

# Uncle Sam Cracks Down Online!

By Jim Edwards

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Jim Edwards  
ebookcoach@7dayebook.com

Turn Words Into Traffic <http://www.turnwordsintotraffic.com>

In a move that rocked the online world and left many Internet marketers shaking in their boots, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) initiated a sweeping crackdown on what they termed "Internet Scammers" and "Deceptive Spammers."

The FTC, along with state and federal officials, filed numerous criminal and civil law enforcement actions and froze the corporate and personal assets of some defendants.

According to the FTC, they went after a wide array of deceptive schemes and illegal scams including auction fraud, illegal sale of controlled substances, bogus business opportunities, deceptive money-making scams, illegal advance-fee credit card offers, and identity theft.

In other words, Uncle Sam gave notice that people can no longer treat the Internet like the Wild, Wild West!

I welcome this long overdue crackdown on Internet evildoers.

For years, honest business owners suffered because Internet scammers caused consumer fear and reluctance to conduct business online.

As the government cleans up the back alleys of the Internet, consumer confidence will rise and sales will increase.

However, as with any crusade to bring about law and order, innocent businesses stand a real chance of getting caught in the crossfire.

Let's face it, if you get named in a lawsuit by the government - even if you're innocent -you'll still lose a

lot of time, energy, emotion, and money defending yourself.

If you operate any business online, or plan to set one up, the following guidelines should help you avoid problems.

### \*\* Always Tell The Truth

Actually, this basic lesson from your Mom ranks the best way to avoid all kinds of trouble! "The truth shall set you free" ranks just as appropriate in the online world as in the offline world.

In fact, in the light of recent events, the truth might actually keep you out of jail!

### \*\* Avoid Outrageous Claims

Don't make outrageous claims you can't substantiate.

A big difference exists between good copywriting (salesmanship in print) and making claims that no sane person, or at least the average person, could ever achieve.

It's one thing to tell people you can show them "how to get thousands of hits to their website." It's quite another to say you will "show them how to get 10,000 hits to their website by tomorrow and make \$15,000 this weekend."

### \*\* Turn the Tables

Look at what your business promises and actually delivers from the standpoint of a consumer.

Would you feel happy or sad once you did business with yourself?

Would you feel like you got your money's worth, or would you feel like you'd been held up at gunpoint in the middle of the night in the mini-mart parking lot?

Your gut answer to that question will go a long way toward keeping you out of trouble with the government.

Sort of funny how the "Golden Rule" of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" keeps cropping up in life as a way to consistently avoid trouble and heartache.

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Jim Edwards and Bruce Safran are co-creators of  
"The Online Marketer's & Website Owner's

Legal Information Clinic" -- the authoritative guide to protecting yourself and your website against needless harassment, lawsuits, and other legal problems.

"Discover The TRUTH About Why the FTC or other Law Enforcement Agencies will "Raid" your Internet Business... and What YOU Can Do To Prevent It!"

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