

26 Ways to Quickly Kill Your Internet Business

By Marie Flynn

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We have all received emails, most of them spam, about get rich quick schemes based on internet business opportunities. But how many times does someone give you real information on why you are more likely to fail than succeed?

Not to burst your bubbles or anything, but I have learned through some painful expensive experience what most of you will also need to learn the hard way – unless I give you some tips on what to avoid.

Here is a quick lesson in Web Marketing 101. You will learn what to ignore, what to avoid, what to read, what to delete, what you really need and what you don't need. Then you will learn how to choose for yourself as you – hopefully – gain in your experience and your success.

One thing to keep in mind first and foremost is that the type of business you are bringing to the internet is very important in deciphering your needs at this point. Your needs will differ greatly depending on whether you are selling web design, or cosmetics.

I learned almost everything the hard way. I had this idea that because I had a MBA in Marketing Management I couldn't help but succeed! Wrongo! That degree probably hindered me, if anything.

To understand and become successful in web marketing, my brain needed to be completely retrained and refocused. I was like a stroke victim who had to go through intense physical therapy just to walk again.

I knew that after leaving corporate America as a senior operations manager in high tech that once I experienced the freedom of being home, there was no way I wanted to head back to that life style again.

I always had a dream of doing something totally outside of my career path. I always had an interest in health and real aromatherapy and I wanted to build a business based on that. I researched, I bought books and courses and tapes and videos. I did everything and read everything I heard about. I did this for five months while getting my first web company up and running. All by myself. I remember one night about 11:00 just breaking into tears because my brain was so overwhelmed

with information that I didn't know what to do next.

During these months of "pre-launch", I overworked and killed a laptop that needed to be replaced. I wore out my VCR. My printer choked and needed to be replaced due to all the articles I was printing out to study.

My car stereo no longer played music – all I had was "How To..." audio tapes... Ultimately, no one would go anywhere with me!

While I was getting my original site functioning, and managing my first email marketing campaign, and writing articles and other pages for my web site, and researching my competition, I was still reading everything on other web based businesses that people seemed to be making money with. Storefronts, popup exchanges, banner ads, MLM after MLM. Because everything came with a guarantee, I bought everything I thought would come in handy.

When my credit card bill came in that month, I was shocked to see that I had spent in the previous month more than \$500 to buy into these other "income opportunities" and buying software I felt I needed.

I knew I had lost focus! Bad! Very bad! Even though my MBA had for the most part failed me miserably in this new venture of mine, there is no doubt that the major idiom of Management 101 was "keep your goal in sight and go straight for it" still applied to brick and mortar as well as web companies.

Somewhere along the line I had taken a fork in the road and ended up so lost even a map couldn't help me! I sat back and spent the rest of the afternoon making some simple flow charts, and one single page with my goals on it.

I also reprioritized my To Do list into 1, 2 and 3. I then put this list in front of me any time I sat down with my laptop to do some business. I couldn't afford to waste any more time by veering off course and losing sight of my immediate and primary goal: get my original site up and running smoothly, THEN look at other opportunities.

To save all of you from the same muck and mire into which I had fallen, here is my WBA (Web Newbie Association) 101 to help keep you focused, on task, and....sane!

1. Do not make the mistake thinking you can build your web business with no money! It costs money, and sometimes plenty of money! Do not believe anyone who tries to tell you differently. No one has become successful with \$30 and a free website.
2. Get a real website and a real domain name. The .com after your company name gives you viability. Do not use a freebie site by Yahoo Geocities or one of those if you plan on publishing your company name anywhere, as you should. (Many times you will be told that a website doesn't need to cost you anything – of course it does!)
3. Make sure your web site looks absolutely professional. Doesn't have to be fancy, just pulled together. Easy to navigate, easy to understand. A visitor should know right away what you are all about. Spend money on this if you have to. But keep in mind that no matter how great your product might be, something that looks amateurish will send all your visitors away screaming.
4. Have your own product to sell! Know it inside and out, know your necessary profit margin, and know your market. You will not make money selling someone else's product. If their product was any good they wouldn't be saturating the market in desperate attempts to have everyone else try to sell it.
5. You will be swamped with emails talking about ebooks with resell rights... stay clear of those things. How much value do these books really have if their authors completely give up their rights?

I've lost count of how many ebooks I've read, and some are very good. But I paid dearly for those. The bonus books and the freebies are nothing more than 25 page sales pitches.

6. Free advertising has its place in any business, but most free advertising is free for a reason: no one reads the publication your ad is in!

7. Don't waste your time using software that allows you to put ads into FFA sites. FFA stands for "free for all" and they couldn't be more aptly named. They are full of ad after ad after ad of how to get rich quick on the internet. Who is going to actually go to one of these sites on purpose to try to buy something? No one!

8. Nothing is free! Especially if you expect some value out of it. Read that sentence again. You get what you pay for. There is a reason someone wants to give you something for free! These reasons range from the product is so bad no one would actually pay for it – all the way up to you get it free for a week before you are forced to purchase or upgrade.

9. You DO need to have computer experience. There is no way you can expect to succeed with a web based business if you don't at least have a minimum level of computer ability. If you really want to go places, at a minimum you need to learn some HTML, understand JAVA, find the description of CGI scripting. There will be a point where you run into a brick wall if you want to run a one person company and don't understand technology.

10. You do need certain software. Your personal level of aggravation with administrivia will drive your need to purchase, or not, certain software products to make your life easier. These products include a high end email program, a good word processor, an HTML editor, an auto-responder, and a full fledged shopping cart. Others could include, but don't buy these right away until you are making money and feeling comfortable with your work load: banner software, popup generators, affiliate software, ad trackers. If you have just read this paragraph and find yourself totally lost – do not proceed! You need to understand the new jargon of web marketing if you have any hope of success. There is no way around this.

11. Don't go nuts trying to track the success of your ads right away. I know there are others out there who would loudly disagree, but let me tell you something – when THEY first started out they didn't track ads either. They only figured out this was a good idea long after they started to understand the business. No matter what method you choose to try to do this, it's cumbersome and difficult at best. Suffice it to say that if you're making enough money to show a profit, settle for that until you are completely comfortable with what you have. If you add products or services, then you start some ad tracking. Doing this isn't easy no matter what some of the "pro's" try to tell you. If you don't have a thorough understanding of URL and cgi name tags, forget the "easy" ways to do it yourself. If you are truly interested in ad tracking, and we all should be at some point but certainly not right away, you need to invest in a good autoresponder or a dedicated ad tracker.

12. Understand your product, your market, and how to get the word out to them. People don't find web sites by accident. If you are not passionate about your product, no one else will be either. It is your excitement that will help sell it.

13. Don't waste too much time trying to learn the intricacies of how to submit to search engines. It is a science unto itself. Don't waste money on "professionals" who promise to get you listed, either. These pros cost a fortune, and unless you are selling a high ticket item, you can't afford this.

14. If you can learn about META tags for your home/index page, that will be sufficient for your first venture into web publishing.

15. Don't waste your money on software that submits your site to thousands of search engines. Thousands?? I can name maybe 10. Where are these others?

16. Automate what you can, but automation costs money. Figure out what your break even point will be if you buy some sort of automation. Maybe it could wait.

17. When advertising, make your mistakes early, if you make them at all. If you make a mistake, better do it while using free ads rather than an expensive one with lots of exposure.

18. Forget about direct mail marketing for now. Super expensive, very low returns. Email is the way to go. BUT be careful not to spam! Free safe lists are a good bet. You will probably need to spend a one time fee of about \$25 for a program that "blasts" your ad to thousands of opt in email lists once or twice a week.

19. When you do this, you will be flooded with emails in return. These lists are free because when you sign up, you have to agree to allow them to send you mail in return. Get a free email address like Hotmail to sign up with these. Two things to be careful of here though: one, check this account a few times a day. The first time I sent out a free ad, within two hours I had my hotmail account frozen because it was overloaded with junk mail. Two – don't be afraid to actually read some of this email! It's a great learning opportunity on many fronts.

20. You will hear about banner ads – unless you have a clue how to make your own, forget this for now. The concept of banners is fine, and some are actually successful, but not many – the click-through rates usually aren't worth paying for this type of advertising. If you can't design a .jpg or .gif file, go onto something else.

21. For banners to be successful you need lots of them. Don't spend money to have someone do one for you. You can't edit it yourself. Different sites have different requirements. AOL has different size requirements than Amazon for instance.

22. As you read through some of the return junk mail resulting from your Safe List free ads, learn what you are looking at. Stay away from anything that uses "guaranteed", "upline", "downline", "sponsor", "referrals"... these business opportunities expect you to recruit people, not sell anything. You actually have to market someone else's product for a tiny financial reward.

23. Check your spelling! I can't tell you how many sites I visit and how many junk emails I read where the spelling is so bad I laugh! It is horrendous! They might have something very interesting to say, but I can't read it if I'm laughing. Yesterday I got an email apparently advertising some Safe Lists. It started with "Get over 10,000 MASSAGES out free every day." I actually wrote to the man and suggested he might make more money once he learns the difference between a Massage and a Message....

24. Keeping in mind the negative image of spamming, each email you send should be to someone who has agreed to receive it. A disclaimer at the bottom of the ad reads something like "this is not spam because you agreed..." etc. Last week I saw a disclaimer that read, "this is spam because..." Obviously leaving out a word can negate all your other efforts.

25. Links: you will hear everyone telling you to have others link to your site to increase your visibility even to the search engines. Linking is fine if you are exchanging links with companies that are similar to yours. I had a request the other day from a lingerie company to link to my original site (www.avicella.com). I rejected the request simply because my company sells aromatherapy products and lingerie isn't even in the ballpark. You are better off having a few quality links rather than 50 garbage sites.

26. Know when to ask for help. Whether you need to ask a neighbor to walk the dog while you fine tune an ad, or if you need a pro to fix up your home page... always have a list of resources at your finger tips... and be prepared to pay for it. You cannot skimp on your image! I can't stress this enough. Your website is YOU. People can't see you so they judge you on your home page. They judge you on your ads, and the emails you send out. Once you give off a shlocky image, you've lost them.

Expect to take a good six months to see some money. Expect to spend a few thousand dollars to get going. You will hear people tell you how they did it in one night, wrote a quick 2 page web site, added a shopping cart and merchant account, went on vacation while the orders poured in and the bank account filled up. Baloney! It takes two days to get a domain name registered! If you haven't done it before, it takes weeks to research shopping carts AND then get them programmed and up and running!

Is there money for you on the internet? Depends on what you have to offer. Getting involved with all those home based opportunities, MLMs, referral sites, and everything else will only detract from your main goal and your ultimate focus. Some of these opportunities may indeed bring in a few bucks, but they are not true revenue producers.

Go and sign up for some free safe lists and send a few practice ads. This is really marketing research. What you are going to do is read each and every junk mail email you get in return. Yes, read them! You will then see how little competition you have out there.

You see, since people will base your ad on how well you present it, ads with typos, flaming, and poor set up are discarded quickly. 99 out of 100 ads I get each day are a joke! People cannot spell, they cannot put a sentence together, and for some reason many insist on adding nonsensical characters all over such as \$\$\$###%%%!!! . These add no value at all to what they have to offer. These also tend to be deleted quickly.

If you can produce an ad that is well put together, even with a less desirable product, YOU will have a better chance of getting responses.

Good luck, and happy marketing!

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