

# How to Boost Your Chances at Having a Successful Web Site

By Robin Nobles

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New Web sites are springing up online by the millions. However, when they don't reach a level of success, the Web site owners assume that you can't make money off the Internet.

Wrong.

The one thing that is important to know, however, is that you do have to work to make money online. Just like having a regular offline business, the online business needs to be taken care of, the Web site continually updated, and the customers made to feel safe and secure when doing business with you.

So, let's devote this article to simple things you can do to have a successful online business. Remember that books have been written on this subject, so this article won't be all inclusive by any means.

But, for the average Web site owner, it will give you simple steps to take to turn your online business down the right path toward achieving success.

Future of the Internet --

In January of 2003, Roy H. Williams, who is widely known and respected as the "Wizard of Ads," finally declared, "Now is the time to get in." For years, Roy has been watching and predicting the Internet's future. Back in 1996, he declared, "The Internet is a baby born premature." He even predicted the great dot com crash that we're still recovering from.

So what does Roy have to say about the future of the Internet? Roy says that the buying public has finally figured out how to use the Internet and what it's good for: specifically, "information gathering and features-based comparison-shopping."

What does Roy suggest for Web sites today?

1. Ignore heavy graphic sites and focus on providing information for your visitors.

2. Build confidence by interacting with your Web visitors and anticipating and answering their questions.
3. Don't think "advertising" – think information delivery.
4. Focus on Web site architecture (a simply designed site) and exceptional writing.
5. Help your visitors find what they're looking for within a few minutes of landing on your site. If you make them hunt for information, they're gone.

For more information such as what was mentioned above, subscribe to Michael Campbell's newsletter. Michael is one of the most well-known Internet marketers, and his newsletter is exceptional. <http://www.internetmarketingsecrets.com>

For more information about Roy H. Williams and his advertising philosophies, visit: [http://www.newsbios.com/wizard\\_of\\_ads.htm](http://www.newsbios.com/wizard_of_ads.htm)

So, with Roy's predictions in mind, let's look at some ways to make our Web sites stronger, more visible, and have a better chance at being successful.

Purchase your own domain name –

Having a professional image is very important on the Web, and it begins with having your own domain name. Having your Web site located at AOL or one of the free Web hosting companies takes away a level of professionalism.

Let's face it: purchasing a domain is cheap! Did you know that you can purchase a domain name for \$21.95 a YEAR?? That's it! From there, you'll want to use a professional hosting company, which will provide an address for your Web site. Combustion Hosting will be glad to take care of purchasing your domain name for you, moving your "old" Web site to their location, and hosting the site for you. Their rates to "host" your domain begin at only \$15.49 a month, which is an excellent price. "Hosting" a domain simply means to provide an address on the Web for your site. <http://www.combustionhosting.com/moreinfo>

Naming your domain –

Before you rush off to purchase a domain, let's talk for a minute about naming your domain. Most businesses want to name their domain after the name of their company, which is understandable. However, if you can name your domain using keywords that people might be searching for when looking for the products or services you provide, you're giving your site a small edge with the search engines.

For example, if the name of your company is Simply Southern, and if you purchase the domain name simplysouthern.com, you're not using any keywords in that domain name, and someone seeing that domain name will have no idea what your site is about.

So, why not purchase simply-southern-catering.com, which will give the engines (and your visitors) a keyword phrase that describes your site: catering.

Your e-mail address --

When you set up your own domain name, be sure to use that domain name in your e-mail address, such as:

Robin@searchengineworkshops.com

Again, this adds a level of professionalism to your business. In my case, I have an e-mail address through my local ISP, which is how I access the Internet. I use a nickname in that e-mail address. Therefore, rather than use that e-mail address, it would be better for me to use the above e-mail address that's connected to my domain name and online business.

Professional image –

When you have a Web site, you want to portray a professional image. You want your visitors comfortable enough with your online business to purchase whatever it is you're selling.

So, don't let your 12-year old nephew design your Web site with cutesy graphics of cartoon characters. Instead, have it designed by a professional. To save money on Web design, you can always have the designer create the main page of your site and maybe one or two interior pages, and then develop a "template" for you. Templates are "skeleton" Web pages containing just the basic design, and you can then cut and paste the rest of your pages into the template and finish up the site yourself, if you're comfortable with working on your own site.

If you have a software program that allows you to create and work on Web pages (which is called an HTML editor), you may be able to find templates for that program that will allow you to create your own site with a professional look. FrontPage is an easy to use HTML editor that is just like working with a word processing program. If you can use Word, you can use FrontPage. At the URL below, you'll find a huge assortment of templates that were created just for FrontPage, which would make creating your own site very easy. <http://www.thetemplatestore.com/frontpagetemplates.asp>

You can also read this article about FrontPage, which contains a link to an online tutorial for learning how to use the program. <http://www.searchengineworkshops.com/articles/FrontPage.html>

Or, if you'd rather have someone else create your Web site for you, look in your yellow pages and find someone locally. Or, try Look Sharp Designs, which will create Web sites for a very reasonable price. And, their designer also knows how to create Web sites that are "search engine friendly," which is a big consideration when looking for a Web designer.

<http://www.looksharpdesigns.com>

Web site design –

If at all possible, keep your Web site design very simple. Don't use frames, excessive graphics, database-generated pages, Flash home pages, or lengthy JavaScript. Each of these design strategies can present problems for you when you're trying to get a good ranking with the search engines, which is where you'll probably get the majority of your traffic.

So, if you hire a professional Web designer, make sure he or she knows that you want the design kept simple.

Let's face it – when YOU go to a Web site, you would much prefer a simple Web site, wouldn't you? You want to find what you're looking for quickly and easily. You don't want to have to spend time trying to find something. And, you don't want to see a Flash movie that crashes your computer or that keeps you from getting into the site where the real content is. You want the CONTENT!

In fact, one study shows that Americans experience "search rage" if they don't find what they're

looking for within 12 minutes.

Keep that in mind when you're designing your own site. Use simple, clear navigation. Include a site map that has links to all of the pages in your site. This site map is valuable to both your users and the search engines.

Keep graphics to a minimum, and only use them when you want to point the eye to a certain location.

When you use graphics, here's something else to consider.

Let's say that you are a real estate agent, and your home page is covered with your awards, a picture of you, and maybe the logo of your company. Do you think your visitors care about your awards or your picture? No! They want to see pictures of the houses you're selling! They want to learn about the schools in that area or the crime rate. They want to see a mortgage calculator. They want to see content! Put yourselves into the shoes of your visitors, and think about what your visitors want to see, not what YOU want to show them.

If you use a picture of a house on the main page of your site, use a picture that has a happy, smiling family in front of the house, obviously pleased with the new home that you've sold them. The visitors will automatically put themselves into the picture with the happy family, and they'll be more receptive to becoming a potential home buyer. But, just a picture of a home on the main page of your site doesn't evoke those emotions.

Or, if you sell toys, don't just have pictures of the toys. Have pictures of smiling children playing with the toys! Appeal to the emotions of your Web site visitors.

Keep in mind another thing regarding graphics. The search engines can't "see" the graphics. So, if you have a page that is loaded with graphics, there's no way that the engines can know what the page is about. Therefore, offer a paragraph or two of text above the images that describes what the page is about. Give the engines something to index, and your pages will have a better chance of visibility in the search engines.

Build valuable content --

When people come online, they generally aren't looking to buy something. Instead, they are looking for information. Consider your own Web site. What information can you provide that would help attract visitors (and search engines) to your site?

Let's say that you have a local store that sells TV's. Could you create content that would be beneficial and possibly provide cost savings to your Web visitors? For example, are there any little tips you could offer to extend the life of a TV? Or, could you write content that focuses on the latest innovations in TV's? What about a page that deals with the history of television? The more content you build, the stronger you're making your Web site, and the better chance you have that the visitor will return. Plus, as a huge bonus, the engines love a content-rich site, so you're boosting your chances at better search engine rankings.

Remember that you're also "introducing" your online business to these visitors. You're creating name recognition and credibility. So, when the visitors are in the market for a TV, won't they consider an online business that they can trust? Make it your goal to be that online business!

More to come later

As you can see, we've just scratched the surface when it comes to having a successful online business. In the next month or so, I'll cover more tips, which I hope will help you turn your Web sites into true online businesses that will make you some money.

In the meantime, you may want to take some training that will help boost your chances at achieving online success. Here are a couple of choices:

Search Engine Workshops offers on location workshops in search engine marketing to both beginners and advanced folks. These workshops are held in various locations across the globe.  
<http://www.searchengineworkshops.com>

The Academy of Web Specialists offers online courses in search engine marketing, where you can take beginning or advanced classes online in the comfort of your own home.  
<http://www.onlinewebtraining.com/courses.html>

Robin Nobles, Director of Training, Academy of Web Specialists, (<http://www.academywebspecialists.com>) has trained several thousand people in her online search engine marketing courses (<http://www.onlinewebtraining.com>) and is the content provider for GRSeo software (<http://www.se-optimizer.com>). She also teaches 2-, 3-, and 5-day hands-on search engine marketing workshops in locations across the globe with Search Engine Workshops (<http://www.searchengineworkshops.com>).

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