list or add new subscribers on your current list.

If you don't have a newsletter or list you should consider starting one. Most experts will tell you there is money in the list. By having a seminar, you can start a newsletter at the same time if done properly. If you already have a list then you can use the event to add new subscribers to your list.

Next . . . Preparing Teleseminar Audio For A Professional

Info Product
Blueprint
1st Edition

Packaging

Module 3

Section 6: Preparing Teleseminar Audio For A Professional

By Ben Blakesley

Info Product Blueprint was created by
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Dan Giordano, Workbook Manager and Editor
Michelle Alvarez, Design, Layout, Copy Editor
Ben Blakesley, Audio Editor

Preparing Teleseminar Audio For A Professional

Sometimes you will want to have a better quality recording to use for your info product, then you will want to work with a sound engineer. Our next contributor is Ben Blakesley the Chief Engineer for Philadelphia based Javboy Records (JavboyRecords.com), which specializes in creating custom audio solutions. Sound engineers can add intro and outro music, even out voice levels and in some cases even get rid of funny background noises.

What you will learn in this Section:

◆ The difference between stereo and mono recordings

◆ Definitions of terms your sound engineer will use such as sample rate and bit depth

◆ Why compressed audio is better for files sent via Internet

◆ Legalities to consider when adding audio to your site.

When working with digital audio there are two opposing factors that must always be considered: file size and sound quality. The following is an explanation of common file types, their attributes, and options.

Lossless Audio

Digital audio formats can easily be broken up into two categories: compressed audio and full resolution audio.

Full resolution files are usually what can be called "source files" or "lossless" audio. This is because audio is typically recorded in the digital domain in this format and they do not use any sort of compression methods to decrease file size.

The two most widely used lossless file types are WAV (.wav, standard for Windows-based systems) and AIFF (.aif, standard for Mac-based systems). Although WAV and AIFF started off as OS specific, today both file types can easily be used by either platform. WAV and AIFF files offer the best sound quality available, but their large file size can be restrictive in certain uses.

A typical ratio for WAV or AIFF files is 10MB for every minute of audio (assuming stereo, 44.1kHz, 16-bit). So a 3-minute piece would be around 30MB.

WAV and AIFF files should be used when creating master CDs for duplication, when handing off audio to a third-party for editing or mastering, or any application where quality is of the utmost importance.

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Stereo vs. Mono

When dealing with lossless audio files there are options that can be manipulated to increase/decrease quality and increase/decrease file size.

The first and simplest option is choosing whether the audio will be in "stereo" mode or "mono" mode. Stereo refers to having separate left and right channels of audio running simultaneously.

Monophonic (or "mono") is simply using one stream of audio and having no independent left and right channels. NOTE: A mono file will still play through both the left and right speakers of the audio system, but both the left and right speakers will play exactly the same audio and will have no sense of 'space.'

For spoken word recordings, using the mono mode is very desirable because the audio will retain its original quality while decreasing the file size by 50% (one channel of audio instead of two).

If you are using music in conjunction with spoken word, usually the music will sound better in stereo mode (depending on how it was recorded and mixed). When file size does not matter, always go with stereo as this retains all of the audio file's information. You can always convert to mono, but you can't recover stereo information from a mono file.

Sample Rate and Bit Depth

Sample rate refers to the number of reference points regarding sine wave amplitude per second.

The bit depth of an audio file completes the digital grid representing the sound wave.

I know, a bit confusing, but for all practical purposes the higher the sample rate and higher the bit depth, the higher the audio quality. (The more snapshots of the audio wave you have, the closer the digital representation will be to the actual wave).

The most common and widely used sample rate is 44.1kHz (44,100 samples per second). This is the sample rate of a normal audio CD and the majority of digital music available to consumers. This is the rate at which you should record your audio and generally, unless you have significant file size issues, you should always keep your audio at this rate. It is able to be played by all players and will never cause a compatibility issue.

Sample rates vary and include common rates like 11kHz, 22kHz, 48kHz, 88.2kHz, 96kHz, and the highest quality available in recording studios today, 192kHz. If you choose to use a sample rate other than 44.1kHz, the file size will change

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accordingly (lower sample rate = smaller file size and lower quality, and vise versa).

Bit depth follows the same principle, the higher the bit depth, the better the sound quality, but the larger the file size. A typical audio CD has a bit depth of 16. Other common bit depths are 8, 20, 24, and 32. There is also an option called "floating bit depth" and is usually coupled with 32. For all intents, stick with 16 as this will be the bit depth required for CD duplication. Generally, it's a good idea to keep audio at it's highest quality until it gets to its final format. So if you intend to create a standard CD from your audio, do not go below 44.1kHz and 16-bit.

Compressed Audio

Although using the highest resolution audio possible maintains the best quality, often the size of such files is prohibitive. In cases where files must be transferred over the Internet or through email, compressed audio might be the only option for efficient use of time.

Common compressed or "lossy" audio types are: MP3, AAC, and WMA. AAC is associated with Mac systems and is the default encoding format for iTunes and other Apple programs (file extension .m4a). WMA is the proprietary format developed by Microsoft for Windows and Windows Media Player. Although both file formats are comparable in size and audio quality, the universal standard for lossy audio is the multi-platform MP3 format.

It's a good idea to use MP3 whenever compressed audio is needed, as there will be fewer compatibility issues.

Bit Rate

Compressed audio follows the same guidelines for sample rate, bit depth, and stereo/mono options as lossless audio. Again, it's a good idea to use 44.1kHz, 16-bit, stereo as your default if you're unsure of what should be used. But in addition to those three options, lossy audio has a fourth quality-measuring feature called bit rate (different from bit depth, don't get confused!).

Currently, there is no standard being used across the board by everyone for bit rate, but the most *common* bit rate is 128kbps.

As usual, a higher number indicates better quality but larger file size. A stereo, 44.1kHz, 16-bit, MP3 file encoded at 128kbps will generally yield a file size of 1MB per minute of audio, so a 3-minute audio clip would be 3MB, about 90% smaller than its WAV counterpart.

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Other common bit rates are 32kbps, 64kbps, 96kbps, and so on in 32kbps increments all of the way up to 320kbps.

NOTE: Bit rate is measured on a per channel basis, meaning that a stereo MP3 at a bit rate of 128kbps is the same quality as a mono MP3 at 64kbps, because the stereo file has a left channel at 64kbps and a right channel at 64kbps that combines to 128kbps. So the most common bit rate for mono files is 64kbps.

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General Guidelines

Always record source audio as a lossless file (WAV or AIFF). Try to avoid using lossy file formats for recording original material. A lossy recording cannot be returned to lossless quality once it has been converted.

When transferring files over the Internet for editing or mastering purposes, use lossless audio if time and space permit. If this is not possible due to file size, convert the file to an MP3 and use the highest bit rate possible while maintaining a usable file size.

When in doubt, use 44.1kHz, 16-bit, stereo for all formats. (Spoken word can usually be in mono).

Lossy formats are great for websites where file size is imperative. Use the lowest settings possible without compromising quality. Check the audio before posting it online as very low settings can become un-listenable and intelligible.

When making your original recording it's good to have a 'hot' recording level, but NEVER LET THE AUDIO 'CLIP' (exceed the maximum input, usually indicated by in red on your input level meter). Once an audio file has clipped or distorted, it cannot be restored. Low levels can be fixed but distorted levels cannot.

Preparing Teleseminar Audio For A Professional Self-Assessment Questions

Questions to ask yourself:

1. Does my audio product require a standardized open and close for each section?

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2. Do you plan to add a piece of introductory music or closing music to your digital recordings?

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3. Are the voice levels consistent throughout the recording or does it need help?

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Next . . . Membership Sites: Why Paying For Content Just Makes Sense

InfoProductBluePrint.com
your blueprint for creating and launching a profitable info product

Info Product Blueprint
1st Edition

Product Development

Module 3

Section 7: Membership Sites: Why Paying For Content Just Makes Sense

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Membership Sites: Why Paying For Content Just Makes Sense

Gail Buckley and Michael Angier are two successful online entrepreneurs. They both have chosen the membership model for their online business. Gail starts the section and Michael summarizes. Take a few moments to read their perspectives on starting and maintaining a membership site.

What you will learn in this Section:

◆ Benefits of membership sites for owner and member

◆ Different models of membership sites

◆ Software options for membership sites

Not that long ago content was free. Just about every website you went to was chock full of informative content that you didn't have to pay a penny for.

Yet many of these once free websites have turned into membership sites over the past several years. Now, those who pay a subscription fee gain access to better and more in-depth information.

It may seem like website owners have suddenly gotten stingy, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Many people started websites with the intent of sharing information with others. They wanted to help. But as the effectiveness of banner ads and other such free techniques wore off, they found themselves paying out of their own pockets to supply you (yes, you!) with that free information.

Quite simply, barely anyone can afford to do this anymore. This is where paid membership sites come in.

You see, by charging an access fee or subscriber fee, website owners can continue to share their valuable information with the world without having to reach into their own pockets to do so. Plus, they can make a nice side income that encourages these people to continue to share their information at a reasonable price.

Paying for content really does make sense. I mean, you can't get the fantastic information in a book without purchasing it first, right? And you can't expect to receive expert information without paying for it, yes? So what is it that makes the Internet so different that people just assume it should be a free for all?

Honestly, this sort of mentality can be blamed on how the online world first began. People thought of it as a new marketplace, where information could and should be shared. Anyone could have a presence on the web and anyone could

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start a business. While these notions are still relatively true, the cost factor is now an issue.

Free ad campaigns only work for so long. Once the market (in this case, the Internet itself) is overrun with banner ads, pop ups and link exchanges, these forms of marketing no longer work as well as they used to. Without the income derived from ad hosting, website owners are left with only two options.

◆ Start charging visitors for access to information.

◆ Shut down the website.

Here's another interesting fact about paying for content: people like to do it! While they may not know it at the time, web surfers enjoy the feeling of gaining access to "insider" information.

That is, if the information they are sold is actually unique. No one wants to pay for something that they could get for free.

This makes it imperative to do your research before you even think about starting your own membership site. Even if you have a killer idea for a niche, it just won't sell very well if there are tons of other websites that offer all you do for free.

What you have to do is come up with content that people can't help but pay for. You have to ask yourself, "What about my niche is unique and interesting enough that someone would pay for it?"

Research plays a major role in finding a niche that is both profitable and interesting. Take a look around the web for websites in your niche. Do they offer free information? What can you offer that is different? Do you have information that you can market as "insider" or unique?

If you answered "yes" to the above questions, your niche just might be worth marketing.

If you're still skeptical, just look at the amazing benefits membership sites bring:

◆ No reliance on advertising. Free websites rely on advertising only for income. This makes it very difficult to run a site when the money being brought in is also iffy. A membership site uses both user fees and advertising to run the site, making for a much more reliable source of income.

◆ Big Profits: Running a membership site can bring in big profits. Specifically, the low start-up costs make it easy to turn a profit quickly. Plus, each time you acquire a new member subscription your income increases.

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- ◆ Easy To Expand: Membership sites are very easy to expand. Should you acquire a larger membership base than originally expected, you can update your hosting and server subscriptions easily and cheaply. You can also add more features to your site with minimal cost.

- ◆ Easy To Introduce New Products: With a healthy subscriber base you can easily introduce new products or services. For instance, if you have a lot of subscribers to your membership site, you can offer a new service or product. The key is to introduce products to those customers that have a need for your product.

- ◆ Access To A Global Market: With your website up and running even while you're sleeping, you can reach a huge market. Your target audience also increases dramatically. So much so, that it may be beneficial to make your membership site serve many languages. People will search for your niche 24 hours a day, making your information relevant and profitable.

Starting your own content membership site may seem like a daunting task, but with the right direction, you can succeed easily.

One key thing to keep in mind is the profitability of your chosen niche. For instance, if you choose "dog grooming" as your niche topic, you need to be sure that there is a demand for this sort of information.

Once you've conducted a bit of research on your niche topic, you can start to build up content. If you know a lot about your chosen topic, write from experience. Try to offer your subscribers something they can't find anywhere else. Make sure they get their money's worth.

How To Start Your Own Membership Site

In order to start your own membership site, you'll need to purchase a domain name and web hosting.

The domain name should reflect the content of your site accurately. It should also be relatively short and very memorable. Don't pick anything that is difficult to say aloud or is confusing.

Next, you'll need to actually build the site. You can use any sort of web developing software such as Microsoft® FrontPage®, Adobe® GoLive®, Macromedia Dreamweaver®, or you could hire a web designer to build the site for you.

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Avoid fancy flash intros and large images. You want your site to be eye-catching but not so overdone that your visitors don't know what to do. Be clear and descriptive when describing your subscription service and thoroughly tease visitors with good free content. No one will purchase a subscription if your free content is entirely lackluster. You want your customers to feel that the purchased content will be even better!

It is also important to keep in mind the usability of your site. Will your visitors have that plug-in? Will they have that font? Be mindful of what the average web surfer will be able to view.

You'll also need to make visitors feel secure in giving their information for a subscription. Make sure your web server is properly encrypted to prevent the theft of personal information.

A method of collecting payment and delivering products is also a necessity. Many sites offer merchant accounts and shopping carts such as ClickBank.com and Verisign.com that allow you to accept payment and deliver products without lifting a finger!

Finally, you'll need to decide how much per subscription you will charge. How much has it cost you to start up this venture? How much do you anticipate you'll pay in operating fees? Once you figure out your expenses, you'll need to come up with your desired profit margin. Combining these two factors will give you the amount you'll need to charge your customers in order to start making money.

Membership sites are the way to go in the 21st century. While free content may be nice to find, the quality and exclusivity of memberships sites make them worth their cost many times over.

Michael Angier talks about his experience with membership sites and offers suggestions on what you need to do to start one.

Overview

In the last couple of years, membership sites have been gaining in popularity. Maybe it's the maverick in me, but I've had a membership site since 1996. It's gone through a number of redesigns, but it's worked very well for us and our 94,000 subscribers.

Up until two years ago, membership dues was the biggest income category for our company. Even though it has been surpassed by other revenue streams, it's still a significant part of our business model.

Technically, any site that requires registration and a login (whether paid or not) is a membership site. But most of the time, when someone refers to a membership site, they're

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referring to a site where an ongoing subscription or a one-time payment is required in order to access the content on the site.

For purposes of this segment, I'm talking about paid sites. And there are several models.

Community websites are virtual venues for people to interact with one another. Places like MySpace and eHarmony are examples of huge communities with millions of users. But there are hundreds of thousands of smaller community sites built around almost as many different subjects.

Usually the more community-oriented the site, the more "stickyness" you will experience. Stickyness is a term used to describe users who frequent your site often and are loyal fans of your services.

Free and Paid Sites

This is the most common model. Visitors are allowed to register and are given access to part of the site. In order to gain additional access, they must upgrade to a paid level. In some cases, a number of different access levels are offered.

Example:

The free and paid model is the one we have had for over ten years. At SuccessNet.org, we allow any visitor to subscribe at no cost and we don't require a login. These "Guests," as we call them, are given limited access to our extensive site (over 10,000 files) which provides resources to help people be more successful in all aspects of their lives – both personal and professional.

All subscribers (guests) receive email broadcasts (at least weekly). As our guests explore the site, they will occasionally run up against some limitations of their free access. And when they do, they are encouraged to upgrade to Gold Membership ($49 a year). In doing so, they gain full access to all of the articles, e-books, audio recordings, discounts, freebies and more.

Typically, with this model, paid members are automatically renewed unless they cancel – which for us, thankfully, is fairly rare.

One-Time (Lifetime Membership)

Another variation of this model is to offer a lifetime membership with a one-time fee instead of a renewable membership (monthly, annual, etc.).

This lifetime membership is often done as a one-time offer when subscribing as a free member/subscriber.

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This type of membership site and one-time-offer (OTO) has been popularized by Mike Filsaime as "Butterfly Marketing."

One of our sites, <u>PresentationsMadeSimple.com</u>, is an example of this model. We offer two free reports ($58 value) with a one-time chance for a full lifetime membership right after they enroll as guest members. Paid members receive full access to a growing list of hundreds of dollars worth of resources designed to help the part-time as well as the professional presenter.

100% Paid

This membership model does not have the free and paid two-tier option. The only access to the site – other than a sales or entry page – is through payment of membership dues or subscription.

This works best for sites with highly specialized knowledge or services. A typical use would be for a trade association or some kind of membership organization where the pre-selling of the benefits of membership is clearly presented offline.

Design

Designs for membership sites vary widely. They are as diverse as any you would find on the web. A clean and simple design with easy navigation is, in my opinion, more important than a fancy, complicated design with a lot of bell and whistles.

Since most membership sites are communities of some sort, they lend themselves to a database-driven website or Content Management System (CMS). Most websites are static sites. In other words, the text and graphics reside on the various pages hosted on the website.

A CMS site has only a few dynamic pages and all of the content is "pulled" from a database depending upon the requests of the user. The page is dynamically created for display "on the fly."

Almost all Blogs are database driven. And more and more sites are being built using this technology. Unless your website will only be a 2-3 page "online brochure" I recommend a CMS even if your site is small.

Not only does CMS make MANAGING the site easier, but the design can be easily and quickly altered based upon widely available templates (many for free) using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). All you have to do is make a single change in the style sheet and the entire website is updated—very slick. See Joomla™ sites below.

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Software

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Turnkey: The easiest way to offer a membership site is to use a turnkey solution. The one we've found to be the most user-friendly and cost effective is Vision Gate at SuccessNet.org/go/visiongate.htm.
For less than $100 a month, you can have a vast array of services and a database-driven (CMS) site that your members will find easy to navigate and you will find easy to manage. This solution includes an automated payment processing system that enables you to easily manage expirations, recurring payments, non-payments and cancellations.

Open Source

With a little more setup time, but with no purchase or ongoing cost, you may want to consider an open source solution.

Open source software simply means that the source code is open to developers and can be used and modified without infringing upon any copyrights or licensing agreements. Open source solutions are created and improved by people rather than companies and no one "owns" the code.

Support is usually provided by other users through a forum. There is not typically any help desk or live tech support.

The open source, CMS solution we use and recommend is Joomla.org. It's a widely supported community portal that's surprisingly easy and quick to set up. You can see an example of it in action at SuccessNet.org.

This is a particularly good solution for one-time payment membership sites. Once a member has paid, they are sent to a registration page and will have access to the membership site through their login.

If you are going to have MANAGED subscriptions (expiring after certain periods of time) it gets a little trickier. There is a plugin for Joomla that will monitor your expirations and do recurring charges, but we found it to be a bit buggy at the time of our testing in early 2006.

We use aMember from CGI-Central.net in conjunction with Joomla to handle this for us. We had been using aMember for three years prior to going with Joomla, and we were able to integrate it for a one-time fee of only $40.

Joomla is extremely easy to manage and it can be done by a number of administrators with varying levels of authentication. You can even allow monitored or unmonitored submission of content by members.

There are other open source community and CMS sites, like Drupal.org but Joomla seems to us to be the most popular, most robust and the best supported.

If you need to customize your site you can inexpensively and easily hire PHP programmers at places like RentACoder.com or Scriptlance.com. Or with some knowledge of HTML and CSS, you can customize the templates yourself from the Admin Control Panel.

Summary

Membership sites can be highly profitable, but they do require constant attention.

In order to keep your members happy and coming back, you must provide worthwhile content yourself and/or link to relevant content that's perceived by your members and prospective members as valuable. The more compelling and highly desired the information and services you provide, the easier it will be to sell memberships and keep them active.

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Membership sites can provide community, and good content to members. The model requires updates, monitoring, but can be very rewarding financially.

Membership Sites: Why Paying For Content Just Makes Sense Self-Assessment Questions

1. Does a membership site fit your product?

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2. What steps do you need to start your membership site?

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Next . . . Module 4: Packaging