

MAKE YOUR SITE SELL!

How to Turbo-Boost Your Site's **SALES POWER** by Ken Evoy, M.D.

Your Web site either makes the sale, or it doesn't.

Ninety-nine out of one hundred sites **don't** get the order.

We blame that on gun-shy, suspicious, scared Web-consumers.

Wrong.

This book is about joining the **one in a hundred**

who know how to sell on the Net...

It's about **getting the order.**



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Dedicated to Janice, Nori, and Yuki,
the wonderful woman and two darling girls that **are my life.**
Thank you for your patience that allowed me the endless hours
of pounding away at the most important,
and best, work that I've ever done.
I love you, more each day.



Foreword

By Joel Leonoff

Joel Leonoff is a founder of total.net, one of Canada's largest ISPs. He is now a senior Vice-President at [BCE Emergis](#), a major Canadian e-commerce company.

The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible.

-- Arthur C. Clarke

Every once in a while a change is introduced into society that is so monumental it affects the very essence of how we live and interact with one another. Imagine the modern world without the “innovations” of electricity, air travel or computers!

The true measure of innovation is the degree to which the advancement surpasses our imagination. The idea of air travel must have seemed ludicrous to the average person years ago. Yet today, it is vital to our commercial and social needs.

The creation, commercialization and proliferation of the Internet may well be the most significant innovation that the world has **ever** seen. It will evolve into a formidable tool that impacts every aspect of our lives.

The motion picture industry changed tremendously over 60 years, as technology moved from silent films to the space-aged high tech adventures of *Star Wars*. **We are, without any doubt, in the silent picture era of the Internet.** But the Net moves so fast that the *Star Wars* version is “coming soon to a computer near you!”

Each half-year brings such gargantuan change that it is impossible to predict what we will be doing on the Internet 10 years from now. The single “**guaranteed to come true**” prediction is that we will wonder how we ever lived without it.

The Internet is here to stay -- no, it's here to **revolutionize**. Given that certainty, the prudent business person must harness the Internet to capitalize on the opportunities that are available today, and evolving for tomorrow.

We live in the pioneer days of the Internet. These are days filled with wondrous business opportunities. You can hardly turn around without reading some new prediction like, “E-commerce Revenues to Skyrocket to \$43 trillion by 2003!”.

But... **how** does one take advantage of the worldwide consumer potential of the

Internet? The reality of the Internet today is that **real commercial success stories are few in number**, although they are growing every day. So there are **no** tried-and-true guidelines that spell out the recipe for success.

How does one market to a **worldwide** audience where borders don't exist... and where potential sales are just a **click away**?

What methods are best suited for marketing into an audience that has a **15-second attention span**... and little if any patience to wait for graphics to load?

How do we develop a marketing strategy in a world where **all the rules have changed**... or better yet, in a world where all the rules are **continuously** evolving?

The questions are tough. The answer is **simple**. Find someone who's done it. Learn from all of his trials, tribulations and successes.

I first met Ken Evoy in 1977, when he was a medical student and I was the ripe old age of 12 years old. It was on a baseball diamond where I desperately desired to become an awesome pitcher. Ken was my coach.

Even then, he loved to teach. Ken displayed tremendous patience, passion and knowledge as he converted my sidearm, submarine style into the proven, tested and conventional method of pitching "over the top." I vividly remember his passionate plea that it had to be done. He stressed that if I listened diligently and practiced hard, my desires and dreams of excelling would be realized.

Twenty years later, "Dr. Ken" has figured out the Net. He successfully markets and sells his own products with tremendous success. Now, that same insight, strength, passion, and desire to teach have created **MYSS!**.

Ken shares all the secrets learned from his victories **and** defeats (failure always provides some of life's best lessons). The result is an outstanding guide. It covers everything you could ever wonder to ask about how to **really** sell on the Internet. The answers jump out of the pages that follow.

I can still hear Ken's voice from 20+ years ago... "Listen diligently and practice hard." Take the information in this book and use it. Do it, and you too, **will** excel.

Oh yes... Ken **was** right about the "over the top" style of pitching. If only he could have advised me to be on the lookout for an up-and-comer named Bill Gates...





1. How to Use MYSS!

This book has many special features to enhance your reading experience. The **first six** sections below apply **only** to the **digital version** of MYSS!.



1.1. Links to Spots within MYSS!

You know how sometimes you read something in a book, and you say, “Now where the heck did I read about that?”

Well, **MYSS!** has **internal links...** links that take you from one part of the book to a related section. So you can easily find and re-read a topic. These links appear in **blue** and are underlined.

Usually, clicking on such a link will take you to a relevant listing in [the Index](#) -- this is a separate file, labeled **Index.pdf**. From there, you can link through to relevant discussions. Go ahead, click on [the Index](#). (To return here, click in the left or right **margin** of the page -- more on the **Back** function later.)

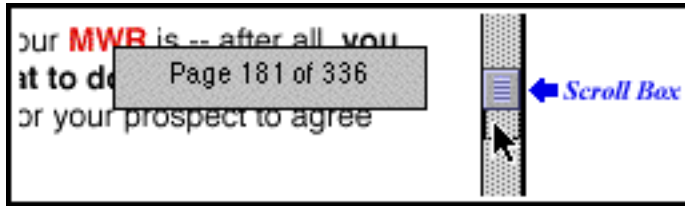
Occasionally, clicking on an internal link will take you **directly** to another spot in the book. For example, suppose the book mentioned [the Foreword](#). Clicking on [the Foreword](#) will send you directly there because there is no reason, in this case, to send you to the Index.



1.2. Navigation Features

MYSS! makes navigating easy. Here's how to move around the book...

- **Scroll Bar** -- click on the Scroll Box in the Scroll Bar and drag it **down** or **up** to rapidly move forward or backward through the book. You will see the page number appear when you click on the box. Release it when you get to the desired page...



Clicking just **below** or **above** the Scroll Box will **advance** or **reverse** a part-of-a-page at a time.

Clicking on the Scroll **Arrows** (at the bottom or top of of the Scroll Bar, **not** shown in illustration) will **advance** or **reverse** the page one **line** at a time... holding an Arrow down will scroll the page continuously.

-
- **Arrow Keys** -- Pressing the **↓** or **↑** cursor key **on your keyboard** will **advance** or **reverse** the book one page at a time.

-
- **Table of Contents** -- Click on any numbered heading **in the book** to go to the **Table of Contents** -- this is a separate file, labeled **TOC.pdf**.

When you are in the Table of Contents (TOC), click on any heading to jump to the corresponding part of the book.

Try it now by clicking on the heading for this section ("**Navigation Features**"). It will take you to the the appropriate part of the **TOC** in TOC.pdf. To return **here**, just click on the **appropriate heading** in the Table of Contents.

SiteSELL Sidebar

When you have more than one **MYSS!** file open at the same time, you can **also** manage them via the **Window** menu in your Acrobat software...



• **Index** -- **MYSS!** has an index. It is a separate file, labeled **Index.pdf**. There are two ways to access it...

- Click on blue underlined links in the book. This will usually send you to the relevant listing in the index. Try it now for [MWR](#). (To return here, click in the left or right **margin** of the page -- more on the **Back** function below.)
- Click on the **page number** (bottom right corner of each page of **MYSS!**). This will send you to the first page of the index. On the bottom of that page, you will see [the alphabet from a to z](#). If you are looking for “**media**,” click on the [m](#) link. This takes you to the first page of the **m**’s in the index. Scroll until you find “**media**.”

After you find the desired topic in the index, click on any referenced page number **to link directly** to a relevant discussion. Each page **number** is preceded by a **letter**. This indicates **which volume** (PDF file) of **MYSS!** contains that particular discussion...

- **m.** -- main volume (black listing) -- **MYSS!.pdf** is the file that you are **now** reading.
- **p.** -- Product report (red listing) -- [click here to open Product.pdf](#).
- **t.** -- Traffic-building (blue listing) -- [click here to open Traffic.pdf](#).
- **g.** -- Glossary (green listing) -- [click here to open Glossary.pdf](#). Once there, **read how to best use the Glossary**.

So, for example, let’s say that you see “[t.142](#)” following a topic in the index. Clicking on “[t.142](#)” will hyperlink you straight to page 142 of the Traffic volume. No fuss, no muss.



- “**Back Buttons**” -- The entire left and right margins of every page are giant, invisible “**Back buttons**.” Click in either margin to **trace back** to the previous page you were on, even if you were in a different file. Click again to trace another page back.

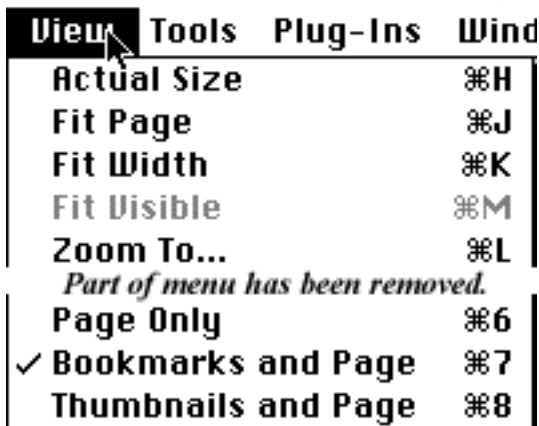
When you click in a margin, it turns black, and when you release the click, off you go! Here’s what it looks like...



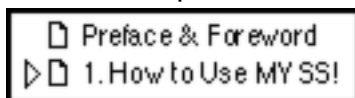
This feature is especially useful after linking to another part of the book. Once you read that material, **you'll likely want to return to your point of origin.** Clicking in either margin sends you straight back, so you can pick up where you left off.

-
- **Bookmarks** -- This is useful for those with larger monitors. If you have a smaller monitor, you will likely find that it chews up too much “monitor real estate.”

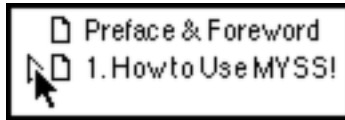
Under Acrobat's **View** menu, change from **Page Only** to **Bookmarks and Page**.



A set of bookmarks will appear in the left margin. Here's what the bookmarks for the first two chapters look like...



The triangle to the left of “1. How to Use MYSS!” means that there are “sub-bookmarks.” Move your cursor **over the triangle**, like this...



Then **click on the triangle** to expand the bookmarks under that chapter. Click again to shrink them all back down, then again to expand them...

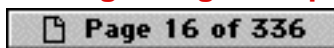


Now... here's the whole point of bookmarks. Move your cursor over the “**Links to the Web**” bookmark until it turns into a “hand with pointing finger,” then click...



Clicking on **Links to the Web** sends you to that section. Click on **any** bookmark to leap to the beginning of any section of the book.

-
- **Straight Page Jumps** -- At the bottom of your Acrobat screen, you will see...



Click on it. Then, in the window that pops up, simply enter the page number that you want to jump to. Then click “OK.”



1.3. Viewing Features

[Click here to open a preference window](#) -- in this window, **uncheck** the box beside “**Open Cross-Document Links in the Same Window**”. **Why?...**

MYSS! links across its many PDF files. This is best done by opening each such link in a **new** window, and **not** in the same one.

Now, still in the preference window, set the **sharpness**. Would you like the text of **MYSS!** to appear **smooth** like this?...

Your Web site either makes the sale, or it doesn't.

... or **sharp** like this?...

Your Web site either makes the sale, or it doesn't.

If you prefer the **smooth** look, **check** the box beside “**Smooth Text and Monochrome Images**.” Otherwise, leave it **unchecked**...

You can also set **magnification** and **page display layout** in the window above, **or...**

- **Magnification** -- Generally, the best **magnification** to view **MYSS!** is **100%**. But if you want to adjust this, look down **to the bottom** of the Acrobat software's screen. You'll see something that looks like this...

 **100%** **Click-and-hold on it.**

You'll see it snap open to...



Then **enter or select the magnification** that you prefer.

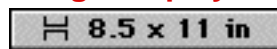
If you have a small monitor (15-17")...

To make the words as large as possible, **maximize MYSS!'s** window so that it takes up **the whole monitor screen**. Then click and choose **"Fit Visible"** (as shown above). Experiment with different settings.

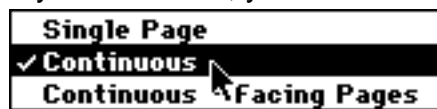
If you have a large monitor (19" or greater)...

Maximize MYSS!'s window so that it takes up **the whole monitor screen**. Then click and choose **"Fit Page."** This fits one entire page into the vertical dimension of **MYSS!'s** window (convenient for reading). Experiment with different settings and window sizes, as well as page display layouts (next)...

- **Page Display Layout** -- Just to the **right** of the magnification setting, you'll see...



If you click on it, you can choose between the following page layout options...



Single page -- displays one page in the document at a time.

Continuous -- arranges the pages in a continuous vertical column for easy scrolling.

Continuous - Facing Pages -- arranges the pages to appear side by side. This is only a good choice if you have a **gigantic** monitor.



Single Page layout



Continuous layout

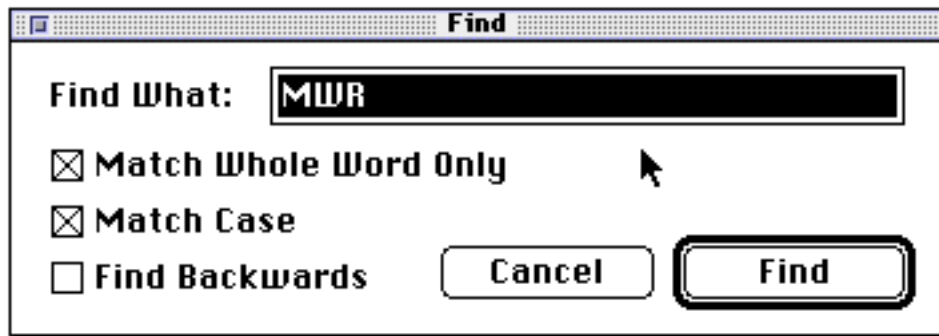


Continuous-Facing Pages layout



1.4. Search Features

To find a word, hit either **Control-f** (Windows) or **Command-f** (Mac) to bring up the Acrobat Find window...



In the example above, you are searching for **MWR**, (abbreviation for **Most Wanted Response**).

Since you are looking for exactly **MWR**, you click “Match Whole Word Only” -- if you wanted to catch any word with **MWR** in it (ex., **MWRs**), you would not click this box.

Because **MWR** is abbreviated with capital letters, you ask it to “Match Case.”

Finally, you decide to look for **MWR** starting from the front of the book, instead of from the back, so don’t check “Find Backwards.”

Once you’re done, hit the **Find** button.

If you’d like to find the next occurrence of **MWR**, just hit either **Control-g** (Windows) or **Command-g** (Mac). You’ll go to the next **MWR**, without having to pop up the Find window again.



1.5. Print Features

You can print this document in the usual fashion. Please respect [the intellectual rights attached to this book](#). Do not make copies for others.



1.6. Links to the Web

Links to the Web appear like this...



Make Your Site SELL!

<http://www.sitesell.com/>

To hyperlink to the URL, open a connection to the Internet. Then click anywhere **on the graphic**, on the **black title**, or on the **red URL** to go there. **But first, MYSS!** needs to know which Web browser to use.

[Click to open this preference window](#) -- then...

- Click **Browse** (for Windows users) or **Select** (Mac users). In the window that pops up, **find your browser, select it**, and click **Open**.
- See “**Connection type**”? “**Standard**” is fine if your browser is not offered as a choice. And ignore the other settings -- the default selections are OK.
- **Then click OK.**



1.7. Sidebars

A **sidebar** is a side note that relates to the main discussion, but which breaks the flow of the main thought. So I “tuck it away” to help the flow. It appears like this...

SiteSELL Sidebar

A **sidebar** is a side note that relates to the main discussion, but which breaks the flow of the main thought. So I “tuck it away” to help the flow. It appears like this...





2. Intro to MYSS!

No matter **what** you offer on the Web, **your site must SELL!**

Are you selling **digital goods** like software, videogames, or info-products (like this book)?

Perhaps you offer world-class **consulting** on your special area of expertise?

Do you sell freezers to Eskimos (to store the ice you sold them), or other **hard-good widgets**?

Are you simply selling the **image** of your company?

Or are you just **thinking** about selling through a Web site?

Maybe you're looking to expand regional sales into **global** distribution?

No matter **what** you want your Web site to sell, **this book shows you how...** like no other book ever has.

When you use the experience-proven strategies in this book, you will attract motivated, targeted customers to your Web site. Then you will sell them. Period.

If you already have a Web site, this book (**MYSS!**) will show you how to convert it into a killer sales machine.

If you don't have a Web site, but are planning one, terrific! No errors to correct. **MYSS!** will show you how to convert a blank piece of "digital paper" into a strong site that **SELLS!**

SiteSELL Sidebar

From here on in, whenever you read the word "**product**," please understand that I use it to include hard goods, digital products, and even knowledge-based consulting skills... in short, **whatever you're selling**. The principles of **MYSS!** are universal -- they work, no matter what you're selling on the Web.



2.1. Why You Need MYSS!... Today

SiteSELL Sidebar

If you are reading this introduction as part of the **free trial** download, please read on. But if you **own** this book, you have probably already read the intro -- link straight to [Chapter 2.5. Join the 1% Who SELL!... let's get started!](#)

Only a minority of companies **currently** sell on the Web. However, many surveys have shown **most businesses** expect to be ringing up Web sales before the turn of the millennium. Other studies have shown that **consumers** have already started a serious shift towards buying via the Web.

Here are just a few recent headlines from surveys by respected companies like Forrester Research, ActivMedia, Price Waterhouse, and Zona Research...

“80 Percent of Global CEOs Expect E-commerce to Reshape Competition in Their Industries.”

“Study Predicts Online Shoppers to Triple by 2002”

“44% of Companies Expect to Implement Internet Selling Within The Next Two years”

“40-fold Increase in The Number of Web Transactions by 2002, at Expense of Offline Vendors.”

“Electronic Commerce To Exceed \$1.2 Trillion By 2002”

“Thomas Register, Visa See Big Move to Web”

This mass movement **will dramatically alter the way the world buys and sells just about everything.**

Which all boils down to a simple, but dramatic, conclusion...

If you're not selling like crazy on the Web soon, you're toast. **And it's the competition who'll do the toasting.**

... And if you're **not** part of a large company, this is **the opportunity of the millennium**, especially if you're just an "average Joe."

Because as long as **bandwidth remains tight** and for as long as the **search engines remain free**, you are on an **equal footing** with Microsoft. Really.

Yes, the Microsoft site has thousands of pages. Yes, your site is a lot smaller and you're an unknown...

But when a visitor hits your **Home Page**, **you** own the screen. **You have the same initial opportunity to grab a visitor and send her down a pathway to a sale.**

In five years, the barriers to entry are going to be a lot bigger.

Large or small, grab this opportunity and start selling now.



2.1.1. Already On the Web?

Right now, at this very moment, someone is browsing your Web site. It's "make it or break it" time.

Do you know why most sites fail? Because they are developed with either the wrong mindset... or **no** mindset.

Web selling is about selling one customer at a time... **one-to-one selling**... you and the customer together in the same room talking about her, and what she needs and wants. With two differences...

1) the customer sought you out -- this is a big positive. But...

2) there's a million other guys who want a few minutes from her. And since you are actually just a "virtual vendor," the customer can click you away in a second... and doesn't even feel bad about it! This is the huge negative.

Empty whatever concept you have in your brain about Web selling and replace it with the above. **Do not go any further until you can visualize you and your customer together, with that big positive and that big negative firmly in mind...**

Ready? Great! Let's continue the one-to-one analogy just a bit more...

During your one-to-one meetings, you will meet all kinds of customers. Some will be almost pre-sold and immediately deliver your Most Wanted Response (MWR).

Other people will have zillions of questions and head down all kinds of side paths and tangents. A skilled salesman never loses track of the ultimate goal -- getting the **MWR**. **This is exactly what your Web site must do, and will do, once you read and use this book.**



2.1.2. Just Thinking About It?

Stop thinking. Do!

Deciding to sell on the Web is a no-brainer...

- Cheap to start up
- Low promotion costs
- Low staffing/operational costs
- Can be completely automated
- For solo marketers, can work at your own pace
- Worldwide customers, easy to reach
- Easy and cheap to test, lowering risk
- Quick to generate income.

So stop thinking -- there's nothing to think about. Do!

Your competition is already passing you by. As a communications medium, the Web outranks Gutenberg's printing press, Marconi's wireless, and Bell's telephone... all rolled together.

Entire industries sprang up, and others disappeared under these steamrollers of

revolution. The Web will wreak similar havoc to the business landscape over the next few years.

It doesn't matter what your business is, or what you think of the Web, or whether you're worried about ruining conventional distribution channels, **get your business on the Web and make your Web site SELL ASAP...** or sooner.

If you can't see an obvious way to sell on the Web, **your competition will.** And you'll be the one who gets the worms' eye view of the steamroller!

And for the **individual?** During the rest of your lifetime, you will never again see such a low risk, high reward opportunity -- a true chance to grab the brass ring without betting the farm. If you have any kind of expertise, or hobby that can be turned into a business, or idea for a product to sell...



... stop thinking and do!

In five years, when the typical surfer zooms at a thousand times the speed of today, when search engines are no longer free, the entrepreneurial dream will be far harder and more expensive to reach.

Get going!



2.2. **Who MYSS! is For...**

I make only one assumption about **you**, dear reader... you want your site to **SELL**. If you cannot imagine what you might want your site to **SELL**, **read no further.**

But if you want your Web site to **SELL** a product, service, brand, or image...

This book **will** reward you... in different ways, **depending on who you are and what you do.**



If you have a specialized role at a mid--to-large company, this book is for you if...

- you are responsible for site design
- you are responsible for the techie stuff
- you are in R&D
- you are in sales
- you are in marketing.

SiteSELL Sidebar

The roles of sales vs. marketing in a sales-oriented Web site are light-years apart. You will see why later in this book.

No matter what your role is, read the **entire** book. Too many larger companies have “no man’s land” gaps between the “propellorheads” and the “suits.” Want to become **invaluable** to your company? **Fill the gap.**

And don’t skip the parts that relate to the entrepreneur. Why? **Because they do relate to you.** New product introductions increase in every industry at a dizzying pace. Every successful large company, like Microsoft and 3M, is really nothing more than a grouping of hundreds of startups.

If you are a one-man-show entrepreneur, **MYSS!** is an invaluable total-package guide to sales success. Of course, if you are reading this in your home office, sitting in your shorts with your feet up on your desk... when you read words like “sales department” or “marketing people,” simply read “you” instead. ;-)

Whether you are launching your first product on your own, or working for a humungous multi-national, **the information in this book will convert you into a Web sales expert.** And there aren’t many of those, anywhere!

If you want your site to SELL, this book, **all of it**, is for you.



2.3. What MYSS! Won't Do...

MYSS! assumes you have **zero** technical knowledge. You don't have to know [html](#) from a hammer. **MYSS!** is **not** intended to teach you html, [javascript](#), or any other kind of techie stuff. You **hire** people to do that.

Nowadays, it's the techies and designers who tell the business people how to do their sites. This is wrong. They don't understand your business, your products, or your customers.

(Of course, **if you're a techie or designer**, this book will shoot you a quantum leap forward. You'll understand the needs of the biz people who write your checks!)

When you finish this book, you will know what you want your Web site to do. You will have the power and knowledge to **direct the techies and designers to get what you want... a site that SELLS!**



2.4. If I Can, **You Can!**

I am a Canadian physician who formerly taught and practiced...



... emergency medicine at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. **I knew little about the Internet and the World Wide Web.**

I realized early in my medical career that doctors were doomed to be slaves to the government in our socialized medical system. I still wanted to practice emergency medicine, **but as a hobby that I loved.**

Before becoming "Web-sessed," my wife and I designed toys and games. We sold 23 of our inventions to large companies around the world, generating millions of dollars in royalty revenues along the way.

So, thanks to toys and games, medicine **is** my part-time hobby that I still love...

However, like a lot of other people, I became fascinated by the Internet. It's the digital Wild West. **Right now, everyone has the same chance to successfully market a product on the Web.**

In late 1996, I started writing a computer program for myself called PennyGold. In the six years before that, I had developed a successful strategy for investing in junior mining companies (this "occasional hobby" grew an original \$5,000 experimental stake into more than \$150,000). But in late 1996, my strategy could not identify any strong investment candidates.

So I gathered all my loose-strewn notes and rough database... and converted that chaos into the "ultimate penny mining stock software." Originally intended **for my own use**, I planned to use the software and the Internet to generate more high-potential stock candidates.

While learning about the Internet, I realized that the Web was really the ultimate "high-density marketplace." What do I mean?...

Manhattan can sustain high-niche retail stores because millions of people are on one tiny island. Well, with the Internet, you have tens-and-soon-hundreds of millions of people sitting right on your desktop!

I figured that if this software product was of interest to me, **it would be of interest to others on the Web.** So I decided to market it...



2.4.1. The Big 3 to Succeed on the Web

Launching a Web business is far simpler than a "real-world business." To succeed in a Web-based venture, you only have to succeed at three points, **each one directly under your control...**

- 1) develop a great **product**
- 2) write a Web **site** that **SELLS** with deadly effectiveness
- 3) attract targeted customers (i.e., **traffic**) to the site.

If you succeed at all three steps, your Web-oriented business has to succeed. Period. There are simply no other variables.

Of course, the “catch” is that you must succeed at **all three!**

I knew that my **product** was going to be of high quality. I had to learn how to make a site that **SELLS**, and **then** figure out how to attract targeted traffic to my site (**no point in traffic if no one buys**).

The focus of **MYSS!** is on making your site **SELL!** However, I want you to have the **entire package**... everything you need to win on the Web, from **product** to **sales site** to **traffic-building**.

So I have included **two special bonus reports**. They cover the two other pieces to the 3-part puzzle... **product** and **traffic**.

“That’s great,” you say. “But **how** do I succeed at The Big 3?” Glad you asked!...



2.4.2. How to “Nail” The Big 3

Become customer-crazed! Excel at **The Big 3** (product, site, traffic) by being fanatical about her. Make your #1 objective, “**Improve the life of my customer!**”...

- Develop a **product** that **exceeds** your customers’ needs and wants, one that overdelivers.
- Write a **site** that tells her what she wants to know -- in other words, write your site for her, not for you.
- Attract only those people who want or need your product. By understanding and focusing on your customer, by targeting her needs and wants, you’ll know how to cause her to find you.

And continue this customer-care attitude well **after** the sale. Go “above and beyond” in servicing your customers. Follow-up customer support and communication is the key to developing a **long-term** business.

OK, let’s boil it all down...

Be customer-crazed, every step of the way. The rest is just details... ;-)



2.4.3. First, The Product

Of **The Big 3** for success, **product** is perhaps the most controllable. You either have a great product or you don't. If you don't, dump it and get a new one... a great one.

And don't try to get away with selling a bad product on the Web. First, of course, it's just not ethical. But also, your life will be a misery of e-mail bombs and people spreading the word. And it just doesn't spread any faster than on the Internet!

The [special bonus report](#) on products for the Web covers...

1) Great Products that SELL on the Web -- This discusses the highest potential products/product categories. Topics include...

- The Best Digital & Knowledge-Based Goods
- Hard Goods... Only Certain Kinds
- So What's Selling Now?

2) 16-Point Product Evaluation Checklist -- Is your product appropriate for sale on the Web? How to evaluate, and re-position, your products for Web-worthiness. This section includes an excellent discussion on how to scope out your competition on the Web.

3) How to Develop Your Own Products -- If you control your product, you control everything

4) Bad Products -- Why Bother? -- With endless opportunities out there, why do it wrong? Repeat sales are the key to success. You don't get repeat sales if you sell bad products.

5) Setting the Price... -- Your pricing decision can make or break you...

- How and Why to Price **High**
- How and Why to Price **Low**

6) How to Test A Product, Free! -- Need a quick and free way to test-market your product on the Web, free? **Be sure** before launching a full rollout.

[Click on the blue link \(above or here\) to open the bonus report.](#)

Once you've got a great product, it's time to build a site to **SELL** it...



2.4.4. Next, Make a Site That SELLS!

OK, you've developed a great product. And let's assume for a moment that you can attract targeted traffic to your site. What's the difference between success and failure?...

... **your Web site!** It's the "make it or break it" step.



I realized that I would have to convince people to buy PennyGold. And I knew that fancy graphics would not do that. But words would...

Before designing/writing my PennyGold Web site, I set about reading books on copywriting, writing direct response letters, and Web marketing. I surfed through countless commercial Web sites, looking for the strongest common elements that worked.

Over time, I tried just about everything that looked or sounded reasonable -- **I kept what worked, and dropped the rest.**

Like most things in life, there's an **80-20 formula**. Most of what I tried was a waste of time. I boiled the whole process down to doing a small number of things perfectly.

While marketing PennyGold on the Web, **this trial-and-error process has developed a tight battlefield-tested system that works... and will work for you** (and **you** will save the 24 month learning curve!).

The **net result** for PennyGold? The **site increased its sales rate tenfold**, from 0.1% to 1% of all visitors, an incredible feat when you consider the "doubtful" nature of the product. Let me explain...

There is simply not a harder product on the Web to sell than PennyGold. People have grave doubts about penny mining stocks. Here's the problem...

PennyGold really does work... **but the consumer does not know that.** As a matter of fact, my potential customer has severe **doubts** when he first hits the site. You see, only **after** customers buy and use it, do they truly realize how PennyGold **over**delivers.

Despite that **huge disadvantage**, and despite the fact that we were **unable to offer a free trial download** (we limit sales to 1,000 copies, so cannot give this info away), we increased our sales rate by tenfold, and that **despite steadily increasing the price from \$197 to \$447.**



The Web consumer is a sophisticated, **doubting** consumer. I had to develop a Web site that would overcome the following problems...

- **expensive sale**
- **dubious investment arena**
- **from an unknown person (me)**
- **hard-to-convince audience**
- **without even the benefits of a trial download.**

Phew! Whatever you're selling, your product will be easier to sell than PennyGold... far easier. **PennyGold forced me to become a battle-tested expert in making sites with SALES POWER.**

This book works! It doesn't matter whether you work at Microsoft or out of your clothes closet while in your pajamas, **MYSS! will fire up your Web sales.**

The central core of this book is Chapters 5 to 15. These chapters focus on **what it takes to make your site SELL!** They cover it all, **everything...**

- how to write powerful, compelling sales copy
- building a tight, easy-to-use, easy-to-navigate site
- designing convincing testimonial and guarantee pages

- how to structure a powerful path, from the Opening Page to the Closer.



And **MYSS!** doesn't stop once you're about to get the order. I just couldn't stop there. I felt I had to round it out for you... turn the book into a complete package. Invaluable for the entrepreneur... but also a terrific learning tool for even the most experienced marketing V.P., director of sales, or Chief Techie.

So, to complete the job, we discuss such things as...

- shopping cart software and e-commerce solution packages
- setting backup responses, including how to set up and run a newsletter
- how to constantly experiment your way to large sales increases, month after month
- using e-mail to close the sales
- the critical secrets of great after-sales support
- analysis of great sites that sell
- advice from other entrepreneurs succeeding in the real world
- and on and on...



Believe me, when you finish reading this book, you will **know** how to **make your site SELL!**



2.4.5. PennyGold As a Site Example

Examples bring life to the points made in **MYSS!**. Many are drawn from around the Web. Many come from my own PennyGold site.

Please don't misunderstand the intent of the PennyGold examples. The goal is **not** to tempt you to buy PG. The point is to illustrate real-world examples, often

explaining what went on during my own trial-and-error experimenting, what worked and what didn't... **and why.**

If you're like me, you're too busy to get involved with someone else's offer. So please, when you link to the PennyGold site from this book, just check out the example **and then come back here.**



Funny thing about the PennyGold site ... it looks like a terrible site to **most** people. Why "most"? Because most folks have no interest in penny mining stocks.

And from the very first word, down to the last compressed GIF, the PennyGold site is designed only for people who **may** be interested in junior mining stocks. To them, the site is **pure gold.**

I once struck up an e-mail correspondence with a "Web marketing expert." Now this person truly knows what he's talking about -- I respect his work highly. One day, he e-mailed me with all his criticisms about the PennyGold site...

- long, scrolling pages
- "cheesy" [MIDI](#) music (ouch, that one hurt)
- no easy access to the Order Page from every other page
- etc., etc., etc.

His e-mail was sincere, and I respect his understanding of the Web. So I replied to each and every point, explaining how they had all been tested (ex., [orders fell by 70%](#) when we stopped the music for two weeks!).

I also explained that the site was netting about \$1,000 per day (our only expense being the site hosting fee)... from a product that should be just about impossible to sell (expensive, questionable, unknown author, etc.).

The bottom line never lies!

To his credit, he wrote another of his typically terrific columns. It started like this...

Just when I thought that I knew it all, along comes this guy with long scrolling pages and lots of other things that we experts consider to be "mistakes"...

He explained about all the “mistakes” (and why they were really **not** boo-boos), all in a tone that made fun of himself. The article was so funny...



... I almost split my gut. After recuperating, I wrote back to him...

You looked at the site through the eyes of a Web expert looking for mistakes. Take another look at it, this time through the eyes of someone interested in aggressive forms of investing. You'll see a whole different site! :-)

I aim the PennyGold site purely at the heart of my target customer... the aggressive investor with an interest in penny mining stocks. Everyone else will exit quickly. And that's OK with me -- I know that I could never change their minds.

Should **you** review the **whole** PennyGold site on your own, **you will see many places where I break the rules in MYSS!** At first glance, the PennyGold site may even strike **you** as a **bad** effort that could not possibly be an effective sales-generator.

But you'd be **wrong**. **Why?**... Two reasons...

1) The site **targets** a small, well-defined group of investors. I have crafted the “sales copy” **purely with my target in mind**. You, dear reader, are probably part of the “everyone else” who has **no interest** in penny mining stocks -- you may not find the copy appealing, or even interesting!

2) We are **not** trying to sell as many copies as possible... we are only selling 1,000. It's important that they fall into the right hands. So the site has a **second important function...** to weed out the “get rich quick” junkies, the lazy, and those who are not smart enough to use it well. Sometimes I have to **break the rules** to do that.

For example, I do **not** provide access to the PennyGold Closer Page (the Order Page) from every major page on the site. That's because I want to be sure that the visitor has read, at a minimum, my Opening Page, and an important “weed-out” page just before the Closer Page.

Here's the bottom line... Aggressive investors with an interest in penny mining stocks invariably think that PennyGold is an awesome site. Everyone else sees an irrelevant, boring site. So, if you don't see the power of the PennyGold site...

Look again, this time through the eyes of my target customer. There's much more to the PG site than meets the eye. I'd hate for you to miss the point...

The PennyGold site has taught me all I know about selling on the Web. I hope to share that with you. Please remember this about the site...

Nothing is there by accident -- there are **no unintentional mistakes** (well, one actually -- we'll discuss it later).

And the proof is in the pudding -- the PennyGold site SELLS! :-)

SiteSELL Sidebar

Should you review the www.sitesell.com site, you won't see any rule-breakers. Just a sharp, tight site that **SELLS**. The book was almost completed before we wrote this site -- we'll draw many examples from it in the **next** edition of **MYSS!** In many ways, sitesell.com is a better pure-sales site than PennyGold.



2.4.6. Finally, Attract Targeted Customers

Once you've got a great product, and a killer sales site, it's time to bring **targeted, motivated** traffic to your sales machine...

There are hundreds of books related to Web sales -- I own 'em all. I also subscribe to every imaginable Web marketing/promotion and Web sales newsletter and e-zine.

You know what? All the books and e-zines teach you that "if you bring more people to your site, you'll get more sales."

And this is true of course. **Unless your site barely sells at all.** If you can only convince 1 visitor out of a million to buy your product, you're wasting all that good traffic.

That's why I focused **first** on designing/writing a site that would be **SALES-effective... and then...**

... developing the traffic. I tried more ways to bring targeted traffic to the site than I

care to think about. Most of what is written in those books is, to be kind, **extremely time-inefficient**.

OK, OK, let's be blunt -- they were huge...



...time-wasters.

Don't get me wrong. Through **time-sucking** trial-and-error, I did manage to build traffic to a few thousand hits per week. This was the only way to discover what builds traffic.

Lucky for you, you won't have to do that! Because, starting from scratch, I have just about tried it all. Once I discovered **what worked**, I perfected it.

That's when traffic really started to soar. From struggling along at 3,000 hits per week, traffic rocketed to 50-60,000 hits per **week...** with **a quarter of the effort** it took to reach the 3,000 hit plateau.

Sales, of course, increased proportionately, because my methods attracted **only targeted customers... people with an interest in what I was selling.**



I include everything I know on traffic-building in the second [bonus report](#). This special bonus report concentrates on **what works**. You'll also find out which techniques are the true **time-wasters** -- avoid falling into the same chase-your-tail traps.

You'll discover how to build targeted traffic **in the most time-and-money-efficient ways possible**. This report covers all of the most effective **online** methods for building traffic. And it also targets the best "bang-for-your-buck" **offline** ways, too.



I devote special attention to the "**bargain of the millennium**"...

... the single most important traffic-building method of all...

... the Search Engines. This **special report** shows you **all you need to know** to attract motivated, interested customers to your site... **cleanly, simply, and**

deadly-effectively... and ethically, in such a way that even the most sensitive, stringent Search Engine won't object.

Actually...



... they'll **love** the way you do it.

I had originally planned to cover it all in 40-50 pages. But it grew to almost 200! It's so crammed with absolutely essential traffic-building information, that I just couldn't edit it down. It's a book in itself, and, as one "beta-reader" remarked...

... "it alone is worth five times the price of the entire book!"

Most beta-readers thought I was nuts to include it as a free bonus report. But I wanted to complete the **Big 3** (product, site-selling, traffic-building) ... give you **everything you need** for Web success.

Here's a quick look at just a few of the traffic-building topics...

- **Search Engines (SEs)** -- It amazes me -- 90% of what you read about keywords and SEs will be **wrong**. When I [VIEW SOURCE](#) the Web pages of 99% of all Web companies, I am stunned to see how badly they structure their pages.

The SE chapters discuss in detail how to generate keywords and how to use them to drive targeted traffic to your site. Forget the "theory" -- this is full of **nitty-gritty "how to" info**. I even include an example of a fully engine-optimized page, html and all!

I guarantee that you're **not** doing any of these techniques. Master this info and you will join the 1% who know how to work **with** the SEs to build traffic.

- **Yahoo!** -- Not only did PennyGold get listed in Yahoo!, we managed to get the listing modified (supposedly impossible). Yes, there really is a way that works. And it's not difficult.

- **Other Online and Offline Traffic Building Winners** -- Again, hard experience and

original experiments will show you how to build traffic online and off. There are methods here that have not been revealed before ... anywhere!

- **The absolute time-wasters** -- save yourself months of poorly spent time. I explain why these are boondoggles, and not just for PennyGold, but for any product.



The traffic-building report completes the package. From great **product**, to a **site that SELLS**, to bringing **targeted traffic** into your site, you will be in **complete control of your Web destiny**.

Master the Big 3 of product, site-selling, and traffic-building, and there's just no way to fail.



2.5. **Join the 1% Who SELL!**

OK, let's summarize...

To succeed in a Web-based sales venture, you only have to succeed at three levels...

- 1) develop a great product
- 2) write a Web site that **SELLS!**
- 3) attract targeted customers to the site.

All Web marketing and sales books focus on the third level, building traffic. **Why?** What's the point of receiving millions of visitors per day if no one's buying?

Instead, your initial order of business is to **develop a site that SELLS!** So...

First, offer a product that will sell on the Web. Some products just don't cut it on the Web. **MYSS!** will help you evaluate your current products and to develop new ones that are sales-appropriate for the Web.

Second, make the sale an almost inevitable outcome. The function of your Web site is to sell your product, OR... to generate a lead toward a sale. **To increase**

sales, simply increase the percentage of visitors who buy. Not very complicated, is it?... And very “do-able.”

It's critical to keep the following in mind while designing your site... **everything you do must be geared to increasing the percentage of visitors who buy. Ninety-nine percent of Web marketers just don't think like this when they design their site. You will.**

MYSS! focuses on **site-selling**. It shows you how to **build a tight, sales-oriented site that climaxes irresistibly at your “Closer (Order) Page.”**

Then, and only then, is the final piece easy to fit into the “Web sales puzzle”... **build your traffic.**



2.6. **Getting the Most Out of MYSS!**

The best way to get on the cutting edge of Web sales, **fast**, is to simply read this book, from front to back. **MYSS!'s** pages have been designed for rapid, easy-on-the-eye, on-screen reading.

If you're a total neophyte to Web sales, this **front-to-back, “zero-to-hero”** attack is the fastest way to become a **Web sales pro**.



If you **already** have some experience, use the “**read what you need**” approach...

Each chapter has been written to stand on its own. **Scan the [Table of Contents](#)** -- I guarantee that **MYSS!** covers **whatever** you need to know about Web-selling. Use it to solve your most pressing problems. **For example...**

If you feel that the words on your site lack **sales-generating punch**, read the chapter on **[how to write words that sell](#)**. If you're having trouble converting **interest into sales**, then jump to the sub-chapter that reviews a **[checklist for quadrupling your Conversion Rate](#)**.

SiteSELL Sidebar

If you **also** want to “read paper,” here's what to do...

- Print out a chapter ([or order a printed copy of the book](#)).
- Drink-of-choice in one hand, pen and book in the other, **settle into a...**



... nice comfy chair.

- As you read, circle **the links** that interest you.
- Return to the digital version, and click on the circled links to check them out.

No matter how you use **MYSS!**, start with a quick peek **at the last three sections** of Chapter 20. That's where I strip the entire book down to the bare essentials...

- **11 Steps to a Site that SELLS!**
- **The Top 6 Rules in 17 Words**
- **The Bottom Line**

Please [skip to the back now](#) and read the last three sub-chapters of **MYSS!**, then return here...

...

...

OK, back already? Super! Now that you know **where** we're going, **let's go!...**

... it's time to...



...





3. **Most Wanted Response**

Once your prospect has reviewed your Web site, don't leave him hanging. This is **not** a TV commercial... He must **do** something... he must **respond**.

What do you **most** want your visitor to do? We call this "visitor-must-do" action the **Most Wanted Response (MWR)**.

The **Most Wanted Response (MWR)** is **the** single most important part of your entire Web site. If you do not set one for each product (or product line), there is almost no point to your site taking up bandwidth, **if** you want your site to **SELL!**

Let me put it another way... **your Web site exists to get the MWR.**

SiteSELL Sidebar

I labored over what to call the **MWR**. I easily spent more than a full day on this term. Why would I "waste" a day on a name. Because it's that important!

I changed from KEY RESPONSE to #1 RESPONSE to BUSINESS-BUILDING RESPONSE to FIRST RESPONSE to PROFIT-MAKING RESPONSE. I tried terms with words like ACTION, MUST-DO, REACTION, PRIMARY, TOP, etc., etc., etc.

But, when I boiled it all down, I simply asked myself the following questions about my own PennyGold site...

What Do I Most Want My Visitor To Do? Why does the PennyGold site exist?

Well, that was simple... "I most want visitors to buy PennyGold."

Now, Ken, apply a name to that. Not a slick-but-vague slogan. A clear name that focuses everyone on the **#1 goal for their sites...**

Most Wanted Response (MWR).



3.1. Set Your Most Wanted Response

Before you write your first word, before you worry about site design or architecture, before you worry about graphics or your Table of Contents...

Set Your **Most Wanted Response**.

Why must you do this before anything else? Hey, great question! I'm glad you asked...

Once you set the **MWR** for a product (or product line), you will design that entire part of your site towards **getting it**. Every word you write, every graphic you include, every form you design, will be chosen to steadily increase your odds of **getting the MWR**.

“**Getting the MWR**” becomes your overriding goal. **Setting the MWR** focuses you totally. **If you don't set your MWR, there is no way to design an effective Web site that SELLS!**

Right now, **think** about your **MWR...**



... What Do You Most Want Your Visitor To Do?

Do you want to make a direct sale? You can sell almost anything, from info-products to services to country inn (or Hilton) reservations.

If your product is too difficult to sell straight off the Web, craft your **MWR** appropriately. If you sell a \$10,000 piece of software, offer a free download for a 30 day trial as your **MWR**.

Are you an **OEM?** Or are you selling a service? Generate a lead as your **Most Wanted Response**. In this case, you may decide to focus your site on convincing your prospect to **fill in a form** with name and contact information, requesting to be phoned by a sales person.

Even when a direct, off-the-Web purchase is not the **MWR**, **you are still selling**.

You are still trying to make your customer “buy” your **MWR**, not the product (at least, not immediately). Even if your **MWR** is to “give away” a freebie, you have to sell that freebie (just as hard as if you were selling the product itself).

Maybe you want your visitor to subscribe to your free newsletter, or enter a contest (super for building a database), or request a free report or any other desirable freebie you can dream up. All are nice ways to build a mailing list for ongoing direct e-mail marketing. (As we’ll see later, these are more likely to be [Backup Responses](#).)

Or perhaps you want your site to support your retailers (resellers) -- in that case, get your visitors to print and clip coupons for discounts at retail.

Or maybe you just want your prospect to request sales materials (printed matter, CD-ROM, whatever) by regular mail.

With a little creativity, it really doesn’t matter what your business is. **Set a good MWR.**

What makes a good MWR? Hey, another great question!...

First, it must be reasonable, given the product that you are selling. If you are selling a \$10,000 piece of software or your personal consulting services, you are unlikely to generate a direct sale from the site. Your **MWR** is to **generate a lead**. You will make the sale later, **person-to-person**.

Second, it must be “measurable.” You must be able to measure the effects of changing your Web site. If you make an important change, how can you tell whether your site’s better, if you don’t have a way for your visitor to respond?

What if you added 43 fantastic testimonials from happy customers? How will you know what effect that has had, **if you don’t have an MWR that you can measure?**

Here’s another example...

Let’s say you double the traffic to your site. Whoops! The number of **MWRs** is the same. This must mean that the extra traffic was non-targeted. They were poor prospects. So if you spent money on this marketing effort (ex., banner advertising), it was not money that you should spend again. How would you ever know this if you were unable to measure **MWRs**?

If you don't set a hard, measurable **MWR**, how the heck will you know when you're doing the right thing?

Third, the method to submit the MWR must be a good fit for your customer. If all of your business comes from Europe and your offices are in Canada, providing a 1-888 order line is **not** a good fit (1-888 does not work for overseas calls). But a **form** that your customer fills in and submits directly from the Web page is perfect -- it's fast, free and immediate. We call this kind of Web-based form a **Response Form** from here on in.

Fourth, it must qualify your visitor. Obviously, a direct sale certainly weeds out the tire-kickers. But if your goal is to **generate leads** for your million-dollar bridge suspension joints, you'll design your **Response Form** to qualify your lead, as we'll see in the next section.

OK, now that you've **set** the **MWR**, let's **get** it.



3.2. **Get Your Most Wanted Response**

If you sell **many** product lines, each starts with its own **Opening Page**, has its own **pathway**, and ends in its own **MWR Closer Page**. Once you have **set** your **MWR**, every single word and graphic builds to **getting** it.

The **MWR Closer Page** must **close** the sale. Although we will discuss the **Closer Page in more detail later**, suffice it to say that you must figure out the best way to **make your visitor deliver the MWR**.

The exact mechanism of getting the **MWR** depends on...

- what exactly the **response** is
- the nature of your **product**
- the nature of your **customers**.

For example...

If your **MWR** is to get the **direct sale**, **how** do you want them to buy?...

- Do your visitors complete and submit a basic [Response Form](#), after which you phone to process the order (useful for high-end, low-volume products like PennyGold)?
- Or do they also include full credit card info (on the **Response Form**) via a [secure server](#), after which the info is processed automatically (useful for low-priced, high volume items like this book)?
- Do they simply call your 1-888 order line?
- Do they snail-mail you with a check?
- Or all of the above?

Let's look at the 1-888 option. Inbound telemarketing is **measurable**. If it is clear that they are calling the "Order Line," it also **qualifies** the responder. The particulars of your business will determine whether you should use a 1-888 number or a regular long distance line to handle inquiries.

Another example...

If you are selling those \$1million expansion joints for bridges, generating a lead is a reasonable **MWR** -- you certainly won't sell many joints straight off your Web site, no matter how great you make it. So your **MWR** is to **generate a lead**.

Let's use this example to review what a good **MWR** should be...

... reasonable (✓)

... measurable (✓)

... good fit (✓)

... qualify the visitor (✓)

Ask your visitor to complete and submit a **Response Form** asking you to contact them with more information. Make it clear that a sales person will call.

Submitting a **Response Form** is **the** most **reasonable** (✓) way to generate a lead. It's easily **measurable** (✓). It's a **good fit** (✓) for your customer, especially if a good deal of your business comes from overseas (which is likely).

And you can tailor the form to qualify (✓) your customer “just right”.

Remember... **set, then get.**

SiteSELL Sidebar

Review the basics of designing a form that works.



3.3. **MWR Doesn't Apply to You?**

Perhaps you think that the **MWR** doesn't apply to your business? Well, maybe that's true...

... if you don't have customers!

Otherwise, no matter what your business is, you not only **can**, but **must**, design an **MWR**, one that is appropriate to your product and customer.

There's never a good enough reason to have a site that serves as a mere TV commercial. **Think... What is your site's Most Wanted Response?**

What's that? You provide off-shore tax avoidance structures for the well-heeled? First, understand your target market. In this case, it's likely to be the tax attorneys of the rich. Build a site that proves your competence to them... beyond any shadow of a doubt.

Perhaps you close with this simple **MWR...**

“Please call me (514-555-1212) to discuss establishing your clients safely offshore. I will be happy to provide you with a list (and phone numbers) of customers whose estates I have moved out of the grasp of voracious governments.”

Of course, you will prepare a **telephone script** that qualifies those who respond by calling you. But you get the idea...



What's that? You sell hamburgers and your name is McDonald's? Simple, get your visitor to fill in a coupon to sign up for McDonald's news... and receive a

coupon for a discount on new food introductions!



You're GM? That's easy. Let your customer design his own car -- model, colors, options, etc. Offer him a 2% discount for printing out that perfect custom-mobile and bringing it in to his nearest dealer within 30 days.

Still arguing about this? You say that printing coupons isn't measurable? What if you get your visitors to fill out a form requesting such a coupon. Your autoresponder e-mails back a "secret" URL, with the customer's name and a unique serial number on it. All your customer has to do is print it!

Conclusion?...

No matter what your business, you must design an appropriate **MWR**. A Web site without an **MWR** is like an amusement park without rides... what's the point?



3.4. It's Not Just the Number, It's the Rate

You actually want to track two numbers...

1) **MWR** -- On a weekly basis, record the number of **Most Wanted Responses** generated from the site.

2) **Conversion Rate (CR)** -- Use [log file analyzer software](#) to track the number of visitors (or get your techie to do it). Divide the number of **MWRs** by the number of visitors to get the **CR**. The **CR** is the percentage of **visitors** that your Web site converted into **responders** -- it's the **percent** of visitors who will deliver your **MWR**.



Now you really have a way to **measure and interpret** results!

For example...

Let's say you improve your [offer](#) on the **MWR Closer Page**. If your **CR** doubles, you know you have a winner.

Or, perhaps you doubled traffic to your site? If your number of **MWRs** doubles,

while the **CR** remains constant, your traffic-doubling efforts have been a success.

[More on the CR later on...](#)



3.5. Respond to the **MWR... Fast**

Whether it's a 1-888 call, or an e-mail inquiry, or a **Response Form** submission, what is your "respond to the **MWR**" process? Assign someone to respond, and respond **well**, to each **MWR**.

What is your response time? In this digital age, people expect a response within 24 hours. **Beat that by responding same day.**

If you can respond in a quality way **within an hour**, you've arrived! Your prospective customer will be impressed... **the first step to cementing a longer-term relationship.**





4. It Starts With Product

“Ce n'est pas bien, bien compliqué,” as we say here in Quebec, Canada.

Translation?

“It's not terribly complicated.”

If your products deliver poor price/benefit ratios or are inappropriate for sale on the Web, **quit wasting your time. Quit wasting your visitors' time. Don't sell via the Web.**

Or better still, **develop a good product that is appropriate for the Web.** It's not only the **right** thing to do... it's the **smart** thing to do.

[Click on the blue link \(above or here\) to open the bonus report.](#)





5. You Can Write to SELL!

Words are the most powerful drug used by mankind.

-- Rudyard Kipling

The written word is your most powerful tool -- it will make or break your effort to persuade your visitor. The right words will turn your visitor into a customer. A single wrong word will drive her to a competitor, never to return.

Read the preceding paragraph again.

Here's the biggest mistake currently being made on the Web today...

... sales-oriented Web sites spend tens of thousands of dollars on graphics and gizmos. Then the assistant product manager throws up some marketing mumbo-jumbo text. Not a penny spent to craft compelling, sales-oriented copy.

Each sentence, each paragraph, each headlined section, must keep the readers' interest high. It must all build towards getting the **MWR**. Once you're "done," review your copy with this in mind.

Bottom line? **It's the words that sell, not the pictures.** Doubts? Try this experiment...

STEP 1 -- Go to any sales-oriented Web site.

STEP 2 -- Imagine the site without any graphics. Could it **sell**?

STEP 3 -- Imagine the site without any words. Could it **sell**?

Choose the right words ... **words that SELL!**



5.1. **Know Your Customer**

You will read “customer-oriented” or “write for your customer” or “put yourself in your customer’s shoes” at least 1,000 times in this book.

To be customer-oriented, **you have to know your customer...** seems reasonable, right?

Let’s start with a wide-angle customer view, and then narrow down until we understand your particular target market.



5.1.1. **So Who Is on the Web?**

[CyberAtlas](#) perhaps said it best when it comes to Web demographics...

“As more people get online, cyberspace begins to look more like Earth.”



However, as of May, 1998, the whole world is **not yet** online (somewhere between 60 to 120 million people are online, depending on who you believe). So it would still be fair to characterize the population of Web surfers as follows...

- **Males** still outnumber females but the **gap is closing** -- 39% female as of May, 1998 (5% in January 1994). Females accounted for 52% of all Internet users who have been online **for less than a year**. The 9th GVV WWW User Survey, also found that 44% of all users aged between 11 and 20 were women.



- **English** is by far the dominant language on the Internet (93%) -- even in Europe, 39% reported English as their primary language.



- **Connection speed** -- 60% connect at **modem speeds of 33.6 kb or less**. 4% connect at 14.4 Kb/sec, 71% connect at speeds ranging from 28.8 Kb/sec to 1 Mb/sec, and 17% at 1 Mb/sec or greater.

-
- **Web users are young, but getting older** -- 36% of those now surfing the Web are over 40 years old, with an average age that has steadily increased over the past two years from the low 30's to 35 years old.



- **Education** -- over half have completed **college or an advanced degree** (50% with at least one degree), 81% with at least **some** college education.

-
- **Largest occupational groups?** Primarily from education-related fields (26%), followed closely by those in computer (22%) and professional (22%) fields.

Business professionals, lawyers, accountants, executives, managers, high-techies, skilled tradespeople, sales execs, government employees, educators, retirees, and health care professionals.

-
- **Income** -- only 18% make less than \$25,000 a year, and 42% make more than \$50,000. Average household income was \$52,500.

-
- **Marital status** -- married (41%), the next largest is single (39%).

-
- **Large numbers of students**, especially from colleges and universities, who take advantage of educational Internet access.

-
- **Net experience** -- The largest category of respondents has been using the Internet

in one form or another for 1 to 3 years (45%). 18% were new users (less than one year), unusually low compared to previous Gvu surveys (perhaps an aberration).

• **Frequency of use** -- 88% use the Net at least daily. The breakdown is...

- 27% of users go online over 9 times daily
 - 18% go online 5-8 times per day
 - 43% access the net from 1-4 times daily.
-

• **Amount of use**

- 26% more than 20 hours per week
 - 33% are online 10-20 hours each week
 - 41% use it for less than 10 hours per week
-

• **Place of access** -- 63% access the web exclusively or primarily from home. Males are more likely to have access to the web from several places (home and work), while females and those over age 50 are more likely to access from home. 67% pay for their own Internet access, while 31% have their access paid for by their work.

• **Primary Computing Platform** -- Win95 (70%), Macintosh (13%), other Microsoft platforms (12%).

• **Choice of browser** -- 61% by Netscape Navigator, 31% Microsoft's Internet Explorer. Microsoft is gaining market share -- users on the Internet less than one year are 51% Netscape, versus 47% Microsoft.

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So who is your typical Internet user? Well, he's a frequent user, American (84%), white (87%), English-speaking (93%), 35 years old, educated and making good money.

For more info on Web demographics (sources for the above info), here are two great sites...



GVU's 9th WWW User Survey

http://www.gvu.gatech.edu/user_surveys/survey-1998-04/

Much, but not all of the demographic information above was drawn from **GVU's 9th WWW User Survey** (conducted April-May, 1998).



CyberAtlas

<http://cyberatlas.com/>



5.1.2. Attitudes To Web & Shopping

From [GVU's 9th WWW User Survey](#), here are some survey results that measure the attitudes and behaviors of people using and shopping on the Web. **These have direct relevance to making your site SELL!**

Start thinking about these now. MYSS!** addresses them all, and much more, in the chapters that follow. For now, here's the data.**

• **Problems Using the Web**

- takes too long to download pages (65%) -- **53% of respondents reported that they had left a web site while searching for product information simply because the site was too slow.**
- broken links (56%)
- finding new information (46%)
- finding known information (28%)
- organization (24%)

• **Most important technology used online** -- users found the following technologies indispensable.

- **Email (94%)**
 - **WWW (91%)**
 - Java/Javascript (30%)
 - Chat (24%)
 - Audio (21%)
 - Video, Digital signatures, Net Phone, Net Fax, 3-D, Push (all under 10%)
-



- **Community** -- 45% of respondents become more connected to people like themselves. Experienced users (over 4 years online) are most likely to feel connected (52%). People feel more connected with others who share their hobbies (44%) and professions (33%).

-
- **Falsification of Information** -- 49% never provide false data when registering with a web site, which unfortunately means that 51% do, at least some of the time. 25% falsify about a quarter of the time, while **5% routinely provide false information.**

-
- **Willingness to Pay Fees** -- people **don't** want to pay fees. Here's why...
 - They feel that they can get it for free from other sources (45%). So, if you want to charge for access, **unique content is critical.**
 - They are already paying to connect to the Internet. They don't want to pay anything else "because it should be for free" (33%).

-
- **Reasons for shopping on the Web** -- percentages for personal shoppers and professional buyers are significantly different, so I include both here (personal shopper first).

- convenience (78.4%) (76.1%)
- no pressure from sales persons (66.4%) (57.5%)
- saving time (64.2%) (62.4%)
- vendor information (60.7%) (75.2%)
- availability of reviews and recommendations (30.8%) (42.9%)

• **Products Sought on the Web...**

- computer hardware/software costing **more** than \$50 (78%)
- computer hardware/software costing **less** than \$50 (73%)
- books and magazines (72%)
- travel arrangements (68%)
- music recordings (63%)
- investment choices (40%)

Except for investment choices, respondents are more likely to seek information using the Web than using newspapers and magazines, and much more likely than using direct mail. Information about investment choices was equal to print news media.

• **Type of Information Web shoppers search for...**

- detailed information about products and services (86%)
- price comparison (80%)
- availability of products and services (78%).



- **Searching behavior** -- Web users take about 10 minutes to find what they are looking for. They succeed about 60% of the time (numbers improve with years of experience). They tend to give up after 15 minutes of futility.
-

- **Web Ordering** -- 76% have ordered a product or service by filling out a form on the Web. **This figure has grown dramatically over the years!**



- **Purchases on the Web** -- An increasing number of people are making purchase decisions based on information gathered from the Web.

And they're doing it with increasing frequency. One-third are purchasing this way 1-2 times a month, more often among experienced Web users. Most purchase decisions are the result of intentional searches, also increasing with experience.

Growing numbers are regularly paying via the Web, indicating increased confidence.



- **Spending on Web Purchases** -- The largest percentage of respondents who made purchases over the Web in the last six months spent between \$100-\$500 (33%) and a group almost as large spent more than \$500 (30%). The amount spent increases according to the number of years a person has been on the Web.



- **Opinions on Providing Credit Card Information** -- 55% **don't** consider providing credit card info as the major obstacle for making purchases on the Web. 61% **don't** consider it more risky than providing the same information over the phone. Of course, that means that 45% and 40% are on the "wrong side" of the fence.

Neither lower prices nor higher quality of products had much bearing on the respondents' **willingness** to provide credit card information over the Web. The major factor is **reputation** of the vendor (76%). Respondents were most likely to provide credit card information using a **secure transmission** over the Web (81%).



- **Reasons for Not Purchasing over the Web**

- not being able to judge the quality of the product (39%)
- not trusting that credit card number will be secure (39%)


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- not trusting that personal information will be kept private (27%)
- faster/easier to shop locally (23%).
- heard that it is not reliable/trustworthy/secure (9%)
- found the process to be (or think the process will be) too complicated (5%)
- only 2% have actually had a bad experience with web purchasing.

• Reasons to **Abandon** a Web Store

- could not find what they were looking for (56.4%)
- site disorganized or confusing (53.7%)



-  pages were too slow to download (53.1%).

The percentages above are for personal shoppers. They are even higher for professional ones (62%, 61%), and 60%, respectively), and for those with more experience on the net, and for those age 21-50.



5.1.3. An Informal **Top 10 Web Activities...**

According to Jesse Berst, who writes a terrific column, here are the top 10 Web surfer activities (in reverse order, #1 being the **most** popular)...

10) Online shopping

9) Play Games

8) Investing/Making Money

7) Chat and similar “social” activities

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- 6) Travel
- 5) Downloading Software
- 4) Learning Something New
- 3) Managing Your Career/Finding the Job You Want
- 2) Reading News and Sports
- 1) Using the Search Engines



5.1.4. Your Surfer-Customer's Mindset...

Wondering how your surfer-customers **feel** when online?

They are **all** in a hurry. Their browsers are slow... their bandwidth is slower.



Their trigger-happy fingers are **poised** over the mouse, just dying to get to "**the next site.**"

They have **low attention spans**. They often have some idea of what they are looking for. But they are easily distracted along the way, due to the link-link-link-what-the-heck-was-I-looking-for-anyway nature of the Web.

The whole wide world awaits... right at the end of their clicking fingers! So many Web sites... so little time!

What does that mean to you? **One wrong step, and you'll lose your visitor, usually forever.**



5.1.5. Where is Your Target Coming From?

Know how your customers find your Web site -- **this info will give you an idea about the mindset of your arriving visitors.**

Is it due to **previous knowledge of you** or **offline advertising/promotion** of your URL? These people are extremely targeted, buy-oriented customers. They may already be offline customers of yours.

Or is it from search engines (SEs)? They come to you because they looked for info related to what you offer, so they are targeted, info-seeking, and open-to-buy if you say the right stuff. They have a level of interest, or they would not be there. But you've got to sell them about yourself and your product. **Aim directly at persuading these people on your site. This is the critical group.**

SiteSELL Sidebar

As soon as you have a site that gets some traffic, you'll have one more important tool... the **referrer fields of your log files**. Run your log files through a **log file analyzer** to learn **what sites** your visitors originate from, and **what keywords** your visitors enter (in the search engines) to find you.

The site of origin tells you whether your visitor arrives via a search engine or from a "regular" site (for whatever reason -- advertising, a product review, etc.). A clear indicator of arriving mindset.

The keywords give you an idea of your prospects' level of interest, as well as the kinds of benefits they seek.

Do visitors come for the freebies or the entertainment? Maybe they found out about the free stuff through a newsgroup, or by searching for "free newsletters." These are your "least likely to buys." You may convert them through your efforts, but **don't target them**, certainly not at the expense of aiming at your search engine arrivals.

Clearly, it's **the SE group** that you have to persuade. Refine that group's "big

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picture” mindset according to wants and needs... figure out the demographics and psychographics that are specific to your product line.

How your customer finds you is a strong indication of what kind of customer he is. Know this information.



5.1.6. Write for your Target's Personality Type

Aim the design, language, look and feel of your copy to **the dominant personality type of your target market.**

Is your typical customer outgoing and friendly, a marketing and sales type? If so, you can afford a more promotional tone of language.

Or is she logical, analytical, more introverted and thoughtful? If so, she perceives promotional language as dishonest, money-grubbing hype!

As you write your site, feel the emotions and mindset of your typical customer. **Adjust the words and tone to fit that person,** not you.

I can't begin to tell you how important this is. Don't write to SELL yourself. After all, you're already "sold."



For more information on selling to personality types, here are two terrific books...

- **Targeted Selling**, by Mike Godfrey, published by Prentice Hall, ISBN 0-13-456799-4



- **The Art of SpeedReading People**, by Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger, published by Little, Brown, ISBN 0-316-84525-6



5.1.7. How & Why to **Thumbnail** Your Target

OK, you understand the personality type of your typical customer. Time to get a bit more detailed.

Let's develop a "thumbnail sketch" of your target. Who **is** your customer? What are his wants and needs and worries?

Understand what makes him tick. Only then can you figure out what gain you can offer, or what pain you can cure.

Here is a "starting point" **baby boomer thumbnail** sketch...

- 30-50 years old
- money concerns -- mortgage and other debts, children's university, retirement
- want everything for their children -- health and wealth
- unsure of their job and/or unhappy at their job
- tight for time, pressured, stressed
- out of shape, getting overweight
- looking for ways to improve wealth and health and self
- want to get out of the rat-race before they become their parents!

If you have a product that addresses one or more of these needs, and that is [appropriate for Internet sales](#), keep this thumbnail sketch firmly in mind as you design and write your site. Elaborate on the points that fit with your product and what it delivers. For example...

If you are selling a book on time management, you'd emphasize...

- the great feelings of being in control, of freeing up hours per day
- more productivity at work (i.e., promotions and pay increases)

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- time to go fishing with the kids
- finally have the time to get back into shape
- and most important of all... time to just sit down and relax.

Take a moment now, and develop a thumbnail of your customer. Do it **for each market segment** if your product has more than one kind of consumer. For example, a weight-loss product might appeal to both athletes and the obese. Develop profiles for **both** of them -- their needs are far different.

Bottom line? Understand your customer before you keyboard your first word of the site.

Your site *lives* for these people!



5.2. **Crash Course... Write to **SELL!****

Formal writer's training is not necessary. **Knowledge of your product's benefits, and your customers' needs, however, are critical.**

Let's quickly educate you in the basics of good sales copy. Then you can make the decision to hire, do it in-house, or do-it-yourself.



5.2.1. **Powerful Tools of the Trade**

Strong, active, and tight sales copy is **10%** art and **90%** hard work. Here are the copywriter's equivalent of hammer, drill, and saw...



Kill all tired, passive verbs, floppy adjectives and 6-syllable nouns.

What do I mean by active and strong? Well, which is stronger?...

"The cat was run over by the truck."

OR

"The 10-ton Mack pancaked the kitty."

Use strong, active, emotion-charged verbs (do no use anything derived from "to be"). Activate the sentences -- **pump** action into them. **Rivet** people to their monitors. Make every line **snap**.

Your visitor can leave you, and will, with a single click of the mouse. You must **rivet your reader's eyeballs** to the monitor.

Learn how to write **riveting copy...** or hire someone who can. If you hire, ask candidates for references, credentials, samples of work, and c.v. (focus on training, past employers, and online experience).

Even if you hire a copywriter, you must still be able to evaluate her work.

Ultimately, whether you write it yourself or not, **you're responsible.**



Use **hot** words (within the tolerance level of your target), especially in your headlines...

- **free**
- **profit**
- **new**
- **now**
- **secret**
- **easy**
- **save**
- **guarantee**
- **today**
- **first**
- **how to**
- **amazing**
- **facts you should know**
- **discover**
- **do you...**
- **Yes!**

... And the hottest word of all...



Use short words. The average person reads at about a grade six level. You are not trying to impress your peers with a pedantic, university-level paper. Even if your reader has a high I.Q., she is in a hurry -- **everyone** on the Web is impatient and in a hurry! Make your copy as clear and as easy as possible to understand. **Keep it simple -- write the way you would talk.**

Build short paragraphs. Just put 2 or 3 short sentences together. No paragraph should extend more than 3 or 4 lines. Make the occasional paragraph just a single line... it drives a point home...

... like this!

Put a space between the paragraphs. This little “white space” lets your page breathe. It looks much easier to read. Break up the work of reading as much as possible, and you will have a happy customer who reads what you have to say... right to the end!

Write clearly. If you have any doubt as to whether something is hard to understand, **it is.** Make it better.

No jargon! Don't use language that is specific to your industry, unless you are sure that even newcomers will understand the lingo. Don't use sayings that are specific to your country, if your customers are international.

Use fresh, surprising, neuron-tingling concepts. Use the most colorful language you can, without disturbing the flow. Use similes, analogies, metaphors, quotes -- have a bunch of reference books ready!

Be punchy and interesting, not dull and scientific. Surprise and engage her -- don't be predictable or boring. Don't worry about appearing "professional." The only thing that relentlessly matters is what your customer wants, the benefits.

Ellipses, dashes, and other **unconventional punctuation** can all convey a nice informal sense and help the flow.



5.2.2. Benefits, Benefits, and **More** Benefits

Don't focus on what **you** want -- **get into what your customer** wants, and especially into what he **needs...**

Stress customer benefits throughout. Make your sales copy so customer-benefit-focused that your visitor **wants** to read on.

Add excitement and rouse emotions. Emotion sells -- use words that convey feelings. Speak to your customers' emotional interests.

Help your customer **imagine** using the product. Paint a picture -- let your customer see, hear, touch, taste its benefits. Fill him with good feelings -- **make him feel like a...**



... king.

In short, **dramatize the benefits** -- if he can feel the payoff, he'll buy. If you can't generate these good feelings, your chance of a sale (if that's your site's **MWR**) plummets.

To succeed, stress benefits. Strong benefits include...

- making money/saving money -- “How would it feel to be making an extra \$1,000 per month? Wouldn’t that take a lot of the pressure off?” Boy, you got my attention!
- romance/sex -- No-brainer on the Internet!
- health/ease pain
- better/younger appearance
- more leisure time/save time/save work -- anything that improves efficiency or saves time
- pride of accomplishment -- need for approval or recognition/popularity
- happiness/relaxation -- brought about by such things as travel or hobbies
- greed -- not just money, but any other desire to enhance or increase one’s possessions, such as collecting
- eliminate worry/doubts/risks/embarrassment
- exclusivity -- humans have a need to belong
- basic needs, such as food, health, shelter, security, safety -- address the fear of losing them, or the desire to enhance them.

Analyze the above universal human needs and relate them to your product.

The importance of benefits applies to you, no matter what you sell. For example...



... you sell lightbulbs and you’re thinking, “Whoa, what a crock! I just sell lightbulbs!”

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Wrong! You sell light. More importantly, you sell the benefits of light. What are these benefits?

Well, in this example, I'm not the expert in lighting -- you are. But I'll give it a stab...

First, lighting lets you see.

Second, both the fixture and the light cast by the bulb have an aesthetic, or decorative function.

Third, beside "gain," lights also cause "pain" -- the cost of the bulb, the cost of electricity and the bother of replacing.

So, if you aim your copy at these key benefits that matter to your customer, you'll have an interested visitor. But if you talk about your light bulbs and your company, you'll die like all the other light bulb companies!

[More on this example a bit later.](#)



5.2.3. Hot Copy **SELLS**, but...

Hopefully I've hit you over the head with the importance of writing **hot, active copy**. Are you ready for the **BUT?** But...

... **don't cross over into bad taste or low credibility.**

This advice reminds me of old Casey Stengel, the legendary NY Yankees manager, who walked out to his pitcher in a tough, bases-loaded situation. What did he tell his trembling hurler?

"Don't give him anything to hit... but don't walk him either!"

So... write hot, active, benefits-oriented copy... but don't cross the "credibility" line. Present the benefits of your product **strongly, but honestly and credibly**.

Only **you** can be the judge -- you are the person who knows the target market. If your customer is the VP of Technology at a high-tech company, he will have a lower tolerance for aggressive sales copy than will a stock speculator.

As your customer reads your copy, **he is evaluating you**. Maybe not consciously,

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but he is. If your customer decides you're a huckster, well... *hasta la vista!*

Let's take an extreme example. Have you ever responded to those e-mail pitches?...

Make BIG MONEY... \$5000 Per WEEK, Starting TOMORROW!!!
Make \$124,000 in just 90 Days!!

Of course not! Just not believable.

Your #1 goal is to persuade the truly interested, targeted customer to deliver your **MWR**. People respond best to strong, active, benefit-oriented copy. **But you must tailor that copy to the tolerances of your target.**



5.2.4. The **You : Me** Ratio

The higher the "YOU" to "ME" ratio in your copy, the better.

Other than establishing you and your company **at the right time** (in the "About Us" and "Product Features" sections of your site), focus on using **YOU** as much as possible. **Appeal straight to your customer's selfish needs, not yours. Tie your offer to his needs.**

Using "YOU" also helps write in an active (vs. a passive) sense. For example, instead of "Headlines throughout North American newspapers have...", say "You've seen the headlines. You know what's happening." See?

Or get even **more active** and **use commands**. Since you have set the "you" tone from the beginning, commands are acceptable. "Fill in the form and e-mail me" is far better than "This form can be completed and e-mailed if you are interested."

SiteSELL Sidebar

Do a search on your site for "We, us, our". Then repeat for "you, your, yours." If the latter does not outnumber the former 5 to 1, you're in trouble. **You can never overuse the word "you."**



5.2.5. Turn the Info-Pyramid **Upside-Down**

Journalists start their articles with the conclusion or summary. They follow with the most important supporting facts. They finish with all the background details.



This style is known as the **inverted pyramid**. It allows readers to get the most info in whatever amount of time they are willing to spend.

On the Web, where reading is painful, the inverted pyramid is even more important than it is for newspapers. Visitors are in a hurry... many will read only the top part of an article. If they have not learned enough, or if they are not interested... bye-bye.

Interested readers will scroll through the whole story. But you have to give them the goods up front, in order for them to decide to stay and investigate you and your products.

Use the inverted pyramid in all of your Web writing.



5.2.6. Never Waver, Never Stray

Make your site a single, coherent, consistent statement that...

1) addresses directly **and only** the type of person who likely will be interested in buying your product. Don't try to "convert" people who are unlikely to buy. If you try to be all things to all people, you'll be "nuthin' to no one." **Never waver from your target market.**

2) develops a consistent **personal image** which builds a rapport with your visitor. Decide what that image will be and carry it throughout the site, even extending to your e-mail replies. **Never waver from yourself.**

3) builds relentlessly towards getting the **MWR**, ending with a call to action that tells the reader what to do. **Never waver from your goal.**



5.3. Make Each Page SELL!

Each, and every, page must SELL!

Start each page with a...



...**grabber**. Write a **benefit-laden opening paragraph** that sells your prospect on continuing deep into the page. (We'll talk about a very special case, [the opening paragraph of the Opening Page](#), a bit later.)

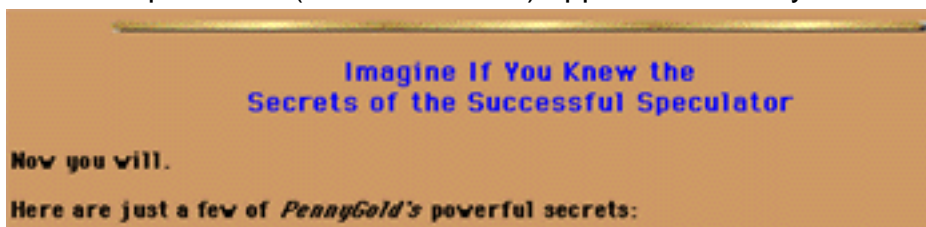
This opening line must answer the question that **every** visitor has as they reach a new page...

“What’s in it for me? Why should I spend my time reading this page?”

The remaining copy **must deliver** on the promise of the opener. We have already discussed the basics of writing good, hard, active copy. Stick to these guidelines, always aimed at the personality of your visitor.

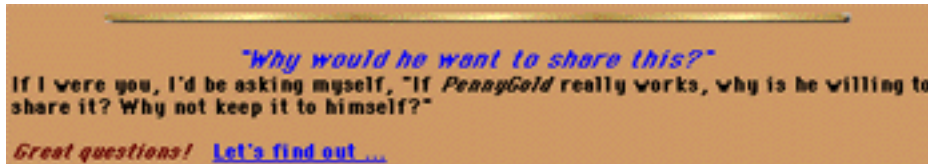
So, you’ve got a great opener. And your copy sizzles. Two final **tricks of the trade** will polish each page into a sharp, shiny selling tool...

-
- **The Headline** -- The headline is the larger, different-colored type that separates major sections of a page. It pulls your visitor from one section of a page to the next. The example below (headline in blue) appears on PennyGold’s Opening Page...



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• **The Joint** -- The joint is the end of one page that leads to the beginning of the next. It pulls your visitor through your site **in your preferred order**. The example below is the joint that pulls the reader from PennyGold's **Opening Page** to the next one...



Headline and joints must promise benefits and keep the visitor moving. Headlines move your prospect to the next section of the same page. Joints move her on to the next page. **Good joints create predictable flow.**

In short, **each page** must...

- **first**, pull the reader into the contents
- **then**, deliver the desired info, short and crisp
- **finally**, make him want to click to the next page.

Now let's look at the details of writing compelling headlines and joints.



5.3.1. The All-Important **Headline**

How can I tell you headlines are important without **SCREAMING?** I can't...

HEADLINES ARE IMPORTANT! HEADLINES ARE CRITICAL!

Headlines account for as much as 90% of the effectiveness of your site. Ten times as many people read the headlines as read your body copy. If you don't use headlines or if you have poor ones, **you lose 90% of your site's sales potential.**

Strong, hard-hitting, benefit-laden headlines keep the reader **motivated and moving**. Hitting your customer's "hot buttons" motivates him to read more.

Headlines break up an endless string of paragraphs into readable sections -- this makes it easy to continue. Craft lots of them. Use them to divvy up your paragraphs into small, logical, building blocks of text. **Headlines make the reader's job easy.**

Arrange the sections such that the page builds to a climax. The headlines must draw your visitor in, deeper and deeper. **Headlines make your reader's progression irresistible.**

Think of your headline as **an ad for the words that follow**. It has to pull the customer into the copy. So stress strong benefits. Make powerful, tangible, customer-serving promises.

An effective headline is important for many reasons...

- Attracts attention, making your page easily scannable
- Communicates a strong benefit
- Appeals to the self-interest of the reader by answering, "Who cares? So what? What's in it for me?"
- Sets the tone
- Organizes the material, dividing it into logical text blocks.

Here's how to write exciting headlines that **absolutely no one** can resist...



5.3.2. How to Write Headlines that Hit

To write headlines that hit, identify your product's benefits. Phrase them to push your customers' hot buttons. Well-phrased benefits bring out emotions. People **act** due to their emotions. Then they **justify** their decisions by using logic.

So... **write down all the benefits** of your product. Then select the the most meaningful ones. **Use strong active verbs** (ex. slash, chop, stagger, etc.) to create powerful headlines with emotional impact... headlines that push your customer's hottest button!

For example, if you were writing a headline for a book called, "How To Form Your Own Corporation Without a Lawyer for Under \$75"...

"Wage Your Own Personal Tax Revolt" or **"Build Your Own Ultimate Tax Shelter"** would be great, benefit-laden headlines.

First, a few **do's**...

- For each headline, write 10 before choosing the perfect one -- never accept your first stab at a headline.
- Stir an emotion. Get the reader excited or fearful or protective. Motivate to continue reading.
- Use the present tense, or the imperative, which is far more emphatic. Use “you.”
- Use verbs which are vital and strong. Use short words that create images or pictures. Eliminate most adverbs and adjectives.
- The headline must stand on its own. Your visitor must understand it, and foresee where the following text is likely heading.

A few **do not's**...

- Avoid headlines that **only** create curiosity. Tie it to your product or to the benefit derived, or the reader will feel deceived.
- Do not try to be “catchy” or “cute,” unless that will work with your target market. Catch phrases call attention to the copy itself, which is distracting. Make the product the “hero,” not the copy.
- Don't care about what non-targets think of your headline. Don't write for them -- you're not after them. **Focus...**



... on your target.

Here are a few more tried and true suggestions...

- Start with “Now” or “At last” or “Announcing” or “Finally” or “How to” or “Why” or

“FREE!”

- Ask a question that begs to be answered.
- **Make only believable promises** -- don't get carried away with hype.
- Use upper and lower case letters (typical title-style), NOT ALL CAPS (screams).
- Do not vary appearance -- maintain a consistent color and size across headlines and sub-headlines.
- Sometimes, where appropriate and for extra credibility, put a headline inside quotation marks (ex., “*The Most Powerful Word Processor Yet*”).
- Challenge the reader -- for example, in PennyGold... “**Only for Investors Who Want to Use Their Own Brain.**”

Finally, hit benefits, hot buttons! Should I say it again... na-a-a-ah, you've got the message. Now, here's how to write **joints** that pull prospects like herring in front of a cat's nose...



5.3.3. Joints --- The Key to **Visitor Pull-Through**

See how the **preceding** teaser sentence, followed by an ellipsis (...), with a promise of great success (joints that pull like herring in front of a cat), pulled **you** quickly into this section? That's how to make the end of one Web page “joint” into the next.

The joint is the end of one page that leads to the beginning of the next. It is the most important tool that you have to lead your visitor through your site **in your preferred order**.

End each page with the need for the reader to click. Make her click to the next page -- use **questions** or **ellipses** (“...”) or **incomplete sentences** that beg to be finished... whatever it takes to get her to click through to the next page with curiosity, excitement and enthusiasm!

The end of a page is a danger spot where people may decide to leave. A good joint keeps your visitor in the site. It keeps her moving towards the **MWR Closer Page** (your Order Page, if the **MWR** is a direct sale).

In a sense, a joint is a “**call to action**” that pulls your visitor to the next page. **Basically, your “MWR” for each Non-Response page is to make your visitor click to the next page.**

Each page must fit together and build into the next. Each must do its part to compel the prospect to **deliver the ultimate goal, the MWR.**



Up to this point, we have used the word “joint” to mean that critical zone **between** pages, the end of one page that leads into the next. But joints also exist **within** each page. Let’s call these “**small joints.**” The role of small joints is to pull the reader through, **from one paragraph to the next.**

The “how to” for making small joints is the same as for developing full, inter-page joints. Let’s see...



5.3.4. How to Write a Magnetic Joint

Joints must keep your visitor **on site**. They must **pull him through as irresistibly...**



... as a giant magnet.

Here are a few more tried and true joint-building suggestions...

- End paragraphs with ellipses (“...”), which leads the eye into the next paragraph. Start the other end of the joint by finishing these thoughts, **with impact.**
- Ask a question that begs to be answered, especially one that implies big benefits.
- For small joints, start paragraphs with “And,” “But,” “So you see,” “However”
- Use connectors like...
 - “What’s more...”
 - “And that’s not all!”

- “Better yet...”
- “So that’s why...”
- “And not only that, but...”
- Finish a page with a **teaser lead-in** to the next one.
- **Don’t leave his progress to chance.** At the bottom right of every page, **clearly lead your visitor to the next page.** Include an arrow button pointing to the right!



Remember, **each paragraph** must deliver the reader **to the next paragraph...**

Each **block** of paragraphs (headed by a headline) must deliver the visitor **to the next block.**

Each **page** of copy must deliver your customer **to the next page.** Clicking to the next page is your “most wanted response” **for that page.**

It’s the joints that pull your reader through all the “click-somewhere-else” **danger points.**



5.3.5. Summing It All Up

Build logically from your opening “grabber” paragraph. Use small joints and headlines to pull your visitor from one section of text to the next. Finish the page with an irresistible click to the next page, which leads...

into the next page, and so on, until...

your visitor gives you that **MWR** that you want so badly.



5.4. The “Write” Tone

The Web is a “faceless” place. Prospects don’t know your product/information. Their starting mindset is that the product/service is probably bad. And most potential customers are not as interested as you are in the subject matter. They worry about poor quality, credit card scams, etc.



Write **as if you were talking to a good friend...** as if your customer was sitting across the table from you.

Think about this for a second. When **you’re** surfing the Web, don’t you feel like most sites are talking **at you**, instead of **to you**? Talk **to** your customers, just as surely as if you were looking straight into his eyes.

You are working one-to-one. So personalize your web site.

While friendly and personal, you still have to cover the following ground with your customer...

- create the desire for the product
- develop a thorough understanding of its features
- convince your visitor that it will deliver as promised.

Build confidence by being clear, straightforward and friendly.



5.4.1. Turn Your **Visitor** Into Your **Friend**

Make your copy one-to-one, conversational, friendly and personalized. Write copy that is sincere, honest and believable, customer-oriented (benefit-packed) and friendly. Let your own personality shine through in your writing... assuming you have a pleasing personality, of course. ;-)

Make it feel like there is someone on the other end of that Web page listening and

anticipating what the visitor wants to know. But don't cross the boundary and get too cute.

Work from the mindset of **what your customer wants to buy**, not what you want to sell. No easy task, but critical.

Ignore good grammar when you have good reason. You're not trying to write a university-level thesis. As a matter of fact, that pompous-style writing is fatal on the Web. Write like you talk... sentence fragments are fine. Really. Just fine. See?

Make your visitor see real people who they like and trust, not a corporation or a salesman. Your customer must get a strong feel for your personality. If they get a sense of "friend" instead of "big company who wants to make money from me," you're half-way home. The tone of your site sells **you** first, and then your product!

If your site is cold and impersonal, your customer won't like you. And if that happens, **it's going to be a long, uphill battle.**

Before you can write like this, you have to...

- **Know your customer. Yes, this again!** The "right tone" for an aggressive investor is substantially different than for a V.P. of Manufacturing for a high-tech hardware company. Remember, your target market is not the entire group of Web surfers. Narrow it down to who **your** customer is, then choose the appropriate bond-building tone.

- **Sincerely believe in what you are selling** -- or forget it. If you don't believe in your product, it will show. Believe in your product and it will shine through.

But no matter who your customer is, **a friendly "I-wrote-this-just-for-you" tone is right for the Internet.**



5.4.2. Become a Story-Teller

People love to read stories. Stories have a friendly one-to-one feel. They draw the reader in.

And stories can be a potent way to **communicate a benefit**, especially when it is found in a consumer [testimonial](#). For example...

MYSSI!... You Can Write to SELL!

"My feet used to scream in pain after 12 hours working on my feet in the Emergency Room. In the morning, I'd lie in bed with my feet up on the wall, trying to reduce the pain. I was taking high-doses of anti-inflammatories. But now, thanks to AIRCUSH, my little doggies purr like kittens (whoops!). AIRCUSH cured what I thought was a hopeless situation."

Isn't that a lot better than, "Use AIRCUSH shoes and your feet will feel great!"?

So...



... become a story-teller.

Story-selling is a powerful, credible, and nicely informal way to SELL.



5.4.3. **Don't Make These Friend-Losing Boo-boos**

A single careless error can destroy a lot of good work...

• **Don't offend.** For example...

- Use non-sexist language.
- Don't be US-centric, unless the rest of world is **not** in your market.

• **Don't rush it.** Only when they like and trust you, will they buy. Be patient and optimize the experience of all visitors. Convince them through your tone and content that you want them to be satisfied -- gain their confidence slowly but surely.

• **Use humor carefully,** and only if you really know your visitors. If you have any doubt, drop it, especially anything that could be accidentally or remotely offensive.



5.5. **Cut, Chop, Axe, & Prune**

Be as succinct as possible. Reading from computer screens is 25% slower than paper. On top of that, your reader is time-pressured. Therefore, the whole online info-gathering experience puts an impatient knot in your viewer's gut.

So get to the point.



Chop every useless word.

Once you have chopped viciously, go back and cut out some more. No matter how tight you think it is, **“the copy can always be tighter.”**

Present in tight, short bursts of info. As long as your visitor is learning quickly, she will sense progress and satisfaction... and will therefore keep moving forward through your site. Call it the “Potato Chip” school of writing. If each chip is tasty and rewarding, pretty soon your visitor will have munched the bag.

And there's a side benefit to merciless honing...

You will have more than a tight, clean, fast-moving site. It will stand out with a calm, classy look and feel. This professional image translates directly to your product.

So... keep pushing, polishing, improving your writing... until it's perfect. Go for **effectiveness** rather than cuteness/cleverness. Edit until you feel that the **MWR** is inevitable. Then go away for a week.

Come back and read it again through your customer's eyes -- is it still good? It should glide smoothly from point to point. Do you feel increasing excitement as you approach the **MWR?...** “Gee, this really is a great offer.”

Now read it again, **aloud** this time, and to a friend. Do both of you find it exciting and motivating? Are there places that you trip over, that sound wrong?

Bottom line... Does it sell you? If it does, you're ready to [test with a harder audience.](#)

SiteSELL Sidebar

Animations distract from reading **your brilliant text**. If you fall in love with an animation, do the following... read a couple of paragraphs with your hand covering the animation. Then read two other paragraphs with the animation in plain view. Once you see how distracting they are, get rid of the whirling gizmos. If you have to have one, make the animation subtle and useful.



5.6. The 3 Rules for Words that SELL

Let's summarize it all into three simple rules that you won't forget...

Rule #1 -- Get into your visitor's ego. Give her what **she** wants, **not** what **you** want to give her.

Rule #2 -- It's the words that **SELL**, not the pictures.

Rule #3 -- There is no Rule#3. Re-read #1 and #2.





6. **Build Trust & “Likeability”**

Web surfers are extra-skeptical. **Your visitor will constantly ask herself...**

“Is this true? Are the claims valid? Is the product any good? Are the people/company trustworthy?”

Trust & “likeability” are intertwined. You don’t like someone if you don’t trust him. And, at least on the Web, you don’t trust someone if you don’t like him.

Maximize your customer’s confidence in you. Actually, make your buyer more than confident... make her “like” you and trust you.

Remember always that your customer must trust...

- the quality of your product. If your customer doubts this, you’re dead... even if she likes you!
- the validity of information. Your content must be rock-solid and unchallengeable.
- you and your company. You have competitors. Your customer must feel that **you** can be trusted with her credit card and that you “know your stuff,” and that you will stand behind your product.

And here’s the most important point of all...

The smaller you are, the more time you must spend on building trust. After all, you don’t worry about Coca-Cola or Microsoft. Do you?

So how do build trust, using only electrons and without the benefit of a face-to-face?
Glad you asked...



6.1. It Starts With **Look & Feel**

Your customer must like and trust you, before she will consider buying from you. The look and feel of your site is the beginning of this process.

Your Web pages build your store's ambience. If you already have a site, take one big step back and look at the overall impression.

Is it a distracting, confused mess? **Or is it professional and organized, yet warm and inviting?** Does it make you feel good? Do you trust this store?

Now ask that same questions of friends, colleagues, and favorite customers, during unscheduled, informal test sessions. Ask them to be **blunt** -- tell them you need the truth, not compliments.

This look and feel of your site goes a long way to getting the sale... or losing it. The **first impression** as your Home Page loads will drive people away before they even start reading ... if the look and feel is all wrong. Or it will allow them to settle into a comfortable place where they will enjoy reading your message.

Shopping at your store must be a pleasant, rewarding, convenient and safe experience. Your site should transmit that... **immediately and throughout** the site.

The overall design (colors, fast-loading graphics, layout, fonts, copy layout) sets the table. Design can develop a warm, trusting feel... or a sterile, cold one... or a multi-national, big-company presence...



...or a **hucksterish** "I'll steal your credit card and run it to the max in a minute" feel.

And it's not just graphics and design...

Remember the [write to sell](#) techniques? Every word must address "look and feel," too! If you write like a lawyer, that's the sense they'll get. Is that what you want?

If your site is up, scan the copy of your first two pages. Look for a conversational,

friendly tone... do you “talk” to your customer? Do so! For example, tell her your story... reveal a bit about yourself, why you got into the business, what drives you, etc.

Let’s sum it up...

Offline, customers get a strong look and feel by “being there.” But your Web-prospect can’t get that from **physically** meeting you and touring your operation.

So your Web site has to do it. A web site is a mirror to the soul of a company. A solid, friendly, professional look and feel is the start of building confidence... of developing trust and likeability. A whirling, loud site does the reverse.



6.1.1. Two Tasty Examples



Your visitors want info, enough info to make a buy-or-not decision. **Make that info-gathering process as light, even entertaining, as possible** (within reason, given the tolerances of your target market).

Unless entertainment that “blows their minds” fits with your product and target market (ex., you sell video games), don’t feel that you have to entertain with all the bells and whistles that the Web can offer. But don’t just write **words**, either.

Gratuitous entertainment takes your visitor’s mind off the task at hand. And it will slow the delivery of your information drastically. Presenting info in a light and breezy manner (as light as your product will allow, that is), in an appropriate setting, is critical.

So, if you can present your information in a fun and entertaining way, **do it**. See the **Ragu site** for a colorful example of information delivered via relevant entertainment.

MYSSI!... Build Trust & "Likeability"



Ragu (Mama's Cucina)

<http://www.ragu.com/>

See **HotHotHot** for another top-notch look and feel. It features...

- excellent **hot colors** for the text and links
- complementary background color
- sizzling, stylish (but very simple) graphics.

Nothing complicated. Just effective at building a unique-and-appropriate look and feel.



HotHotHot

<http://www.hothothot.com/>

Your product may not be as “easy” to have fun with... it may not even be appropriate. But **you can always make the copy quick and easy to read.** And the overall **look and feel** can always be appropriate and stimulating to the eye and mind. **In short...**



... make it tasty!



6.2. Join the **Big Leagues...** **Get Your Own Domain**

Which looks more like a serious Web business?...

<http://www.pennygold.com/>

OR

<http://www.masterlink.net/websites/web57177/~pennygold/>

Do **not** use your Web host's domain name. Domains are cheap -- if you don't have your own, it is absolute proof that you are smaller than "a little guy." **So...**

You must have **your own domain** and it must be **perfect...**

- **short and sharp** -- sitesell.com is just so easy to remember.
- **easy to convey** -- Stay away from hyphens and tildes (~) and underscores (_), if at all possible. The best test is... "Can you spell it on a voice mail and be understood?"
- **not easily misspelled** -- You take a chance if you register "tozzz.com" because "toyz.com" is already taken. Best of all would be "toys.com," of course. Let's take the voice mail test one step further... can you say it on the phone **without** spelling it, and the recipient **still gets it right?**
- **easy to remember** -- A potential visitor hears about you from a friend or on the radio, but has no pen to write it down -- will he remember the URL?
- **unique, descriptive, and "you"** -- It must be appropriate for the theme of your site, yet be broad enough to diversify into associated products.
- **solid, classic** -- your URL is the first thing anyone notes about your digital biz. Start the good impression right away.
- **totally lower case** -- If you mix upper and lower case, people will have a harder time remembering the URL. And since much of the Internet is based on **UNIX**, which is case-sensitive, you'll be headed for all kinds of errors if you mix case in an

attempt to be cute. Stay lower case.



OK, got the **perfect** domain name? Let's hope it's still available! **Here's how to find out...**

Go to the InterNIC "Whois" Web page. This page not only tells you whether a domain is taken, but who owns it, and other details.



**NETWORK
SOLUTIONS™**

Web Interface to Whois

<http://www.rs.internic.net/cgi-bin/whois/>



If your first choice is taken, try small variations or abbreviations of the name -- you'll probably still be able to find something close.

The fee for your own domain is \$70 to cover the first two years, and then \$35 per year. It's the best money you'll ever spend. Here's why...

1) You look like a serious business. If you don't have your own domain, you raise a big credibility question in every customer's mind, regardless of your site and product quality. **And you'll have a more professional e-mail address...** sales@yourdomain.com is just so much more credible than hte8349@aol.com.

2) If you switch ISPs, your URL and e--mail address will remain the same. This is critical. Let's say that you're using your ISP's domain name in your business URL -- when you change ISPs, you'll lose a heck of a lot of time just to get back to where you were before...

- You have to **re-submit** your Web pages to all the search engines.
- You **lose** all those millions of visitors with bookmarks to your site.
- You have to **tell everyone** about your new e-mail address.

Ouch!

3) It becomes your brand, your very own proprietary name, which no one else can have. If you're just starting out, this may sound a little academic. Trust me, it's not. **For this reason, it's worth taking the upfront time to choose "the perfect domain name."**

4) Once you have your own domain, you can get full log files which [you can analyze](#).

Avoid problems and register the name yourself -- it's not hard. Just link to the registration page at InterNIC and follow the instructions...



InterNIC Domain Name Registration

<http://www.rs.internic.net/cgi-bin/domain>

[If your ISP registers your domain](#), tell them to name **you** as the administrative and billing contact. After it's done, go to the "whois" page and make sure it's been done right.

SiteSELL Sidebar

At the time of this writing, everyone is waiting for new domain categories to be introduced (.firm, .store., .info, .nom, .web, etc.). Until at least the year 2001, **your first choice will remain .com -- it has a solid foothold in our psyche.**



6.3. **Win SALES With Valuable Content**

Content is **information that is of value to your visitor.**

Good content builds credibility prior to hitting your **MWR Closer Page**. It establishes you as an expert, that you know what you're talking about. Isn't that who **you** would want to deal with?

Outstanding content, where your customer learns something new or receives some other benefit, can make your customer like you so much that she **wants** to pay you back. If you can develop that frame of mind in your prospect...



... **open a new corporate bank account.** Your first one won't be big enough to hold all that income! ;-)

Your visitor has probably visited 10 or 20 sites in a Web session, before stumbling upon yours. Guess what she's learned from them. Zip... a lot of useless, overworked tidbits. **Don't do the same.**

So stand out! Build some truly valuable content into each pathway that leads towards your **MWR Closer Page**. The content must not just be info about your product -- **it must be content (related somehow to your product) that is of value to your visitor.**

You must weave content with product tie-in seamlessly. If you are too heavy on promotion, the information feels overly commercial. If you provide good content in a separate part of the Web site, many users will take the free good stuff and bypass your pitch. **Weave it together, but do it just right.**

For example...

The PennyGold site weaves the broad outlines of the strategy right into the sales copy, **but not so much that they don't need the main product.** As a result, the reader is thinking...

"Wow! That makes a lot of sense. What a clever idea. I never thought of that."

Slowly, the reader comes to realize that I know what I'm talking about. And she's **feeling good** about learning something about a little known and poorly understood investing arena.

By the end of the site, **she's contemplating...**

"Phew! This is great! And I've checked out all the proof, so I know it's for real. Geez, I know so much that I could probably even try it myself without buying PennyGold. But there must be an awful lot more important info in the book. And the software tool sounds fantastic. The price is cheap when you compare with how much time and money I'd lose doing my own trial-and-error."

Yup, I'm not far from getting another order. So...

Give your visitor something that she did not have before she came to your site.

If you accomplish this...

1) you will have a happy customer as she reaches your **MWR**, one who thinks nice thoughts about you... one who figures that she owes you something in return. Sure, not everyone thinks like this, but most folks are pretty decent sorts.

2) your customer may not actually buy, but she will be a **shoe-in to subscribe** to your free newsletter that provides more of that great info! Eventually, a good number of these people convert into paying customers. Anyone who won't provide her e-mail address to subscribe after your great info is simply not a prospect.

Let's expand upon the above sentence... **Give your visitor something that she did not have before she came to your site.** That "something" does not have to be knowledge in the form of **words on a static [html](#) page**.

While content is **information that is of value to your visitor**, the actual **type** of content will vary widely depending on the type of products you market. Here are just a few possible formats...

- **pictures** -- Especially for some of our baser instincts. Great pictures on-site, more behind the curtain (after the purchase). Just like verbal content, give away some great stuff, but not so much that they don't need you.

- **software** -- Javascript is a great way to provide special functionality on your site, **now** that Explorer 4+ and Netscape 3+ both interpret it well. You can even offer that "software", **free**, to visitors who request it for their own use on their own computer,

when offline. Talk about a double content bonus -- first on **your** site, then on **their** computer. Your visitor is really going to love you!

For example, on the **Order Page** of the PennyGold site, **after** the ordering process, we offer a Decision Helper javascript. The visitor can either link to DH and use it on-site. Or she can request a copy to use on her own computer.

The screenshot shows a webpage with a light brown background. At the top, a blue header reads "Not Sure? Try Decision Helper!". Below this, the text says: "I do not want to talk you into buying something that you won't use. We are only selling 1,000 copies, so I want them in the hands of the right people. So...". The next paragraph says: "If you're not sure about PennyGold, please see what PennyGold owners have been saying. Their feedback has been most gratifying for me, and hopefully will be helpful for you." This is followed by: "Still can't quite believe this offer? I have a final message for you. Then please come back and try Decision Helper." The main body of text reads: "Danny Goodman, THE Javascript guru, has written a wonderful little program called Decision Helper. I offer it here to help those of you who are still undecided to come to a well thought-out decision that is right for you." The final paragraph says: "If you find this gem as useful as I do, you'll want to use it (only with Netscape 3.0+ or Internet Explorer 4+) whenever you need to think through an important decision with several possible solutions. It really forces you to think straight. Here it is." In the center, there is a white box with a black border containing the following text: "OR ... if you'd like a FREE copy of Decision Helper (no PennyGold purchase necessary), e-mail a request with 'DH' as the subject line. Type either 'For MAC' or 'For WINDOWS' in the body text. Danny Goodman has kindly allowed me to send DH to those who request it, as long as you don't redistribute it." At the bottom left of the page, there is a link: "Order Form Above".

Try Decision Helper

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#DH>

[A bit later in the book](#), I'll show you how this powerful technique closes the sale!

- **forums or chat rooms, etc.** -- This is a powerful way to create a community. For example, if you are selling high-end fly-fishing equipment, maybe you could start a great little "fishing lure" chat group, or "great places to fly-fish" group. Visitors sharing info with other visitors is a terrific (and cheap) way to build valuable content.

- **reports** -- Offer a [free report](#), one with truly high-value-content. Let your customer know that, from time to time, you'll send other terrific reports, too. This will "allow"

you to occasionally e-mail other special reports, which of course seamlessly blend truly valuable content with a subtle sales push.



- **if you sell a shareware MIDI player** -- How about offering (for free download) the most popular jazz, rock, blues, and classical MIDI files of all-time? Of course, offer a subscription to your “MIDI file of the month, free in your e-mail box!”

-
- **lots of great information or news** -- This not only educates your customer, it convinces her that you know what you’re talking about. Supply this in an ongoing manner via a subscription to your newsletter. We do this on our PennyGold Web site. It’s a very powerful way to build up a solid, targeted mailing list.

-
- **“sample of the month” mailer** -- For sites that sell hard goods, why not offer a subscription to a monthly sample of your products? Charge just enough to cover mailing and handling costs. (Geez, hard goods are a pain, aren’t they?)

Get creative -- content **SELLS!** There’s no end to the number of ways that you can offer outstanding, original, valuable content...

... and turn visitors into customers.



6.4. Unique Ways to Use Photos

A **photo** personalizes things. But don't make this a boring, gratuitous head-and-shoulders shot. They reduce you to "talking head" status.

If you're selling health foods, show a shot of you and your brother doing something in your "so clean you could eat off the floor" factory. Or maybe a shot of your happy, clean-scrubbed and neatly uniformed employees, serving customers in the "real-world" retail operation.

Make your visitor **feel** your business. **Use photos to pull your prospect from off her computer-bound chair and into your place of business!**

Photos of you and your team are great likeability-builders. When they see you, you are no longer a concept. You are a real flesh-and-blood human being, just like the **person** who is reading about you!

You have employees, computers, an office building. You're a genuine serious business...



... **not** some crazed 14 year-old working out of the corner of his bedroom. (If you **are**, ignore this section!)

Work the photos in naturally. They must **fit** the context. Examples...



- ... a shot of a school tour through your factory
- a photo of you receiving "Vendor of theYear" from Toys 'R Us
- a picture of your Manufacturing V.P. laughing with an assembly line worker

- a photo of you and your wife in an article from a major business newsmagazine...



The Toy Biz

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/100toysROB.html>

Done right, photos add to the “look and feel” -- they build credibility and likeability. Done wrong, they feel gratuitous and out of place.



6.5. Prove It!

What can I say? We live in a “Oh Yeah? Prove It!” kind of world. It’s up to you to do just that. Include **all available evidence** to prove how great your product is.

The PennyGold site was the ultimate “must prove” example. PennyGold really **is** a great tool. Due to the nature of the products, I knew that everyone would be full of doubt. And the PennyGold site suffered from another huge disadvantage...

I couldn’t offer a free trial download. PennyGold contains a digital book and software. The **information** contained in the book is proprietary and is where the true value lays.

So I knew that I would have to **prove** my case, **beyond any reasonable doubt**.

It is not enough to just offer the actual evidence -- **make every piece of proof verifiable**. Of course, only one in a hundred visitors will actually cross-check the proof. The other ninety-nine think, "No way he would offer that evidence if it wasn't true. All I have to do is pick up the phone or e-mail to check." **Which accomplishes the goal!**

Here are just a few of the methods that the PennyGold site uses to prove its case in a **verifiable manner**...

1) **Don't just say** that PennyGold averaged a 108% return from 1991-1996 -- **prove it**. Users can download a database of every transaction, even with scans of confirmation reports from my broker. They can even call my broker to make sure that this is **the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth**.

Download PennyGold Tracker for Windows (4.4 meg) -- this version contains scanned confirmation reports for every PennyGold trade.
Download PennyGold Tracker for Windows (1.4 meg) -- same application and data, except no confirmation reports (which is why it's only 1.4 meg).

Download PennyGold Tracker

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/downloadtracker.html>

2) Offer **testimonials**. Not those fake blusterings by "A.K., Phoenix, Arizona." **Include real names and e-mail addresses** so potential customers can contact them... "Hey, did you really say that. Do you still like PennyGold? How are you doing with it now?"

Unsolicited feedback (#1) from a PennyGold Owner (**click here**)

"PennyGold has been my savior in my search for low priced, quality stocks. Not only has it given me the tools to find these stocks, but has increased my own "brain power" and knowledge in all areas of the junior mining industry.

The feeling it has given me must be what a blind person who has been given sight must feel like. Unlike any other software I have ever purchased, the support I have received was worth the price alone."

Marvin Janzen, mjanzen@mb.sympatico.ca, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

PennyGold User Feedback

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/PGuserfeedback.html>

3) Open yourself to investigation by your users. In my bio, I give contact info so that visitors can...

- get a true sense of me as a stable, successful person in my community, one who likes to teach others
- verify that I really did go to McGill University med school
- cross-check at the hospital where I used to work and teach
- reach the major newspapers to be sure that the articles I show on the Web (about our successful toy business) are real
- e-mail or phone successful people who I have taught (something that I love to do).



The Who & Why of PennyGold

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/100.html>

Bottom line? Document all claims "ad nauseum" -- make the documentation **verifiable** by your customers. **If you're good, prove it... beyond all reasonable doubt.**

SiteSELL Sidebar

If you sell software or some other digital product, you have a unique advantage -- the **30 day free trial download**. If your product is great, you'll succeed.

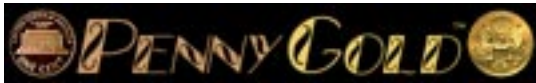
This is such powerful evidence, that it actually reduces the amount of proof that you have to offer on your Web site. Of course, still include some great reviews and testimonials, but you don't have to go to the same lengths. For example...

Although the Web site **for this book** is not up yet, it will be much, much smaller, for two reasons...

MY**SSI!**... Build Trust & "Likeability"

- lower price point
- **trial download** -- I have full confidence in my product, so I expect the trial to complete the sale. Obviously, for a book, we'll modify the terms of the trial to fit the circumstances.

Compare the difference in the two sites yourself...



PennyGold

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>



Make Your Site SELL!

<http://www.sitesell.com/>



6.6. **Specifics Are Reassuring**

Stress specifics, **not vague generalities**.

Want to publicize your great number of satisfied customers? Don't say...

"We have many happy customers from all over the world."

Instead say...

"As of Feb. 28, 1999, 13,569 customers, people from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, happily hop on our pogo sticks."

Don't write...

"Fast Service, Satisfied Clients, Satisfaction Guaranteed."

Replace that with...

"All orders shipped same day. 3,900 companies use and love our widget. [Click here for the list.](#) If you aren't totally satisfied, return our widget within 30 days and get 100% of your money back. No questions asked."

(Naturally, when they click on the list of widget-users, you even include a contact name and e-mail address for each company that has permitted such usage. Remember? **Prove it!**)

What happens if you speak in the same old vague generalities as everyone else? **Your ex-prospective customer won't even remember that she visited five minutes after leaving you.**

Say things in original and specific ways -- people will sit up and take notice.

6.7. Certification Boosts **SALES**

If you are a small, unknown operation, selling a rather expensive product, consider joining the **Better Business Bureau**, both locally and online. **TRUSTe** is a newer purely online credibility-builder that is gaining recognition by online consumers. There are a few other certification bureaus on the Web, but none have the recognition of the **BBB**.

With **BBBOnline**, you display their logo on your Web site. It links to their site (a weak point for you -- always dangerous to link your customer out). When a customer clicks on the seal, the *BBBOnline* site responds with a page of information on your business. In order to be a member of *BBBOnline*, you must also be a member of your **local** BBB.



BBBOnLine

<http://www.bbbonline.org/>

Like *BBBOnline*, you display the **TRUSTe**'s "trustmark." You must agree, in writing, to certain principles. Visitors who click on the trustmark can view your individual privacy statement.



TRUSTe

<http://www.truste.org/>

Since **registering with more than one would be overkill**, *BBBOnline* seems like the one to choose as of July, 1998.



6.8. More Confidence-Builders

Looking for more ways to build **trust and likeability**?...

- Write in a [friendly, one-to-one, open and honest tone of voice](#).
- Make your [testimonials](#) verifiable (full names, phone numbers, e-mail addresses).
- Offer a strong [guarantee](#), one that makes your reader say...



"WOW! They must be confident!"

- **Tell a story from the third person viewpoint.** When someone writes about you, it's more credible.
- Add any other audits, attestations, etc., as appropriate.
- **Personalize your site for repeat visitors.** Your techie can set a [cookie](#) for each visitor. Track each visitor (by following the cookie), and record preferences. You can even ask her for preferences. If this applies to your business, your repeat visitor will start to feel at home at "your place."

SiteSELL Sidebar

Site personalization is a hot concept today. Don't get carried away with it. Again, [K-I-S-S](#).

Many sites that are hell-bent on awesome personalization ask visitors to fill out multi-forms asking their preferences. This raises privacy issues, not to mention that people hate filling out long forms.

The **best** personalization occurs as the visitor proceeds through your site normally, making selections along the way...

- It does not make the visitor do extra work.
- The replies are honest and reliable, since they occur naturally.

A good example is Amazon's recommendation service, mentioned in [the discussion on Amazon below](#).

For smaller, entrepreneurial efforts, in particular...

- The [The About Our Company Page](#) becomes important for establishing credentials. **Tell your story -- open yourself a bit to your reader.** In my bio, I tell my personal story so that users can know me as a stable, successful person in my community, one who likes to teach others. And I make it all [verifiable](#), as well.
- **Include key contact information** at the bottom of every important page of your Web site. This must include a permanent fixed postal address, phone and fax numbers, even a 1-800 number. Most people won't use these to contact you, but they do prove you have a certain minimum amount of substance.
- [Use a secure server](#) for online ordering. It shows respect for your customers' credit card worries (even though they are unfounded). It's better to offer a secure version of your own domain for ordering (ex., "secure.yourdomain.com"), rather than a [third party secure server](#) -- it establishes that you have this **"big company"** capability, and your customer does not worry about who the third party is.
- **Avoid "spam signals"**. Tricks signal deceit. If the title of your **Home Page** is "penny stocks, penny stock, stocks, penny stocks," this may help with the SEs, but it sure delivers a spammy starting message to your potential customers.



6.9. **Never Mislead...** **Not Even a Little**

There are varying degrees of dishonesty...

- 1) The flat-out lie.
- 2) Exaggerating or promising or otherwise misleading, so that your visitor thinks that...



... **your product is bigger than it really is!** It's easy to fall into this trap. After all, you want your visitor to buy from you, instead of your competition.

3) While not lying or exaggerating, you withhold certain aspects that “might kill the sale.” The result, of course, is that you sell your product, but to someone who would **not** have bought it if he knew “the whole truth.”

Let's cut to the chase on this issue. Don't do it, not #1, 2, nor #3. **Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.**

Of course, write to sell. Present your case in the best way possible. But **never** mislead. If your product's not good enough to survive the truth, **drop the product.**



Here's a subtle example from the **VeriSign Web site**, a company whose business is based on **trust and authenticity**.

The screenshot shows the VeriSign website layout. On the left is a purple sidebar with two buttons: "Access your free guide now!" and "Learn more about Server IDs now!". The main content area has a yellow and orange header. Below the header, the text reads: "Access your FREE copy of the guide, *Securing Your Web Site For Business!*". It then states: "This FREE guide outlines the steps needed to secure your site to protect sensitive information, authenticate users and secure sessions." Below this, it says: "In *Securing Your Web Site For Business*, you'll learn how to:" followed by a bulleted list: "Accept credit card numbers for online transactions—safely", "Encrypt communications with users", and "Authenticate your website." Further down, it explains: "When you request your free guide, you'll also learn about the ultimate security solution for doing business over the Web—VeriSign's Secure Server ID. A Secure Server ID authenticates your server to site visitors and allows you to enable SSL technology for encrypted communications." At the bottom of the main area, it says: "To learn more about this important technology, access your FREE copy of the guide, *Securing Your Web Site For Business* now!" To the right of the text is an image of a blue spiral-bound book titled "VeriSign Securing Your Web Site For Business". At the bottom of the page, there are two red buttons: "Access your free guide now!" and "Learn more about Server IDs now!".

VeriSign

http://www.verisign.com/whitepaper_34/

(Sooner or later, VeriSign will have to modify this page, or take it down. Try the link, but it may be broken by the time you do.)

Back in June, 1998, this page offered a **FREE** guide, using language like "*When you request your free guide.*" They even showed a picture of a real (non-digital) book.

Click **Access**, but you don't access! Instead, you have to fill out a detailed form to proceed! Normally, you would not offer this info, but hey, you're going to get some kind of download, maybe even a real book, right?

So, you complete the form. Finally, when you click through, what do you get? Straight, regular Web pages!

Now they didn't actually **promise** a nice, slick **PDF download** or a **hard copy**, but they sure led you down that garden path, didn't they?

Don't get me wrong! **The info is very helpful.** I recommend it and I include it as a link. But the tricky way of getting personal info left a bad taste in my mouth.

And if it did that for me, **it will for others...**



VeriSign Secure Server White Paper

<http://www.verisign.com/whitepaper/server/secure/index.html>



6.10. **12 Sales-Killing Ways to Erode Confidence**

Here's just a few of the most popular ways to **completely erode trust and likeability**. Follow them to the letter and you, too, can soon turn your visitors into **cringing, distrustful, non-caring individuals...**

... at least until they leave your site. ;-)



6.10.1. **You Don't Hype Your Friends**

Stress benefits, but do not use overly promotional language. You must keep the tone **appropriate for the mind of your target market**. Too much hype (to suit the taste of your target market) will turn your Web customers off.

After all, **you don't hype your friends. Do you?**



6.10.2. **Quit Talking... Let Your Visitor Play, Too**

Besides the **MWR**, involve your reader in other ways. Get your customer to send in a form to subscribe to a newsletter. Or to answer a quiz. Or enter a contest. Or take a personality inventory test.

This **is** the Web, after all. **Involve your visitor...**



...don't hog the floor.



6.10.3. Typos... Sure Sign of a Sloppy Company

I seriously doubt any company with typos and bad grammar, don't you? Spell-check and grammar-check all copy. Then proof-read it.



6.10.4. Missing Graphics -- Amateurs Only

Missing graphics look sloppy and amateurish. Nuthin' worse than seeing...



Br-r-r-r-r-r!



6.10.5. Outdated Info... Are You Still Open???

Out-of-date info shows inattention, which is just as fatal as typos. **Seriously** outdated info also makes your visitor wonder how active your site is, and whether you're still open for business. You make things even worse if you advertise it with "**Last update**" notices.

Do not put "last update" messages up. If you do, establish a maintenance schedule to update the date every 2 weeks. Then do it, **even if the info does not need to be changed**. Old update dates make the site look old, even if the info is "evergreen."



6.10.6. Guest Books, Tired & Tacky

Guestbooks are a tired and tacky way to secure an e-mail address. In the old days (all the way back to 1996!), people used to innocently and proudly "sign" guest books. But now they guard their e-mail addresses.

Offer something of value to your customer in return for his e-mail address, and don't do it in a guest book format. For example, give a free subscription to an e-zine with solid, relevant content.



6.10.7. Scrolling Marquees -- “Look What I Can Do!”

Scrolling marquees are strictly “amateur night.” They take forever to read and the movement is annoying when you try to read the static text on the rest of the page.

Stick to business.



6.10.8. “Under Construction” --- Who Isn’t??

All sites are a constant work in progress. If you aren’t ready for Web traffic, keep your site on a hidden location until you are. **These signs are only put up by “small guys.”**



6.10.9. “Site of the Micro-Second” Awards

Don’t put them up. No one cares about what awards your site has won, unless...

- it’s a really **major** award that lends true credibility to your company, or
- it’s a **four-star review** of your product!

Instead of inviting your visitor to link to some bogus award-giver, replace this with “**you**-focused” (i.e., benefit-laden) info that the customer **will** appreciate.



6.10.10. “Download Netscape” (or Explorer) Button



Who are you in business for? You, or Microsoft?

Out of the millions of Web sites out there, there are exactly **two** who should have these buttons on their sites. **Guess who?**

Right!

If you're **not** Netscape or Microsoft, these buttons make you look small and self-serving. If these are paid ads, reconsider. If you're not paid to put them on your site, drop them.



6.10.11. Don't Keep Asking for a Cookie!

[Cookies](#) are invaluable to a commercial Web site. They can be used in...

- **shopping cart** software
- password-protected, [CGI](#)-driven dynamic sites
- log file analysis software.

They are especially useful to [personalize your site](#) -- they differentiate the **first-time** visitor from the **repeat** visitor. For example, when someone returns to your site, you could welcome them back, and let them know what's been updated since they were last there. Amazon keeps track of the books you buy. Next time you return, it offers others in a similar vein (much the way your friendly neighborhood bookseller would do).

Cookie details are beyond the scope of this book. If you do use them, tell your techie, “Don't ask for a cookie more than once.” Some people are (needlessly) scared of cookies -- they configure their browser to warn them when you try to bake a cookie in their computer. It's annoying to get that warning several times.

Think of your visitor as your mom -- if she tells you “no cookie,” **don't ask again** -- just set the site to run without the cookie.



You know she'll only get angry if you keep asking! :-)



6.10.12. Hit Counters -- Who Cares? So What?

Never, never, never put a hit counter on your site. Strictly bush league and no one believes, or even cares about, the numbers.





7. Make Your Site Usable

You cannot antagonize and influence at the same time.

-- J.S. Knox



Usability is **the ability of a person to use something**. It is not fancy graphics, or Shockwave, or any other bell or whistle.

If you want to **antagonize** your potential customer, make your site hard to use.

Did I hear you ask, “**Why would I ever want to do that?**”

I don't know. **But a whole lot of sites sure seem to! ;-)**

According to [GVU](#), the top three surfer complaints about the Internet are...

- **slow page downloads**
- **broken links**
- **trouble finding info.**

Of course, that's just **The Big 3**. There are hundreds of usability issues. And they all have one thing in common -- **they're all preventable!**

Poor usability indicates a company that is more concerned with **its own** business objectives than with the **needs of its customer**. By empowering web site visitors to do what **they** want, you will be able to persuade them to do what **you** want.

But to do that, you've really got to get into your customers' heads (how they think) **and** shoes (how they act on your site). Here's **how you should do it**.

SiteSELL Sidebar

Navigation is an important usability issue. It is so important, it insisted on having [its own chapter](#).



7.1. Your Server as **Pizza Delivery Car**

Your visitor wants info the way she wants pizza... so deliver it crisp, fast, and hot. To do that, your “delivery vehicle” needs to be **reliable**, and it needs to be **fast**.



7.1.1. **Get a Fast, Reliable Vehicle**

Make sure that pizza gets there. And deliver it hot.



The first issue is **reliability**... if your car breaks down, your customer doesn't get the pizza at all! **And you don't get the sale.** So make sure that your car is mechanically sound.



And have a **back up** vehicle -- if the first hits a tree, the second saves the day!



The second issue is **speed**... if the car is slow, or traffic is heavy, the pizza will be cold. **You don't get the repeat sale!**

So your delivery vehicle must be both reliable **and** fast... if the pizza is to get to your customer, piping hot!

(I'll be back right after I return from the fridge...)



If you are running your own server, make sure that your techies are maximizing

reliability and speed. Here are the major issues to review with them...

- hardware reliability and speed (CPU, disk drives, etc.)
- bandwidth connection vs. expected traffic
- network card
- operating system
- memory (RAM)
- back up arrangements.



If you're a large company, you're already dealing your Web site to the world via your own server.

If you're not, **you might be tempted by such advantages as...**

- total control -- get what you want, when you want it
- great flexibility -- you can customize everything you'd like
- tie in the site to your company's computer systems.

But consider the disadvantages, too...

- 24 hour dedicated, T1 connection is extremely expensive
- expense of dedicated computer(s) and server software
- must employ full-time techies who know...
 - how to set it up and maintain it
 - how to make it hack-proof
 - lots of other specialized techie skills (ex., database hosting)
- staff on-call 24 hours per day

- requires expensive techie skill sets
- expensive hardware and software.

Not sure whether you need an in-house server? The larger your Web site, and the more traffic you generate, and the more people you hire to run and market the store... the closer you are to going in-house.

Bottom line? **If you're not sure, use a third party Web host service.** When you **do** need to go to your own server, you'll know it, and you'll have the ability to do it.

If you plan to use a third party to host your Web site, you're still at Square 1... shopping for that fast, reliable vehicle. **Let's go shopping...**

SiteSELL Sidebar

Whether large or small, Keynote offers an interesting service, *Perspective*, that measures the speed of your Web site from 35 cities worldwide. You'll know how fast visitors receive your pages. Compare your web site's performance and failure rates to your competitors, or to the average of 40 important business web sites. Take their one week free trial at...

KEYNOTE

KEYNOTE *Perspective* Free Appraisal

<http://www.keynote.com/common/freeappraisal.html>



7.1.2. What to Look for in a Web Host

There must be zillions of [Web hosts](#), and the number is growing every day. Choosing the wrong host is one of the worst mistakes you can make. And moving to another one is a major pain!

So let's get it right the first time! Here's the quick way to narrow the list...



1) 24x365 support -- 24 hours/day, 365 days per year live-human support. They must offer free unlimited technical support (by email and ideally, by phone). Test this before you sign up -- e-mail them a tough question. If you don't get an answer within 2-3 hours of calling or e-mailing, look elsewhere.

2) Guaranteed availability -- Your site must be up **99+%** of the time, or it will cost you more than your monthly ISP fee. Ask each potential ISP for a written guarantee on availability. They must have a clear strategy for achieving their targets. There should be a significant penalty in place for exceeding allowable downtimes.

The next two steps involve sites that are already on your **potential** Web host. You can often find a server's **hosted** sites by exploring its Home Page. If not, ask it for at least 50 names, then **choose 5**.

3) Fast connection speed -- We have already seen how important speed is. Don't be dazzled with all the techno-jargon ("redundant T3s," etc.) -- simply **see for yourself**. Browse through the 5 sites and note how quickly they are delivered. Test them at different times of the day. To be really thorough, get three friends from different corners of the continent to do the same. **Compare** with other sites (**not** hosted by your potential Web host) **at the same time**.

4) Experience counts -- **Phone** the 5 sites and ask how long they have been with this Web host, about the quality and speed of support, how often it goes down or slows down severely.

5) If you choose to use a large, national Web hosting company, they should offer **peering and mirroring**. ISPs with peering (multi-homing) have more than one high-speed backbone. Your site gets delivered by the fastest speed available, and if one backbone is down, your site still gets delivered via one of the other backbones. An ISP that "mirrors" puts your site on several servers at different locations. This acts as a back-up and improves accessibility and connection speeds internationally.

Once you've got it narrowed down to a few fast and reliable servers, find the one that can deliver your needs. First, make a list of your needs from the following...

- **virtual domain** -- You will want your own domain (www.yourcompany.com). Either register it yourself at **InterNIC**, or get your Web host to do it. They must **do it in your name and name you as the administrative contact** -- your domain is yours, after all. Does this seem too obvious? There are many immoral ISPs who put it in **their own** names, which can cause you huge headaches when you want to switch providers (which is why they do it, of course).



- **e-mail and autoresponders** -- It should offer at least 5 e-mail POP accounts, and one catch-all account which picks up anyotheraddress@yourdomain.com. These help you organize the e-mail to your company, and also enhances your image. And if **autoresponders** are important to you, make sure your Web host offers them.

- **secure server** (SSL provided) -- This is a **must** for credit card sales. And your Web host must not only be secure **to accept the incoming** credit card info, it must **also** be able to **transmit that data** from its computer to yours in a secure way -- usually via PGP-encrypted e-mail.

- **real-time verification** -- If you want to clear credit card transactions via real-time verification and authorization, the Web host must offer CyberCash or a comparable service that is compatible with your merchant credit card's processing protocols.

- **data transfer** -- The busier your site, the more data it transfers. Most commercial sites transfer less than 1 gigabyte (Gb) per month. So any server offering 2 or more Gb per month will almost surely cover your needs.

If you expect high traffic (be realistic), request "unlimited data transfer." For those that offer it, check the small print -- they likely qualify this against what will "compromise their system." If so, get them to put that level in writing.



- **storage space** -- You probably need less than 10 megabytes (Mb) of storage space on your server's hard disk... unless you are selling 8 Mb software or digital books, of course!. But leave room to grow.

- **access to Raw Log Files and/or online stats** -- This is a **must**.
- **unrestricted FTP access** -- You must be able to manage and modify your site, with no limit to the number of site updates or to the times of access.
- **access to personal CGI bin** -- This is where your techie installs the [CGI scripts](#). Verify that your host offers a large number of off-the-shelf CGI scripts and does not charge more than a minimal installation/configuration fee to install them (or zero if your techie installs). You must be allowed to run your own custom CGI scripts.



- **shopping cart software** -- Depending on the number of items you'll be selling, you may need this. The Web host must either offer a shopping cart solution that meets [your checklist of needs](#), or it must be willing to host the software solution that **you** have chosen. **Don't choose a Web host whose shopping cart does not measure up.**
- **database support** -- If you have a large catalog sales site, or if you offer data retrieval from a large bank of info, you will need this capability.
- **bells and whistles** (ask your techie) -- Streaming Audio/Streaming Video (Real Audio/Real Video), Java Virtual Machine, Chat Software, FrontPage Extensions, Platform Preference (UNIX, Windows NT, Mac OS), telnet access, Web-Based Control Panel (makes management of your site easier).
- **payment methods** -- It should offer credit card or monthly/quarterly/annual billing.
- **Web development services** -- not a must, especially if you are happy with who you are currently using.

Once you've made your list of needs, e-mail it to your "Web hosting finalists." Ask if they can deliver. Choose the one who responds fastest and best. If their answers are poor or slow at this time, **it will only get worse after you sign with them.**

Trust your instincts. If you don't feel comfortable doing business with an ISP, look for another. **You must have a good working relationship with your server.**

Other tips...

- 1) **Keep your own back-up copy of your site on your hard disk.** Do not rely on your web hosting company's promise of back-up. **This is critical** -- failure can compromise your entire Web business.
- 2) Be very careful about using **new start-up companies** with little experience or financial base.
- 3) **Location** of the server -- Some experts feel that it's best to choose a **sharp, small local server** that has come to your attention via word-of-mouth. Of course, the large national outfits have obvious advantages, too. **If you can get a fast, reliable connection and top-notch, free support, location is simply irrelevant.**
- 4) **Price** -- you may think it strange that I have not talked about price yet. There's a good reason for that. It's not important!



I laugh when people strain over whether their Web host charges \$15, \$50, or \$100 per month. **What the heck difference does it make?** It's all peanuts compared to what a real store costs in the real world, and it's nothing compared to how important your Web biz is!

Services with unusually low prices often don't deliver on reliability and support. **If you find a fast, reliable, supportive Web host who keeps you on the cutting edge, it's worth it's weight in gold.**



7.1.3. How to Find the Best Web Hosts

Got your list of needs? Here's how to find the host that **best meets them**.

- **The List** is a comprehensive listing of ISPs. Just link to their **listing by area code**, then link to **your** area code.



The List

<http://thelist.internet.com/>

- **The Ultimate Web Host List** is another great place to start your search for the perfect Web host...



The Ultimate Web Host List

<http://www.webhostlist.com/>

- **ISPcheck** has an interesting way to locate a Web host that might be right for you...



ISPcheck's Web Hosting

<http://www.ispcheck.com/shared/>

- **And HostSearch** is also great for locating Web hosts that meet your needs...



HostSearch

<http://www.hostsearch.com/>

- **Finally, if all else fails**, check your Yellow Pages (surprise, surprise). It's still a good source for Web hosts near you.



7.1.4. How to Make Sure Your Site is Up!

Whether self-hosting or employing a third party Web host, use a Web-based “server checker” to **make sure that your site is available for browsing**.

NetMechanic's Server Check accesses your site every 15 minutes, 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. It answers important questions about your Web server, including...

- Is my server up right now?
- Can users get through to my site?
- How does my server compare to others on the Net?
- What can I do to tune my server's performance?



NetMechanic

http://www.netmechanic.com/server_check.htm

Similar services include...



Red Alert

<http://www.redalert.com/>

and...



WebAssure

<http://www.webassure.com/>

Or for the do-it-yourselfers, Bentoni sells a CGI script called **PLUTO**, which will monitor your server. Ask your techie to get it up and running...



Pluto's Server Watchdog

<http://bentoni.com/PLUTO/>



7.1.5. Get a **Fast Driver** (Web Designer)

OK, the car is solid and fast. And you have a back up. Time to find a driver who knows the city and can put the "pedal to the metal." Someone who can deliver that pizza **hot**.

The "driver" for your Web site is **your Web designer**. Here are the signs of a **slow driver**, and how to speed him up...



Heavy, elaborate graphics, lots of Java and Shockwave, scrolling marquees, gratuitous animations are all sure ways to lose your visitor. **Your visitor wants info, delivered clean and crisp. That's all.**

Worse still, while designers are still wowed by moving stuff, it seriously distracts your visitor from what's important... the words. **And it's annoying -- your visitors can't concentrate on the content!**

All that bandwidth-sucking "designer stuff" slows the delivery of your site miserably. Designers get easily distracted by "new and cool" technologies -- don't let your designer do it just "because she can."

Of course, your designer will deny all this, saying how important your image is, etc., etc., etc. But when you hear "**cool**" or "**hot**" or "**hip**"... you'll know that you've left Biz-Land and entered Designer-Land. Remember, your visitors **want info**, not "cool."

"Usability research shows that page download has to be faster than 10 seconds for users to keep their attention on the site," says Jakob Nielsen, [the Web page usability guru](#).

So compress graphics maximally, even if you have to give up a bit of quality in the image (you'll notice, but your visitor won't). Maximum total download of any page should not exceed 30K, preferably 20K.

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Remember to exclude [cached](#) images from your download calculations (i.e., if you're loading a graphic on page 2 that should already have loaded on a previous page, don't count it -- it will come in via the browser's cache on the user's hard disk).

Designers have 24-bit, full-color displays, and hate to design for 8-bit, 256-color monitors. But that's what you have to make sure they do. Small graphics, small number of colors. No customer looking for info is wowed by a slow-loading but beautiful graphic.

Graphics and animations don't make the sale... they kill it... unless you're selling video games.

If your visitor wanted high bandwidth entertainment, she would turn on the TV! Just give her the info that she is looking for... and make it sharp and neat.

Make your site customer-driven, not designer-driven. Remember these two facts about your customers...

1) They want enough info to make a stay-or-leave, buy-or-not decision. They are not “surfers” -- they just want info, and they want it **fast, fast, fast**.

2) Their browsers interpret text, graphics, forms and tables, some basic javascript (be careful here), and nothing else. Eventually, it will be safe to stretch this assumption. **But until the Year 2001 design to meet the lowest common denominator, which is Netscape 2 or Internet Explorer 3 (with no plug-ins).**

Design your site to hit the above two points. A highly “usable” site will not win any “Cool Site” awards.

But it **will** sell.



7.1.6. Designers, Put the **Pedal to the Metal**

Using the Web is **painful**, so you must reward users. In “the old days,” programmers used to pride themselves on how much functionality they could jam into a few K of code. Now, of course, hardware has advanced so much that programmers are sloppy and could care less about how fat their applications become (12-15 megabyte downloads for the Explorer browser?!).

Unfortunately, many Web designers are **already** fat and sloppy... the only problem is that we still live in the “bad old days” of limited bandwidth. You must design within these severe constraints and reduce your visitors’ pain.

Research has shown that users need response times of **less than one second** for optimal info-gathering. Of course, that’s impossible, for now and the next few years. **Your goal should be ten second downloads** -- that’s the limit to keep people’s attention focused while waiting.

The Web user requires at least **T-1 speed** to work well, but the proportion of people **with this bandwidth** is actually decreasing. Of all the links in the chain (user’s connection, bandwidth throughput of the server, server’s connection to the Internet, the Internet itself, user’s browser and computer), it is the user’s connection speed that is the bottleneck.

Info-seekers beg for speedy downloads. If your attitude is “let’s just give them better design and they will be happy to wait for it,” you are doing your client a disservice.

The challenge of Web design, circa 1999-2000, is not to see how much you can

make your client's site **DO** -- it's to see how much you can make it **SELL**.

Bottom line?...



...Put the pedal to the medal! Design your web pages for speedy downloads -- this must be your #1 consideration.

What's the single most important thing you can do to achieve this?

Hey, you always ask the right question at just the right moment!...

Give the visitor a screenful of useful information to read... immediately. Here's how...

1) Provide all the data that browser software needs to draw the top of the page fast. Include WIDTH and HEIGHT attributes for all [tables](#) and [graphics](#). If you don't provide these specs for the browser, it has to download the graphics and lay out the tables, **and then** flow the words onto the page!

2) Use the [inverted pyramid design](#), with strong, interesting text to hold attention. This keeps your visitor's attention nailed to the screen while your graphics and tables download.

3) Put [only](#) a small logo and navbar at the top -- do not take up the critical "first screen" with huge corporate or product logos, fancy graphics, tables, etc. **Fill it with riveting copy.**

Other important speed tips...

- **Keep graphics to a minimum.** Small graphics, creative use of color in table cells, and a well-designed style sheet (linked, not embedded) with creative use of fonts will present an attractive and professional, yet speedy, page.
- **No multimedia effects**, unless there's just no other way to make a point.
- **Cut down on the complexity of your tables** (especially the top table, if it is visible

and complex). Split information into several tables.

- Links to a directory should include the final slash in the URL when embedded in Web pages -- this avoids a [redirect](#) from the server (ex., <http://www.goodbytes.com/> -- not <http://www.goodbytes.com>)
- Employ a server that supports [HTTP keep-alive](#). This saves the overhead of establishing a new TCP/IP connection for every “hit,” which cuts latency dramatically, dropping response time by 50%! This is pretty standard nowadays.
- Use [ALT](#) tags for images (a **must** if your graphic is a **link**) -- this doesn’t make your page faster, but it does show a lot of respect for those who crave speed by surfing with “graphics off.”



Final note to designers... take pride in **how fast** you can get a page to download, rather than **how cool** it is. That’s the true mark of a pro, circa 1999-2001.



7.2. The #1 Usability Principle...

Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.

-- Albert Einstein

In all things, the supreme excellence is simplicity.

-- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Anything that reduces your visitor’s workload increases the chance that he stays on your site. Keeping it simple reduces your customer’s work. Throughout your Web site design process, hold this thought above all else...

Keep It Simple, Stupid.

“Yeah, yeah,” you say, no problem. But here’s one final quote on the topic...

There is nothing quite so complicated as simplicity.

-- Charles Poore



It takes work (that your visitor won't see) to make your site **transparently simple...**

... simple to read, navigate, understand, and buy.

Assume that everyone who visits your site is not only new to your site, but new to the Web. Make it brain-dead simple to use your site.

Surfers are a frustrated, ready-to-click somewhere else breed. Simple sites not only make your users happier in their comfort and success, they are also more stable and less error-prone. The more elaborate your site, the more likely something goes wrong... a broken link, a javascript error, an incompatibility with an older browser... and your visitor gives up.

Complexity increases your visitor's workload. Don't do that! If you can do something, anything, to **reduce your customer's work, **do it.**** Two examples...

- If your customer needs Adobe Acrobat Reader to read your digital book, **[provide the direct link to it \(http://www.adobe.com/Acrobat/readstep.html\)](http://www.adobe.com/Acrobat/readstep.html)**.
- When you put an e-mail link, **include the actual address in the link**, like this... **[Email Ken at kevoy@sitesell.com](mailto:kevoy@sitesell.com)**, and not like this... **[E-mail Ken](#)**. Some browsers are not set to pop up an e-mail window when they click on the link. By including the address right on the page, they can copy and paste into their e-mail software. And if your visitor prints the page, she'll see it.

Sure, these little things take some time now. **But you'll be rewarded for it later.**



7.3. **Make it Readable, then Scannable**

Your visitor is reading your site on his computer screen. It's **painful** to read on a screen, compared to paper. **And he's in a hurry.**

Bottom line? Make your pages **highly readable, then scannable.**

This is so basic, it's amazing how many companies get it wrong. What do they do? Glad you asked!

They use white on a black background, like this...

**A full screen of this can drive your nuts,
and looks amateurish.**

Or they...

**Or just as bad, they camouflage the text into
the background, so you can hardly read it!**

Oh, sorry, couldn't read that? Here it is, properly this time...

**Or just as bad, they camouflage the text into
the background, so you can hardly read it!**

So -- **use dark text on white or off-white background.** Period. Your designer should either specify the background color in the [html coding](#), or supply a slightly textured light-colored background graphic (unifies the site nicely). If you use a background graphic, **make 100% sure that it does not impair readability -- not even slightly.**



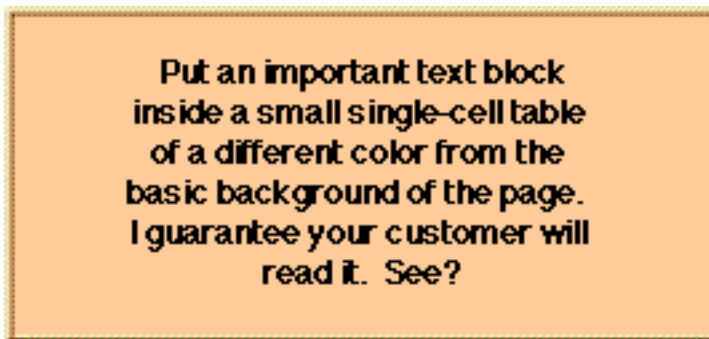
Now that it's readable, make it "scannable." Web surfers don't read every word -- **they skim**, looking for the important stuff. They pick out [keywords](#), sentences, and paragraphs of interest while skipping over the rest.

Use lots of headlines, laden with keywords and benefits, to **divide the copy into logical groups of text**. Divide the groups with an attractive horizontal line (about 50-75% of the width of the text block, not the full width) above each headline.

Highlight your most important concepts -- **bolden**, or **use a second sharp color** (in bold) **for the really important stuff**. *But don't italicize -- its jaggedy look is too hard to read on screen. See?*

Don't underline text for emphasis -- your visitor will mistake it for a link. They'll click on that "link" several times before they conclude that it's broken (or realize it's not a link). **If you want to underline text, it must also serve as a link.**

Put an important text block inside a small single-cell [table](#) of a different color. **I guarantee your customer will read it.**



Use bulleted (or numbered) lists and **horizontal lines** to increase scannability.

Be aware of your "word count." Never-ending text is extremely discouraging. Cut by 50% and then cut again. **But cut only fat -- keep the good stuff!**

Once you have chopped the "filler," **your reader will acquire useful information at a faster pace**. Deliver that info via short, active words, arranged in short paragraphs, with lots of headlines, and **readers will scroll to follow you forever.**

Contrary to what many "experts" say, if you write well, your page does **not** have the equivalent of the "fold" in a newspaper. Your visitors **will** scroll, so don't feel forced to link-break a page just to keep the page short. If the page belongs together, keep it together -- your reader will scroll **if you deliver the goods.**

Make sure your visitor doesn't miss your critical points -- design for readability, then scannability!



7.3.1. Long Scrollers ➡ What to Do

If you have a long scrolling page, **try to break it up, but don't force it.**

Look for long passages of text that are nothing more than detailed background information, or only of interest to a minority of readers. Split these sections off into **separate dead-end branches** (once in a dead-end side branch, the visitor's only navigation option is to continue in the branch or return to the main path).

Tighten up the copy as much as possible. Use short, active, words, arranged in tidy, easy-on-the-eye paragraphs. But **don't...**

- **chop out good content just to shorten the page**
- **break a page into two, just to make it shorter.**

If a page would suffer from breaking it, simply divide it into a series of smaller sections by using attractive horizontal dividers above sharp, interesting headlines. Much better than breaking the page with a **“continued on page 2”** link.

Scrolling keeps people in mental touch with the content more than a link. Linking causes a delay that breaks the rhythm and momentum of the page. **So don't break a page up just to cut it down to a single screen.**

If your copy rivets the reader, **he'll scroll right to the bottom.**



7.3.2. The Optimal Size for Text Blocks

Control the size of your text block through the use of [html tables](#). Do not let your page expand to fill the size of the monitor. Why?

People hate to read wide lines of copy (progress feels too slow). Even if your entire audience has 21 inch screens, don't exceed copy blocks of 500 pixels.

Optimal is 400-500. Anything more is just too painful to read.



7.3.3. **How to Use Lines, Bullets and Other Mini-Icons**

Use bulleted (or numbered) lists because...

- they are easier to scan
- they invite the eye
- they break up the page.

Isn't the above bulleted list better than...

"Use bulleted lists because they are easier to scan, they invite the eye, and they break up the page"? The [html List tag](#) can deliver black bullets instantly, no graphic necessary. But...

● **Bright, graphical bullets add extra emphasis...** use a small colored ball, arrow, or pointer to bullet your lists.

● But don't overdo it and cross the line into bad taste.

● Use them only for special purposes, and use only one, low-K graphic. Once it is [cached](#), it will load quickly for the rest of the visit.



Use horizontal lines to separate major blocks of text into more readable chunks. The [html HR tag](#) loads a black horizontal divider instantly. Your html guru knows how to vary the width, thickness and color.



Or use a graphic horizontal line. It should be small, definitely under 2K. Use only **one** line graphic. Once cached after its first download, it will load quickly for the rest of the visit. If the line is well designed, there's no need to have different sized lines -- your html wizard just codes in the dimensions.



Graphic bullets and lines add spice to your page, unify the look and feel of the site, and they don't cost much in download time, especially after the first download.

While we're on the topic of mini-icons, sharp **"New"** or **"Updated"** markers will

highlight new info that you want your visitors to see. You can also use “**Sale**” or “**Bargain**” or “**Special**.”



Again, **not too many per page** -- don't start looking crass.



7.4. Do Your Links Clink?

Links are, of course, the very essence of the Web. **Use them well.**



7.4.1. Link Rot... The **#1** Sales Killer

There's no excuse for broken links -- they're just plain sloppy. **Sloppy = fatal.**

Why anger your visitor with a link that goes nowhere except to the [dreaded 404 “page does not exist” message?](#)

Test every link on your site, either manually (browse through your site online, clicking every link) or with Web-based link validators like **NetMechanic**.



NetMechanic

http://www.netmechanic.com/link_check.html



And **never delete pages that are out-of-date** from your site. Links to these pages (from [search engines](#) and other sites) will often live well after you delete a page. Why deliver a [404 message](#), when you could instead give your potential customer a page that contains a brief update and a link to the relevant part of your site? Or you can even get your techie to use a [redirect](#) to automatically send someone who visits a “dead page” to the correct “live” page on your site!



7.4.2. Links in the Copy... What to Do

Your copy should have very few links **within** it, only those absolutely necessary to provide some background info, details, etc. Let's call these **Content Links**.

Each Content Link **branches off** the main pathway, therefore leads your customer **away** from your **MWR**. So these [side-branches must dead-end](#), which means that your visitor's only choice is to return to where she started from on the main pathway.

Even if you do side-branch effectively, if you put **many** links in each paragraph of text...

- you destroy the natural flow of the case that you are building
- you distract your reader to the point of crazed insecurity
- you destroy the intent of the navigation structure of your site. Each branch has the potential to lead your visitor off the main path that heads towards your **MWR Closer Page**.

Each **Content Page** should basically be a stepping-stone in a path that leads towards the **MWR**. Except for the TOCs and the navbars, **limit links in the copy to only the most necessary**.

And where you absolutely must include links in the text of your pages, **don't embed them in the copy, where they are likely to be missed...**



7.4.3. Embedded Links, A Big No-no!

Embedded links -- Don't bury links in the contents of a paragraph. Make them stand out.

The **better way** is to do do it like this...

Embedded links -- Don't bury links in the contents of a paragraph. Make them stand out.

The **best way** is to do it is like this...

Embedded links

Don't bury links in the contents of a paragraph. Make them stand out.

See how the third version is impossible to miss?



7.4.4. How to Fool-proof the Destination



Short, vague links create uncertainty in your visitor. It slows him down. He either won't click it because he doesn't want to take a chance and waste time. Or if he does, and it's not what he expects, he's peeved. **Peeved visitors don't buy.**

Include enough text in the link for the user to be certain where he's going.

Your reader should be able to scan the text of your links and predict the info at the destination. Links with cryptic or obscure language have three possible outcomes...

- 1) Visitor gets lucky and gets to the info he hoped for.
- 2) Visitor wastes time and has to back up to continue, or worse, decides to go to another site.
- 3) Visitor decides not to take the chance and just continues with the rest of that page (a link is useless if it's not used).

Besides wording the links well, **consider javascript or link titles to add extra clarity as to contents of the destination...**

1) simple javascript -- to add clarity to any link, just put the following inside the **HREF tag...**

```
onMouseOver="status='Sends you to our ISDN modems.'; return true;"
```

This will put the following message into the **status bar** of any javascript-enabled browser...

"Sends you to our ISDN modems."

2) link title -- put the following inside the HREF tag...

```
TITLE="Sends you to our ISDN modems."
```

You will see this message pop up right over the link (instead of in the status bar) as you pass your mouse over the link. This only works on newer browsers.

3) content-predicting javascript -- [See the Cisco example](#) for a great little "content-predicting" javascript. We're preparing a similar concept for our own **www.sitesell.com** Web site. As of this writing, I'm not sure exactly what it will do, but I can promise you this...

No one will get a surprise when they click on a link!..

[HOME](#) [TESTIMONIALS](#) [GUARANTEE](#) [FREE DOWNLOAD](#) [ORDER](#)

MAKE YOUR SITE SELL!

Make Your Site SELL!

<http://www.sitesell.com/>

Bottom Line? Make every link's destination crystal-clear.



7.4.5. 8 Ways Links Can Cost You

Links, if used badly, can hurt you where it counts most... **in the pocketbook.** Here's how...

1) Image Maps -- these are bad ideas. Since they are created as a **single graphic**, problems arise...

- Designers often forget to include visual clues that show where to click in order to link somewhere. It's best to make the clickable areas look like buttons, or offer other visual cues.
- Image maps, although "beautiful and cool," rarely make the destinations of links clear.
- There's no way to provide alternate text links nearby for text-only browsers, so you must also include text links nearby, adding to the clutter.

Don't use image maps. You can accomplish the same graphic appeal by assembling many smaller images, which has many advantages ([see discussion on how to build a navbar](#)).



2) Multi-line links in a TOC -- Since a link is underlined, if your link in a TOC spans three lines, many users will mistake it for three different links. Like this...

[Outer Mongolian Airlines](#)
[International Reservations](#)
[Ordering System](#)

Many visitors will click each line ([Outer Mongolian Airlines](#) and [International Reservations](#) and [Ordering System](#)). Know how they feel when they keep going to **the same page over and over?**...



... Confused and frustrated!



3) Ambiguous "in-house" or "trade" terms -- never assume your visitor understands terms that you use "in-house," even if they're standardly used in the trade.



4) Link that is confused with another -- Each link must stand apart from the

others. Your visitor must never look at two links and say, “H-m-m-m. Either of these **could** take me to where I want to go. I wonder which is which?”

Your visitor smells a time-waster coming! Even if he guesses right, the indecision has already hurt your customer’s momentum.



5) Non-standard link colors -- You risk confusing your visitor if you deviate from the standard [blue unused link](#), [red activated link](#) and [purple used link](#). Stick with the basics. If you have a strong design reason to do so, make sure that the used link is less bright than the link that has not yet been followed.



6) Reliance on graphic links instead of text links -- if you use graphic links, make it clear that the graphic is a link (ex., looks like a button), and make the destination clear. If it’s not clear that it’s a link, put a border around it, so that the border changes color when the link is activated and has been followed (the border will follow the usual color conventions for links).



7) Linking OUT -- This is a huge mistake. Why lead your hard-earned customer to anywhere else? Want to know what’s even worse than regular linking out?...



8) Linking out to your designer -- Why in the world would you want to tempt someone out of your site right off the front page (which is where these links usually appear)? Not to mention... it’s **proof-positive that you’re a small fry**. When was the last time you saw the name of an ad agency on a TV commercial?



7.4.6. The Bottom Line?

Your visitor must see and immediately understand your links.

She must understand the destination of every link... meaning she must be able to predict what she will get.

Make a link pay off and your visitor will be happy. Otherwise you will quickly antagonize, then lose, her.



7.5. 13 More Usability Ways to Kill Sales

Many sales-oriented sites sometimes appear to want to **drive sales away**. Here are just a few more examples...



7.5.1. Frames -- Netscape's Curse to the Web

Frames, originally a Netscape innovation, simply have too many drawbacks for a serious, commercial site. They...

- have a busy interface
- can't be bookmarked
- give search engines trouble
- add to download time because each frame is basically a whole new page
- are tricky to print
- impair navigation and confuse visitors (the URL in the location bar does not change)
- waste precious screen real estate with multiple scrollbars
- are incompatible with early version browsers that don't support frames.

The most common "reason" to use frames is to provide a **Table of Contents**. If you want to have a Table of Contents in the left margin, simply use a two-column TABLE tag, with the left column set fairly narrow. Put your TOC in the left column.

Is there a **good** reason to use frames? Special functions like music maybe, as I did for PennyGold.

Many Web designers will argue on this point. But if Amazon.com and 90% of the Fortune 500 don't use frames, they must see things the same way.



7.5.2. The Agony of Browser-Specific Sites

Some companies actually develop multiple sites, each optimized for a different browser. This is high-work, low-reward. Don't get caught up in this quagmire -- it's hard enough to maintain a single site.

Unless you have a very **skewed** audience, assume that everyone uses a browser that is at least 2 generations below the "cutting edge" one. Then design a single version of the site for this lowest common denominator.

For example, as of 1999, this would mean designing for Netscape 2 or Internet Explorer 3. There's not enough people using more primitive browsers to worry about them (sorry Netscape 1, Lynx and Mosaic).

And if you throw in designs that **require** Netscape (NN) 4+ or Internet Explorer (IE) 4+, you will lose a good number of people who **will** be using NN2 and 3, and IE3, until at least the year 2001.

However, it's OK to use advanced features that are simply **ignored** by the more primitive browsers -- for example, stylesheets. Netscape 2 can still deliver a regular page, since it just passes over this feature in the html coding.



7.5.3. Not Cross (-platform, -browser, -spec's)

Boy, did your site ever look great on your designer's top-of-the-line Mac with 21" millions-of-colors monitor and T1 connection (or possibly even shown to you off a [disk mirror](#)), browsing with Netscape 4.

But how did it look for Windows users (different colors, even different brightness), using Internet Explorer 3 (whoops! there goes some of that javascript).

How about on a 28.8 connection? Ouch, those graphics take forever, all of a sudden!

A majority of your visitors still **have 15" or smaller monitors, with 256 colors.** Browse your site on a small monitor, for both Mac and Windows. **Within 10 seconds...**



... there must be enough text visible on that first small screen to grab the reader. If your corporate ego (i.e., your logo) fills that **first screen**, people won't wait the 30 seconds it takes to load ... they'll hit the Back button on their browser, instead!

Here's the bottom line, minimum cross-torture-test...

Find six friends/colleagues with different platform-browser configurations. Test your site for Netscape 2, Internet Explorer 3, and AOL3 **browsers...**

... on both Mac and Windows **platforms.**

Testers should ideally have a **minimal monitor-modem set up** (15" monitor/256 colors, with a 28.8 or 33.6 connection).

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While there's **no replacement** for a thorough, "real-world" test as outlined above, here's a quick and easy way to rough-check your site...

Bobby is a Web-based public service that analyzes web pages for their accessibility to people with disabilities as well as their compatibility with various browsers. It's outstanding. They even offer a downloadable **JAVA** version of Bobby so you can test the copy of your site that you keep on your own computer (you do, right?)



BOBBY

<http://www.cast.org/bobby/>

Give testers a **complete list** of things to observe and do on the site. Ask them to note the speed of each page. If you have built in special javascript or other functionality, they should check if it functions as intended. They should also write down anything that “looks wrong,” even if not on your list.

Testers should also check it with “load graphics” turned off, because 10-25% of Web surfers surf with “load graphics” turned off. These are info-seeking, graphic-loathing people. If you believe this trait fits a good percentage of your target market, test your site with “graphics off.”

SiteSELL Sidebar

And one more thing... don't forget to **re-test with major new browser releases as they come out -- just a quick run-through to make sure that all is OK.** In July, 1998, I finally got around to downloading IE4 onto my Mac machine, and guess what?

It messed up all my headlines, putting them on the same line as the first line of the following text (it had changed the way it interpreted the html from the previous version). Looked terrible. It was a simple cleanup, but I had left it like that for months, without knowing!



7.5.4. Requiring Plug-Ins Will Plug Sales

If you include any technology that **requires a plug-in**, you will lose people. Your customer wants info on your product -- she does not want to leave your site, download a multi-megabyte plug-in, figure out how to configure it, call tech support when that doesn't work, etc., etc., etc.

PDF (Adobe's wonderful Acrobat Reader), **RealAudio**, and **Shockwave** are the most common offending plug-ins. Don't get me wrong -- I love the technology behind all of these. Obviously, I love Acrobat -- I published this book with it!

But I would never put up a PDF Web page **until at least 90% of all browsers have the PDF plug-in. Same goes for any plug-in.**



... sorry.



... nope.



... maybe later.



7.5.5. Long, Messy URLs

Ever see one of those URLs...

`http://somebody_else's_domain.net/this_name.com/is_so_long/_forget/~it.html?`

Usability starts with making your URL **easy to remember!** [Get your own domain.](#)



7.5.6. Use of Full-Text Search Engines

These **confuse** most visitors and, according to some usability studies, actually **decrease** the odds of your average visitor finding the info she seeks. **Why?**

Well, it turns out that most Web surfers often aren't sure...

- what the heck **BOOLEAN** is



- what part of the site is being searched
- why in **tarnation** they get crazy, irrelevant results, or useless listings. This happens often. When it does, guess **who** they get peeved at.

This will only get worse before it's get better, because the newer waves of Web users are less and less techie-oriented. So...

Does your business have special circumstances (ex., catalog store with millions of products, like Amazon.com) that absolutely require a search engine? If not, **don't confuse** your potential customers... kill the on-site search engine.



7.5.7. Orphan Pages... So **Now** Where Do I Go?

Never trust your visitor to hit his browser's **BACK** button. After all...



...some users barely know how to turn on their computers.

Always provide at least one button to navigate somewhere. Otherwise, he may very well navigate back to the search engine... and then to a competitor.



7.5.8. No Link to **MWR** Closer Page on Every Page

You never know when you say **just the right thing** that triggers the desire to buy (or trigger whatever your **MWR** is). Provide access to your **MWR** on every page of your pathway, from **Opening Page** onward.

While your **#1 goal** is always to trigger the **MWR**, keep a **general contact avenue** open. List **contact info** at the bottom of every page (street address, telephone, fax, e-mails).

If you have a large company, design a "**Contact us**" page with general contact information (general corporate address, phone number, and e-mail address, **AND** names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of key people).

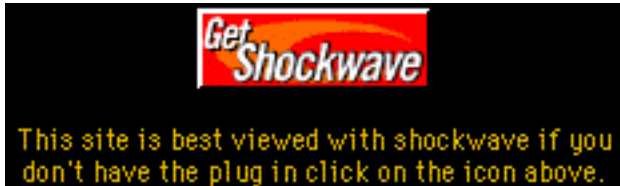
Then put a [dead-end link](#) to that page on the bottom of every important Content Page.



7.5.9. “Best viewed with Explorer 4+ and Shockwave”

These notices are unbelievable...

This site has been optimized for MSIE 4.0 and Communicator.



If the visitor has “what it takes” (i.e., the required software and plug-ins), why bother wasting his time, making him look at the above graphics?

If he doesn’t, you literally drive him away. Your visitor comes for info, not to download something that he has already decided he doesn’t want yet.

Who wants a sub-optimal experience? And who wants to waste his time downloading the plug-in, then going ballistic getting it to work right?



“Hey! Do ya wanna sell somethin’ to me, or what?”



7.5.10. The Deadly Horizontal Scroll Bar

Here's something your visitor should never see...



More and more pages nowadays significantly exceed 800 pixels. For most people, who use 15"-17" monitors, this triggers the dreaded horizontal scrollbar.

The total width of your Web page should not exceed 590 pixels, which means a left margin of 70-90 pixels and a text block of 500.

Why not 640, since that's the width of the lowest common denominator, the 640 x 480 screen? Three reasons...

- it's good to leave a little breathing room
- allow for Microsoft's Explorer Bar (in IE4) on the left side of the browser window
- the width of your copy block should not exceed 500 pixels ([best reading width](#)), so you just don't need it to be any wider.

A horizontal scrollbar is a sure sign of a designer who works on a 21" Sony Trinitron monitor -- she has forgotten (or never knew) that many of your customers are on a 15", 256-color monitor.

People hate to scroll horizontally -- this is a sure way to alienate, and lose, your visitor. If you're lucky...



... she'll blame the monitor.

But don't count on it!



7.5.11. The Dreaded 404 File Not Found

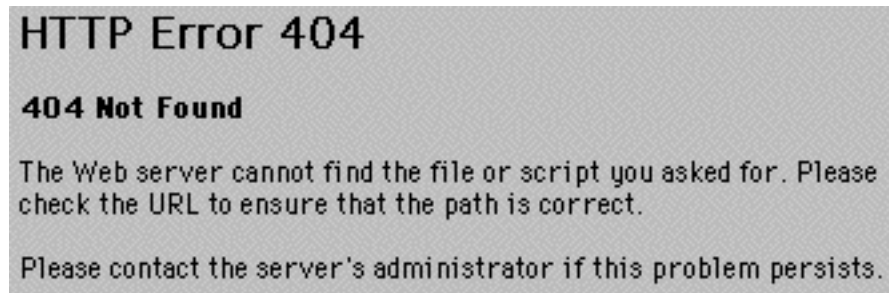
Visitors to your site will enter a wrong URL fairly often. Here are a few of the most common reasons why...

- typos, or... “Ah just plumb remembered it wrong, pawdnah.”
- you dropped a page, but your visitor had bookmarked it (if you drop a page, [leave a page that directs your visitor appropriately](#))
- hit a page listed in a search engine that you have since taken down.

When that happens, would you like them to see this charming message?



Or perhaps you'd like to treat them to the famous 404 code...



Instead, get your techie to put up a nice page with your usual logo and background, and a message like this...

Sorry, you have asked for a page that doesn't exist. Please [click here to go to the Site Map](#). You should be able to find the page that you want over there. Thank you, and sorry for the bother.



7.5.12. Popping Up New Windows Like Daisies

If you have a special reason to force your visitor's browser to make a new window (html code [TARGET=VIEW](#)), it had better be a very special reason!

Otherwise, you risk all kinds of sales-losing confusion. Click on this [TARGET=VIEW](#) link for a full discussion of the problems, including real-life problems from the PennyGold site. It's a mess that I've gotten myself into, and that I've chosen to live with.

But never again will I pop up all those...

 ... *&#@!^% daisies!



7.5.13. The Impersonal Pre-Fab

If you are in charge of designing a Web site for a large company with many divisions and product lines, do not use the "pre-fab" approach. This is a construction/navigation template that is given to various departments to complete.

The techies then assemble the pieces into the finished Web site. The resulting hodgepodge is guaranteed to confuse your visitors.

Design from the ground up, according to the particular circumstances and organization of your company.



7.6. Test, Test, then Test Some More

If you and your Web designer have done a good job, your site will look almost “too simple.” **High-usability is, by the very definition of usability, invisible to the user.**

But a low-usability site is **very, very visible**. It’s frustrating and time-consuming. Test with target customers who have never seen your site and you’ll understand. But test with yourself and the site’s designers and you’ll be misled. At a minimum, use employees who don’t know the site.

Unless you are very aware, you will design Web sites with your own objectives in mind, rather than your customers’ needs. And you will base decisions on common-sense design rules. Even the best-intentioned companies fall into this trap. **But company-focused sites mean...**

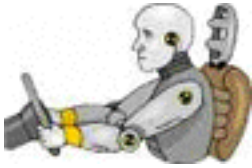


... sales death. And conventional “common sense” design rules can mislead -- the Web is unlike any other medium, and **many of the old rules don’t apply.**

So here’s the bottom line. Visitors will rarely use a site as anticipated. Test your site with users who have nothing to do with creating it.

When testing, **eliminate bias**. Take the testing out of the hands of those who designed it. The developers of any site have too much bias to test objectively. The Web designer(s) should attend, but not run, the test. **It takes a long time to realize that your visitor is not an idiot because she navigates it “wrong.”**

The most important observation period is the tester’s first 5-10 minutes on site. Anyone will “figure it out,” given enough time and motivation. But how does she do during the first 5-10 minutes? If there is hesitation or failure, **the failure is yours, never the tester’s. Actually, here’s the best attitude...**



Hope your testers crash! It's the only way you can **improve** your site. So **be nice**, and **help** your testers. Ask what the problem is, but **do not debate or explain -- just take notes**. If your tester is shy about expressing problems, just tell him to say "problem" whenever confusion or failure arises.

At most companies, "testing" means showing the site to the V.P. of marketing. If he or she likes it, then it's OK. But some companies are waking up and performing usability testing.

And it doesn't have to be expensive. If you're a large company, recruit a few junior sales people to test the site. If you're a small company, ask a few friends (dumber ones, and preferably in the target market) to come by and test the site.

Odds are that you would be terribly embarrassed or upset if you ever sat down and watched the actual experiences of your visitors. **You would realize how your site has been silently killing sales, day in and day out.**

Matters that you felt to be crystal-clear would confuse the heck out of your visitors. You'd find them getting lost down pathways. There'd be countless unforeseen "user mistakes," which translate into lost sales opportunities.

But then you would fix them. And then you would SELL more.



7.7. **And If It's Not** **Usable...**

If your site's not usable, it's frustrating. **And if it frustrates...**



... Your visitor will not buy from you!



7.8. Links to Usability Gurus

There are a few people out there who do “get it”...

Jakob Nielsen is **the** usability master...



Alertbox: Jakob Nielsen's Column on Web Usability

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/>

Here's a great article by him...

Writing for the Web

<http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/>



Sun Guide to Web Style

<http://www.sun.com/styleguide/>

An outstanding group of articles



All Things Web

<http://www.pantos.org/atw/usable.html>

Terry Sullivan's site is superb!

MYSSI... Make Your Site Usable



Sun's New Web Design

<http://www.sun.com/980113/sunonnet/>

A wealth of useful information, using their site as an example.



User Interface Engineering

<http://world.std.com/~uieweb>

Usability experts, they offer an excellent book for sale, and also hold regular seminars.





8. Navigation ... Where **Am I??**

If your cybernaut-visitor doesn't know where he is, nor how to get where he wants to go...



... he **does** know one thing... **how to get out.**

Anticipate your visitor's navigation needs and meet them.

First ask yourself, "What information does my customer want and need from this Web site?" Organize it so that you can deliver that info at the right time, in an intuitive fashion. Build it according to your customer's needs, not yours.

Then, **and only then**, design a **clear, simple navigation structure** that puts your visitor on the right path.

There is no single best navigational structure. Web sites vary from single-path, single-product companies, to multi-billion dollar companies. But the principles are all the same.

Awkward, doubt-inducing navigation loses visitors. Your visitor is only a click away from finding out "who's next" on the Search Engine findings. Optimize your customer's experience. Give your visitor a sense of steady progress. He should be able to drill down straight to his target.

Make your navigation structure clean, sparse, consistent, and obvious... in other words, simple-and-clear-to-use. It must be consistent across all pages -- never change the format.

Every time you force a potential customer to search, navigate, decide, think, or otherwise use his browser's controls, he may leave your site instead.



8.1. **Points of Reference** **Help to Build Context**

Everyone likes to know where they are.



When you're in **Disneyland**, you like to know where you are. If you're in Fantasyland, you check the map to see where that is, in relation to the rest of the park. Then you look for landmarks, as points of reference, to see where you are within Fantasyland. These **points of reference** keep you oriented in, and help you navigate through, Disneyland.

The Web is much the same, with a major difference. On the Web, you can suddenly fly over to some other site, plunk down right smack in the middle, unaware of where you are. **Without the correct points of reference**, you could be in Frontierland... or in **Tokyo** Disneyland!

So **build context**, in the form of points of reference, into your site. Here's how...

1) Company name, small logo, background, and overall look and feel should stay consistent throughout the site. This ties all your pages together.

2) Within each page and across all pages, the headline type must be consistent in font, size and alignment. Use a modest, classic font throughout, both for headlines and for text. If you use sub-headlines, use a visibly smaller size font to show that it is a sub-section of the major headline with the larger sized font.

3) The TOCs and navbars should present the hierarchy organization in a clear and consistent manner. The user should be able to gather where he is by looking at the navbars. Then it is just a matter of clicking to some other major section of the site, or proceeding through the pathway as he heads towards your **MWR Closer Page** for that product.



Apply the “**parachute test**” to every page of your site...



“If a visitor parachuted straight onto this page, say from a search engine, would he know where in my site he was, and where to go next?”



8.2. The **Anatomy** of a Web Site



In med school, we learned zillions of body parts. **Luckily, in Web school, we only have to learn five...**



8.2.1. **Content Page -- The Guts**

Content Page -- delivers content which meets the needs of the visitor and which increases your chances of getting the **MWR**.

A Content Page is either part of...

- the **main pathway** that runs from the **Opening Page** to the **MWR Closer Page**

OR

- a **dead-end side-branch** off the main pathway.

If a Content Page is on the direct pathway heading towards the **Closer Page**, we call it a **Content Pathway Page**.

The main goal of a Content Pathway Page is to deliver your prospect to the next Content Page.



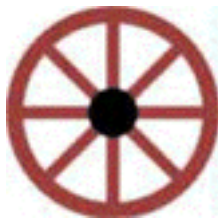
8.2.2. Link Page -- Link Only

The #1 job of a **Link Page** is to link to other pages via “collections of links” that are organized into structures called...

- **tables of contents** (graphic and/or text-based)

and

- **navbars.**



Think of **Link Pages** as **central hubs**. They direct your visitors down the spokes (pathways) that your visitor wants to take. The purpose of a Link Page should be to explain the link options in a customer-focused fashion, **not** to sell.

The main goal of a Link Page is to provide clean, clear navigation.



8.2.3. Opening Page -- **Grab** their Attention

The **Opening Page** is the **first** page in the pathway towards the **MWR**. The main job of this page is to stop your visitor in his tracks, dazzle him with benefits, and pull him further down the pathway.

Since an **Opening Page** is the first page in a pathway, it will also do double duty as a **Link Page**. It provides navigational aids (a Table of Contents and/or a navbar) to...

- key pages in its pathway
- the Link Pages of the LEVEL above it (for larger companies, [as we will see in a bit](#)).

The main goals of the Opening Page are...



- **STOP** your visitor from clicking elsewhere
- interest him in your product, and
- deliver him to the next Content Pathway Page.



8.2.4. **MWR Closer Page -- Get the Order**

MWR Closer Page -- the **last** page in the pathway towards the **MWR**. This is very simple. The **only job** of this page is to...



... get the order (or whatever the **MWR** is).



8.2.5. **Pathways -- Lead Your Customers**



A pathway is composed of an **Opening Page**, one or more **Content Pathway Pages**, and a **MWR Closer Page**.

It is not a strict, “can’t escape” pathway. The user still has navigation choices. **But if you do it right, he shouldn’t use them very often!**



OK. Now that we've got the terminology straight, let's see how to build a proper navbar and Table of Contents. Then we'll take a quick peek at how to use a left margin. And then, finally...

... we'll be ready to assemble all this **into a rock-solid navigational structure.**



8.3. How To Build a Navbar

A **navbar** is a horizontal row of links intended to aid navigation. For example, here's Amazon.com's navbar...



The text you see in Amazon's navbar is actually **part of the graphic**, and that's the way it should be. If you wanted to spice it up a bit, you could include a small icon above each text. But don't use some cool, artsy squiggle that's hard to figure out. Your visitor doesn't want Picasso -- **he wants clear direction.**

The combination of simple icons and text makes your links' destinations as clear as possible. [And you can add other techniques](#) to add to the "predictive value" of any link.

While most would think of a navbar as a set of **graphic** links (as above), it can also mean a horizontal row of text links, commonly called a [text bar](#). Here's an example...

| [Home Page](#) | [Products](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Order](#) |



A **good navbar** accomplishes the following...

- provides links to key areas
- downloads fast
- functions just as well with graphic-loading turned off
- tells your customer where he is by highlighting that section in the navbar.

SiteSELL Sidebar

It's a good idea to **inactivate** the highlighted button, since clicking it would only send him right back to the same spot. This wastes time and confuses/frustrates. Instead, pop up a javascript alert -- "Sorry, you are already here."

With the above four functions in mind, it's clear that **we must use a "modular approach"** -- **build your navbar with individual buttons, one for each link.** It should **not** be one large **image map**.

If you used an image map...

- each navbar on every page would have to be a completely different graphic (due to the highlighting function). A large image map means a **big download each time your visitor hits a new page**. But in the modular approach, once the first set of small buttons has loaded into the browser's cache, it only has to load **one new GIF** (the highlighted GIF) per new page.
 - you would be limited to a single ALT tag for the entire image. If you build your navbar with several smaller buttons, you can include an **ALT tag** for each.
-

Let's look at the **UPS** navbars from four pages of their site as an example that pulls all this together...



See how **TRACKING** is highlighted? Guess where you are?



See how **QUICK-COST** is highlighted? Note too that UPS does not make you guess "what the heck" that graphic is -- they add the **QUICK-COST** text underneath to clarify the destination of the link.



Now we're in **DROP-OFF**, right?



Sure UPS, you can **PICK-UP** my parcel anytime... but only because that's one well-organized Web site.

One last graphic from the UPS site, this time to do a little deconstructing. It's the same navbar as the last one above, except that this is with **graphic-loading turned off**.



OK, so what do you see?...

First, this is not **one** big graphic, but rather it is **thirteen little graphics**. That way, after the navbar loads once, only one new small graphic (highlighted to reflect that location) has to load for each new page. This is much faster.

Second, even though the graphic-loading is off, good use of **ALT tags** allows you to understand the destination for each link. No wasted clicks here! If the designer had used a large image map, she could only use one ALT tag, making the navbar useless for those with graphics turned off. That would force her to add a **text bar**, which would add clutter.



Finally, **follow the Rule of 7**, if at all possible... each navbar should have no more than 7 links, 9 max. Otherwise, your customer misses stuff in all the clutter.



8.4. How to Build a **Table of Contents**

A **Table of Contents (TOC)** is a vertical column (or two) of links intended to aid navigation. It can be either **text-based** or **graphic-based**...



8.4.1. **Text-based TOCs**

Text-based TOCs are especially useful for **smaller, one-product sites**. Two great places for them...

- the left margin
- at the end of the Opening Page's copy (when the Opening Page is also the Home Page).

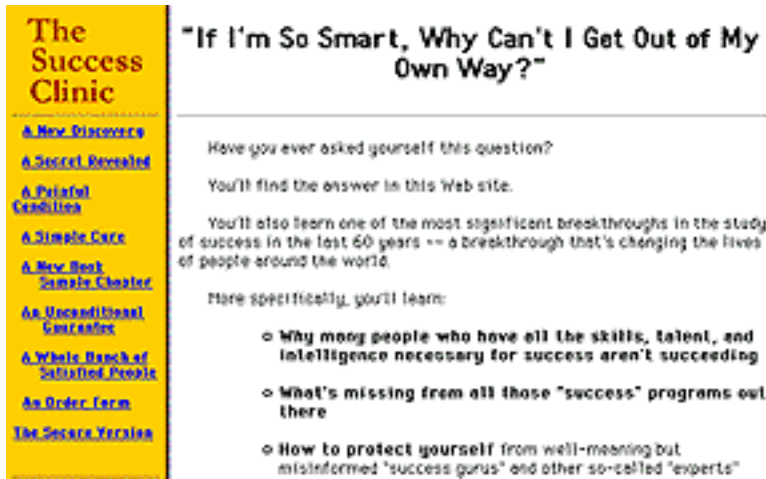
Most **Table of Contents** are a boring compendium of meaningless words... or worse, vague graphic symbols. They do nothing to inspire exploration and purchase. But that's not the way you'll design **your** TOC.

Each text link must be crystal-clear and stress benefits -- basically, it should be a **headline**. Each headline in the TOC must stress a benefit to the reader, or at least relate directly to the reader. Each link should be so tasty that your visitor can't wait to visit them all.

Pull your reader into relevant major sub-sections. Think **Table of Headlines**, rather than just plain-old **Table of Contents**.



TOC in left margin -- Use this when you want your viewer to see the whole layout early during the visit.



The Success Clinic

- A New Discovery
- A Secret Revealed
- A Proven Condition
- A Simple Cure
- A New Book
- Female Cheater
- An Unconditional Guarantee
- A Whole Bunch of Satisfied People
- An Order Form
- The Secret Version

"If I'm So Smart, Why Can't I Get Out of My Own Way?"

Have you ever asked yourself this question?

You'll find the answer in this Web site.

You'll also learn one of the most significant breakthroughs in the study of success in the last 60 years -- a breakthrough that's changing the lives of people around the world.

More specifically, you'll learn:

- Why many people who have all the skills, talent, and intelligence necessary for success aren't succeeding
- What's missing from all those "success" programs out there
- How to protect yourself from well-meaning but misinformed "success gurus" and other so-called "experts"

Do You Have Success Anorexia

<http://www.preparetowin.com/>

TOC at the end of the copy -- Use this format if you only want to show the links **after** your visitor reads what you have to say on the first page. I prefer controlling matters in this fashion...



Table of Contents

- [The Who & Why of PennyGold](#)
- [How Do You Know This is "For Real"?](#)
- ["Yes! What Do I Get?"](#)
- [Why PennyGold May NOT Be for You](#)
- [TEN-Times-Year-Money Guarantee](#)
- [A Very Exclusive Club](#)
- [*** PennyGold FAQ ***](#)

Questions? E-mail me.

PennyGold

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>



8.4.2. Graphic-based TOCs

If you prefer, deliver a graphic-based TOC. This works especially well for larger companies whose **Home Page** is purely a **Link Page**. We'll discuss this further in the [Cisco example below](#).



Cisco

<http://www.cisco.com/>

If graphic-based, your TOC should follow all the same rules as laid out for navbars. It must definitely have text descriptions (of the links) built right into the graphics -- nothing worse than a vague collection of obscure graphic symbols, unsupported by any textual explanations. **The destination must never be in doubt.**



8.4.3. The Rule of 7

Just like for the navbar, **follow the Rule of 7**, if at all possible... each TOC should have no more than 7 links, 9 max. Otherwise, your customer will be overwhelmed by choices, and will certainly miss some important pages.



8.5. Uses for The Left-Sided Margin

The left margin is a 70-100 **pixel**-wide margin on the left side of the Web page. It provides designers with loads of navigational flexibility. Design it with the [Table tag](#), not the [Frames tag](#).



Here are just a few uses **for the left margin**...

1) **For small companies...** use it as a main navigational aid, either a text-based TOC as we have seen in the previous section, or as a graphic-based “vertical navbar.”



U.S. Wings

<http://www.uswings.com/>

2) **For small or large companies...** use it as a secondary navigational aid for [dead-end side-branches](#). A conventional horizontal navbar handles the important stuff.



Make Your Site SELL!

<http://www.sitesell.com/>

3) For large companies... use it both ways. Make it an important navigational aid for deeper levels, when you just don't want to add another navbar. Or use it to add special functions that are relevant to where your visitor is. Cisco uses the left margin in a variety of ways. More on this in the [Cisco example below](#).



Phew! We know the five body parts. We can build and use a navbar and a Table of Contents. And we've got some good ideas on how to use the left side margin.

We're ready to assemble...



8.6. **A Rock-Solid Navigation Structure**

You can't go wrong with the following simple, rock-solid navigation system...



If you are a one-product company, your **Home Page** is also your **Opening Page**. It likely does double duty as a **Content Page** and as a **Link Page** (perhaps your only Link Page).

Your Home Page **Table of Contents** (HP TOC) provides your visitors with links to the important **Content Pages** that lead to your **MWR Closer Page**, and to a few other key sections like the SiteMap (see below), FAQ, Special Features of this Site, etc. Don't include every page, just the ones that you really don't want your visitor to miss.

A good example is the **Home Page** for this book. I put a graphic-based navbar up top to set the basic pathway. I put **special functions** (like my FAQ and newsletter subscription) into a text-based "Table of Contents" in the left margin. Each of these link to simple one-page [dead-end side-branches](#).



Make Your Site SELL!

<http://www.sitesell.com/>

If you are a large multi-product company, you will need a second, and maybe a third LEVEL of Link Pages. Your Link Pages will become the skeleton for the body of your Web site. The Content Pages will flesh it out.

LEVEL 1

Since the **Home Page** is the first LEVEL, let's call the Table of Contents on the Home Page the **L1 TOC**.

Your L1 TOC links to **LEVEL 2 Link Pages**, each of which is a major logical division of your site/company (of which "**Products**" would be one, with others like "**Investor Relations**" and "**In the News**"). Determine those divisions according to your customers' needs, not your company's.

What does your customer want to know when she hits your Home Page?

Organize that info into groups that make it easy for her to find what she seeks. Organize according to the info that she needs, **not** according to the hierarchies of your company.

Once that's done, give each division simple, descriptive names. Your visitor must understand where she's going when she clicks -- no creativity here, please!

Repeat this process as you establish each LEVEL below this one...

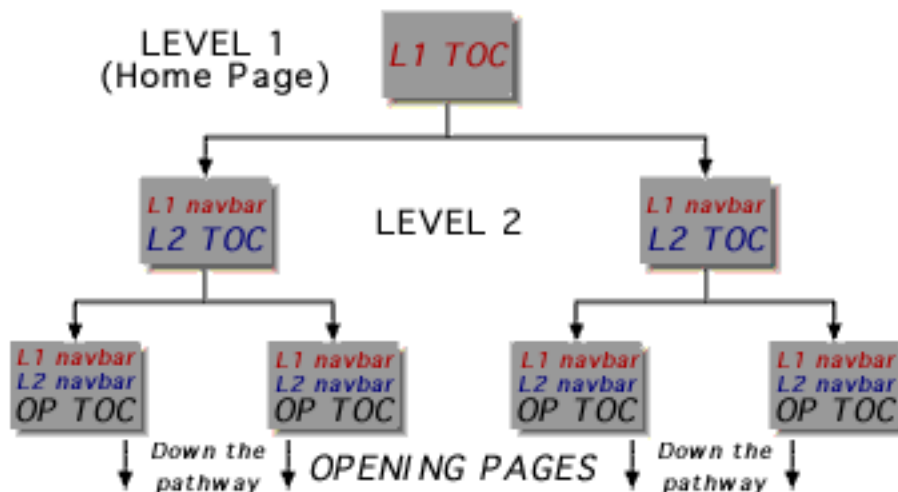
LEVEL 2

Each LEVEL 2 **Link Page** contains a **Table of Contents (L2 TOC)** that links to an **Opening Page** for each of the major subdivisions of that division. It would **also** include an **L1 navbar** that **summarizes** the **L1 TOC** -- this allows easy-quick navigation back-to-and-through the higher LEVEL. What do I mean by “summarizes”?...

Put only critical links in the navbar, including a link back to the Home Page itself. The navbar also delivers a contextual reminder of the visitor’s location (**by highlighting where the visitor is**).

For example, each link on an **L2 TOC** for **Products** sends the visitor to an **Opening Page** heading down a pathway for each product line. The **L1 navbar** highlights **Products** on each **Opening Page**, reminding the visitor of her location.

Each Opening Page contains its own **TOC**, which links to the important pages in the pathway, including the **MWR Closer Page**. Of course, the **Opening Page** also includes the “hit them with your biggest gun” copy to “hook” your visitor with benefits.



Put L1 and L2 navbars at the **top and bottom** of each **Opening Page**. Put it at the top so that your visitor gets a quick “lay of the land.” Put it at the bottom **to use**.

From the **Opening Page**, it’s straight down the pathway to the **MWR Closer Page**. **Every** pathway should end with some kind of **MWR**. You’re not there to just show

pictures of your products.

And this is true even for non-product pathways. For example, if it's a pathway for Investor Relations, convince potential investors to subscribe to your newsletter, "Insider InfoBytes, hot off the digital press and straight to your e-mail box."

Another non-product example...

If you have a major pathway for **Tech Support**, you could provide a pathway that drills down to the answer. Finish the pathway with a **Response Form** -- ask the visitor to enter the problem and to rate how well the online Tech Support answered it. If you get a poor rating, answer it manually and improve your online tech support! It's more work upfront, but once all the common problems are nailed, your tech support costs will drop dramatically.

OK, an example to clarify this...

Your **Link Page** for **Products** is at LEVEL 2. On that page, you have a text TOC that headlines your many exciting product lines, say ISDN Modems, Ethernet Products, and Party Balloons (just seeing if you're paying attention).

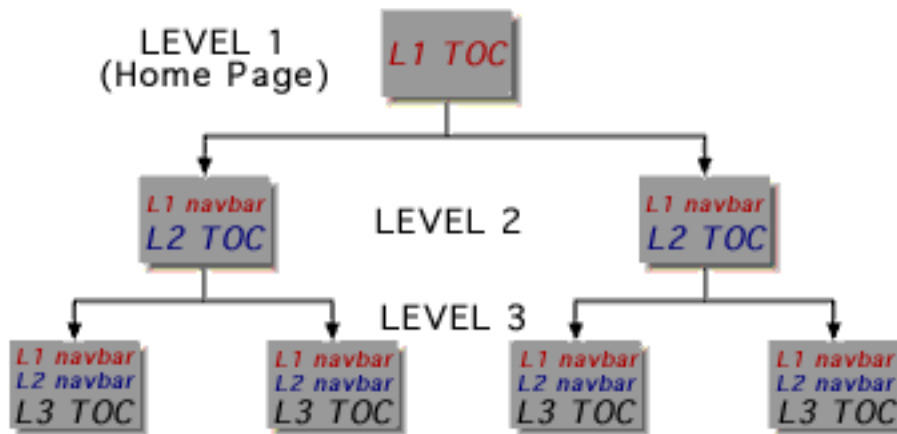
Each headline in the TOC links to an **Opening Page** of a pathway for that product line. Let's say your visitor clicks on "ISDN Modems"... She arrives at the ISDN **Opening Page**. She would now see an **Opening Page TOC** for ISDN MODEMS. The links in this TOC would be the highlights in the pathway that head towards the **MWR Closer Page**.

The **Closer Page** might have **two** different **MWR Response Forms**, one for resellers and one for end-users. The reseller fills in a "Call me, I'm interested" form -- i.e., she becomes a lead. The consumer enters her town and asks where the nearest reseller is. The database kicks back the answer in a few seconds.

Try to avoid adding a third LEVEL. It starts getting pretty hairy. However, depending on your size and how your product lines are organized, it might be unavoidable.

Your product lines alone may even need to be sub-divided into a third level, each starting with an L3 TOC. In this case, the links in an L2 TOC would link to a third

level of **Links Pages**, again with its own TOC (the L3 TOC). The links in the L3 TOC would send your visitor down the pathways towards the **MWR Closer Pages**.



By showing a navbar for each LEVEL, with highlighted buttons, you provide a way for your visitor to **rapidly jump** to other areas with a minimum of clicks. And your visitor **always knows where she is**.

Obviously, for larger and larger companies, you will customize. But this structure will form the foundation. And no matter how big you are...

Don't ever use an L4. Do your best to stay within 2 LEVELs. You must be able to send your visitor to an **Opening Page** for a product line pathway by no later than a third level. **Try to do it in less.**

The progressive TOC/navbar format provides for clean and rapid drill-down by your customer. It also effectively orients the visitor. And if they ever "lose their way," it provides an easy way back. They can quickly jump back to the L1 or L2 TOC to orient themselves at the desired level.

It provides the perfect simple-yet-flexible blend that a rock-solid navigational system requires. No... that your customer requires.



8.7. How to Use **Links** on Content Pages

A good pathway makes the user **feel** like he has navigational control, but he basically follows the pathway that **you** want.

Call it **pseudo-autonomous navigation** -- “you can go anywhere you want, as long as it’s to my next page.” They may stray off onto a **dead-end side-branch**, but those who wander soon get back on the main road to the **MWR Closer Page**.

Permit your customers to wander, but design the site so that they **want** to stay on the main path, **or get back to it as quickly as possible (help them do that via dead-end side-branches)**.

Content Pathway Pages should have **few** navigation options in general, especially if the goal is for your visitor to deliver an income-generating **MWR**. If the purpose is to move your visitor on to the next page in such a pathway, then provide **few options** (next page button, previous page button, a prominent link to the **MWR Closer Page**, and an **Opening Page** button).

For example, here are the only navigational aids on PennyGold’s **main Content Pathway Pages**...



As you can see, PennyGold includes buttons to the other **key pages** in the form of a navbar. A text-based Table of Contents under that provides links to the...

- **Order Page** (actually goes to a pre-Order Page for [special reasons previously](#)

[discussed](#))

- **Subscription Page** for PGOLD XPRESS (my [Backup Response](#))
- **FAQ** (which is an important sales tool for PennyGold).

Finally, I encourage customers to call me directly, but not on my 1-888 line -- this costs too much, and it originally took too much of my time. Anyone who calls long distance **qualifies himself** as seriously interested.

The goal of a **Content Page** might **not** be to get an income-generating **MWR**. Let's say it's to provide **online help**. In this case, you might also want to include the **higher level navbars** at the top and bottom of each page (as explained above), to encourage quick-jumping into other, more profitable areas of your site.

The final kind of link is the **Content Link** -- i.e., links that occur **in the actual copy** of the page. These usually provide details and background information... in short, side issues. Structure them as **dead-end side-branches, to make sure that your customer returns to the main path**.

What is a **dead-end side-branch**? It's a branch off the main pathway **that goes nowhere**. It allows no linking to anywhere else in the site.



It's main goal is to deliver the fruit of knowledge that your visitor seeks, then make him return to the main trunk of the tree.

Each page of a **dead-end side-branch** allows you **only** to move to the next page of the side-branch (if there is one) or back towards the main pathway. There is **absolutely no other linking...** no navbars, no TOCs.

Keep these clean and simple, and get your visitors **back** to the main pathway... leave no room for straying or distractions. **Your visitor was on a path towards the MWR -- get him back on it!**

Once your visitor has clicked into a branch, he has only three options...

- 1) Hit the **BACK** button on the browser.
- 2) Click a **NEXT** button to move on to the next page on the branch (if there is one).
- 3) Click a button that will send the visitor back to the **exact spot** in the page of the pathway from which he left.

Good use of **dead-end side-branching** allows “keeners” to drill as deeply as they like to get more info. It **also** allows the time-pressured, “bigger picture” visitor to get the basics and stay on the freeway heading towards your **MWR**.

Here’s how to design a dead-end side branch...

- 1) Simple page, with same look and feel as the rest of the site, but no left margin, etc.
- 2) Provide the expected content.
- 3) Add a NEXT button in the bottom right, and a PREVIOUS button in the bottom left.
- 4) Dat’s it, dat’s all.



8.8. **Meandering = Lost Sales**

Once you’ve put your visitor on the right path, **here’s a sure fire way to lose her...** fill the path with lots of low-payoff links. Too many sites bog the user down in a variety of useless clicks... do this once too many times, and she’s gone... probably to your competitor.

Each “need to click” is a possible...



... EXIT point. So get your visitor to the **MWR Closer Page** ASAP.

Since each “need to click” can lose your visitor, make the [page joints](#) irresistible to follow. Do it right, and you can pull your visitor along a nice tight pathway, while giving the illusion of navigational freedom.

What information does your user want, at each step of the path? Provide it... **now**. Don't waste her time with anything else. **Don't let her lose her focus.**

Once the benefits are clear from the **Opening Page**, lead your visitor to your **MWR Closer Page** in as few clicks as possible, **straight in to your MWR Closer Page.**

Start each page with a grabber headline-and-text, right at the top of the page (so even the smallest screen will see it). This pulls the reader through to the bottom of the next page (with the help of more headlines, as needed), until the next joint... which, of course attracts your visitor through to the next page.

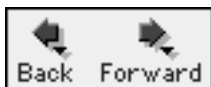
Done properly, **your visitor wants to stay on the main “best way to go” path**, or get back to it as quickly as possible. **Every link pays off**, building a clear sense of progress... a sense that she has come to the right place... **an increasing desire for your product.**

Finally, **provide a short cut link to the MWR Closer Page on every high-traffic page.** Whenever, your customer feels like ordering, let her!



8.9. **Keep the Browser's Navigation Functions in Mind**

The browser has in-built navigation functions. Some of them can disrupt your carefully constructed navigational system.



- 1) **Back Forward** -- These buttons shoot a Web-surfer to the last visited page (**Back**) or the next (**Forward**) in a sequence of visited pages.
- 2) **History or “Go” menu** -- Provide access to any page visited during a session.
- 3) **Bookmarks or Favorites** -- This function saves specific pages for revisits later.
- 4) **Color-coded hypertext links** -- Unvisited links are one color and visited ones are

another. This works for graphic links, too, if you code a border around them. This lets your visitors know that they've "been there, done that."

5) Status bar -- as the user passes the cursor over a link, the destination URL appears at the bottom of the browser window.



Here's how to work with, and work around, those buttons...

1) The Back and Forward buttons -- In each page of the pathway, you should put the following at the bottom of each page...

- in the bottom right corner -- a right-pointing arrow and text should indicate that your visitor will move to the **next page in sequence (Opening Page and Content Pathway Pages)**.
- in the bottom left corner, a left-pointing arrow and text should indicate that your visitor will move to the **previous page in sequence (Content Pathway Pages and MWR Closer Page)**.

Do this in such a way that your customer does **not** confuse your pathway sequence buttons with the Back and Forward browser buttons -- **they are not the same**.

2) The Go menu -- Not much you can do about this. The Go menu really allows the user to randomize his visit to your site. All you can do is build a magnetic site that pulls him through in order, keeping that clicking finger away from this menu. But if he does "hyperlink" to some remote corner of your site, the context that you have built into your navigational aids should cue him as to location, and should show him how to get back (or hopefully he hits the Back button!).

3) Bookmarks -- Generally not used much **in the course of a visit**. And since it's a bookmark, the user knows where he is going (I hope). A neutral feature, as far as site navigation is concerned.

4) Color-coded links -- Don't change the Web standard color-coding system. This definitely helps our navigational efforts.

5) Status bar -- If you use a little javascript, [you can tell them what the link is about](#), instead of just giving the URL. This is a nice way to improve the predictability of a link.

Remember that your visitor may choose to use the five basic navigation features while cruising your site. **Take that into account when designing your navigation system.**



8.10. Other Navigational Aids

Let's discuss some other ways to help visitors get around your site...

- Site map
- Index
- Drop-down short cuts
- Site search engine
- FAQ
- Help
- “What’s New”

Yes... FAQs, Help, and What's New sections are really just specialized ways to point your readers to information.

Alternate Navigational Systems should generally be grouped together into a “**Special**” section, which should be listed as a link on the **L1 TOC** ([see discussion on Cisco below](#)). Occasionally, they integrate well into others parts of the site (ex., short cuts, “What's New” sections, or Help).



A Site Map is basically a humungous text TOC that provides the viewer with a total picture of the entire Web site. Most visitors either don't, or can't, form a mental image or where they are in your site.

Site Maps help them form that picture. They orient your visitors, and give them a good idea where links will lead. The larger you are, the more important this is (not needed at all for a simple, one-product site).

Here's an example from PennyGold...

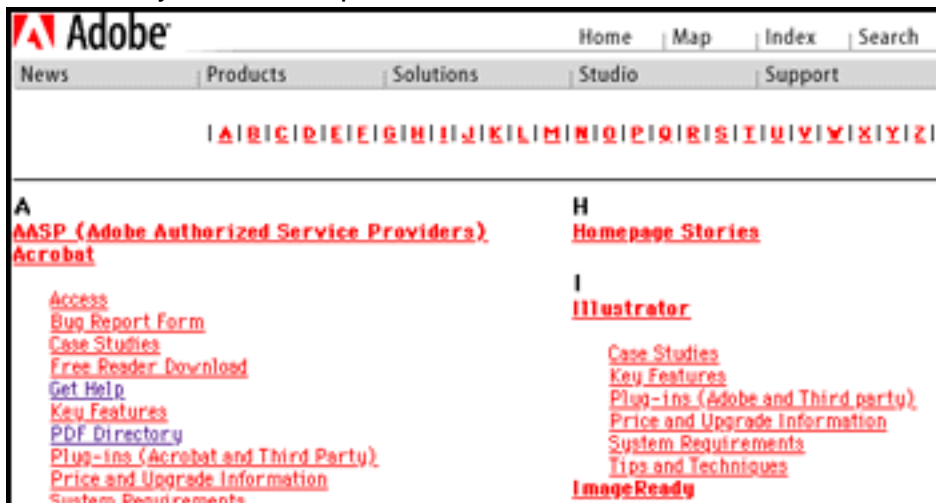


PennyGold Site Map

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/SITEMAP.html>

Don't include **all** of your site's contents on the Site Map -- provide to L3 of the **Link Pages**, as well as the **Opening Page** and the **MWR Closer Page** for each product pathway.

A **site index** is much like a **book** index... an alphabetical listing of all the important concepts, with a link to the appropriate Web page for each. The best way to explain is to show you an example...



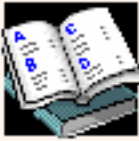
Adobe's Index

<http://www.adobe.com/misc/siteindex.html>

Site indexes are assembled **manually** by professional indexers -- yes human eyes review a site and create the index. The result is far superior to a site search engine -- clicking on a topic in an index brings you to the **relevant Web page, every time**.

Large, info-intensive sites should use indexes as a navigational aid. It's amazing that more don't -- this is a seriously underused navigational option. For more info...

The American Society of Indexers includes an excellent article on...



Indexing the Web

<http://www.asindexing.org/webndx.htm>

... And **Kevin Broccoli**, a professional indexer (he indexed **MYSS!**), offers some great information on Web-indexing...



Broccoli Information Management

<http://www.bim.net/>

Drop-down menus make great short cuts. They permit visitors familiar with your site, or who know what they want, to jump to the exact page they need. Either design a special page for short cuts, or integrate drop-down menus into your existing navigation structure... or both!

The Cisco example below demonstrates [a great use of drop-down menus](#).

[Site search](#) and [FAQ](#) have been discussed elsewhere. **Help** and **What's New** are self-explanatory (and usually not necessary -- I mention them just for the sake of completeness).



8.11. **Special-Content Sections**

You may have a section that is so radically different that it needs its own unique navigation system -- for example, **a long pull-down menu**. Consider this as a special sub-site that stands on its own and “breaks the rules.”

But within that subsite, still use all the major navbars to set the context, and to provide your customer with the ability to move back to the mainstream site.

It is generally best to avoid deviations from the pattern, if at all possible. **A consistent, repeating, “no tricks or exceptions” structure is always best.**



8.12. **Simple Structure + Clear Pathways = Never Lost**

Build your site according to the above navigational concepts, your site will offer the following to your customer...

- **simple, visualizable, hierarchical organization**
- the **flexibility** to jump to other areas at different levels
- the ability to **progress or backtrack** along a pathway
- a **clear contextual model** that tells your visitor where he is at all times.

It all boils down to caring about your visitor and his experience. Frustrate him, and he’s gone. Confuse him and he’ll leave. **Re-remember, [K.I.S.S.!](#)**

SiteSELL Sidebar

At certain times, you will be tempted to provide more flexibility. The cost is more clutter and confusion. **Balance the two carefully.** If you have any doubt, don’t add the flexibility.



8.13. Cisco as Example

Let's look at Cisco's Web site for an outstanding implementation of this. If a big, complicated, \$6 billion company allows its users to drill down so effortlessly, you certainly can too.

Cisco Connection **ONLINE**

Cisco Connection Online

<http://www.cisco.com/>

SiteSELL Sidebar

The discussion of Cisco's site is accurate as of this writing, June-July, 1998. Things may have changed by the time you read this.



8.13.1. Table of Contents -- Outstanding!

On the **Home Page**, Cisco uses a graphic-based **Table of Contents**. Here it is, first with the browser's graphic-loading **turned ON**, then **turned OFF**.

Graphics Turned **ON**...



Graphics Turned OFF...



As you can see, each combination of **text and icon** is actually **a single graphic** -- i.e., the light bulb and the word "Solutions" is a single graphic. The overall graphic TOC is actually 6 individual "buttons" -- one for "Solutions," one for "Corporate News & Information," one for "Products & Ordering," etc.

When you pass your cursor over each graphic, the "text" and the icon both highlight. See how the pointing finger is over and therefore highlights **Seminars, Events & Training** (below, and in the **Turned ON** illustration)? That rollover **also** popped open the column of text to the right of **Seminars, Events & Training**...



This is the ultimate little [javascript program](#) that lets the visitor know what she's getting **before** the click! Check the [source HTML](#) on the Web to see how they did it.

SiteSELL Sidebar

Cisco had to make a tough decision right off the bat. They obviously don't want the

visitor to miss the “Solutions” section. **So it decided to open...**

[Education](#)
[Government](#)
[Large Enterprise](#)
[Service Provider](#)
[Small/Medium Business](#)

.. and keep it open, even without a rollover. And the links are provided, so basically “**Solutions**” is always open, ready for you to link to the next level.

However, in Cisco’s desire for you to drill down into this section, they introduce some confusion. How come a roll-over doesn’t open and close the “preview” text like the other sections do? **You think your browser is “stuck.”** Obviously, Cisco decided the “permanent open and fast drill-down” benefit was worth the slight confusion caused.

Sometimes, you simply have to make a trade-off.



8.13.2. Navbars -- Whoops!

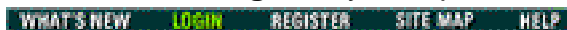
On subsequent pages, Cisco always provides this TOC as a horizontal navbar at the **top and bottom** of each page.



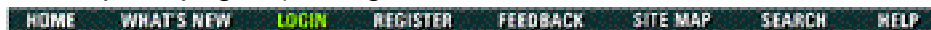
See how it summarizes the Table of Contents from the Home Page?



On the **Home Page**, they also provide this navbar...



... which raises a problem. They are obliged to carry this extra navbar on subsequent pages (adding links to Home, Feedback, and Search along the way)...



This adds clutter throughout the site.

The best way to handle “special functions” is to group them all into a link called “Special Site Features” in the Home Page TOC. Then just call it “Special” in the summarizing horizontal navbars (in lower levels). But that, of course, has its own tradeoff -- **the extra click**. But in this case, the extra click is the lesser of the two evils.



Another surprise -- they use an **image map navbar**. Unfortunately for Cisco's graphics-off visitors, here's what it looks like...



So where do I click? This is why a [modular navbar](#) is a better idea.

The image map choice is probably why they **don't highlight the navbar to indicate a visitor's location**. They do partially set the context. In the example below...



... we are in the **Enterprise Service Programs** sub-section, of the **Customer Services** section, of the... whoops! They don't highlight **SUPPORT** to tell us exactly where we are because that would take an entirely new image map, which means longer download time.



8.13.3. Left Margin... a Variety of Uses

Cisco uses navbars as a major site-navigating-and-orienting technique. So when you get to the deeper levels, there's just no room to add another navbar. Instead, they use **the left margin in several different ways...**

First, they use it to **add special functions** (that are relevant to that page)...



Cisco Catalyst 5000 Switching System

<http://www.cisco.com/warp/public/729/c5000/>

See how a third horizontal navbar would only get lost on the top of the page? Instead, they build a vertical navbar down the left column! There's a lot happening on the page, but it still feels clean and simple.



Farther down on the same page, Cisco also uses the left margin as a navigation aid, listing all their LAN switches in a simple, text-based TOC down the left margin.

LAN Switches: Catalyst 8500 - 8500 CSR Edition - 8500 MSB Edition Catalyst 5000 Catalyst 3920 Catalyst 3920 Catalyst 3900 Catalyst 2900 XL Catalyst 2900 Catalyst 2600 Catalyst 1900/2820 Catalyst 1800 Catalyst 1200 1548 Micro Switch	<p>Cisco Systems' flagship Catalyst 5000 series switches are the industry's most powerful switching solutions in the wiring closet, data center, or backbone.</p> <p>The series features a Gigabit Ethernet and ATM-ready platform offering users high-speed trunking technologies including Fast EtherChannel and OC-12 ATM. The Catalyst 5000 series also features a redundant architecture, dynamic VLANs, complete intranet services support, and media-rate performance with a broad variety of interface modules.</p> <p>Modules for the Catalyst 5000 family models---the Catalyst 5500, 5000, and 5002---are designed for complete interoperability and investment protection. New functionalities in the Catalyst 5000 series support multiprotocol NetFlow Switching for scalable convergence of Layer 2 and Layer 3 switching, adding the benefits of multiprotocol, multilayer switching and other Cisco IOS network services.</p>
--	--

Cisco Catalyst 5000 Switching System

<http://www.cisco.com/warp/public/729/c5000/>

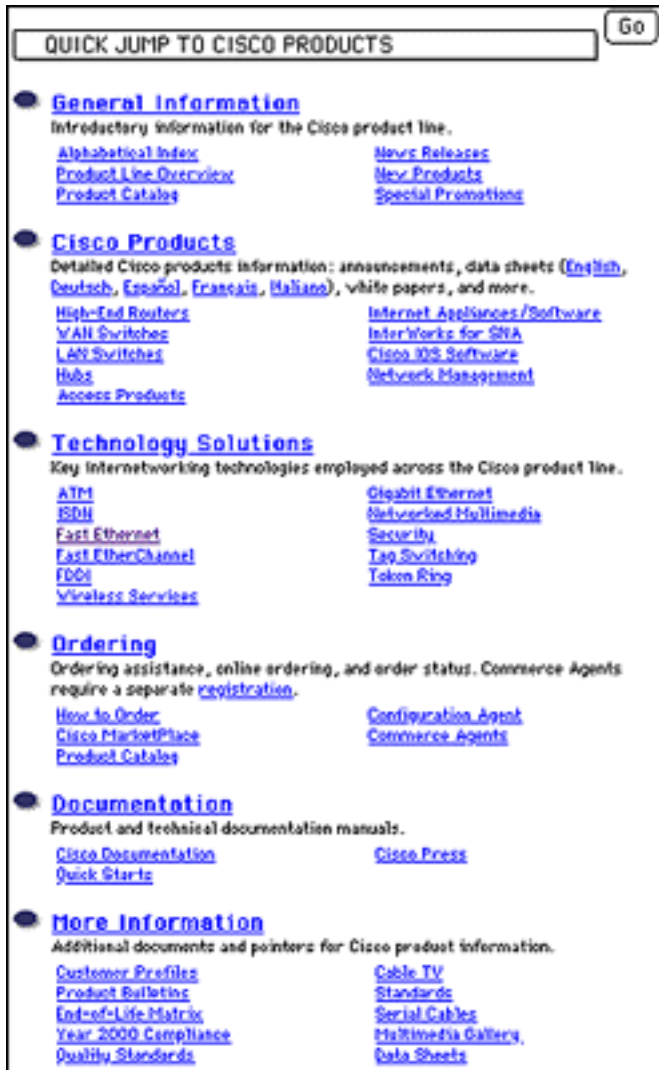


The left margin provides designers with a lot of navigational flexibility. Use it.



8.13.4. Let's Go Product-Hunting!

OK, let's go to their “Products & Ordering” section. Click and we jump to...



Very clean and straight-forward text-based TOC, that just begs a **progressive drill-down** if you're not exactly sure what you're looking for. **So let's drill-down...**

(We'll talk about that “QUICK JUMP TO CISCO PRODUCTS” pull-down menu a bit later.)



8.13.5. Drill-Down...

OK, click on the ISDN link (under Technology Solutions in the **previous** page) and here's what we get...



Cisco tells you what ISDN is, then provides the benefits, in a tone of language appropriate for its technically oriented customers. But make no mistake... **they're SELLING!**

The link options available appear in the left margin (it would be nice if they added the same kind of javascript destination cues as on the Home Page). The first is the link to the **ISDN products** themselves. Let's take it!



8.13.6. Click Again...

Clicking on **ISDN products** takes us to this page...

Cisco ISDN Products

Cisco Enterprise Accounting for ISDN Version 2.0
Cisco Enterprise Accounting (CEA) for Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) V.2.0 is a powerful network management tool designed to help organizations lower the cost of owning and operating the network. The information provided by CEA for ISDN empowers managers to track network usage, identify costly bandwidth allocation, perform segment accounting, manage performance, and deliver timely analysis to decrease the largest expense of owning a network: transmission costs.

Cisco 700 Series ISDN Routers
The Cisco 700 Series (ISDN) Access routers provide home offices, telecommuters, and small professional offices the next generation of affordable, high-speed, easy-to-manage, and multiprotocol remote access solutions. The Cisco 700 Series Product Family comprises the Cisco 760 and 770 Series.

Cisco 1000 Series LAN Extenders
The Cisco 1000 series local-area network (LAN) extenders and routers provide low-cost, high-speed connectivity in easy to install and manage desktop systems. The 1000 series combine Ethernet LAN routing capability with a variety of synchronous and asynchronous wide-area network (WAN) options, making the series ideal for small to medium-sized offices.

Cisco 1600 Series Routers
Cisco 1600 series routers connect small offices with Ethernet LANs to the Internet and to company intranets using several wide-area-network (WAN) technologies: Integrated Service Digital Network (ISDN), asynchronous serial, and synchronous serial such as Frame Relay, leased lines, Switched 56, Switched Multimegabit Data Service (SMDS), and X.25. The Cisco 1600 series consists of four models, each of which has an Ethernet port, a built-in WAN port, and a slot for an optional second WAN port.

Cisco 2500 Series Modular Routers
The Cisco 2524 and 2525 Modular Routers allow corporate customers to deploy a single, remotely managed, intelligent device to provide both

This page is a straight list of each product line, with an easily visible **(non-embedded)** link followed by a brief description. As you can see, we are already clicking on the **Cisco 2500 Series Modular Routers...**

... which takes us to the final product page, which has tons and tons of documentation about this product family...

2500 Series Modular Routers

- Access Products Table
- Branch to Branch Connections
- Internet Connectivity
- Enterprise-Wide Connectivity
- Dial-Up & Telecommuter Access

The Remote Office Solution

The Cisco 2524 and 2525 Modular Routers allow corporate customers to deploy a single, remotely managed, intelligent device to provide both wide-area network (WAN) and telecommunications line connectivity for unattended remote sites. The integrated data service unit/channel service unit (DSU/CSU) and integrated services digital network (ISDN) modules provide a compact, self-contained unit without the usual clutter of external devices and cables. The intelligent DSU/CSU and ISDN modules can be remotely managed from a central location to speed problem resolution and avoid onsite visits.

Did you notice how you steadily drill-down to the desired “Content Pages”? Were we ever lost?

If a \$6 billion company can organize their site so cleanly, anyone can. Note that there are no beautiful (i.e., slow) graphics. There is absolutely no expensive, heavy multi-media. **The site never gets more complicated than CGI, javascript and a database.**

Relative to the size of the company and to the sales it generates, this site was not expensive to develop -- it just took smarts. **You can do it, too.**

SiteSELL Sidebar

See how even Cisco **stresses benefits and features**, even though they already have fantastic credibility. I did notice one more thing... **they don't have a Closer Page**. I guess when you're Cisco, you just don't need one!



8.13.7. Or... the Shortcut...

Of course, if we had known that all we wanted from the outset was a couple of **2500 Series Modular Routers** and a loaf of bread, we could have used that excellent **pull-down shortcut** [provided at the beginning of this example...](#)



Once you know the site, and if you know what you want, “**one-click**” gets you straight to the same final product page. **A great feature.**

Which leaves us with the loaf of bread to get. **It will take us longer to find that at the corner convenience store!**

SiteSELL Sidebar

Be careful when offering an alternative navigational system. It can cause confusion. Be clear about its purpose.

Keeping the above in mind, **do use a second method** when you can identify either...

- a second major target market, one with different needs

OR

- a second important need of your target market.

In both cases, this new need requires a second, more appropriate navigational system. Here's another example...



8.14. **Let There Be Light!**

[Remember our light bulb example?](#) We discussed your lowly bulb's benefits...

First, lighting lets you see.

Second, both the fixture and the light cast by the bulb have an aesthetic, or decorative function.

Third, beside “gain,” lights also cause “pain” -- the cost of the bulb, the cost of electricity and the bother of replacing.

OK, time to design a navigational system for your Web site. Realize that we must meet the needs of **two kinds** of customers...

- **end-users** who light their homes

- **people in the trade** -- renovators, resellers, etc.

For the end-user... let's divide your Web site into the rooms of a house. Discuss the **desired effects and benefits of lighting for...**



... each room. Support this with photographed “how to” and “how not to” examples.

Explain how **your** bulbs **deliver** the benefits (perhaps **yours** are the ones in the “how to” shots?). Once you’ve convinced her, finish with an **MWR...**

This customer **buys from a reseller**, not from you. So get her to enter her city and postal code and click the “**Nearest supplier**” button -- your database fires back the answer! Result? Happy, motivated customer, and grateful reseller!

For those in the trade... these people are likely **in a hurry**, and they know **exactly what they want**. Offer an alternative navigational system, the Cisco-style drop-down menu. This will allow your customers to drill straight down to the desired product. The discussion on each product focuses on what’s important to them... cost per gross, technical spec’s, delivery time, etc.

Finish with an **MWR** for resellers. Convince them to complete your form, either...

- an Order Form (for existing customers)

OR

- a “New Customer Form” requesting that a sales person call. To motivate the completion of this form, ask if the visitor would like to be included in your “**refer-a-customer**” program.

This is just one possible way to organize the navigation of your light bulb site. No matter how you choose to do it, remember this...

Focus on your customer’s info-needs/wants. Do that and you’ll build a site that’s **rewarding to navigate.**



9. The **You**-Focused Opener

Does your **Opening Page** start like this?...

“Welcome to **My** Site!”

If it does, it's **bye-bye** to your **MWR!**

Your customer does not care about you or your company until he understands what you can do for him. He hits your site, moving at 100 MPH, with one question... “What's in it for **me?**”



Remember that trigger-happy index finger? Your prospect is time-pressured and looking for any reason to leave you.

He concentrates best on your opening headline and sentence. Make an impact right off the top, while he is curious and interested . At this moment, your target is squarely in your sights -- **fire your biggest guns right away** (tempered with credibility).



Aim straight for the heart of your cyber-target. Bring him to a dead halt. Make him say, “**Whoops! This looks worthwhile. Tell me more!**” Here's how...



9.1. Fire Your Biggest Gun First



Pull out your heavy artillery, **the major benefit to the customer**. Fire it immediately, in the **opening headline and sentence** of your Opening Page...

Let's assume "Joe Prospect" is hitting your site right now. When Joe first arrives at your site, what does he want to know? What does **anyone** want to know?...

"What's in it for me?"

So...

Match your opening message to Joe's strongest motivator, either "pain" or "gain" ...

1) Pain -- people feel deprived, almost all in either wealth, health, love, or happiness. Show people how you help in the area that they are deprived in. **Make it clear that you understand your visitor's problem and that you have the cure for his pain or fear of loss.**

2) Gain -- stress the single most important positive benefit that you offer to your customer, in language that he will appreciate.



The **Opening Page** for each product starts by stressing **benefits, benefits, benefits**. Let Joe know how his life will be better because of your product.

Many sites start off like this...

"The XYZ high-tech company is a leader in nano-technological innovation since yesterday... blah, blah, blah, blah,blah, blah... us, we, ours, our founding fathers..."

These are the same people who can't figure out why Joe doesn't buy!

After all...

Who are you most likely to buy from? The pizza shop that leads off with...

"Hot Pizza in 30 Minutes Or Less... Guaranteed."

OR

"Luigi's Pizza Parlor has been making great pizzas for 30 years. We started in Ippawich, Pennsylvania in a little restaurant... blah, blah, blah..."

Get it?



Which dentist hits you where you live?

"If you feel any pain whatsoever, you get your money back... no questions asked."

OR

"Hello. I am Dr. Brian Dentist. I graduated from Minneapolis Dental School in 1994. I love this job. My whole family has been involved with dentistry. My mom even married one!"

'Nuff said.



Bottom line. Boil your product down into a short, sharp benefit-laden punch that your customer can't ignore. Open with that.

Whether you use "pain" or "gain" will depend on the nature of your particular product and target market. But, whichever approach you choose, make it tighter and tighter, sharper and sharper. **Hone it until it's razor-sharp...**

... 'til it's irresistible!

If your opening headline and sentence answers "What's in it for me?", you'll convert the "I'll just take a quick look" arrival into a motivated visitor. Which means that you're halfway to getting the MWR from your visitor.

But...



If your **Opening Page** makes him ask, “Who cares? So what?”, **he’s gone.**

And just what is your biggest gun? Easy, it’s your USP...



9.1.1. The **Unique Selling Proposition... A “How-To”**

Your **Unique** Selling Proposition (USP) is your product’s most powerful benefit, combined with a strong, unique aspect of your business. It answers that most difficult question...

Why should potential customers buy **your product, from **your** company?**

Here’s how to develop your USP...

First, what are you selling? Write down what your product is and does.

Second, what is the benefit to your customer? What pain does it cure, or what gain does it provide?

Third, what is unique about your product?... about you? What makes you stand out from the competition? Keep working on this until you can clearly separate yourself from the field. There must be a convincing reason for doing business with **you**, **instead of your competitor.**

Fourth, summarize the above into one tight, powerful, motivating phrase that will **persuade your customer to do business with you, to trade their money for the benefits delivered by your product.**

As you start to work through the above four steps, you may find this to be a lot harder than it looks. **Don't blow it off and give up!... You must have a USP.** If it was easy, **everyone** would have a great USP! **Come up with a tight, sharp USP that SELLS your customer.**

There's a second benefit to this exercise... one **for you!** It will crystallize your own vision of what you do! **Write your USP down. Keep it firmly fixed in your mind.**

SiteSELL Sidebar

Here's a nice little technique that may help you form your USP...

Ask yourself this question...

"If I had unlimited, god-like powers and could grant my prospective customer the biggest benefit I can possibly imagine he or she would ideally want from my product, what would that be?"

Write down your answer. Sharpen this into your USP.



9.1.2. An Opener that SELLS!...

The best way to show you **how to start an Opening Page** is by example. And since I know the rationale for every word on the PennyGold site, we'll use it.

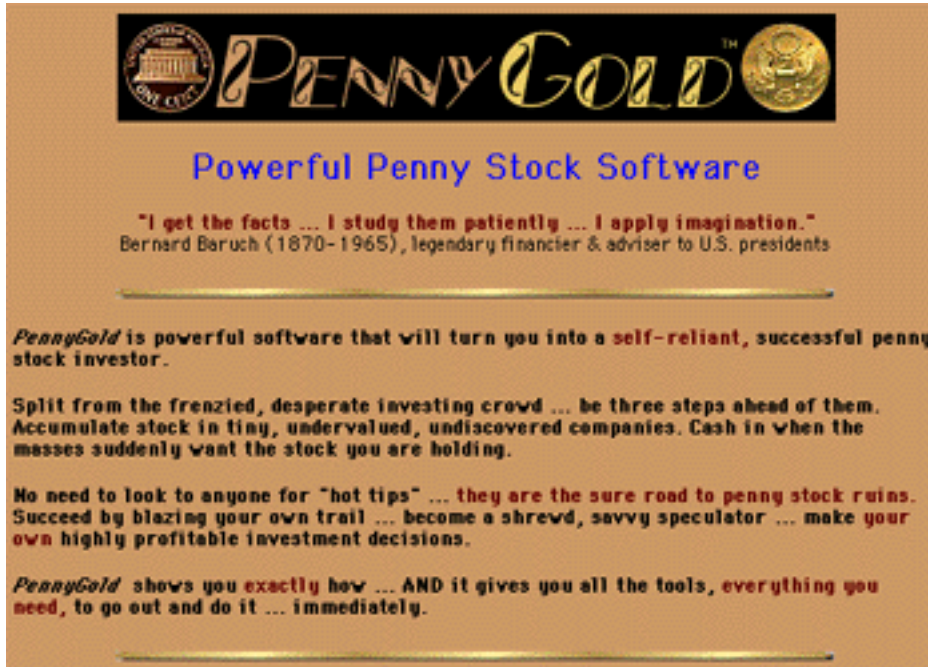
Ready? Lets go!...



Fire your great, big USP-elephant-gun in the opening headline and sentence of the Opening Page.

Develop it aggressively and clearly in the next paragraph or three.

For example, on the PennyGold **Opening Page**, I lead off with the following opener (copy in blue, comments in black)...



PennyGold Opening Paragraphs

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pennygold.html>

First, the opening headline...

Powerful Penny Stock Software

Admittedly, nothing brilliant here. Just a straightforward, exact description of the product **that states my USP exactly...** PennyGold is **software** for penny stocks, which is **unique**.

The benefit is that it's **powerful**, which is **better than just plain old money-making**. It also imparts a sense of power... for investors who normally are powerless, waiting for the recommendations of others, "**powerful**" is a **powerful word**.

I follow that with a quote from Bernard Baruch (1870-1965), legendary financier & adviser to U.S. presidents...

"I get the facts... I study them patiently... I apply imagination."

This previews what PennyGold is all about. It also adds a touch of class, separating us from all those loud, crass penny sites.

Next, the opening sentence...

PennyGold is powerful software that will turn you into a self-reliant, successful penny stock investor.

Clear benefit. There's no need to get too creative over this, because most penny stock sites are "tips services" that just sell the fish. I sell the fishing rod. So words like "self-reliant" hit home immediately.

Split from the frenzied, desperate investing crowd... be three steps ahead of them. Accumulate stock in tiny, undervalued, undiscovered companies. Cash in when the masses suddenly want the stock you are holding.

I don't say "You can stop feeling frenzied because you'll be above all that." That would be too obvious and would leave a bad taste. They identify immediately with the pain, and sense the opportunity to stop the pain and feel some gain.

No need to look to anyone for "hot tips"... they are the sure road to penny stock ruin. Succeed by blazing your own trail... become a shrewd, savvy speculator... make your own highly profitable investment decisions.

Ditto. Penny stock investors are notorious "hot tip junkies." I'm looking for the good percentage of them **who'd like to rely on their own brains.**

PennyGold shows you exactly how... AND it gives you all the tools, everything you need, to go out and do it... immediately.

All-in-one solution. Aggressive investors are always hunting for the next "sure thing." It's painful, because it wastes time and money. But PennyGold "cures that pain"... no need to continue that painful hunting process.

See how the Opening Page blends pain and gain? By the end of this first section, if you have any interest in penny stocks, you'll continue into the site. **And if you don't, I never had a chance to sell you anyway.**

So there's no point on trying to sneak up on anyone...



Your cyber-target is squarely in your sights when he first arrives.
Fire your best, biggest gun, right away.



9.1.3. “That’s where the money is!”

Be willing to lose a certain percentage of visitors right off the bat. Don't worry about not appealing to less targeted visitors.

Decide what's important to your **target market** and hammer on that. Not **everyone** has to go to “page 2”... just **everyone** in your target market.

Don't weaken **your big benefit-gun** by adding in extra messages, with the rationale that if you hold on to less targeted visitors for a while, you will convert them. By being all things to all people, you will lose your grip on your best prospects. You will lose much more than you will gain.

Focus purely on your high-interest, good-probability visitors.

Which reminds me...



... When the famous stickup artist Willie Sutton was asked why he robbed banks, he replied, **“Because that’s where the money is.”**

You should do the same. No, not rob banks! **Focus where the money is.**



9.2. Building a **Killer** Opening Page

As we said, your **opening headline and sentence** must **stop** your visitor in his tracks. It must **grab him and not let go!** **No long, meandering buildups.** You win or lose in your first sentence or two.

Can I stop saying that now, or should I repeat it one more time? ;-)

OK, OK, let's talk about the rest of the page...

Put a **small, quick-loading logo graphic** at the top. Either scan in an existing logo or get a graphic designer to design one. Make it classy, and compress it so that it's small -- under 10K.

Don't include the name of your company or product in the **TITLE tag** of your **Home Page**, nor in your **<H1> header tags**. Why not? Because you are wasting valuable **Search Engine** real estate ([more info on this later](#)). Instead, include the name of your company or product right **in the logo graphic**.

Here's what your customer should see as he hits your **Home Page**...

First -- Opening headline that screams "get in here and read the rest of this site."

Second -- Opening sentence that fires your big benefit-gun.

Even a viewer with a small browser window opened on a small monitor must see these two grabbers before he sees anything else.

Third -- Small corporate or product logo loads about now. It will distract your visitor from the copy for just a moment. But he will then return to...

Fourth -- The rest of the benefit-laden copy on your **Opening Page**. Remember the benefit promised in your big gun? Build upon that.

The balance of this page convinces the prospect that **you** have the solution to his problem. Make it clear that you see and understand his needs and worries.

As always, aim straight for your target.

Fifth -- The end of the page, where he sees your navbar and decides to **click to the next page**.

Know when to end your first page. You can't get **all** the information on the **Opening Page!** Cut and chop until your **Opening Page** fires your biggest gun straight at the heart of your prospect...

... and **only** that biggest gun.

It can be as long or as short **as you need** to get the essential info across. But not longer.

Once you have your prospect's complete attention, **you've got other pages to develop the rest of the story.**

SiteSELL Sidebar

Write the rest of your **Opening Page**, and indeed the rest of your site, with the following in mind...

Your visitors will only be there once. If people visit and don't purchase, they are probably **not** going to return later. The Web is an exciting, "show me what I haven't seen yet" kind of place. **Odds are they won't be back.** You only have one shot to make your case and generate a sale -- **make it count.**

Get the order... now.



9.3. “Talk About **My** Lawn, Not Your Grass Seed!”

The following, by two unknown authors, sure understand the evils of the “me-oriented” **Opening Page** and the benefits of “benefits.”

*Tell me quick and tell me true
Or else, my friend to hell with you.*

*Not how this product came to be,
But what the damn thing does for me.*

Was that brilliant piece of poetry too deep for your tastes? ;-)

Here’s some even shorter prose...



... “Talk about my lawn, not your grass seed!”



10. Two Critical Sales-Builders

Two special techniques stand tall on the road to **getting the order...**

- **testimonials** -- There's nothing like happy customers who tell the world how great your product is.
- **guarantee** -- If you've got a great product and you're sure about customer satisfaction, guarantee it. This puts **your** money where your mouth is.

These two sales-boosting methods are so important that **they deserve their own Content Pages on the path to your MWR.**



10.1. How to Make Testimonials **SELL!**

Testimonials carry tremendous weight. Why?

Because **other people**, people just like your prospect, **say that you are** as good as you say you are.

But there's a slick trick to testimonials that almost no vendor uses... A technique that will make your testimonials **shine...**



...like a beacon of truth.

To have true credibility, a testimonial **must be verifiable**. It must include the real name of the customer, with city of residence and e-mail address (in cyberspace, the telephone number is not so important, so don't bother).

Amazingly, prospects almost never check, but that doesn't matter. They know that

they **could** check. And since they **could** check, they know that you wouldn't put those testimonials there if they weren't genuine.



Here are the critical parts of the **“perfect testimonial”**...

- It makes a **specific** statement that is a **benefit** to your visitor, something your target market understands (“Hey, that’s exactly what I want!”). The very best ones are **real-life success stories** from typical customers -- when others read these, they should think, “Wow! If I can get the same result, it’s more than worth the price!”
- It has an **air of believability**, because the testimonial is **real** (**never** make up testimonials). Clean up horrible typos or misspellings, but **don’t turn a testimonial into a polished piece**. They are much more believable when they are “real.”
- It includes full name, city, and e-mail address.

The key is credibility. Make it impossible for your potential customer to say, “They probably made it up.”



10.1.1. How to Secure **Great** Testimonials

On your site, in documentation that you ship with your product, and in your **regular e-mail newsletter**, ask for “success stories” and “happy experiences.” You care, right? So, of course, you want to hear how people are doing with your product.

When someone replies with how happy they are with your product and service/support, send them an e-mail like this...

Wow! I live for feedback like this. Thank you for those kind words.

Regarding your comments, if you agree, I would like to use them as a testimonial on the Web Site, as follows...

"PennyGold has been my savior in my search for low priced, quality stocks. Not only has it given me the tools to find these stocks, but has increased my own "brain power" and knowledge in all areas of the junior mining industry.

The feeling it has given me must be what a blind person

who has been given sight must feel like. Unlike any other software I have ever purchased, the support I have received was worth the price alone."

Judging from the small number of people who have e-mailed the 30+ people who offer testimonials on the Web site, I doubt if it would generate many inquiries to you, especially because it shares the limelight with the others.

Would this be all right? If there is anything else you would like to add to your quote, please do. I appreciate you considering this.

All the best,
Ken

Once you have drafted your letter, it's just a matter of cut-and-paste, replacing the copy of the proposed testimonial into the letter. Does "cut-and-paste" seem contrived? Well, it's not. **You wrote from the heart the first time.** But it would be idiotic to re-write it each time.

Once they OK your request (and happy customers usually **do** add to it!), use it as a testimonial on your site.

SiteSELL Sidebar

Just getting started and don't have any customers? No problem...

Give your products to people who fit your target market. Ask them for a testimonial, **if they truly like and benefit from your product!**



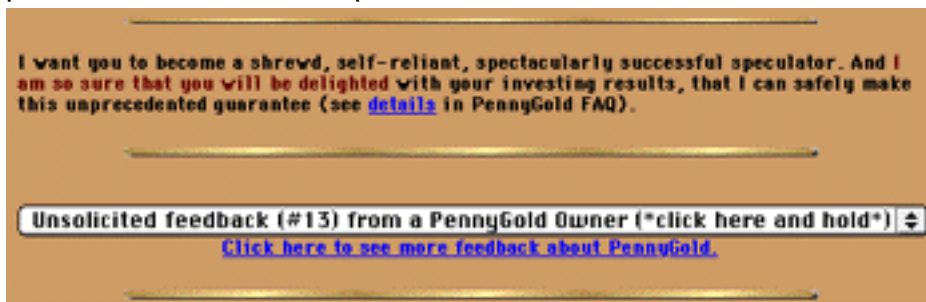
10.1.2. Get Maximum Mileage From Your Testimonials

Most sites group all their testimonials onto a page reserved for that function. Then they put a "**Testimonials**" link on their navbar. Big mistake.

Most won't take the time to link to your testimonial page. Clicking costs them a couple of minutes of their lives... and they already know that the comments will be glowing. So what's the point, right?

But, you know, once you **actually read** a couple of great testimonials, they're like potato chips -- you can't stop. **So make sure your prospect reads at least one!**

On the PennyGold site, we use a feature available in the [FORM tag](#) to shrink the testimonial down to a **single line** which can be expanded, pull-down menu-style. We scatter these “**one-liners**” throughout the site. At each testimonial we also provide a link to our comprehensive list...

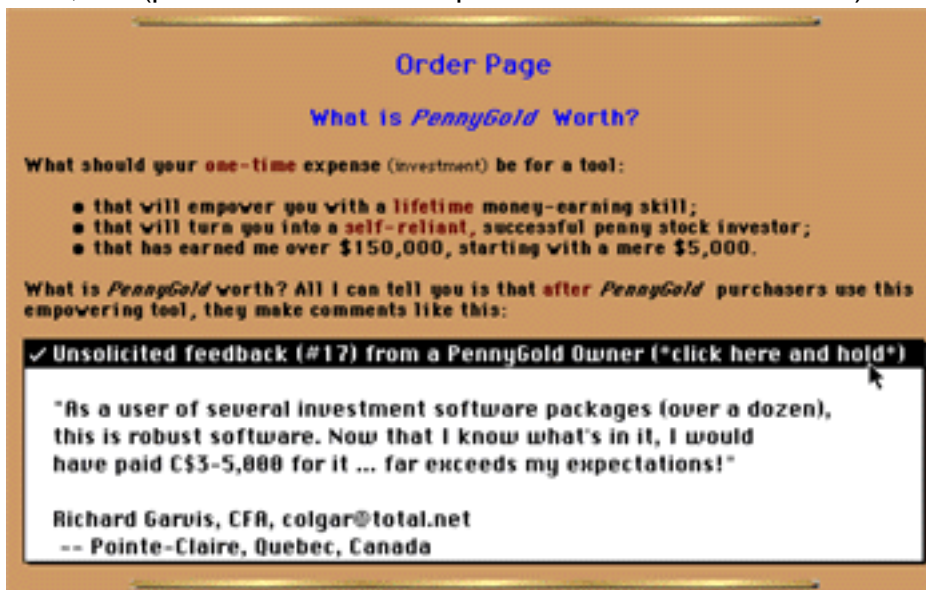


Try it yourself at the following URL...

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/500.html>

This allows us to work testimonials into the copy **throughout the site**. They are repeated, powerful reminders, yet they **don't break the flow**.

Use them at **strategic spots**, to emphasize and support important points. For example, on the PennyGold **Order Page** (my **MWR Closer Page**), we build the case for PennyGold's value. We support it with a testimonial saying that it is worth \$3-5,000 (pulled-down menu expanded in screenshot below)...



PennyGold Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html>

By spreading “**one-liners**” throughout your site, you...

- ensure that everyone sees at least one testimonial
- provide many links to the main testimonial page
- offer repeated, powerful reminders from happy customers
- tailor the use of your testimonials to support the content, **saving your best testimonials for the most important moments!**

SiteSELL Sidebar

Do the same with any other strong **product reviews** that you may have.



10.1.3. How to Get & Use **Product Reviews**

Product reviews are a special kind of testimonial. It's a testimonial that comes from a trusted, known, professional. If you have a great product review or award, don't be subtle. **Trumpet it.**

If you don't have any reviews, get them. Submit your product to every relevant print and online media. Accompany your product with a brief letter that sells your product, and sells the media on reviewing your product (it must be of interest to **their** target market).

If you have a print media review, scan the review and include it on the Web page. If the scan makes a large (over 10K) graphic, post a small thumbnail graphic on your “Reviews” page, with a link to the full-size review.

If it's an online review, include a link to that review, but do it as a (**TARGET=VIEW**) link, so that you open a new window. This way, just in case your visitor checks out other reviews on that site, she'll ultimately “come back” to you when she closes that window. **Put a note beside the link, or use a javascript alert when the link is clicked, that clicking will open a new window, and to close it when finished.**
Or much better...

Don't link out. **Simply “re-print” the review on your own site.** By keeping your visitor **on your site**, you control what she sees and where she goes. **You open a potential can of worms** by sending a visitor to a review site (she may link

somewhere else, or check out reviews of competing products, etc.). For example...

WallStreet E does this extremely well. Loads of great reviews. Each “review link” (in the page below) links to a page on the WallStreet E site, **not** to the reviewer’s site. It’s well done. It’s credible.

And it keeps the visitor on WallStreet E’s site! If the visitor had gone to the Barron’s site, she would likely check out the other reviewed online brokers, right? This way, WallStreet E gets the boost from the review, without losing control over the visitor.



WallStreet E, Articles About Us

<http://www.wallstreete.com/home/articles/article.asp>

However you choose to do it, **the bottom line is...** if you have received glowing product reviews but don’t include them on your Web site...

... marketing is not for you. **Hire someone... fast!**



10.1.4. Articles on You, Your Company, Your Products

Whenever a major publication (or even a minor one!) writes about you, your company, and/or your products, **put it up on your Web site.**

While these general-interest articles are not as strong as product reviews, **they still come across as an endorsement of you, and therefore your products.** After all, trained professionals are writing about you, right?

Here's an article about our toy design biz that was written up in Montreal's largest English-language newspaper. Even though it's not related to penny mining stocks, it otherwise establishes me as a successful, credible and stable person (OK, OK -- a lot of friends will argue about the "stable" part!)...



The Toy Biz

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/100toys.html>

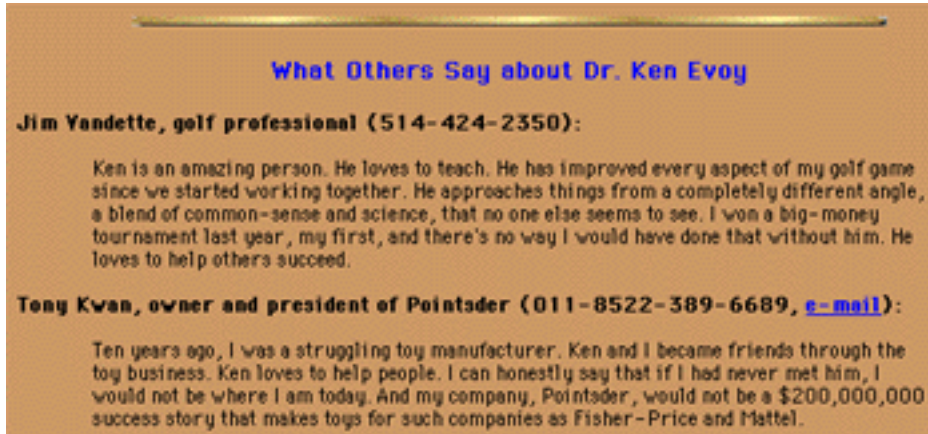
While it's not actually an endorsement by that publication, **it sure looks like one!**



10.1.5. Using Other Third Party References...

Any time someone says something nice about you, it has credibility. **Figure out how it can be used to build credibility on your Web site.**

I even put up a page on PennyGold that is half-devoted to "personal character references" from people I have worked with and /or helped...



How Do You Know This is “For Real”?

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/200.html>

As a matter of fact, if the concept fits, you could even **write your whole Web site from the third party perspective**. For example...

I chose to write the PennyGold Web site from my own perspective. But I could have asked Bob Carrier, my broker, to write about PennyGold instead. All the successful trades that he has witnessed... what a great guy I am... etc., etc. But the site was really too big for this approach.

But if you are a small, one-product company, with an extremely happy customer or some other participant, consider this approach.



10.1.6. Your **Unsalariated** Sales Staff...

Encourage customers, suppliers, associates, whoever... to report their positive experiences to a newsgroup, forum, mailing list etc. This, in itself, has some limited value. But you can leverage off that tremendously!

How? **Glad you asked...**

First, get permission to quote the posting. Then...

If it's a **Usenet** (i.e., newsgroup) posting, go to Deja News and do a search for that posting. When you find it, copy the URL for that posting (in the “Location” or “Go to” bar of your browser). Provide a link to that posting from your Testimonials Page ([remember, always open a new window](#), in case your visitor gets interested in

where he went).



Deja News

<http://www.dejanews.com/>

If it's a Web site **forum** posting, simply provide its URL. Same for quotes from mailing lists that are archived (i.e., back issues are stored on the Web, and therefore have URLs). If the mailing list is not archived, treat it as a straight testimonial, with quote, name, e-mail address.

Again, it may be preferable to keep your customer on your site. Simply create a section in your "Testimonials" page to quote the relevant newsgroups, mailing lists, and forums. If your visitor stays on site, you can't lose control.



10.2. **The SALES-Clinching Guarantee**

Remember your prospect's mind set? No matter how great you **know** your product is, your prospect is skeptical.

Everyone has bought a bad product at one time or another. So anyone over the age of 8 **has learned to be careful.**

No one wants to make a mistake. Especially not an expensive mistake -- the more expensive your product, the more important is your guarantee.

So let your prospect know that you are willing to take the risk for them -- that's how much you believe in the product.

Let me repeat -- **Take the risk off your visitor's back and put it all onto your own shoulders. How?**



10.2.1. Developing the Perfect Guarantee...

First, let's talk **attitude**.

Don't pitch your guarantee as a "Full Refund If Not Satisfied" or "Money Back if You're Not Happy" kind of thing. That's **negative**.

Instead, offer "A Free 30-day Trial" or "A No-Risk Free Trial Download." It is the same thing, expressed in **positive** terms.

"Examine it, try it, use it for a **full 30 days** without risk." Now you're inviting them to try your product. **You're not warning** them about it.



Did I say "30 days"? No!...

Make the guarantee as long as practical. Longer trial periods allow prospects to "get used to" your product. You also get inertia working for you, instead of against you. People forget.

I don't know about you, but when I see a 30 day guarantee on a product, I wonder about the product. And when I get it, I am very aware that I only have 30 days to be sure. **So I actually test it and make a decision immediately.**

However, with a one-year guarantee, I don't exactly enter the deadline in my day planner -- "**End of guarantee period -- decide by now, Ken.**" No, I just kind of forget all about it.

I took a subscription to a newsletter that offered a full guarantee for a full year after subscribing. Each month that I received the newsletter, it reminded me that it wasn't very good. However, I put off asking for my money back -- "I'll do it later." After all, don't you put off unpleasant stuff? Then guess what? I forget all about it!

Now, I'm not saying to offer a one year guarantee to reduce refund requests if you have a bad product. No, just that it's good business to offer a one year guarantee. You will get more sales and less returns. **It's the best way to offer your guarantee for your great product.**

Your guarantee must be specific, not vague. It must **prove** your commitment and confidence.

It must be iron-clad. Not weaseling. No ifs, ands, buts, or any legalese... "Just ask and we'll refund your money. Period. No questions asked."

Make your reader think, "Gosh, I'd have to be brain-dead not to try this. What do I have to lose?"



10.2.2. How to Handle the Refund Request

If someone does make a refund request under the terms of your guarantee, **honor it.**

Understand that a few guarantee claims will be fraudulent. Allow them to "fool" you -- it's just not worth your time to do otherwise. And, of course, a few claims **will** be genuine (not everyone can love your product, no matter how good it is). Either way, it doesn't matter...

Refund them all. But go **beyond** that...

Do it quick and with a smile. Thank them for the product feedback, and apologize for not measuring up to their expectations. Promise to improve the product -- **then do it**, if possible.

Then **really** go "the extra mile." **Convert** that unsatisfied customer **into a friend.** Apologize for their inconvenience and offer to "make it up to them." For example... if you're selling software, offer your next version **free.**

In the long run, it's great for business -- no bad-mouthing you and your product to all their friends, **or worse...** to newsgroups, mailing lists and e-mailed newsletters! You may even convert an unsatisfied customer into a **raving fan!**

SiteSELL Sidebar

If you offer a free trial of your product, the guarantee becomes less important, or even unnecessary.

But for our site, the guarantee **is** vital because the 30-day trial is impossible (due to the nature of the information itself). And since PennyGold **does** deliver what we promise, the guarantee has cost us nothing to date.



10.2.3. How to Reduce Refund Requests to **Near-Zero**

While you must honor refund requests, there are ways to **prevent them from ever happening...**

- **Deliver an obviously great product** -- if a customer receives a crummy, low-quality product, as if no serious effort was ever made by the vendor, you'll get an angry customer. And angry customers **punish** you by asking for their money back. So it's simple... **over-deliver**, even to the extent of adding something that your customer did not expect to receive in the package.
- **Build a good relationship with your customers and less than 1% will ever ask for any kind of refund!** Start with a wonderful, warm, "welcome and thank you" letter upon shipping the product. This letter should thank and reassure, removing any buyer's remorse -- this would also be the place to point out any little extras that you have thrown in, "just to show you my appreciation." Then follow with solid after-sales support, newsletters, and so forth.

You have to be a real hard-nosed SOB to ask for a refund if a company has delivered a good product and built a solid relationship!

If you honestly offer a solid product, about 2% of purchasers will still make claims. That 2% figure will drop to well under 1% if you are an effective one-to-one marketer and provide good after-sales support.



10.2.4. Summing Up...

People who phone me with questions about PennyGold often mention “and it’s guaranteed, right?”... followed by some detailed questions about the guarantee.

Clearly it’s a **determining** factor in the decision-making process. Use one... always.



The Guarantee

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/500.html>





11. Site-Sales Techniques

So far, we have seen that a **you**-focused **Opening Page**, benefit-laden and verifiable **testimonials**, and a sales-clinching **guarantee** are “**The Big 3**” that every serious sales-oriented site must have. The **MWR Closer Page** is the fourth, of course, and [we'll discuss that soon](#).

In addition to “**The Big 3**,” you should keep a few other tools in your cyber-toolbox. Use them at the right time (i.e., for the right product and appropriate target market).



11.1. Build a Form that Works!

To look at many [forms](#) online, you'd think that companies don't want you to complete and submit them. They're full of barriers to completion... vague, long, intimidating, worrisome.

Here's how to get it right...



11.1.1. Make it Short

Make your [Response Form](#) short. Ask for as little as possible. Only what you absolutely need to know. Remember, the typical Web surfer is time pressured. If she sees a flurry of entry boxes, chances are she'll just say, “Ah-h-h, maybe later.”

SiteSELL Sidebar

Here's a way to get more info **and** not lose anyone...

Let's say you offer a free newsletter. First, just ask for the e-mail address. That's all you really need.

But you'd like to add a little friendly **personalization**. So you decide to **also** ask for a first name. The [CGI mailing script](#) stores that name, along with the e-mail

address, in an online database. When it sends the newsletter to that subscriber, it uses the name in the subject of the e-mail (“Jill, here’s PGOLD XPRESS #035”). And you could preface the newsletter with a brief letter that starts, “Hi Jill,...”

So how do you get this **extra** piece of data **without losing subscriptions?**...

First, just ask for the e-mail address. When your visitor clicks the “Subscribe” button, she advances to **another** form which then asks for her first name. Since this only takes a second, odds are she’ll give it to you. If not, you still have her registered as a subscriber!

TECH NOTE: Your techie will have to set a **cookie**, which can tie the info from the different forms together, so that you can read it as all coming from the same person.



11.1.2. **How to Qualify Your Prospect**

There is one big exception to making your form as short as possible. That’s when you want to **qualify** the respondent.

If your form takes orders for widgets or asks people to subscribe to your free newsletter, odds are **you want as many people as possible to complete and submit the form.** In these cases, keep it as short as possible. But...

... let’s say you’re looking for leads, people who, after reviewing your Web site, are seriously interested in your million-dollar bridge expansion joints. When these people submit a form, the data will be delivered to your high-priced, super-busy, director of sales.

On one hand, you want to weed out as many “tire-kickers” as possible -- no point in wasting your sales director’s time. On the other, you don’t want to scare away serious inquiries. **Design the form to optimize the balance.**

The more data that your form requests, the more motivated the client must be to complete it. And certain **kinds** of questions will also qualify prospects better than others...

Let’s start by designing a **Response Form** that asks for full contact information, with a few pointed questions thrown in (name of company, title, decision-making capabilities, etc.). End the form with a question like “Please provide a brief summary of your needs.” This eliminates the tire-kickers -- it forces people to think!

If you get too few inquiries, lighten up a little. If you get too many “low-level” requests, toughen up the form. It’s cheap and easy to experiment until you find the perfect balance.

Another way to qualify is by **the response that you promise in return**. Everything else being equal, which of the following propositions do you think will generate a higher number of qualified submissions?...

“For more information, fill out this form...”

OR

“If you would like our sales director to discuss our expansion joints with you personally, fill out this form...”



11.1.3. **Make it Clear**

Make everything about your form as clear as glass and as easy as pie...

Instructions must be clear.

Design must be simple and clean.

Organize your required data into logical groups.

Layout your data headings and corresponding entry boxes clearly. Test across all browsers.

Use radio buttons, drop-down boxes, etc. wherever it will make your customer’s life easier.

If some data is a must, and other is optional, mark the “must have” with an asterix. Then explain that the “asterix” is for data that you require.

Test all forms with users before going “live.”



11.1.4. “Submit” is for Techies

Don’t use a “SUBMIT” button...

“Submit” is a techie word. If your visitor is subscribing, make it a “SUBSCRIBE” button. If she’s ordering your product, make it a “SEND ORDER” button.



11.1.5. How to Remove Worries

The more boxes that ask for personal info (name, telephone number, address), the more nervous your customer gets. So make sure you put your privacy policy on your form. Here’s mine...

Don’t worry -- your e-mail address is totally secure.
I promise to use it **only** to send you the PGOLD XPRESS.

A short, clear, and direct privacy statement goes a long way to reassuring people. The longer your privacy policy, and the more legalese that it contains, **the worse the reassurance.**

SiteSELL Sidebar

Honor your privacy promise. If you don’t, you’ll be exposed sooner or later. People with “catch-all” e-mail accounts can put any name in front of their domain, giving them an infinite number of e-mail addresses.

For example, let’s say you have a **catch-all e-mail account** for your domain, “domain.com.” If you wanted to test how well I honor my policy of not selling my e-mail database, you would subscribe to my newsletter with a **unique** word followed by “@domain.com.” Next, you set your e-mail filter to send all e-mail that comes to **unique@domain.com** into a folder with **my** name on it. **The e-mails that go there better only be from me!**



11.1.6. Verify the Data

The **CGI script** that handles the data gathering should verify that it has all the mandatory data -- remember, keep your mandatory data to a minimum.

For example, after your visitor hits “**Subscribe**” to sign up for your free newsletter, the CGI should check to make sure that the e-mail address field is not blank, **and** that it has been entered by your subscriber in a valid form (i.e., **xyz@something.ending**).

If the address is empty or invalid, the script pops up a page politely asking her to correct the entry.



11.1.7. Put Up a Response Page

Once your CGI script has verified the submission, it should put up an **html response page**. Here’s what someone sees after submitting an “Intent to Order” form for PennyGold...



PennyGold Thank You Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/thankyou.html>

Note the functions of this page...

- reassures that info was received
- promises what **our** reply to their submission will be
- confirms what a good move they have made. This **removes any last second doubts or worries... eliminates “buyer’s remorse.”**

Here’s the response page for those who subscribe to the free newsletter, PGOLD XPRESS...

Thank you for your subscription to PGOLD XPRESS.

I'll send you a welcoming e-mail, as well as the current issue of PGOLD XPRESS, immediately. You'll get it in a minute or two (assuming you have entered your e-mail address without typos*). [Please let me know how you like it.](#)

*If you don't get it within 10 minutes, try again, being sure there are no typos.

Thank You For Your Subscription

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgxprsresponse.html>

This page promises two e-mails, which the CGI script will send automatically. Since the welcoming e-mail continues with the sales process, I don't bother confirming their brilliant choice on this page.



11.1.8. Follow-up with an E-mail

While a customer cannot store an html response page, she can store an e-mail. So program the CGI script to send an e-mail to your customer who submitted a form.

A follow-up e-mail serves as a good reminder, too. People forget amazingly fast.

The contents may do nothing more than repeat your response page (above). Or it may build upon it, and move matters to the next level. All depending on your particular circumstances, of course.

If you ask for non-standardized kind of data in your form (ex., feedback, new product ideas, tech support question), reply with individualized responses.



11.2. How and When to Use Music

Music is a controversial point. There are several downsides...

1) Download Time is slo-o-o-ow. If you use plug-ins like RealAudio to eliminate download waiting by [streaming](#) the music, only a small percent will actually hear your music, because most don't have the plug-in. If you are using music just for background look and feel, **no one will take the time** to download the plug-in while at your site. **So let's stick with MIDI files** as the most practical compromise.

A MIDI is a file containing programmed, computerized music. It delivers an amazing amount of music per K of file. But you are still looking at 20-30K for a decent-sounding MIDI... which means **download time**.

However, when you give your customers good copy to read while the music loads, **most will wait for the music**. Our own log files show that **less than 5%** kill the MIDI download.

2) Netscape and Explorer use different html tags to deliver MIDI as background sounds. This can be handled with a **javascript work-around**, which means that older, non-javascript enabled browsers (pre-Netscape 2 and pre-Explorer 3 or 4, depending on your code) won't hear the music.

3) If you want a MIDI file to keep playing as your visitors click to other pages, you have to "play" the MIDI in a separate small **frame**, meaning you have to use a frameset with all its disadvantages. See the PennyGold site for how I use frames to deliver a jukebox of 5 MIDI selections that keep on playing as the visitor clicks through the site.

[Goodbye Blues \(61k\)](#) [Canon in D \(32k\)](#) [OEE](#) [Stairway to Heaven \(65k\)](#) [Start Me Up \(62k\)](#)

PennyGold Home Page

<http://goodbytes.com/pennygold/>

4) People will complain about the music. At least that's what the experts say. We get **far more compliments** than complaints (2 out of tens of thousands have complained).



So why play music? Simple...

People buy more. Choose the right, toe-tapping stimulating music, and people will get into the right mood. You don't think Wal-Mart and Sears play that music just to keep their staff entertained, do you?

I experimented with **not** using music. One day, I decided that I didn't like the frames and the long initial download. So I dropped the music for two weeks, and delivered

a frames-free site. I loved it -- it felt tighter, faster, cleaner... **to me.**

How did sales go, you ask? I'm sorry you asked!...

Sales dropped by 70%, including three days in a row with **no** sales at all, which had not happened since I figured out how to increase traffic (several months earlier).

I put the music back on, and sales returned to normal.

As I write this, I still have trouble believing the results could be that dramatic. I don't know if it was coincidence or not, but I never tried the experiment again. **I still don't have the courage.**

If you're not using music now, perform this little experiment...

Try two weeks with background music. See my URL above for an example of implementation and types of music to play. I'll bet your **sales go up** (unless music is really inappropriate for your product and target market -- for example, hard-core, info-seeking techies).

Follow these guidelines for adding background music to your site...

1) Stimulate your visitors. Make most selections fun and toe-tapping.

2) Provide alternate choices, so that there is something for everyone in your target market.

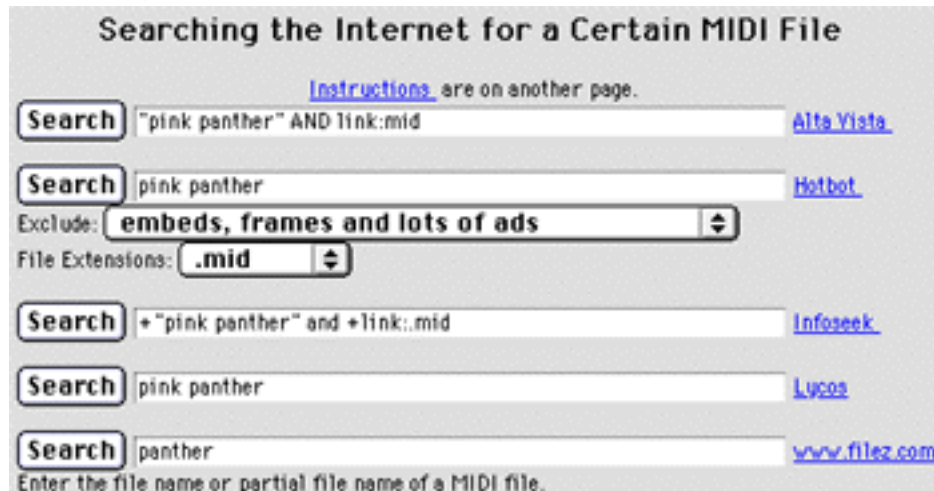
3) Deliver an OFF option. You **will** get complaints if they can't turn the music off! One of the two complaints was an inability to turn OFF the music (even though the OFF option **was** clearly there).

4) Don't distract your visitor or slow her down. Remember the goal -- deliver her to your **MWR Closer Page** and get the **MWR**. For example, don't invite her to visit your **MIDI** museum. Don't offer a fancy, huge jukebox with 80 music choices.

Keep the music where it belongs, in the background.

SiteSELL Sidebar

Here's a great site to find selections for your own mini-MIDI-jukebox...



The screenshot shows a web interface for searching MIDI files. At the top, it says "Searching the Internet for a Certain MIDI File". Below this, there are several search options. The first search bar contains the text "pink panther" AND link:midi, with a link to "Alta Vista". The second search bar contains "pink panther" with a link to "Hotbot". Below these, there is an "Exclude:" dropdown menu set to "embeds, frames and lots of ads" and a "File Extensions:" dropdown menu set to ".mid". The third search bar contains "+ "pink panther" and +link::midi" with a link to "Infoseek". The fourth search bar contains "pink panther" with a link to "Lycos". The fifth search bar contains "panther" with a link to "www.filez.com". At the bottom, there is a note: "Enter the file name or partial file name of a MIDI file."

[Searching the Internet for a Certain MIDI File](http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~ckelly/midi/help/midi-search.html)

<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~ckelly/midi/help/midi-search.html>

11.3. The RIGHT Picture **is** Worth 1,000 Words

From all we've covered so far, you might have the impression that I **hate** graphics. I don't, as long as they get at least one of the following jobs done...

- creating a solid, professional business image and an appealing "look and feel," one that is appropriate for your target market
- helping navigation
- contributing to **getting the sale** by adding to the verbal content.

... and as long as they get the job done while being **as small as possible**.

OK, let's elaborate a little.



11.3.1. Where to, Why to & When to Use Graphics

Use graphics for one or more of the following reasons...

1) Increase the overall visual appeal of the page, just enough to be appealing and set a classy, solid look. Beyond that, “appeal” does nothing for the motivation of your potential customer, who just wants enough info to make a decision.

Decide upon what you want your design to transmit (ex., stable conservatism, sharp originality, etc.). Then, together with your graphic designer, develop the following...

- overall page layout -- build an [html](#) template (left margin, position of navbars, headers and footers, etc.)
- background color or background GIF
- colors for text and links
- quick-loading corporate logo
- Table of Contents and navbars
- bullets and horizontal line dividers.

Beyond that, go easy on “just for appeal” graphics. Once you have established a solid look, beautiful **graphics don’t help get the sale. Words do.**



2) Aid navigation. [As discussed earlier](#), correct use of graphics can **clarify navigation**.



3) Increase the information content of the page. Graphics must add to or complement the text info. For example, [as described earlier](#), you can also use graphics to **build credibility** by including photos of you, your employees, your facilities and your product. This is **far more effective** than anything you could say with words.

And graphics can add a lot to product presentation. We’ll get to that in the next

section.



If a graphic does **not** accomplish at least one of the above, **don't use it.**



11.3.2. Show Your Products in Their Best Light

If your product is highly visual, take maximal advantage of the Web. Provide images that help explain or demonstrate your product.

Great photos **can** sell a product. So if there is indeed a time to sacrifice a bit on download time, this would be it. Here's how to do it...

Say you're selling your brand new "Turn of the Millennium Widget." It's a beautiful, ergonomic widget. You want to show...

- the product from all angles
- your widget in high-detail
- the incredible benefits of using this marvelous contraption.

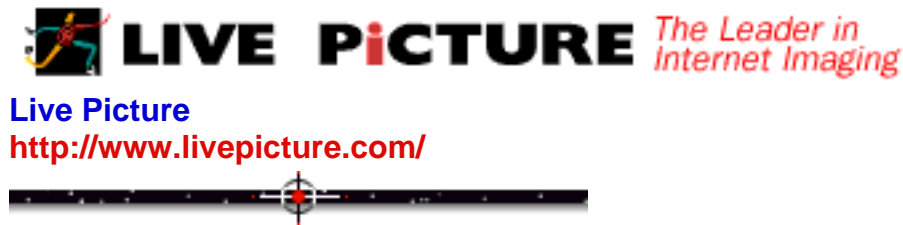
Great ideas! But on the widget's product page, show **low-K** thumbnail photos, with a caption-link below each photo. Now you've got the best of both worlds...

- Your widget product page downloads quick **and** delivers the sales copy followed by the thumbnails.
- Each thumbnail photo-link [dead-end side-branches](#) to detailed photos and some related copy. Your user will gladly wait for the whole photo if she knows what to expect (tell her how many K)... **and** if she believes that the graphic will add to her understanding. **Just be sure to deliver on the promise!**

If, instead, you make your visitor wait for five 60K graphics to download on the product page... well, say good-night, widget.

SiteSELL Sidebar

If you're selling hard goods or travel or just about anything else that would benefit from letting your visitors zoom in for close up looks, check out this site...



11.3.3. Are Your Graphics Confusing?

Sure **you** know what that funny squiggle on your navbar means. **But your viewer doesn't.**

And that photo of the watchamacallit -- you took it from a funny angle. You know that. But your prospect mistakes it for a watchamacall**that**.

Make sure your graphics don't confuse.

Graphics must be clear, **even if your visitor comes in with graphics turned off.** In that case, your **ALT tags** describe the file. Graphic links that do **not** have ALT tags are Web site mortal sins -- there is no way for the graphics-off visitor to know what he's clicking on, let alone the link's destination.

If your graphics don't have ALT tags, graphics-off visitors have to turn graphics **on** and reload (refresh) the page. **That makes them cranky.**



Cranky visitors don't buy.

Does your site stand up to a graphics-off browser?



11.3.4. How to Do Photos Right...

Buy a digital camera and take professional-quality photos of your products. Or scan existing photos. Or use existing stock photos on CD-ROMs from companies like Expert, Corel, and Softkey. **Or get stock photos on-line from...**



PhotoDisc

<http://www.photodisc.com/>



Publisher's Depot

<http://www.publishersdepot.com/>

Like any other graphic, your photos must be as small as possible. Your graphic designer must know how to **compress your photos into super-tight JPEGs.**



11.3.5. Clip Art, Buttons, Backgrounds, Bullets, Etc.

You may want to spring for a skilled graphist to [customize your whole look](#). Coordinated logo, background, bullets, buttons and horizontal rules all do add up to a certain air of sharp professionalism.

But if the price is a little steep, you can certainly get away with less...

ArtToday has an **awesome collection** of clip art (750,000 images) and over 40,000 bullets, backgrounds, animations, buttons, and horizontal lines/rules. Careful

selection here will round out the look of your site.

Even more important, they've got a deadly search engine to make finding your desired graphic a snap.

For a low price, you get one year of full access. Download as many images as you need. There are no royalty payments or download fees. No other charges, whatsoever.

If you've played around in the quasi-free sites, you'll know that ArtToday is a steal.



ArtToday

<http://www.arttoday.com/>



11.3.6. A Few Basics About Graphics

Basically, you should have a graphics guru who knows all this stuff. But if you know a bit, you'll be able to **keep her on her toes...**

- Know when to use **JPEGs** (best for photos and illustrations with subtle gradations) and when to use **GIFs** (little gradation, small number of colors -- good for cartoons).
- Transparent GIFs allow non-rectangular graphics, which gives a sharper effect.
- Use [ALT tags](#), of course.
- Since you're still designing for your lowest common denominator, the 256 color monitor, make sure that your guru is using the 216 color browser-safe palette. The other 40 colors are dropped because they vary from Macs to Win machines. By eliminating those 40, your graphics will look the same on both Mac and Windows.
- Your [html code](#) should specify height and width dimensions, so that the browser software immediately knows how to lay out the whole page. This way, graphics load **after** the text.

That's not even a start. But at least when you throw one or more of the above into

the conversation, your guru will show a little respect!



11.3.7. The \$62,000 Graphic-Killing Question

OK, you've got all your graphics in place. Time to [cut, chop, axe, & prune!](#)

Sound familiar? Yes...

... review your images the way you edited your text -- strike anything that is not absolutely needed.

Ask yourself this question for every graphic...

"Is this graphic increasing my chance for a sale?"

You know what to do...



... if the answer is "no."



11.4. Give Your Visitor Something to **Do...**

Interactivity is the process of **involving** your customer in the process, of giving him something **to do**.

It puts him into a more active and involved state of mind. **It gets him used to dealing with you.**

But if it's gratuitous and stretched, he just thinks, "Boy, that's dumb. I'm not doing that." If it's too time-consuming, bye-bye. And if there's just no payoff, forget about it.

If it's appropriate, quick, and **rewarding**, your visitor will do it, gladly. So...

If your interactive “quiz” doesn’t **fit** or if it distracts, it’s a **minus**, not a plus. If he’s going to fill out a **Response Form**, or do a search, or query a database, or play a game, **there has to be a strong reason why... a reward.**

Of course, **from your point of view, the interactivity must contribute to generating the MWR.**

SiteSELL Sidebar

Profnet Inc.’s personality inventory test is a great example of interactivity, but I’m not so sure it leads to much of anything. Visitors are supposed to take this mini-personality inventory test to “help business professionals develop stronger business relationships.”

They probably understand their particular target market better than I understand basic human nature. Because there’s no way that benefit **would convince me to spill my guts.**

But I love the basic idea **as an example of interactivity.** And also as an example of something **most people won’t do.**

That’s just my opinion of course. And it could just be me. I took a personality test once. Failed. I should have studied. ;-)



1. ☒ Adventurous ☐ Adaptable ☐ Animated ☐ Analytical

2. ☒ Persistent ☐ Playful ☐ Persuasive ☐ Peaceful

3. ☒ Submissive ☐ Self-sacrificing ☐ Sociable ☐ Strong-willed

4. ☒ Considerate ☐ Controlled ☐ Competitive ☐ Convincing

5. ☒ Refreshing ☐ Respectful ☐ Reserved ☐ Resourceful

6. ☒ Satisfied ☐ Sensitive ☐ Self-reliant ☐ Spirited

Personality Inventory Test

<http://www.profnet.org/person2.html>

Bottom line? Blend interactivity into your site. **But make it...**

- fit
- quick
- pay
- help get the **MWR**.

Or drop it -- keeping the path tidy and direct to the **MWR** is a powerful help, all by itself.



11.5. A Rarely Used **Powerful Tool**

I surf several hours per day, and yet weeks can go by before I'll see a [javascript alert](#). Many experts say **not** to use them, so they are rarely used. If these alerts were to become commonplace, I'd be the first to drop them -- then they **really would** get too annoying.

The correct advice is to **use them well if you have a creative way to turn them into a plus for you and your customer.**

PennyGold used two javascript alerts, one upon visitor **entry** and one upon **exit**.

Our visitors were most definitely not annoyed. The only comments we received were positive. They often said something like, "Very cool. How did you do that?"

I highly recommend creative use of them, **but not just to be cool.**

I did drop the alert "on entry." Although there were no complaints about it, I just couldn't develop a message that I thought was worthwhile. **So it delayed access to the site, with no true benefit.**

My "exit" message is still up. Here's what pops up when you leave the PennyGold site...



This “personal thank you” is a strong message, creates a good feeling, and is definitely worth the alert. People have actually called and told me...

“Hi, I’m just looking at this window that told me to call you if I had a question. You know, I wasn’t going to buy PennyGold because... <reason>, But I thought I’d call and ask you about it.”

Bingo!

As long as javascript alerts are rarely used, they’re a great tool. So let’s hope the experts keep saying **not** to do it!

If you do use javascript alerts, they **do** get tired for repeat visitors. So if your site is heavily repeat-visit oriented (PennyGold’s is **not**), add a few lines of script to the effect that if that visitor has been there before (you can check via a cookie), drop the alerts.

This brings up another general observation...

... before following any conventional thinking (which **is** usually based on solid reasoning), **consider your audience and the nature of your site.** The PennyGold site uses javascript alerts and MIDI music (both generally frowned upon), with great results, because they fit the product and the audience.

SiteSELL Sidebar

I’m writing this on a warm Saturday night in June. I talked this morning to a nice lady from Arizona. She saw the site, was impressed, left the site. Javascript alert popped up -- in her own words, she said, “What the heck, I thought I’d give you a call.” She had not noticed our phone numbers at the bottom of each page.

We had a nice little chat. When I returned tonight, there was an order from her.

The more ways you reach out to people, the more ways you make yourself available, the better your chances of turning a visit into an order.



11.6. Build Community to Build SALES

Jim Wilson is the master of building community, through his Web site, VirtualPromote.

VirtualPROMOTE

VirtualPromote

<http://www.virtualpromote.com/>

Jim's target market is Web marketers. He treasures them, helps them, protects them, and builds them into a true community. In return, they are a constant source of warm communications, inspirations, new ideas, and original articles.

Here are just two of the techniques Jim uses to mold his market into a community...

- He delivers a **high quality, info-packed Web-marketing newsletter** once a week, the VirtualPromote Gazette.

VIRTUAL PROMOTE GAZETTE

VirtualPromote Gazette

<http://www.virtualpromote.com/gazette1.html>

- The VirtualPromote site hosts many [forums](#). **Search Engine Forums** and **Get High (Traffic) Forums** have been fabulous successes from Day 1.

SEARCH ENGINE FORUMS

Search Engine Forums

<http://searchengineforums.com/bin/Ultimate.cgi>

Visit Jim's site to see why, in his own words, VirtualPromote "becomes constantly more of a home town instead of Jim's formal living room where guests are entertained."

Building off his expertise developed in VirtualPromote, Jim has even launched a Web site dedicated to community building...

COMMUNITYBUILDING

CommunityBuilding

<http://communitybuilding.com/>

What's that, you say it doesn't apply to you? Building community applies to any business.

Yes, even if you sell toilets. Now, you may not want to maintain an active [chat room](#) or [forum](#) on toilets. But you could offer a free [newsletter](#) that covers a wide variety of topics on bathroom installations (high-tech tubs with temperature monitoring, lighting and sound systems, etc., etc.). Encourage people to participate. Ask those with expertise if they would like to host their own column. People with an interest in home renovations would eat this up. **And you'd be front and center when it came time to order.**

Everyone loves to "belong." Think about how to build community among your customers.

Then do it. Your customers will come back to your site **repeatedly**. And they will **appreciate the effort** you make to provide a valuable resource.

And that appreciation builds [trust and customer loyalty](#), which builds SALES.



11.7. Using FAQs to the Max

A good FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page is essential to any site that wants to **SELL**. Properly done, your FAQ will...

- **overcome common objections.** You will lose many sales because your visitor has an objection that she is "**sure about.**" She won't even e-mail to ask you about it. But she may very well see it addressed in your FAQ! **Foresee as many of these objections as possible. Frame them as questions. Then build the perfect answers to overcome the resistance.**

- **answer frequent questions** that “just didn’t fit” elsewhere in the site. Provide the info they want -- work **benefits** into the answer. Anytime you provide useful advice at the right moment, you’ve got a happy customer. Most people, if they have unanswered questions, won’t bother e-mailing you for help. **They just leave. Answer these people in your FAQ.**

- **reinforce important points**, especially any that seem to get overlooked. However, if really important stuff seems to get missed frequently, your site needs some work! Even if a main point in your site is well covered, ask the question in your FAQ -- reword your answer. If it’s important, it’s worth repeating (as you probably have noticed in this book!).

- **save you a lot of time.** A well-designed FAQ will save you lots of e-mail response time. If your customer finds the answer to her question in the FAQ, she doesn’t have to e-mail **you** with the question. She’s happier and you save time -- talk about WIN-WIN!

And if someone **does** e-mail you a question that **is** covered in your FAQ, thank them for asking such a good question, and refer them back to the relevant part of the FAQ (not just to the FAQ itself, but to the exact question). Or better still, simply copy and paste the answer from your FAQ, customizing as necessary.

What’s the best way to make a FAQ? Hey, super question! Glad you asked...



11.7.1. 5 Steps to a FAQ that SELLS!

STEP 1 Anticipate the most common objections. Phrase them as questions. Answer them so that you completely overcome the objections.

Your answers should be brief, to the point, and stress benefits whenever possible. Don’t have to be so obvious as to say, “The benefits are...” Instead, the answer makes the reader clearly understand the benefit. Again, all the rules of good writing apply -- sharp, active, lively copy. Don’t turn your FAQ into the boring, scientific Q&A stuff. **Make it lively and conversational.**

STEP 2 If your business is already operating, ask whoever handles questions (phone or e-mail), “What questions do you hear over and over?” Ask them to make a list. Many of the questions on the list will be the same question,

just asked differently. Choose the simplest, easy-to-understand, way to ask the question. No technical lingo.

If you are just starting out, anticipate the most frequently asked **questions**. These are not objections, just requests for more information on a certain topic.

Answer them, short and sweet, always with an emphasis on benefits. Where there is a good fit with the topic or where you can develop it into a natural conclusion, **link-invite the reader to a Response Page, either your MWR or your Backup Response.**

SiteSELL Sidebar

Questions indicate interest. Use your answers to “close the sale.”

Even more important -- for every question that arrives by e-mail, there are at least 10 others who had the same question, but didn't bother to write. **These are lost sales. Address them through your FAQ.**

How do you decide which questions and objections belong? Simple, you want to include all **the most frequently asked questions**, basically to save you time and provide good info to your customer immediately.

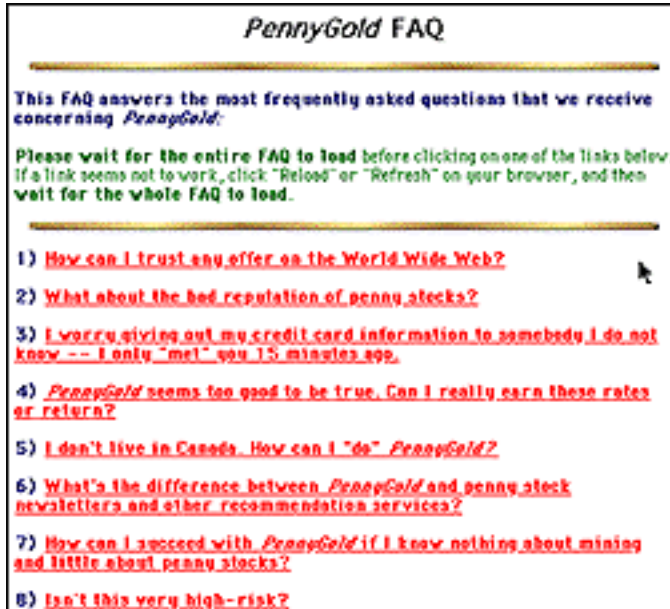
But you also want to include **the most important objections**. They may or may not occur so frequently. But if you answer it well, it may just nail down the sale. Here, you must address general issues (trusting Internet sales, for example), as well as objections that are specific to your product and company.

Bottom line -- if it's neither important nor frequent, it doesn't belong in your FAQ.

STEP 3 Build the structure. While you may only start with a 5-10 questions and answers, build a structure **that will withstand 100.**

List all the questions at the top (most important **“selling”** ones first), so that the reader can see all the questions at a glance. Make each question a link to the answer below. Follow each answer with a “Back to top” link, so your reader can skip back to the top to review the list of all the questions whenever he wants.

If the format for a proper FAQ is new to you, please see the PennyGold FAQ as an example. [View source](#) it to start your own template.



PennyGold FAQ

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/FAQ1.html>

STEP 4 Improve and grow.

- **Improve** -- Let's say that you get a question that is close to one of the questions in the FAQ, but that touches on a side-issue that isn't well handled by the answer in the FAQ. What do you do? Improve your answer to cover the new issue and send the improved answer to your customer. **Then post the new answer to the FAQ!** Always improve.

- **Grow** -- Whenever you get a "never seen before" question, **prepare an excellent answer to it.** Then enter the **Q&A** into a "non-FAQ database or list." **Take your time at this step.** The next time you receive this question, look up the answer in the database. Copy and paste and then...

STOP! Don't e-mail it. Read the answer. Can you improve it? Probably, now that you're reading with fresh eyes. **Make it better,** then e-mail it... and update the database. If the question becomes frequent enough, **add it to the FAQ.**

STEP 5 As your FAQ grows, **it will become an important sales tool.** It is often

the **clincher** that converts a **waffler** into a **SALE**.

So get your visitors to your FAQ. Here's how...

- **provide a link on every relevant page.** For example, here's the bottom of every important (high-traffic) PennyGold **Content Page**.



- **provide a link on your [navbar](#).**
- **mention it in your regular newsletters** -- I even include a "FAQ of the Month" in the monthly PGOLD XPRESS. This gives me the chance to provide good content, at the same time overcoming a common objection.
- **mention the FAQ in e-mail responses to questions...**

If you have any other questions, please feel free to e-mail me directly. And don't miss our FAQ at...

>> <http://www.yourdomain.com/FAQ.html>.

It's the quickest and easiest way for you to get the answers to all of the most important questions. Naturally, e-mail me at anytime should you need more info on any matter!

- **direct them to it in a parting [javascript alert](#).**



12. “Who Cares? So What?”

<yawn>

If you make your customers ask “Who Cares? So What?” before you answer “What’s in it for me?”, **forget about making the sale.**

No one likes an egocentric...



... **blabbermouth.** Don’t talk about yourself, or the detailed features of your product, **until it’s clear what you can do for your customer.** No one cares about you... **until** they understand that you are useful to them.

Then, and **only then**, do you tell them about...

- **The Features of Your Product** -- once they understand the benefits, they’ll want to know “what exactly do I get and what does it do?”
- **Your Company** -- tell them about yourself in an “About Our Company” page, **not** on the **Home Page as so many companies do.** Once they fully understand the benefits and the features, then they’ll want to know more about **who** you are, and about **why** you can deliver the goods.



12.1. **The Product Features Page**

Your Product Page **delivers the substance that backs up the benefits** on the **Opening Page.**

Hook your prospect with some great opening sales copy. But if you offer nothing of substance (i.e., features) to support your “benefits promise,” your customers will head straight back to the search engines.

In other words, your customer has heard the sizzle. **Now deliver...**

MYSS!... "Who Cares? So What?" <yawn>



... the steak.

Your "What do I get" page must explain **exactly what your customer receives** when she purchases. It must not only clarify what the product **is**, it must also explain exactly what it **does**.

You can bet that this is one of your customer's key questions -- answer it... clearly and completely. Make it crystal clear. **Your visitor has to see, and understand, enough to believe it's worth the money!**

To communicate this well, remember this...

The customer does not work at your company. She does not know your products. She probably knows **far, far less**. **So...**

Assume they know nothing, and you'll communicate much better.



12.1.1. It's Not as Easy as It Sounds!

Did I hear you say, "Well that was obvious."? I thought the same way about describing PennyGold. **So how come I kept getting e-mails like this one?...**

I have never invested in anything before, and the question that I have that does not seem to be answered at your website: will PennyGold give me, a person who knows nothing about investing, all the info such as how to buy, how to sell, and stuff like that? Basically, does PennyGold teach all the required knowledge?

He was absolutely right -- **huge fault**. I was too close to the trees to see the forest. We made the changes immediately. **Don't assume the customer knows what you know**, ever, but especially not when it comes to your product (gee, that sounds obvious... now).

I can't tell you how many times I revised PennyGold's "What Do I Get?" page. I had a lot of trouble getting myself into the zero-knowledge base of my customers for this page.

MYSSI!... "Who Cares? So What?" <yawn>

Finally, I think I've got it! I no longer get that question, anyway...



PENNY GOLD™

"Yes! What Do I Get?"

You receive the *PennyGold InfoTool*, which consists of all the information AND the tools necessary to convert you into a tough-minded, independent, successful speculator. This includes:

- 💡 The digital "book" -- It reveals all the secrets ... the entire process, step by fool-proof step. The book puts the "info" into "InfoTool."
[Here are the details and two screenshots of the PennyGold book.](#)
- 💡 The software "tools" -- Just enter the data, then stand back as *PennyGold* generates a complete report and bar chart score. The software puts the "Tool" into "InfoTool."
[Here are the details and two screenshots of the PennyGold software.](#)

Armed with the **Info** and the **Tools**, YOU are the one with the knowledge AND the power to make inspired, money-making moves.

In short, you become the predator, not the prey.

What Do I Get?

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/300.html>



12.1.2. Two Compelling **"Show & SELL"** Techniques

Show pictures. But not straight, boring product pictures. Show users **getting the benefit**. If your customer can **feel the benefits**, the purchase is not far away!

See how Bombardier does it? I can't wait to ride that Sea-Doo!...



Bombardier's Sea-Doo

<http://www.sea-doo.com/english/>

MYSSI!... “Who Cares? So What?” <yawn>

Better still, if you're selling digital goods, **deliver** the **actual benefits**, for free... **on trial**. Two examples...

- **software** -- offer a trial version that dies after a month, or after a certain number of uses. Using the actual product **eliminates all doubts** in the mind of your customer.
- **digital book** (like this one) -- deliver a Table of Contents that really “teases” your customer into wanting the content. And provide a couple of terrific sample chapters. When you look at your trial package, ask yourself this...

“OK, let's assume the Web site succeeds in the trial download. When the customer sees the trial package, is the purchase a drop-dead-easy, can't-resist decision?”

While you shouldn't get sloppy, you can certainly get away with more sins by offering a **trial download of your digital product**.



12.2. The **About Our Company Page**

If yours is a small, unknown company, this is an important page. Of course, no matter how small you are, **you must first stress benefits to your customer on the Opening Page**.

Then build your case for **who** you are, and **why** you can deliver what you promise...

- brief history -- outline your experience in your field, how long you've been in business, and your understanding of your business.
- philosophy of business -- don't get sappy or metaphysical. Explain your reason for being in business, your mission statement (but don't call it that, please!).
- management and other principle personnel, and their backgrounds.

Tell all the above in a friendly, one-to-one, story kind of way. As if you were updating a friend that you hadn't seen in a while. If visitors understand **who** you are and **why** you're in business, **you'll be in business!**

MYSS!... “Who Cares? So What?” <yawn>

Every word on your **About Us** page must exist solely to establish your credibility, **without taking on an air of bragging**. Establish yourself as the expert, the best in your field, etc.

Sell the customer on why she should do business with you.

Make it short, snappy, **relevant to your reader...** and **don't appear to be bragging**. **Almost apologize for doing this**, especially if you elaborate on your personal history.

No matter who you are, your customer must feel that...

- you are real
- you are stable
- you have some kind of track record that can be verified
- you have a stellar reputation
- you can be reached.

Prove to your visitor that you will “**deliver the goods**” **and** that you will be around to **support them**.

SiteSELL Sidebar

Because I and my company were unknown to my target market (aggressive investors), and because PennyGold is expensive, I knew that I would have to develop an especially strong “About us” page.

I had to deliver what is outlined above... in spades. The customer had to get a good feel for me... get comfortable with me **as a person** and **as an expert** in my field.

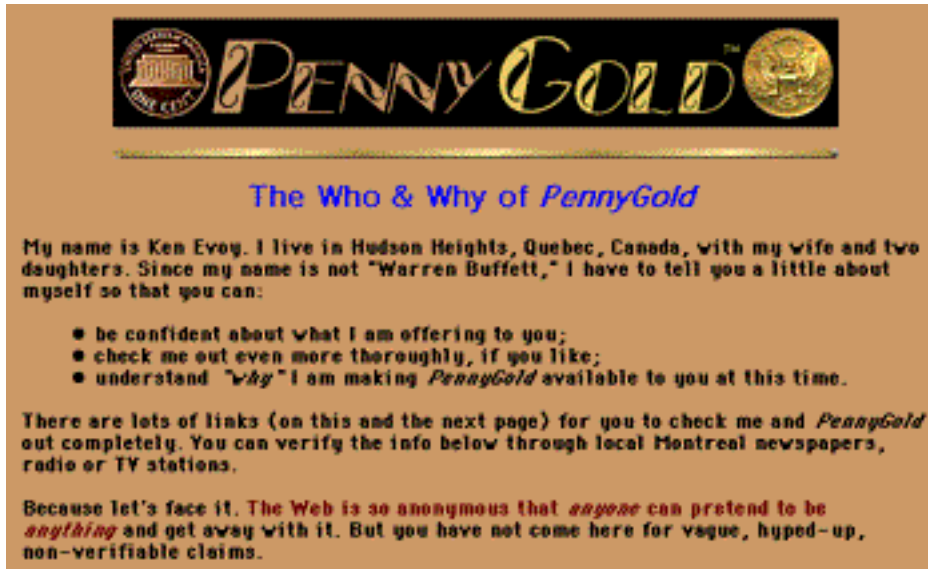
To appear as “real” as possible to my customer, I provided tons of specifics... all of them verifiable...

- where I went to college and med school
- past experiences in the business world

MYSSI!... "Who Cares? So What?" <yawn>

- how and why I started our Web business
- Character references... yes, really! I use them on the PennyGold site. They establish me as someone who loves to teach, and who has had successes in several different ventures.

I provide so much info, I actually break it into 2 pages. Here's the first...



The Who and Why of PennyGold

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/100.html>

12.3. The Tech Support Page... Why **NOT**!

Of course you want to offer **outstanding** tech support. Your customer deserves it.

You can actually reduce costly "live human" tech support (i.e., expenses) by providing a great online version. As Evan Schwartz says in his masterful [Webonomics...](#)

"Self-service provides for the highest level of customer comfort." In other words, people love to do it themselves. Providing online tech support offers help 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

MYSSI!... “Who Cares? So What?” <yawn>

And it reduces costly “live” tech support! The best of both worlds.



So where’s the mistake? **By making it reachable before the sale! Why remind your “not-yet-I’m-thinking-about-it” customer of all the potential problems? Why show him parts lists and diagrams, troubleshooting decision trees, long lists of questions relating to a variety of problems?**

These problems may only occur for one user in a thousand -- your prospect will probably never suffer a single glitch. But when you list all the things that can go wrong, and all the **work** it will take to solve them, well, **you’re doing about all you possibly can to kill the sale.**

Don’t do it. There’s no point. Your prospect does not need tech support. It will kill sales.

Instead, after the sale, when you e-mail your “thank you and congratulations” e-mail, provide your customer with the **tech support URL** (along with username and password to get in) for this product. Of course, let him know that should the tech support page not answer his question, you are always available by phone.

It’s not that you’re trying to hide problems. Every product will give some users some kind of difficulties. **It’s simply that your tech support URL is not relevant before the sale... making it available to everyone can only hurt sales.**



12.4. How to Use a Disclaimer To Build Credibility

Depending on the nature of your product, you may want to add a “This product is not for everyone” page.

First, it’s fair to warn away inappropriate customers.

Second, you add credibility to the rest of your site.



MYSS!... "Who Cares? So What?" <yawn>

Frame the disclaimer in the interests of your customer, but use it to maximize **your** legal protection at the same time. For example...

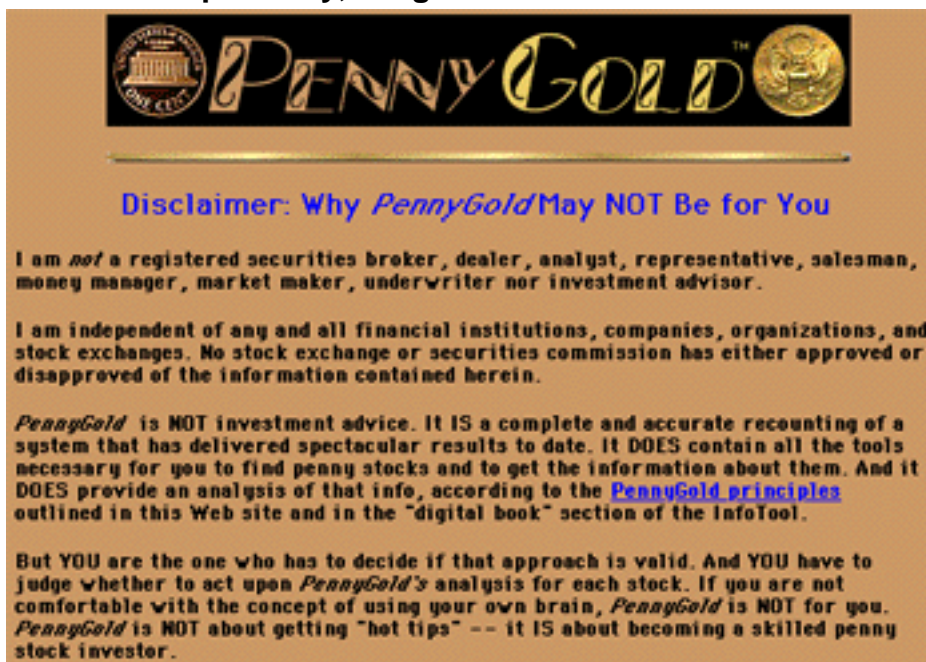
The PennyGold Disclaimer is easily the most boring page on the site. According to our log files, it is mid-range in terms of visitor popularity. So people **do** check it out.

It **adds credibility** to the rest of the site -- customers tell me so. "Geez Ken, sometimes it appears like you're trying to drive people away. But you know, when you read that disclaimer of yours, you feel that Ken must be a pretty fair person."

The PennyGold Disclaimer also helps to **protect us legally**, because it's clear that PennyGold is not a "get-rich-quick" deal. And it provides some solid, common sense to my prospects. The smart ones will appreciate it.

Has the Disclaimer Page lost me sales? Probably, but they're "good losses" -- I really **don't** want unhappy customers. I look upon it as adding by subtracting.

And more importantly, it's gained more sales than it's lost.



Disclaimer

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/400.html>





13. The Closer Page

“Do or die” time. There is only one reason why your visitor has made it to your **MWR Closer Page**...

Your site has succeeded... **so far!** He’s interested.

So many sites today finish a pathway with photos and descriptions of the products, and... that’s it. No clear way to respond. This isn’t **TV**, it’s the **Web**. It’s time for your visitor to **respond**...

It’s time to close the sale. Whatever your **MWR** is, it’s time to get it!

Finish with an **irresistible offer** (price, bonuses, and possibly a little time pressure), then a strong, clear **call to action** (don’t be shy -- tell your visitor what to do right now).

Or, as your VP Sales would say, **GET THE ORDER!**



13.1. Build to the SALE

If you sell **many product lines**, each starts with its own **Opening Page**, has its own **pathway**, and ends in its own **MWR Closer Page** (the different Closer Page responses should all tie into your central [shopping cart software](#)).

Pathways, of course, will vary in length, depending on the nature of the **product**, the **consumer** and the **vendor**.

If your product costs over \$100 and you are an unknown, no one will buy off a short and quick pitch. You will have to build your case as a comprehensive pathway pulls your ever-more-excited visitor steadily to the **Closer Page**.

However, if you’re offering shareware for \$10, then a sharp, benefits-laden one-or-two-pager (including the **MWR**) should do the job just fine (especially if you’re Microsoft). The trial software should later complete the sale for you, **if it’s any good!**

Think carefully about the **nature of your product** (and its price), **your target market**, and the **reputation (if any) of your company**.

Then decide on how to build to the final close. The MWR Closer Page should be the logical conclusion to a pathway that has steadily built to this climax. In other words, there should be...



... no surprises on your **MWR Closer Page**.



13.2. **Skip to the SALE**

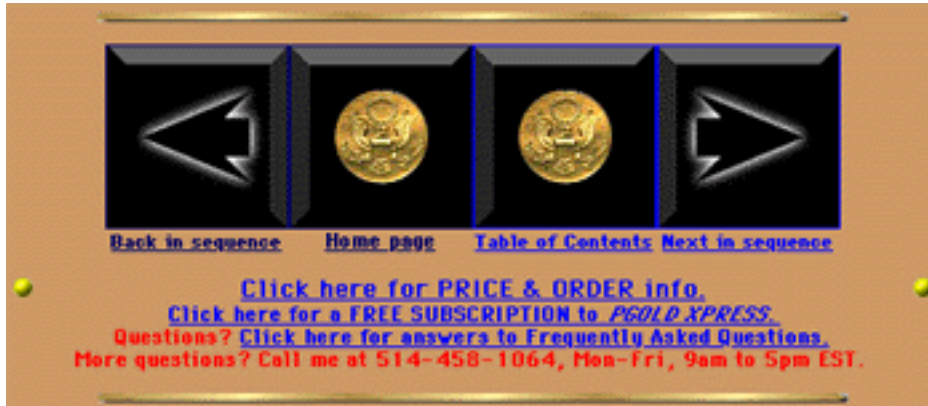
You never know when your on-site prospect becomes ready to buy. Some customers are super-easy “sells” -- impulse buyers. Others will memorize every page of your, and your competitors' sites, before making a decision.

So, while you must build a pathway **that builds to the sale, also allow for an entire range of visitors** who become “ready to buy” at different times... everyone from the spur-of-the-moment impulse buyer to the ultimate careful shopper!

How do you build a pathway, yet still allow “**ready buyers**” to **jump** to your Order Page? Hey! **This is the Web!**...

Provide a link to your Closer Page on every important Content Page of your site. When you say “just the right thing” ... when your customer decides “That’s it, I want it” ... she links directly to the Closer Page and delivers your **MWR**.

Here’s an example of how PennyGold links to the Closer Page **at the bottom of every important Content Page**...



Link to Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/100.html#ORDER>

SiteSELL Sidebar

For those of you who try the above link, you'll see that I actually link visitors to a **pre-order** page. Due to PennyGold's unique nature (valuable confidential info and only 1,000 copies for sale), this is a critical Content Page that all serious visitors **must** see first. I lose sales by doing this, but I accept that. It's the exception that proves the rule.



13.3. **No Distractions, Just Close!**

While you should **always** be focused on getting the sale, you must be laser-beamed on the **MWR Closer Page**.

- No **dead-end side-branches**, for more "last second" info.
- No links to anywhere else **in the copy** (navbars only).
- **No new issues** raised.

Just get the order.



13.4. Why Via the Web

Your **MWR Closer Page** must include **compelling reasons to respond via the Web**. Possibilities include...

- **price** -- a Web business has low overhead, so you should be able to offer products **at a great price**. Of course, if you offer unique, high-end products, a low price may not be necessary or even wise. [Pricing was discussed in more detail earlier.](#)
- **selection** -- since you have a virtual store, you may not need to keep physical inventory. That opens up the potential to offer far greater selection than your “real-world” competitor (ex., Amazon.com does not really keep millions of books in inventory).
- **sales information** -- on your site, you can present the whole story, and answer any question, far better than any sales staff. You can offer the ability to drill-down to almost unlimited detail, **should the consumer so desire**. Build an interactive help desk, e-mail follow-up systems, etc.
- **ease/convenience/instant gratification** -- ordering anything is just a click away. No need to spend money on gas or time in a “real-world” store. No need to even pick up the phone!
- **distribution edge** -- Some products, because of their very nature, are best “shipped” via the Web. Software, video games and info-products are just a **download** away.

Work these reasons into the copy of your Closer Page. **But don’t hit your customer over the head with them**. For example, **don’t** say...

“Just hit the Order button. It’s far easier than phoning.” You’re making a judgment call for your customer, which she will resist. And it’s too pleading.

... Instead say,

“Order now and you’ll be downloading in just a minute!”

OK, enough general issues. Now let's cover the “**Big 3**” of the **MWR Closer Page**...

- The Offer
- The Call to Action
- The “How-to’s” of the **MWR** Itself



13.5. How to Make an Offer They Can't Refuse

No matter what your **MWR** is, your customer better hit your **Closer Page** panting for your product.

The offer has to convert that **desire** into an **MWR** right here, right now. In the words of The Godfather, **you have to...**



... make them an offer that they can't refuse.

Real-world retailers have sales, clearance specials, “limited quantity while supplies last” offers. Direct mail marketers have thousands of techniques to **get the order... now**. But this is the Web, a totally unique medium, where getting the order now is more important than ever.

Why now? Because **this is the Web**. It's more fun to seek the **surprise of the new**, than to return to where you've been. Assume your customer will **never** return. **So get the order now!**

Offer your product at the **right price**, and sweeten the deal with an **irresistible bonus offer**. Create some way to develop **time-anxiety** in the reader.

Then structure a powerful offer.

SiteSELL Sidebar

No matter how good your product is, you have to “close.” Many people think that their product is so obviously great and that they are so shinningly brilliant, that they don’t need to “lower themselves” to sell.

Wrong! And to those people, I would add, “Sales is the most noble, and important profession.” It’s where the action is. Do it well, and you will thrive. So...

Don’t think there’s something wrong with asking for the order! Are you are offering a great product with outstanding benefits? Do you honor your money-back guarantee? If so, you’re offering something that will improve your customer’s life, and with no risk to her. But...

Customers resist the sale, always, and especially over the Web. You obviously can’t be there, with your customer -- so you’ve got to do your best with the written word. Which means “**Don’t be shy to get the sale!**” And don’t make the purchase a “close call” -- offer so much that your customer would have to be brain-dead to turn it down.

The offer is **the major step** in converting interest and desire into your **MWR**.



13.5.1. What’s the Right Price?



Pricing is a complicated issue. [We touched upon a few of the basics earlier.](#)

Remember these two most important points and you’ll be fine...

1) It’s not necessary to be an expert on pricing. No error is fatal. You can always change the price tomorrow -- those who remember that the Web is perfect for super-cheap experimentation have a huge edge.

2) “Cheaper” does not necessarily bring more sales. In the case of PennyGold, increasing the price actually increased sales!

Bottom line -- **keep experimenting until you find the most profitable price** (profit-per-unit x # units sold). On the Web, you can always **correct your mistakes**.

When it comes to pricing on the Web, **creativity, common sense, and a**

willingness to test are far more important than having read forty books on pricing!



13.5.2. How to Use the **Free Bonus**

People like to get...



... **free stuff**.

The PennyGold Web Site offers a free download of a database of every transaction made during a six year span with PennyGold. There are two versions... a 4 Meg file and a 1 Meg. The only difference? The 4 Meg contains scans of all the confirmation reports for every stock transaction.

Only the info-crazed obsessives would want to take the time to download the 4 Meg download. Right? **Wrong!**... 2 to 1 in favor of the 4 Meg. **Why? It's free!**



Free stuff motivates. If your product lends itself well, free bonuses are a strong way to **get the order... now**. If your customer orders **now**, add a valuable free bonus product, preferably related to what you are selling. Make it a high quality product... one that people would pay money for.

Of course, the trick is to find products with **high perceived value, and low production costs**. Info-products are a strong first choice since they are so cheap to produce and distribute. Examples include reports, audio tapes, 30 minute consultation, etc.

Your free bonuses should increase the value of your offer to the point where your prospect thinks, "**Geez, I can't afford not to buy this!**"

SiteSELL Sidebar

On the **Make Your Site SELL! Web site**, I offer 2 reports, one on **Traffic-Building** and the other on **Product**, both included as **free bonuses** with your purchase of **MYSSI!**

Here's how that came to be...

The Introduction of **MYSS!** states...

"To succeed in a Web-based venture, you only have to succeed at three points, **each one directly under your control...**

- **develop a great product**
- **write a Web site that SELLS**
- **attract targeted customers to the site."**

I knew from the first word of writing **MYSS!** that the focus would be on **site sales**. I didn't intend on covering product or traffic.

As the book developed, I decided to round out the content by adding a chapter on the other two points. Then, while editing **this** chapter, it hit me...

Convert those two chapters into free bonus reports! Low-cost (zero), great value, and it fits with the main product. **The perfect free bonus** to add to the offer.



13.5.3. How to Create "Buy Now" Anxiety

Creating time pressure by using an expiration date ("this offer good if you respond within the next 10 days") is a tried-and-true successful method in **direct (offline) marketing**.

On the Web, it's a slightly different kettle of fish. Whereas your customer only receives a mail offer once, anyone can just return to your site at any time. So you must design original, **Web-appropriate** ways to create the need to **order now...**

Yes, you can still offer a valuable bonus, a price reduction, the concept of limited availability, or some other valuable, desirable bonus (that is cheap to produce) if the customer **ORDERS NOW**.



But the Web provides new and unique ways to build on the concept of time-anxiety. Take advantage of the medium.

For example, the PennyGold site tells visitors that we are only selling 1,000 copies (which is true, by the way). **And** that the price increases as we sell more and more of the units. Many people e-mailed asking if we had any left... when the price was going up next, etc.

Of course, we had to back it up. We provided proof about the 1,000 limit. And, as the units sold, we really did increase the price. We even included the price history on the site...



Order Page, Price History

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#HISTORY>

And guess what! Each time we increased the price, we had a surge of sales for a week. Why?

The increased price validated the process and validated the product. And it increased the time anxiety, because it proved that the price really was increasing! And who knew when the next increase would be?

Be creative. **Use the unique aspects of the Web to create time pressure in a new and genuine way!** Don't cross your customer's tolerance limits into "used-car salesman" territory -- **phoney, overly-aggressive, tactics smell bad and**

lose sales.



13.5.4. The Perfect Offer...

A well-crafted offer...

- 1) combines **product, price and bonuses** in such a way that the customer can easily justify the purchase price.
- 2) does it in such a way that it also **creates an intense buy now urgency**.

SiteSELL Sidebar

Of course, depending again on your product, market and your own company, you may not need to offer a bonus or some buy-now-pressure. But be aware that they are powerful weapons.

3) **repeats the major points from previous pages.** People forget. So repeat the highlights to your customer...

- **key benefits...** how great it will feel to have and use this product. Make him feel it all over again.
- **your guarantee...** how risk-free this purchase is.
- **testimonials...** Add a brilliant, convincing one here.
- **your USP...** re-establish your USP. There must be strong reasons to buy from **you in particular** (exclusivity, credibility, etc.).

Re-read your offer. If you are convinced that it more than justifies the price in the customer's mind, you're almost home.

SiteSELL Sidebar

If you are selling an end-user consumer item...

... if your offer justifies the price in your prospect's **spouse's** mind, you're **all the way** home!



13.6. The Call to Action

Do you remember what **MWR** stands for?... **Most Wanted Response**.

Have you ever been to a site where you say, "What was he selling? Anything?" I certainly have ... some have even been Web marketing sites! Somehow, you're just supposed to know what they're selling!

Don't assume that prospects know your **MWR**. **Tell them exactly what to do -- that's what is meant by the "call to action."** It's not enough for your prospect to agree with you... they have to deliver the **MWR**!

If you want your customer to buy or subscribe (or whatever), don't figure that your visitor knows this -- she's waiting to be told what to do. **If you don't tell your customer exactly what you want her to do, you've left too much room for error.**

Never assume. Ask for the order... tell her what to do... exactly.

Get the **MWR**... that's **why** you put up your site.



13.7. "And **How** Would You Like to Order Today?"

The moment of decision!

Your customer has done it all. She came down the pathway and entered your **MWR Closer Page**. She read the **offer**. Your **call to action** told her what to do. **She's about to do it...**

Don't blow it now. Offer **every way possible** for your customer to **deliver your MWR**.

SiteSELL Sidebar

With the PennyGold site, I originally figured that everyone would simply order online, a smooth, logical end-point after reviewing the Web site. After all, most people have to get off the Net to order **by phone** (since most homes still only have one phone line). Printing out a form to **fax or snail-mail** is an unnecessary drudgery.

Well, guess what!? My first order came in (from Sarnia, Ontario -- I'll never forget it!) **by fax, even though I did not offer fax as an option. The customer merely scribbled "I want to order PennyGold" on a piece of paper and faxed it!**

I decided to offer and test **every** possible way of ordering. **Orders arrived every single way...** online, fax, 1-888- phone call, courier to our physical address, yes even snail-mail. If I had offered **Pony Express...**



... I'm sure horses would have shown up at the office!

The majority of orders did come **directly** from the Web site. But about 15% of all orders arrived via **offline** routes. Since they cost little to set up, it was certainly worthwhile to offer them. And with non-credit-card snail-mail orders, we also save the 2-4% merchant bank bite!

The bottom line? Different people are comfortable with different methods.

Let your customer order however she likes... via e-mail, [secure server](#), 1-800 or 1-888 phone call, mail order (create a printable order form) -- let her sky-write it if she wants.

And let her pay however she likes... credit card, money order, even barter for chickens.


Credit card will be the most popular payment method, which brings us to the importance of secure servers...



13.7.1. Secure vs. Non-Secure Server

If your **MWR** is a straight-off-the-Web sale, you must be able to accept credit card orders **directly via the Web**. **Your customers will want their credit card info to be safe and sound.** So put your pages on a server with [SSL security](#), which encrypts the information (virtually uncrackable) -- this is what's known as a [secure server](#).

Realize, though, that you are **not really** doing this for reasons of security. Despite what the press says, there are no hackers hovering over your site, waiting to steal credit cards. **But your customers believe there are!**

Customers relax when they see that **whole-solid-blue key**  at the bottom left of the browser, indicating a secure credit card transaction. **If you don't use a secure server to take the credit card info, you'll lose sales, big-time.**

Are you a one-product company?...

If setting up your own secure server is too difficult to implement, **find a Web host that offers SSL security**. Make sure the host is secure at "both ends" -- **incoming** data from consumer, then **transfer** of that data from Web host to you (usually via PGP-encrypted e-mail).

If a secure Web host is too expensive for you, this is not a death knell. **Not having SSL can be overcome** if you design a **great** site that **SELLS**, and if you **work around** the problem. **You'll have to get creative in setting up your online order-taking method.**

Think of it. People hand over their credit cards to all kinds of people in all kinds of places... restaurants, XXX video stores, **even...**



... gas stations. They give their credit card info to total strangers over the phone, including cell phones where anyone could be listening in. They fax orders all over the world -- that faxed paper sits for anyone to see for a while.

Sure the unwarranted press hype worries the public. **But the much bigger reason for people not to buy on the Web is that vendors don't do a good job of selling.**

Sell effectively. Then develop a creative "SSL-workaround."

SiteSELL Sidebar

For PennyGold, we did not accept credit card orders directly via the Web. Due to the sensitive nature of the PennyGold info and its high price, we preferred to eliminate credit card fraud by calling the customer at the hour he specified, and

tape-recording the call...

Ordering Information

Order now ... while it's still fresh in your mind ... and while *PennyGold* is still selling at the current price of **CDN\$349**. It will be the best investment decision that you make this year.

Until VISA, MasterCard, AMEX, and the other credit card companies implement SET (Secure Electronic Transaction), we'll be offering you our own simple, secure and fraud-proof ordering system.

"Secure" ... because I want your credit card information to be absolutely safe.
"Fraud-proof" ... because I'm severely restricting distribution. So I can't afford a copy to fall into the hands of a credit card fraud.

IF YOU ARE FROM THE U.S.A. OR CANADA
Just pick the most convenient way (e-mail, phone, fax or regular mail) to order:

1) Send in the following intent to Order Form via the Internet:
(All information below is kept in strictest confidence.)

Intent to Order Form

Yes, I want *PennyGold*.

My name is:

I live in:

My e-mail address is:

Please call me to take my order and credit card information (VISA or MasterCard) at this phone number:

(type in country code ONLY if you are outside of North America)

Please call at the above phone number between the following hours:

PennyGold Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#ORDERFINFO>

Our customers **appreciated** our cautious approach, because they knew we were protecting their investment in their software! Of course, this approach is impractical for cheaper products.



13.7.2. Four Steps to **SELLING** Via Secure Server

It's not hard. Four steps, let's go...

STEP 1) Before going to any expense, **check with your merchant accounts**. Many do **not** allow smaller companies to even accept orders via the Internet! If they

do, they will insist that the credit card info be secure. And they may insist that you use a certain service. The outcome of this step will settle the issue for you.

SiteSELL Sidebar

If you do not have a merchant account, or if your merchant bank will not permit you to take orders directly via the Web, either get innovative in your order-taking or [investigate the third-party credit card processing companies.](#)

STEP 2) To accept orders via an SSL-secure server, **check with your techie and Web host** for what it involves. Here are the basics...

You'll pay your Web hosting service \$20 to \$50 more per month, plus a fee for the [security certificate](#). Your Web host may offer to take orders for you off **their** secure domain... secure.**webhost.com**. But if you can swing it, get **your own** security certificate and take orders off **your own** secure domain... secure.**yourdomain.com**.

There are two advantages to this, and they **come at just the right moment...**

- your customer does not worry about who secure.webhost.com is
- you look like a larger, more credible company.

If you're a larger company with your own server that you'd like to make secure, [see VeriSign's info on how to do this](#). Beyond that, it's out of my hands and into your techie's!

Remember, to be considered secure, you must encrypt "both ends" of the order-receiving process (**getting the order to the server** and **forwarding that data** to you). So **also** ask your Web host or techie about an encrypted way to e-mail the order info. PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) software is a PGB (Pretty Good Bet).

STEP 3) Compare your security protocols with the requirements of your merchant bankers. They often have a list of criteria that must be met for your order-taking procedure to be considered secure. **Make sure all of your merchant accounts have signed off on your secure setup, whether it's your own secure server or that of a Web host. Don't jeopardize your merchant accounts.**

STEP 4) Cross-check the info from your techie, Web host, and merchant banks, with your own research at Ralph Wilson's **Electronic Commerce Research Room**. He has tons of state-of-the-art info about secure transactions of all kinds -- secure servers, SET, digital cash technologies.



Electronic Commerce Research Room
<http://www.wilsonweb.com/research/>

SiteSELL Sidebar

Naturally, once you're selling via secure server, **stress the "benefits" of a secure server in your call to action**. Yes, I know this perpetuates the myth. But you want the order, right?



13.7.3. Phone -- "I Just Wanted to Hear a Voice"

A lot of people still need the **security of a human voice** before ordering.

Of course, if the **vendor** is a crook, she's a crook whether she receives the order via secure server or over the phone. Unfortunately, the customer doesn't realize that -- that's **not** why he phones. He simply needs the "warm and fuzzies" of hearing a real voice.



So do offer phone ordering.

For North American customers, **make it a toll-free call**. The monthly rate is amazingly cheap, sometimes zero (you're charged only for the long-distance calls). A few points on the 1-888 line...

- **If you are in the U.S.**, specify that your toll-free service **must work for Canadians**, unless you're willing to lose the business of a country with the population equal to California's.
- **For overseas calls, 1-888 does not work**. Provide a regular long distance number.

- **Specify that this is your order line.** Refer all inquiries to your regular long distance number. Otherwise, people will chew you up with long-distance charges.
- **If you have several 1-888 lines,** dedicate one purely for taking orders from your Web site. This allows you to track how many **orders** arrive via 1-888.



The person who takes your orders is often the first “real, live voice” that he hears. Remember, **this person is your company.**

If she is well-trained and pleasant, you’re a great company. If she’s rude and knows little, you’re rotten... **at least in the eyes of your potential customer.**

So leave nothing to chance for employees who make direct “real voice” contact with your customers...

- Develop a **telephone script** for orders that will be handled by phone, from the opening “Hello” to the parting “Thank you for your order.”
- **Build a list of the most common questions** -- prepare the replies.
- **Enter every problem encountered** -- develop answers for them. Improve responses constantly.
- **Keep track of any other common situations,** and what to do about them.

Enter all of the above information into a database for quick and easy access.

And “smile”...



... yes, you **can** smile on the phone.



13.7.4. Fax -- “I Like to Send Paper”

When we received our first order for PennyGold **by fax**, I just had to call that customer and ask **why** he would fax the order rather than just submit the online form. **We didn’t even offer faxing as an order option!**

Why would he hand-scribble a note, cut his Internet connection, **and...**



... fax it? **“Because I like to send paper. It feels real.”** So...

Design a simple “fax form” that can be printed straight off the web site. The customer just prints it, fills it out, **signs** the credit card authorization (a “**must**”), then faxes it to you. Here’s the **PennyGold Order Form** for credit card payment...

PennyGold Order Form
(Please print the form first and then fill it out.)

Date:

YES, I want PennyGold.

First Name

Last Name

Address

City

Country

E-mail address

Day phone
Area code Local phone number

Evening phone
Area code Local phone number

Card (VISA or MasterCard only)

Card Number

Expiry Date

In order to purchase PennyGold, I hereby authorize GoodByte\$ Information Products Inc. to bill my credit card, and agree to pay to my credit card company, the amount of CDN\$349. I understand that my credit card company will convert this amount to the currency of my own country at prevailing market rates.

Credit card authorization:

Signature

PennyGold Order Form for Credit Card Orders Via Fax
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/formcc.html>

If you would like the [html](#) code for this page, just link to the form and get the source code (via [VIEW SOURCE](#) in your browser's menu). It is the same [form](#) that you use for regular online ordering (except, of course, it does not use any [CGI programming](#) to process the order).



13.7.5. Snail Mail -- "I Hate Giving My Credit Card"

You will be amazed at the number of people who **still...**



... snail-mail money orders or checks. They turn up in our mail regularly. I originally offered this route only "to be complete" -- but people actually use it!

There are two reasons that people would choose this route...

- 1) Many people are maxed out on their cards, or don't have one. But they **do** have money in the bank to purchase a Money Order.
- 2) **Many of the rest simply refuse to give their info out**, whether it's over the phone, or by fax, or however. Of course, they don't realize that their total risk is only \$50, in the event of fraud. And they don't realize that it's probably riskier to use their credit card in the real world.

SiteSELL Sidebar

I was the victim of a real-world fraud when someone used my AMEX info. The suspect was a clerk from a local toy retailer! My bigger problem was explaining the charge to my wife. The fraud hit...



Frederick's of Hollywood
<http://www.fredericks.com/>

Here's the **PennyGold Order Form** for non-credit-card payment. The customer just prints it, provides the info required, then mails it together with payment. Encourage payment via **Money Order** or **Cashier's Check**. But accept personal checks. Just make it clear that you can't ship until the check clears ([I've got a better, digital solution for personal checks for you a bit later](#)).



PennyGold Order Form
(Please print the form first and then fill it out.)

Date:

YES, I want *PennyGold*.

Please find enclosed my personal check, certified check or money order, for \$CDN349 (or equivalent in the currency of your country), made out to the order of "GoodBytes Information Products Inc." (if you are sending a money order, please specify an **international postal money order if you are from outside of Canada**).

First Name

Last Name

City

Country

E-mail address

Day phone
Area code Local phone number

Evening phone
Area code Local phone number

I understand that you will e-mail my username and password to download *PennyGold* as soon as you receive this order (unless I am paying by personal check, in which case there may be a delay of up to 6-8 weeks). By acting now, I also get the **Advanced Investor Package, FREE**.

PennyGold Order Form for Non-Credit-Card, Snail-Mail Payment
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/form.html>

If you would like the html code for this page, just link to the form and get the source code (via VIEW SOURCE in your browser's menu). It is the same form that you use for regular online ordering (except, of course, it does not use any CGI programming to process the order).



13.7.6. No Matter **How** They Order, K-I-S-S!

No matter **how** your customer delivers your **MWR**, make it a fast, easy, clear, one-step process. In other words...

K-I-S-S.

And not **just** simple. Make the **process** of responding crystal-clear to your visitor. Here's why...

Most customers will have last-second hesitations, especially during these early years on the Web. If you make the process **complicated** or **prolonged** or **confusing** or **vague**, you will lose responses.

Don't do anything to make your about-to-buy customer hesitate...



... or think twice.

Review your ordering process. How hard is it to place an order? Is the **MWR Response Form** clear? If you sell many products, do you provide a convenient, clear, easy-to-use [shopping cart program](#)?

For example, one of the most common mistakes on sales sites is asking for **too much info**. People don't like providing info. It makes your **Response Form** look like **work**. What do you think happens? Yup, lost orders. So...

Ask for the least amount of info necessary.

For a credit card purchase, you only need...

- first and last name
- street address (for extra security)
- credit card name, number and expiration date.

Don't ask for more.

SiteSELL Sidebar

[Review the basics of designing a form that works.](#)

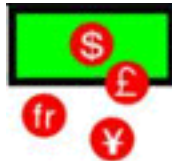


13.7.7. How to Set up a Currency Converter

Most online businesses receive customers from all over the world. It's important that they understand how much your product costs **in their currency**.

Let's say your software costs \$447 in Canadian money. Naturally, Americans want to know how many of their own hard-earned dollars they will pay. And since the Canadian dollar is currently selling at an all-time low, I want Americans to know that this **only amounts to \$260** in American money (hey, I'm almost giving it away!).

What you need is a...



... **currency converter**. There are two ways to put one up on your site...

1) Do it yourself. Write a simple javascript converter. Update the currencies manually. For example...

Go to the **Order Page** of PennyGold, do a [VIEW SOURCE](#) on it, and adapt the currency converter there for your own use...



PennyGold Currency Converter

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#CURRENCYCONVERTER>

There are two **disadvantages** to this approach...

- you have to update the currency conversions manually every week or so (it is

possible to write a script to automate this).

- your customers' browsers must be javascript-enabled (Netscape 3+ or Internet Explorer 4+).



2) Integrate a third party's Web currency converter. While you can check out the details at the sites below, you face the following decision... either pay a **monthly fee** or **accept advertising**.

No matter what, do **not** accept an option that makes your customer **link out**, or that **breaks the momentum towards the MWR**. Once he links out, he may play with the currency converter on the other site, then see something else to link to, then... bye-bye.

Here are two of the most popular currency converters...



OANDA's 164 Currency Converter

<http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic>

Customizable Currency Converter

http://www.oanda.com/site/ccc_intro.shtml



Xenon Laboratories' The Universal Currency Converter

<http://www.xe.net/currency/>

How to Customize The Universal Currency Converter

<http://www.xe.net/currency/customize.htm>



I use Xenon's free converter **only on my GPer Renewal Page**. Since these visitors already own PennyGold and want to renew subscriptions, I know that they are motivated enough to survive being "linked out." Even then, clicking opens a second page (via [TARGET=VIEW](#)) with the currency converter buried inside a PennyGold frameset...

[Click here to convert to the currency of your country.](#)

Once you know which option you would like, order by either...

Currency Conversion for GPer Renewal

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgpers/renewal.html#CURRCONV>



13.8. The A-B-Cs of Online Ordering

As we have just seen, each **MWR Closer Page** must end with a compelling **offer** and a strong and **clear call to action** to deliver the **MWR**. Your customer can deliver your **MWR** in several different ways (online, fax, 1-888, etc.). This section discusses specifically **online** ordering.

There are three ways to accomplish online ordering...

- [html-to-CGI Response Forms](#) -- perfect for smaller companies with a small number of products (I call these **Response Forms** for short -- when a Response Form is specifically designed to take an order for product(s), we'll call it an **MWR Response Form** or an **Order Form**).
- [shopping carts](#) -- for larger companies with more products for sale.
- [e-commerce solutions](#) -- for companies with mega-needs, these packages encompass far more than just ordering.



13.8.1. Order Forms and **CGI Scripts (Made Easy)**

If you're only selling one or two products, your **html** guru can design a simple [Response Form](#) to take your customer's order online. We'll call it the **MWR Response Form** if its function is to get your **MWR** -- it's the same as an **Order Form** if your **Most Wanted Response** is a direct sale straight off the Web.

On the PennyGold Web site, the **MWR** is **not** an actual sale, just an “intent to order.” When the customer clicks the **SEND** button, **CGI scripting** processes the data entered by the customer and sends it to us via e-mail. For security reasons, **we phone the customer** to process the order. Here’s the PG “Intent to Order Form”...

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Intent to Order Form" with a light orange background. The form contains several sections with labels in blue and input fields in white. The sections are: "Yes, I want PennyGold." (a statement), "My name is:" followed by a text box labeled "First and Last Name", "I live in:" followed by a text box labeled "City, Country", "My e-mail address is:" followed by a text box labeled "E-mail address", "Please call me to take my order and credit card information (VISA or MasterCard) at this phone number:" followed by a text box labeled "country code - (area code) -" with a note "(type in country code ONLY if you are outside of North America)", "Please call at the above phone number between the following hours:" followed by a text box labeled "For example -- Between 9 AM and 5 PM" with a note "(type in the best hours to reach you at the above phone number)", "AND/OR", "Call me at my other phone number:" followed by a text box labeled "country code - (area code) -" with a note "(type in country code ONLY if you are outside of North America)", "Please call at my other phone number between the following hours:" followed by a text box labeled "For example -- Between 7 PM and 9 PM" with a note "(type in the best hours to reach you at the above phone number)", and a "Clear" button. At the bottom, there is a "Send" button and a red text prompt "When you're ready, press 'Send':".

Intent to Order Form

Yes, I want PennyGold.

My name is:
First and Last Name

I live in:
City, Country

My e-mail address is:
E-mail address

Please call me to take my order and credit card information (VISA or MasterCard) at this phone number:
country code - (area code) -
(type in country code ONLY if you are outside of North America)

Please call at the above phone number between the following hours:
For example -- Between 9 AM and 5 PM
(type in the best hours to reach you at the above phone number)

AND/OR

Call me at my other phone number:
country code - (area code) -
(type in country code ONLY if you are outside of North America)

Please call at my other phone number between the following hours:
For example -- Between 7 PM and 9 PM
(type in the best hours to reach you at the above phone number)

Press "Clear" to start over:

● When you're ready, press "Send":

PennyGold MWR Response Form

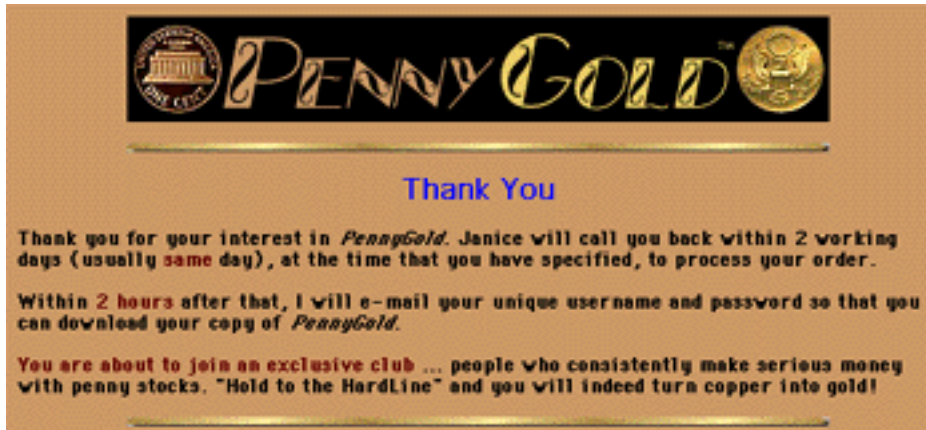
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#ORDERNOW>

SiteSELL Sidebar

[Review the basics of designing a form that works.](#)

After the customer sends your **MWR**, thank him and eliminate “buyer’s remorse.” The **CGI script** immediately pops up a short note (an html page) that **removes any**

last second doubts or worries...



As well, the CGI script can even **send an e-mail right after the order**. This again could contain a “thank you and congratulations” message, along with instructions regarding tech support, etc. Your customer can store this for future reference.

You’ll need a techie to provide the CGI scripting that accomplishes the above. When the customer hits the SEND button, the CGI kicks in. Without the CGI, the form would just sit there, even when the customer hits SEND. This kind of simple CGI is pretty standard, and can even be downloaded off the Web.

As a matter of fact, most “common function” CGI scripts are “off-the-shelf” and available for free download. Don’t let anyone tell you that an Order Form has to be completely custom-programmed. **At most, you might need a little fine-tuning.**

If you have any “techie” ability at all, download free scripts and modify them yourself, to fit your own needs. Here’s where to go...

Extropia.com

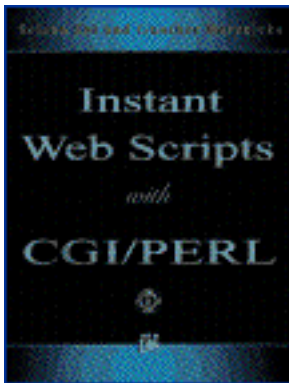
Extropia.com’s CGI Scripts

<http://www.extropia.com/products.html>

Extropia.com offers a wide variety of outstanding business-related scripts. From chat rooms to site-search engines to good, basic shopping cart software that will meet the needs of most small companies, I can’t believe they give these away. I mean, I would pay my techie hundreds of dollars to write these for me. Instead, I only have to pay him to configure them. **Don’t miss this site.**

If you'd rather learn how to use the above scripts yourself, check out their book, **Instant Web Scripts With CGI/PERL**, by Selena Sol and Gunther Birznieks. It covers most of the scripts in the Web archive in great depth. Each chapter takes you from downloading, through installation and customization and usage. It also explains in simple terms how the programs were made so that you can **make your own** with a proven methodology.

Buy this book even if you **don't** want to do it yourself... just to thank them for erecting such an awesome resource.



Instant Web Scripts With CGI/PERL

http://www.extropia.com/reference_library.html

THE CGI RESOURCE INDEX: PROGRAMS

The CGI Resource

http://www.cgi-resources.com/Programs_and_Scripts/Perl/

An encyclopedic collection of CGI scripts, they have some excellent scripts for auctions, bulletin boards, cookies, form processing, mailing list management, password protection, search engines, shopping carts, and a whole lot more. This is a **must visit**.



CGI E-mail

<http://web.mit.edu/wwwdev/cgiemail/index.html>

This is purely for form-to-e-mail conversion. But it's a good one.



Matt's Script Archive

<http://www.worldwidemart.com/scripts/>

Another great compendium of CGI scripts.



13.8.2. Shopping Cart Software... The Basics

If you are offering many products spread out over several product lines, you will need shopping cart software to make ordering as easy as possible for your customers. As was said before, you have to make every part of the buying process **fast and easy... especially ordering.**

If you offer many different products, it's just too awkward for your customer to order using an [html-to-CGI Response Form](#). Shopping cart software provides the interface necessary to make choosing and ordering from your many products an easy, intuitive task. **But...**



... **this is a competitive arena**, with many good **and not-so-good** products. It's a maze out there.

To tackle this labyrinth, you'll need a **checklist to enable you to make a choice...**

✓ Do **not** choose a shopping cart software that requires customers to fill out a form just to put a product into their shopping carts. This interrupts and inhibits the purchase decision. Instead, customer simply hits...

"Put this item into my shopping cart." See how simple that is?

The time to fill out a form is **after** they have finished shopping. Don't scare them off when they are only at the "put it into the cart" stage.

In general, ask for **only** the information that you absolutely need, and **only when** you absolutely need it.

✓ Make it clear that adding to the shopping cart is **not** an order. Customer can always change her mind and take it out of the cart at any time before going to "check out."

✓ Make the "Check out" button "can't miss" too. Customer must clearly understand the difference between simply adding to the cart and "checking out." Think real-world and translate to online. Remember that **most people have never ordered online and do not understand what you take for granted.**

✓ Even though you have made the process so easy and clear that even a politician could use it, **include a "can't miss" HELP button.**

✓ **Minimize the number of clicks** from the time of adding an item to the shopping cart, until submitting the final order. The more clicks it takes, the more orders you'll lose.

✓ Good shopping cart software **stores each first-time purchaser's information.** After that, no need for your repeat customer to complete the "info form." You already have it!

- ✓ Customer can click at any time to **review the shopping cart contents**, see what she's placed in the cart, along with the price, taxes and running total (already calculated). Shipping address is already entered (if customer has been there before).
- ✓ Software ties in to your inventory and alerts customer to out-of-stock, expected delay, etc.
- ✓ It presents shipping options (give expected delivery date for each) with prices.
- ✓ Well-written software is fast (you need to have the processing power for this, too, of course).
- ✓ **It must generate a "confirmation & thank you" page and/or e-mail** to confirm the order. Failure to do so creates insecurity in your customer, often even repeats the same order, really creating a mess!
- ✓ You will be constantly updating your "catalog." So the shopping cart must be easy for you, the merchant, to update. An easy-to-use Web browser interface must make it a snap to add, remove, or change products, prices, descriptions and sales copy, pictures, etc. **This is a must.**
- ✓ **Price.**
- ✓ Add other considerations that are special to your business and products...



Done! Now that you know how to assess the myriad of offerings, here's two good places to get started...



13.8.3. Shopping Cart Software... Two Recommendations

Based on the above criteria, here are two good shopping cart products...

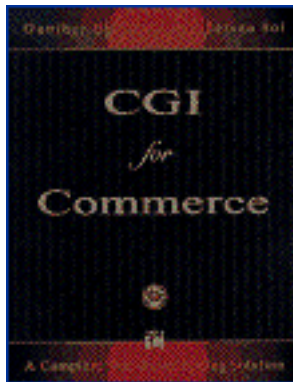
Extropia.com

Extropia.com's CGI Scripts

http://www.extropia.com/scripts/web_store.html

Web Store is a complete solution for selling products over the Internet. In the authors' words, "it is the culmination of our experience with Online Shopping Scripts. It adds all-new routines for error handling, order processing, encrypted mailing, frames, Javascript and VBscript and other goodies." Download it from the above URL. It's well documented, so your techie should be able to install it for your site without too much trouble.

If you want an amazingly complete, detailed documentation on Web Store, see their book, **CGI For Commerce**. The book goes through Web Store in great depth, explaining the intricacies of order logic, PGP, shipping routines, and security on the Internet. It includes Perl scripts, SQL databases, Javascript and VBscript code, as well as finished Web pages. **The enclosed CD** contains multiple shopping cart examples in Perl 4 and 5, e-mail libraries, and HTTP libraries. **Buy the book -- they deserve the purchase...**



CGI For Commerce

http://www.extropia.com/reference_library.html

ShopSite Manager is an excellent commercial package that meets the criteria on

the checklist, and then some...



ShopSite Manager
<http://www.shopsite.com/>

Shopping cart software is a field that evolves quickly. The best way to get up to speed, and then stay on the cutting edge, is to subscribe to Ralph Wilson's [Web Commerce Today](#) and visit his [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#). He has tons of state-of-the-art info about these software packages.



13.8.4. E-Commerce Solutions: Online Store Building Packages

While shopping cart software is usually enough for small-to-mid-sized businesses, larger companies may need more robust packages. These can be divided into two general categories...

- **online store building packages**
- **commerce servers.**

Online store building packages advertise themselves as “out-of-the-box online stores.” They...

- accelerate development
- offer page templates/order form templates
- support secure payment

- provide database connectivity/data management
- cover many other critical functions required by a Web-based store
- **cost thousands of dollars**
- are generally more than the average entrepreneur would need, but are excellent for medium-sized-to-large ventures.



Products in this category include...



Cat@log

<http://www.thevisionfactory.com/>



INTERSHOP

INTERSHOP

<http://www.intershop.com/products/index.htm>



Merchant Builder

<http://www.ifact.com/html/merchantbuilder.html>





iCat Electronic Commerce Suite and Publisher

http://www.icatcorp.com/products/suite_pub/



Then there's the **really** "big boys"...



13.8.5. E-Commerce Solutions: Commerce Servers

The "commerce server" packages are developed and marketed by major companies like Microsoft and IBM. They do all the same store-building things as the **store-building packages**... templates, product catalogs, shopping cart, order processing, secure payment, etc., etc.

But a commerce server is usually **also** part of a larger proprietary system from the same manufacturer, one that fills the broader e-commerce needs of larger companies (ex., Site Server Commerce Edition is a Back Office Family Member).

At prices that run into tens of thousands of dollars, **they're also a heck of a lot more expensive!**



Net.Commerce Pro

<http://www.software.ibm.com/commerce/net.commerce/>





Site Server Commerce Edition

<http://www.microsoft.com/siteserver/commerce/default.asp>

A full discussion of e-commerce solutions is a topic that is beyond the scope of this book. As usual, Ralph Wilson's [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#) has lots of good info on store building software.



13.9. No Clicks from Offer to Order

The **offer**, the **call to action**, and the **MWR Response Form (Order Form** if you are after a direct sale straight off the Web) should all be on the same Web page. **Don't make your customer click again, not at this critical point.**

If it's a long offer, include several **internal links** to the Order Form (ex. "Order Form Below" or "Order Form Above" -- or if your site is more aggressive, "Order Now!"). This way, as soon as the person even **thinks** he's going to order, he doesn't have to look for your form -- he just clicks.

In PennyGold, I develop the **offer** and **call to action** over a long page. I use internal links to make the Order Form quickly available, no matter where the customer is on the page...



(Note ↑ the link "[Order Form Below.](#)")

Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html>

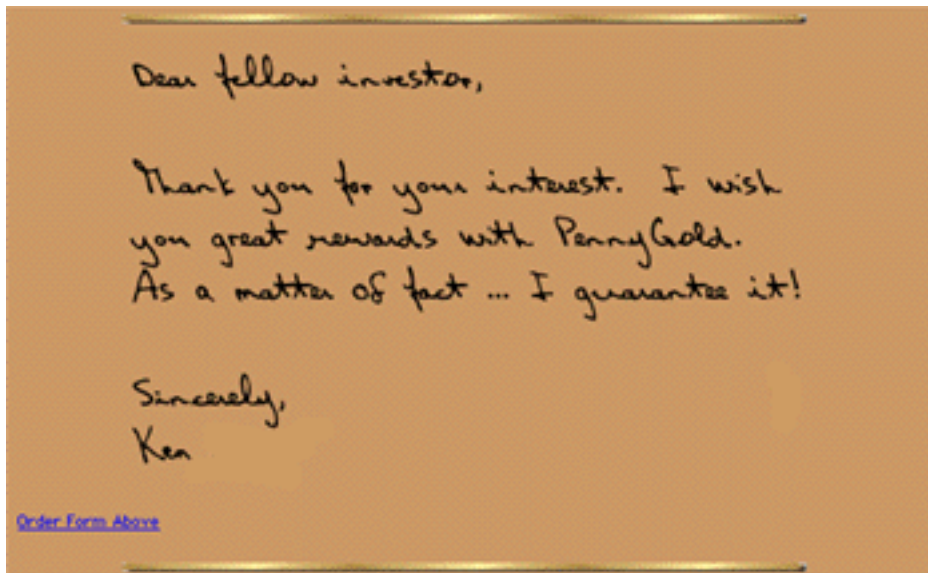


13.10. The Thank You Note

A short, personal handwritten (font-generated) thank you note is a terrific touch. Thank your visitor for her time and interest.

Choose a solid-looking, cursive (handwriting) font and “sign” your letter. Even if your visitor knows it’s just a font (and they usually don’t), they’ll appreciate the effort and the look and feel of it.

Put your note right after the **MWR**. This is not the same as the [CGI-delivered thank you note](#), delivered after your customer **submits** the **MWR**.



Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#THANKYOU>

SiteSELL Sidebar

Best of all, use **your own** font to write your thank you note.

Yes, there is a company that will produce a font that duplicates your own personal writing! I can’t remember how I found out about Signature Software, but within 5 minutes of visiting their site, I was sold on the concept. So...

I bought it, and I loved it. I wrote the thank you note (above) with it. Now...



... I really **did** write the note!

Since the site did manage to effectively sell me, I asked the President, David Fenwick, if he would write an article for you in our **Experience Speaks** section of the book.



Signature Software

<http://www.signaturesoftware.com/>



13.11. The “Last Ditch” Pitch

OK, let's say your visitor ordered. Do you realize that there are 10 **wafflers** who got all the way to your **MWR Response Form**?...



... but can't quite pull the trigger?

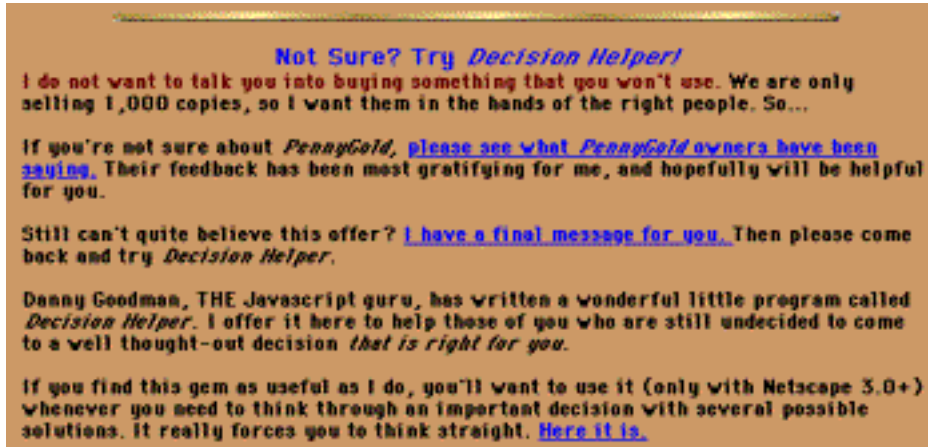
Make one last pitch to them. But don't distract those who are “sold”, i.e. **buyers** -- they're **ready** to submit an Order. So put this pitch **after** the **Order Form**. Don't worry about your waffler missing it, either. If she's a “serious waffler,” she'll be **looking** for more info.

What should you include in your “Last Ditch” pitch?...



- **First, don't appear to be begging.** That'll kill you.
- **Second, K-I-S-S.** Short and sweet.
- **Repeat your #1 clincher.** Perhaps a link to your testimonial page, or a product review that raves about your product.
- Add a link to one last personal **you-to-your-customer message**, something new and original that could “**tip the scales.**” Also short and sweet.
- **Build in a Backup Response. We'll discuss this a bit later.**

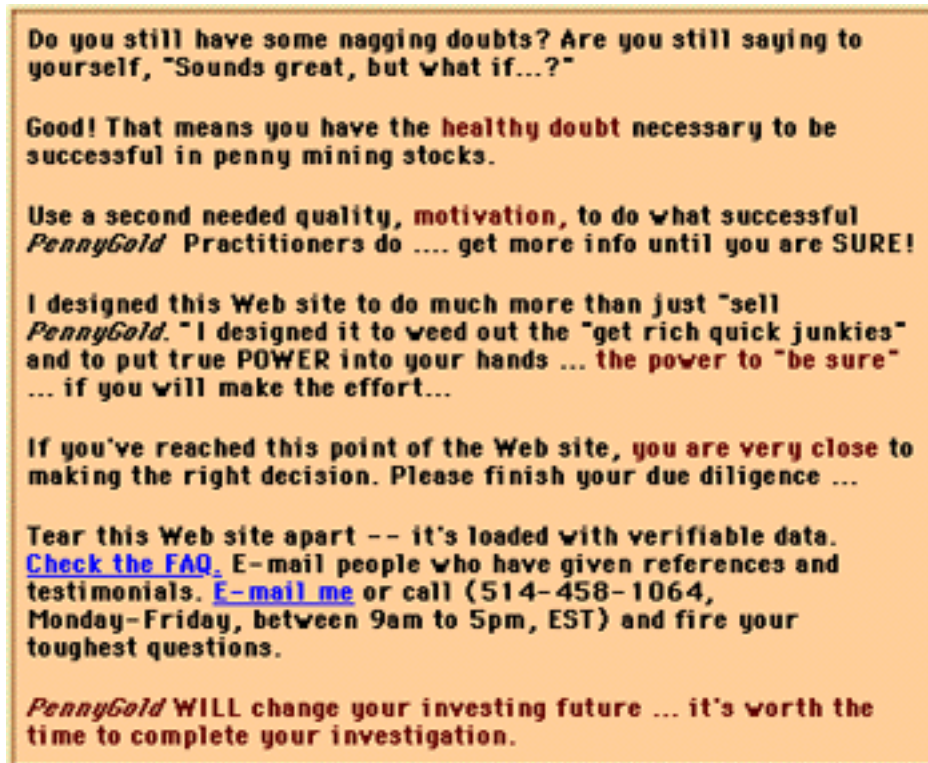
Here's the PennyGold site's “Last Ditch” pitch...



PennyGold Decision Helper (Offer)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#DH>

When the customer clicks on the “I have a final message for you” link, she sees this final attempt to convince...



PennyGold “Not Sure”

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899notsure.html>



13.12. Example of “How to Close”

The PennyGold Order Page (**MWR Closer Page**) is a good example that uses most of the guidelines outlined in this chapter. Read it all -- there's a lot of good stuff there (if I do say so, myself <blush>).



Order Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html>

SiteSELL Sidebar

Again, please don't misinterpret this. The goal is for you to understand **how to close the sale on the Web**. I'm not trying to sell you PennyGold.



13.13. If At First You Don't Succeed...

The Web is made for tinkering. It's **cheap**, and it's **immediate**. Try a different headline. A different bonus. A better **Response Form**. Keep trying different methods.

Here's the formula...

STEP 1 -- Measure your current **Conversion Rate (CR)** over the last week.

STEP 2 -- Change one element of the Closer Page (offer, call to action, or form).

STEP 3 -- Measure the new **CR** over the new week.

STEP 4 -- Act accordingly (i.e., keep or drop).

STEP 5 -- Start over at STEP 1.

If you want to get really sophisticated, prepare two different **MWR Closer Pages**. The only difference is one element of the offer. Get your techie to write a [CGI script](#) that alternately delivers the two pages, i.e., first **Closer Page A**, then B, then A, etc.

Measure the two **CRs**. Act accordingly. Repeat. Keep fine-tuning.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes. If you keep trying different approaches, you'll find what works. Stick with that, but try to make it better.

13.14. Summing It All Up...

Writing a good site that **SELLS** is similar to the classical direct sales rule,
“**A-I-D-A**”...

- **A**ttention -- get your customer’s attention by starting with a powerful, benefit-laden headline that is relevant to the product that you are selling.
- **I**nterest -- build interest by building on your product’s benefits, and explaining its features. Build it further by eliminating any doubt about you and your product.
- **D**esire -- maximize desire with testimonials, an iron-clad guarantee, and other sales-building techniques that eliminate all resistance. Then make an **offer** that is irresistible.
- **A**ction -- get the **MWR** (or **Backup Response**) via your call to action (i.e., tell your visitor what to do).

Once you’ve done that, **tinker**. Keep what works -- dump the rest. **Your site is never done.**





14. The Backup Response

Let's say that your **MWR** is a direct sale of a \$447 piece of software. For every one person who triggers your **MWR** and buys directly from the site, **there are 10 who waffle, then pass.**



Here's what scares them...

- 1) What if it's a scam?
- 2) What if it doesn't work?
- 3) What if they do something with my credit card information?
- 4) What if it's OK, but I don't like it?
- 5) And so on, and so on, and so on...

Sure, you've designed your site to head off these doubts. But... **the more unknown your company and the more expensive your product, the more likely the customer will still have doubts.** Even with the PennyGold site, which documents the validity of the product to the nth degree, customers still breathe a heavy sigh of relief when they see how good the product really is!

In the words of one PennyGold owner...

You know, you proved it so thoroughly, so completely, that it's just not reasonable to turn down this opportunity. But even as I ordered, I worried, 'What if...'. Thanks for a great product.

No matter why a hesitater turns down your product, **it's ultimately based on a**

lack of trust. Can't blame people for that. These people **want** your product, but they can't quite jump over the trust hurdle. **Don't lose them. Find a way to stay in front of them, to gain their trust.**

Even if you're a large, known multi-national, customers can't reach out and touch your product. The Web creates a gap that isn't there in a conventional retail store.

Here's an interesting statistic from our PennyGold site. For every 100 buyers...

- only 15 buy on the same day as the first visit to the site
- 40 buy within 1-2 days
- 15 buy within 3-4 days
- 30 buy **more than 4 days after the first visit, many as long as months later.**

In other words, 85% bought after the initial visit.

Many of that 85% bought after triggering one or more of PennyGold's Backup Responses.

To get **your** hesitators to finally jump and deliver **your MWR**, you must...

... **Set a Backup Response.** If your customer does **not** deliver your **MWR**, what's your Backup Response? What do you want your customer to do **if you don't get the MWR?**

A good Backup Response must...

- **deliver a benefit to your visitor at a "no-brainer" price (free is best), and**
- **provide you with the opportunity** to remind your customer about you and your product again.

Sooner or later, a healthy percentage of those who trigger your **Backup Response** will deliver your **MWR**. Why? Because you're building a quality, long-term, repeated exposure, one-to-one relationship with your customer. When you **finally** reach your prospect's comfort level, she buys.

If you forget your 10 almost-ready-to-buy customers, your hesitators, you're

chopping the sales effectiveness of your site by 90%.

SiteSELL Sidebar

We discussed the **MWR Conversion Rate (CR)** earlier on. From here on in, please remember that any talk about the **CR** applies also to the **Backup Conversion Rate**. **I will also use the term, Conversion Rate (CR)**, to mean either the **MWR CR** and/or the **Backup CR**, according to the context. **We discuss Conversion Rate in more detail a bit later.**



14.1. **It's Now or Never. Unless...**

Not only are you losing the **hesitaters**, you're losing them forever. Here's why...

There is an old Web axiom of “**keep them coming back for more.**” That's true and reasonable for entertainment-based sites, or sites that change every day, like news sites. And maybe even for your particular set of circumstances (ex., if you sell books like Amazon.com).

But for most sales-oriented sites, **people don't come back over and over again**. I mean, if you're looking for a new cutting-edge multiplexer, you'll visit the vendors' sites and make your choice. If you return to a site, **it's for more info, not because they've added a new bell or whistle!** After you buy, you won't come back until you need to buy another multiplexer.

That means that only the keenest return once or twice. But **most of those who came close to buying, the hesitaters, will never come back**. I wouldn't, would you? It's a big Web out there... might as well see something new!

Customers don't **revisit** commercial Web sites **unless they want to know more before making their buying decision**.

Bottom line? Unless the very nature of your sales-oriented site **naturally** tends to generate frequent, repeat visits, **realize that your customer is in “now or never” mode**.



If that's your case, and it most likely is, **why don't you revisit them?** Here's how...

Develop **Backup Responses** that allow you to e-mail the respondents. Then “revisit” them via e-mail, and provide them with reasons to revisit/reconsider you...

- good content that serves as a reminder of the product that they almost bought
- upgrade announcements
- new product introductions
- new info about your site that causes them to revisit you
- the rest is, as they say, “limited only by your imagination” (and good taste).



While developing your Backup Response and the Backup Response Product, **remember every baseball coach’s favorite saying...**



14.2. **Keep Your Eye on the Ball**

Your Backup Response must deliver a WIN-WIN for you **and** your customer.

First, it must deliver great **content** to your customer.

Second, it must increase your chances of ultimately getting your **MWR**.

Third, it must cost you **nothing** to make and distribute if your price tag is **FREE** (which it should be).

If the product for the Backup Response is a **physical hard good**, it will, of course, have a **cost of production** and a **shipping charge**. Think this through carefully. If you are giving away this hard good, will sales of the **MWR** generated by the **Backup Response** support these costs? **Or would it be better to put a low, “no-profit” price tag on it?** The advantages are...

- **prevent** out-of-pocket losses

- **qualify** Backup Responses as serious inquiries, by eliminating the “freebie-moochers”
- **reduce** follow-up expenses by concentrating on a smaller number of serious prospects.

Through all these considerations, never forget the target... getting the **MWR**. To get the **MWR**, first we have to **give** (great content), then **take** (ask for the **MWR**). Let's start with “give”...



14.3. The Perfect Products for Backups

OK, let's see. The product for the Backup Response should ideally cost you zero to make and ship. And we're on the Internet, right? Wait! I've got it!...

Digital products! Geez, that was tough! Products like...

... info-products, software trials, totally free mini-apps that would be of value and interest to your customer. You get the idea.

These digital products must all have one thing in common... **great content!**

A quality Backup Response Product must contain excellent content. Here's why...

- **It impresses people** with your expertise and ability to deliver. You build credibility.
- **It builds the habit of dealing with you.** If it's a free newsletter, they don't cancel their subscription. If it's a 60 day free trial software, they use it and become dependent on it -- when the trial times out, they buy.
- **It makes your prospect like and trust you** -- they feel good about you, confident.
- **It develops feelings of obligation.** Since they keep getting free, quality stuff from you, when it comes time to buy, it will be from you, not a competitor.

But remember, do not let your Backup Response become a one-way street,

where you just give, give, give. You must...



14.4. Give, then Take

If you don't weave in reminders that **you want their business**, your customers will just fall into the habit of receiving great content... free. After a while, they just take, take, take, while you give, give, give. They don't even thank you anymore!

So...

1) Always tie the content back to your product. But be subtle.

2) Provide excellent content, but make it clear where the “best stuff” is (in your **MWR**, in case you were wondering). This is a thin line to walk.

The right freebie not only gives, it takes. It should directly increase your chances to sell. For example, if your backup response is free trial software, give them the full deal, **all** the functions. Then disable it after a month or 10 uses. **If it's any good, they'll buy.**



Here's an example from PennyGold...

The PennyGold site gives away a javascript software that helps people make decisions... **any** kind of decisions. It's a neat and slick little piece of code (by Danny Goodman, the javascript guru), [which we'll discuss in more detail later](#). Of course, to teach people how to use this mini-app well, you need to include an example... the PennyGold example. People run through the example and weigh PennyGold against other options. Guess which one wins, every time, hands-down, **fairly?**

Yup. PennyGold.

Give, then take. As long as you “take” with class and subtlety, your customer won't object. He understands that there is a trade-off, as long as it's done in style. If he does object, he's not a customer. He's a...



... raccoon -- comes for the free eats, then leaves without even saying thank you.



14.5. Match Product to Desired Response

Develop more than one Backup Response Product. Tailor each to a desired type of response.

First, decide whether a **freebie** would be more effective as a **bonus for your MWR** or as the **offer for a Backup Response**.

For example, **the PennyGold bonus** is a 6 month subscription to four e-zines. Since these can only be read by those who own the PennyGold software, this is the right place for this freebie. The total value is hundreds of dollars -- but since they were already posted in the PGPers Club, they don't really cost anything to include in the offer.

The PennyGold Web site also uses a wide variety of other kinds of Backup Responses. An important method that we don't use is the **30 day trial download**. Due to the confidential nature of the information and methods of PennyGold, this was not useful for us. But if this format fits your product and if you have a strong product, **use this method -- it's a powerful way to sell**.

We **will** use a version of the free trial download on the **Make Your Site SELL!** Web site. If you bought this book after downloading the trial, you already understand the power of this Backup Response.

The bottom line? There is no limit to high-quality, low cost-to-produce items that you can give to your customers. Get creative. Design your own creative freebie for a **Backup Response** that fits your own circumstances.

Let's explore several of these Backup Responses now, using PennyGold as the

example for each...



14.5.1. The True Purpose of the Free Report

A free report is really a **direct sales letter** combined with the **outstanding information** that you have promised.

Remember... give, then take. In this case, give valuable info. Take by adding the sales elements. Here's an example...

The PennyGold site offers a free report entitled “**How To BUY LOW AND SELL HIGH in Penny Mining Stocks.**” It makes the offer in the opening paragraphs, to maximize the number of responses.

Visitors get this free report in return for “sending” a referral e-mail to a friend who might find PennyGold interesting. Naturally, she has to provide her own e-mail address, too, in order to get the report!

The report contains **valuable content**, and also acts as a super “second sales effort” when the customer checks her e-mail a bit later.

And the “refer-a-friend” e-mail increases traffic to the site at the same time.

Here's the page...

**Close this window after you have finished.
Do NOT press the BACK button.**

Do you know someone who'd find the *PennyGold* site interesting?
Tell a friend about it. They'll thank you, and so will I ... by
e-mailing you a FREE special report:

**How To
BUY LOW & SELL HIGH
in Penny Mining Stocks.**

You won't read this information anywhere else on the Internet, not
even on this site...

and the Report also contains an **extra** special thank you gift.

You've heard about the WIN-WIN situation? Well this is
WIN-WIN-WIN ... for you, your friend, and *PennyGold*!

	First Name	Email Address
You:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Friend:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Please double-check **both** e-mail addresses for typos.
Both e-mail addresses are totally secure.
I promise to use yours **ONLY** to send the report,
and **NEVER** to contact your friend.

Here's the e-mail that your friend will get:

Hi (Friend's name goes here),

I'm at this site called PennyGold. It's all about investing in penny
mining stocks.

But it's *NOT* about "HOT TIPS" or recommendations or advice.
Instead, they give you the knowledge and tools to go out and
successfully invest yourself.

Refer a Friend to PennyGold

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgref/pgxref1.html>

The [CGI script](#) verifies that the visitor has punched in the information correctly, then e-mails the report to the visitor and the referral letter to the friend.

SiteSELL Sidebar

If you try the above page, you'll find that you must enter an e-mail address for "You" **and** a different one for your "Friend." This has been a fun little experiment -- all attempts, failed **and** successful, go into a database. If you ever had any doubt that people hate to give info, you should see this file!

It's amazing how many of them try to get the report and avoid giving all the info!

Actually, I should only require a proper e-mail address for “You” (the person completing the form). Because some people give up when they can’t fool the script. That means I don’t get to send them the special report. And they’re probably peeved.

But I’m just having too much fun with this. Money isn’t everything. ;-)

And the special PennyGold report has two goals...

- 1) Satisfy the reader with terrific, truly valuable information. We receive thank-you notes on a regular basis, so it certainly achieves this goal.
- 2) “Sell” her again on the PennyGold InfoTool. The report itself reinforces the strength of the PennyGold approach. And I even offer this person a 10% discount just for her kind act of referring a friend. (And this is a **true** offer. It is the **only** way to receive 10% off the price of PennyGold.)

Here’s the e-mail that the customer receives...

There’s only one drawback to free reports...

They suffer in that they are one-shot deals. For example, with the PennyGold free report, the customer understands (from the privacy statement on the page) that this is a one-time mailing. I won’t bother her again.

However, here’s a wonderful special circumstance to keep in mind...

If your special report has time-sensitive material, develop it into a mini-newsletter. Deliver an outstanding report to your customer, as promised. Then, at the end, promise to **update** the report, as developments require. To be fair, offer the ability to UNSUBSCRIBE.

Now you’ve developed a solid reason for repeated contact. Naturally, you send the update (with honest to goodness valuable info -- this is always the engine that drives success) whenever you have news about your product, or about a new product launch, etc., etc.



14.5.2. Text of “Sales Letter” as “Special Report”

This is the e-mail that PennyGold visitors receive when they request the BUY LOW AND SELL HIGH report. You'll see that I take another stab at generating the **MWR** by offering a discount right at the beginning of the letter. And I mention PGOLD XPRESS (the free newsletter) at the end.

The sales pitches are blended with solid content and done with acceptably good taste. But you be the judge...

Dear <whatever name customer entered>,

Thank you for referring a friend to PennyGold. I appreciate your support. As promised, I include the special report below. But I like to "over-deliver" on my promises. So...

To show my appreciation in a more "concrete" way, I am also offering you 10% off the purchase price of PennyGold (whatever it happens to be at the time of ordering). Just use your friend's e-mail address as your "proof of referral" at that time.

Are you thinking, "He must give this discount to everyone"? Nope, I don't. No one else receives this 10% discount. This is the ONLY way to get "10% off" the current price.

For more details, I have set up a special Order Page especially for people who have been so kind as to refer someone to PennyGold. Here's the URL (please keep it confidential)...

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899thankyou.html>

OK, on to the special report on...

HOW TO BUY LOW AND SELL HIGH IN PENNY MINING STOCKS

EVERYONE wants to know when and how to BUY LOW and SELL HIGH. In penny mining stocks, 97% of investors ("players" would be a better term) LOSE MONEY because they do the reverse... they BUY HIGH and SELL LOW.

The best way to show why the losers do that, and at the same time to show you how to BUY LOW and SELL HIGH, is to tell you two true

stories:

1) The "Greed-then-Grief" cycle -- A few years ago, I met a neurologist at a party. We started to talk about investing, and I mentioned how well I was doing at penny mining stocks. Whoops!

"Don't talk to me about penny mining stocks"... almost shouting!

"I bought 100,000 shares of XYZ at a buck. My broker told me it had been at a dime a year ago, and that it was heading to \$10. Great, I thought. I'll buy 100,000 shares and turn it into a million."

I had a good idea where this was heading...

"Anyway, to make a long story short, I sold it all last week for a dime."

When I started to laugh, he asked, "What's so funny?"

I asked him, still laughing, "Do you know who bought all your stock last week at a dime?"

Of course, dear reader, by now you know the answer to that.

Yup, me. Sold it six months later in the 30's.

This story illustrates the "greed-then-grief" cycle to a tee. Your typical amateur buys when "the story" comes out.

Now this neurologist is definitely NOT a stupid person. But why would anyone buy a stock that was a dime just a year ago and that costs a dollar now, without even asking himself, "If this company is so fantastic, who the heck is selling me stock at \$1.00?"

Why? PURE GREED... greed that is caused by "THE STORY"

"What's "THE STORY?" you ask. Great question! It's so good that I'll hold my second true tale 'til after I answer:

Here's what happens. Little shell company, totally inactive/quiet, hopefully nice and clean... only 5,000,000 shares and trading at \$0.10, no debt. Prez owns the control block. The more stock he and his cronies own, the easier it will be to move.

Now, the typical amateur (i.e., the 97% of penny stock investors)

is afraid of this stock. And for good PSYCHOLOGICAL reasons...

After all, no one is talking about it. It certainly LOOKS dead ... hardly ever trades... price is so low, it can't be any good ... doesn't have any decent prospects, etc., etc. So your typical amateur investor, part of the 97%, doesn't buy.

It takes a hard, disciplined, knowledgeable investor to buy a stock like that.

Then, of course, there is the person who DID buy that stock a year or two earlier... at a dollar! He gradually gets disgusted with seeing that !\$@#\$\$ loser stock! Every month, when he receives the statement of account from his broker, that "loser" reminds him of how dumb he was. So one day he cracks and finally sells it "at the market" (i.e., for whatever he can get for it).

Who sucks up that bargain? Yup, the 3% who make the money.

Now, there is one big difference between penny mining companies and just about any other small public companies. A mining venture never generates huge debt. Why? Simple... banks won't lend them money!

After all, they don't have any assets. Even the properties they "own" are actually liabilities, because they generate yearly claim fees and exploration obligations. Since they have no assets, they get no loans.

Even when that stock goes from \$0.10 to \$2.00, the company still has no assets or income to justify any kind of a loan!

So when that mining high-flier goes back down to \$0.10, it does so debt-free. Which means that it's not hard for the insiders to revive it all over again.

Just clean up a few small debts to suppliers who got caught short. Vend in a new property. Or do a deal with another junior. Or roll back the stock (i.e. convert 20,000,000 shares into 4,000,000), raise a bit more seed capital. And they're off and running, all over again.

But for non-mining ventures, once a company succeeds, it actually starts to make money! And it starts to spend all kinds of money for hard assets necessary to grow the business. Banks see income and assets, so make loans. If these companies collapse, the banks usually get nervous and call the loan. Company liquidates. End of story. No revival.

MYSSI!... The Backup Response

That's why I love *penny mining stocks.* The same company can ride the same roller coaster over and over again.

So anyway, back to our Prez...

One day, the Prez and Buddies say, "Hey, let's do something with ShellCo this year." From here, there are a lot of ways that they can build "THE STORY."

They could acquire claims that will give them a play on the "hot metal" of the year. Decades ago it was uranium. Gold has been a perennial favorite, but is now temporarily out of fashion. Silver looks great this year.

Or if they already have a decent little property, they might find another junior company, one with cash, to come and explore their property (for a piece of the action, of course).

There are many different scenarios. It's not important which one happens. Many times WHICH ONE is totally unforeseeable. But that's not important. Here is what's important AND foreseeable...

For the Prez and his buddies, their little public company is a wonderful vehicle. It is IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS to make something happen. Sooner or later, they WILL find "a story" to tell the amateurs.

Remember this... If and when YOU find a safe, dead-looking little stock to buy, it is only a matter of time before "THE STORY" comes out. So buy before it happens!

By the time you "find" a stock in a press release in a newspaper, or in a newsletter, or in Silicon Investor, it's too late. You didn't find it... IT FOUND YOU. You're not ahead of the story. YOU'RE JUST PART OF IT.

When "the story" hits, that 5-10 cent stock triples or better. Don't wait for the RESULTS of the story to get out. Take the money and run. Then start over.

To summarize, get in BEFORE the story gets out. Get out WHEN THE STORY HITS, but BEFORE any results are known.

Of course, it's not that easy. It's TOTALLY natural to be scared of penny stocks that look dead. Some of them, after all, really ARE dead. And it's tough, if you don't have a solid and disciplined approach, to buy when no one else does.

And, when the stock is flying, greed is a funny thing. A really

good story-teller can make you forget yourself and the "greed-then-grief" cycle. For some reason, "this one is different -- it really IS heading to \$10!" Wrong.

That's why I developed my PennyGold software. If you'd like to see what PennyGold owners say about it, please check out the feedback page.

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/PGuserfeedback.html>

OK, on to the second story.

Some time ago, I identified a little stock that met all of my basic criteria. I did a bit more checking and it still looked good (i.e., "bad but good"). So I called the Prez.

Now, usually the Prez will spend an hour with you, if you'd like to talk to him for that long. I mean, it's not like he has a lot to do. The company is pretty quiet.

But this promoter runs several other companies. After about 15 minutes, he cuts me off and says, very flatly:

"Mr. Evoy, You're a very smart guy. You're asking me all the right questions. But let's get to the bottom line. "

"There are only 6,000,000 shares and the stock's a nickel. It will be an easy one to move when I get around to it. Right now, it's on my back burner. I'll do it in a year. And when I do, it's good for a dollar."

"Is that what you want to know?"

He said it so flat, and so arrogant, that I knew he meant it.

I replied, "Yes, I guess that is the bottom line of my questions! Thank you for your time."

I bought 70,000 shares at an average price of about 7 cents. Please understand that I didn't even know what "the story" would be. I just had great confidence in this man's SELF INTEREST.

Now, I had done my homework and KNEW that this stock would not disappear in the foreseeable future. So it was just a matter of buying and holding for as long as it took to explode in price.

I sold the stock 10 months later in the 25-30 cent range.

But the story's not done, yet. The week after I unloaded my last

MYSSI!... The Backup Response

block of 10,000 shares at \$0.25, the stock doubled to \$0.50.
Within a couple of months, it hit \$2.50.

Here's the real point that I hope sticks with you:

When he told me that he would move this stock to a dollar, HE
DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THE STORY WOULD BE YET! His stable
of companies were just "products on a shelf" to him. And sooner
or later, my little favorite would have its day.

And the tale's still not done. The stock is now back down at
\$0.10! Ready to do it again?

Well, that about wraps it up. The first story showed you how
and why the amateurs (I call them "the 97%") buy at the top...
... GREED, GREED, and more GREED.

The second story showed how and why the 97% sell at
the bottom... GRIEF, DISGUST, SHAME. And how and why the
3% WHO MAKE MONEY at penny mining stocks buy those same
stocks off them.

I hope the above two stories, both absolutely true, have helped
you to understand how to BUY LOW and SELL HIGH.

If you found this report to be of value to your understanding of the
penny mining markets, PGOLD XPRESS delivers more of the same
every month. If you have not yet subscribed, you can do so at...

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgxprs1.html>

Feel free to call me anytime if you have any questions.

All the best,
Ken Evoy, M.D.

~~~~~  
>>PennyGold -- Powerful Penny Mining Stock Software  
Become a sharp-thinking, independent, successful investor  
~~~~~  
>>"I get the facts,I study them patiently,I apply imagination."
-- Bernard Baruch
~~~~~  
>>Web site ==> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>  
kevoy@goodbytes.com voice:450-458-1064 fax:450-458-1068  
\*\*\*\*\*TOLL-FREE ORDER LINE 1-888-98-PENNY\*\*\*\*\*  
~~~~~



14.5.3. How to Use Mini-Apps to Drive SALES

A free piece of software! **WOW!** Where do I sign up?

I love using Danny Goodman's javascript **decision-making program, Decision Helper (DH)**. And I love what it does for my site's sales, too. Danny Goodman allows you to use it, **free**, as long as you give him proper credit.

Which, I guess, is Danny's clever way of driving more people to his site, thereby selling more books...

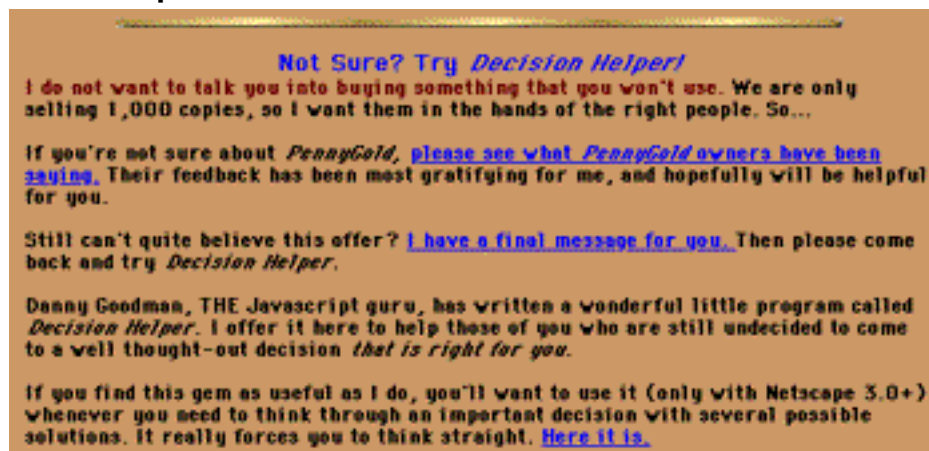


Danny Goodman's Javascript Site

<http://www.dannyg.com/javascript/index.html>

Once you've downloaded Danny's DH from his site, **customize it to fit your product**. List your product vs. the competitors. Enter typical factors that are important in the decision-making process. Rank their importance. Then score them. Voila! Yours is best! (at least, I hope it is).

Since this is a **Backup Response for wafflers**, I include this offer right **after** the **MWR Response Form**...



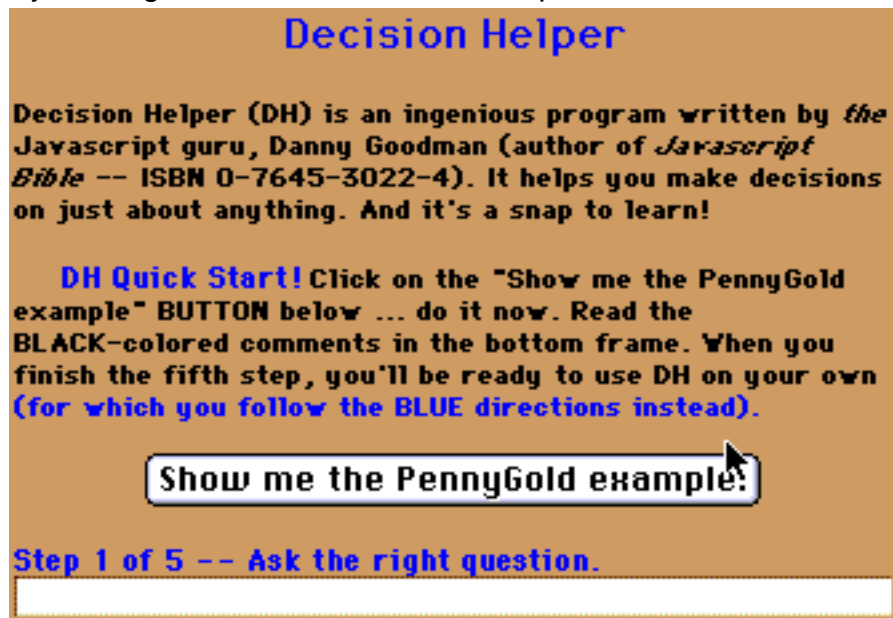
PennyGold Decision Helper (Offer)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html#DH>

Why does this offer appear **after** the Order Form? Super question!...

As explained earlier, I don't want to interrupt those who are "sold" -- they are heading smoothly towards the sale. And anyone who has arrived at the **Order Page** but is **waffling** will continue right to the bottom of that page, to see if there is any more info to help make his decision. There is!

By clicking on the link to Decision Helper, the visitor heads straight into it...



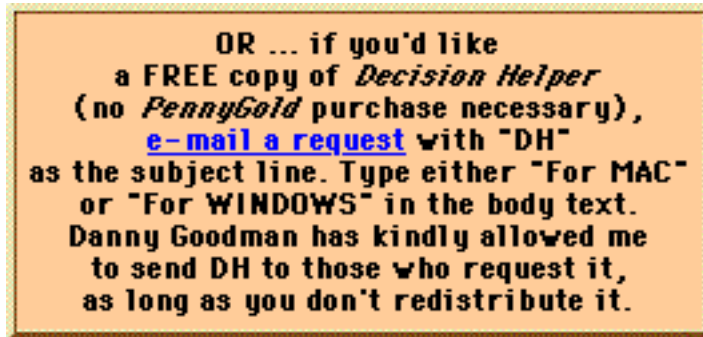
Decision Helper

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/dh/index.htm>

After going through the **PennyGold example**, which compares options like newsletters and advisors, it encourages the user to enter her own options and weightings. When people use DH to compare PennyGold against the competition, the value of PennyGold screams.

And DH adds that extra-value content -- it encourages the customer to try it for all kinds of decisions ("Now let's see, should I marry Bob or Bill?"). It truly is a wonderful little mini-app.

If the user likes it (what's not to like -- it's great!), she can also send an e-mail to request a copy of Decision Helper, totally **FREE**. While we could have just linked the reader to the free URL download page, we instead require them to e-mail us...



Anyone who won't give up an e-mail address for DH is **not** a serious prospect. By getting an e-mail, we succeed in...

- **breaking the "contact us" ice** -- once they see that all goes well, they develop some confidence. It's far easier to contact us a second time, perhaps to order PennyGold?
- **capturing an e-mail address for our database** -- I would only use this in a DH-related way.
- **developing an opportunity to "sell" via the autoresponse letter.** The "request DH" e-mail generates an automatic e-mail response, which is another opportunity to send a gentle sales letter. The autoresponse letter closes by telling them to download. Here's our "DH Response e-mail" (note the P.S.)...

Thank you for taking the time to visit our Web site, and for your interest in Decision Helper.

You can download it at the following URL:

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/downloaddh.html>

You'll be amazed at how this simple little piece of Javascript clarifies the decision-making process.

Best regards,

Ken Evoy, M.D.

P.S. Please do me a favor and try DH on PennyGold. You'll find that there's no better way to generate terrific investment returns. PennyGold is real. It works. I guarantee it.

Finally, here's what the prospect sees when she goes to the **Decision Helper Download Page**...

Download Decision Helper

Decision Helper is a **FREE** GoodByte\$ InfoTool. Instead of just reading a BOOK about "HOW to make a decision," Decision Helper is a TOOL that actually **MAKES** a decision with you.

Decision Helper is indispensable when you need to come up with the correct response to an issue that has several possible solutions. It helps you:

- lay out all the important factors
- analyze them
- weigh them
- make a smart decision.

Once you've done that, it points you towards "the best decision." It even tells you how much better it is than the other possible decisions.

You need Netscape 3+ or Explorer 4+ to use Decision Helper.

OK ... let's get you started on the road to making great decisions.

Click here to download Decision Helper for Windows. This file (labelled "dh.EXE") is a self-extracting zipped file. If your browser asks you, save it as a file to your hard disk. Once downloaded, all you need to do is double-click it. Then, in the window that pops up, click on the "Unzip" button (NOT the "Run WinZip") button.

Decision Helper Download

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/downloaddh.html>

And does this work? Well, although it's not our most popular [Backup Response](#), one quarter of the people who ask for Decision Helper go on to order PennyGold!



14.5.4. Newsletters -- Building Your Business

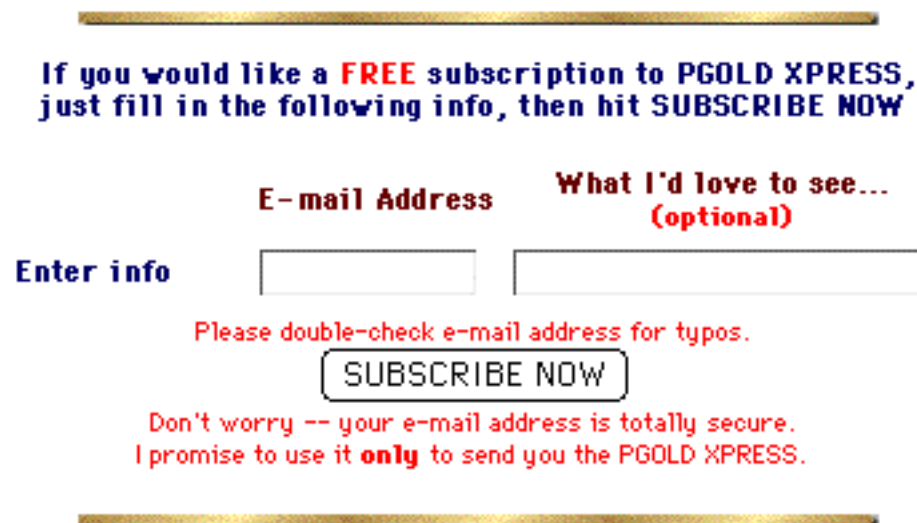
Publishing an [e-mailed newsletter](#) is an important part of building a long-term, valuable list of future (and current) clients.

Right at the bottom of every important **Content Page**, the PennyGold site offers a link to a FREE subscription to **PGOLD XPRESS**. It is designed to **capture anyone with any kind of an interest in penny mining stocks**, even if they are not ready to buy PennyGold itself.



This graphic  is not a link.

Clicking links them to this PGOLD XPRESS Subscription...



The form is titled "PGOLD XPRESS Subscription Page" and includes a URL. It features a gold-colored header bar. The main text reads: "If you would like a **FREE** subscription to PGOLD XPRESS, just fill in the following info, then hit SUBSCRIBE NOW". Below this, there are two input fields: "E-mail Address" and "What I'd love to see... (optional)". To the left of the "E-mail Address" field is the text "Enter info". Below the input fields, there is a red text prompt: "Please double-check e-mail address for typos." followed by a "SUBSCRIBE NOW" button. At the bottom, there is a red text disclaimer: "Don't worry -- your e-mail address is totally secure. I promise to use it **only** to send you the PGOLD XPRESS." The form is framed by gold-colored horizontal bars at the top and bottom.

PGOLD XPRESS Subscription Page
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgxprs1.html>

The results? In just a few months, we soon had over 2,500 targeted readers. If your experience is like mine, the first few issues **won't** generate many extra sales. But, with repeated exposure, and as the readership grows, **we now see a surge in sales after e-mailing each new issue.**

I knew that I was asking people to make a huge leap of faith to spend a great deal of money for investment software from an unknown person. So we offered a subscription to PennyGold as our **Backup Response**. As they see the **high quality** of the **free** product, and as they get more comfortable with me, perhaps even **start to like and trust me**, people buy PennyGold.

Newsletters are an important way to build a long-term, successful online business. [Let's see how to start and grow your own...](#)



14.5.5. How to Start & Grow Your Own Newsletter

Even if your visitor bookmarks you, he's unlikely to ever return once he leaves. [Newsletters](#) are **the best way** to defeat "Out of (Web) site, out of mind" mindset.

By getting your visitor to submit his e-mail address to you, you've broken one barrier (contacting you). By sending him quality info (but not the **primo** material -- you must walk a fine line), he sees you, and feels good about you, **on a regular, repeated basis.**

Every time your potential customer receives your **NEWSLETTER**...

- you remind him about you and your business
- you build trust
- you promote your products
- you build your image as an expert in the field.

Let's review a simple, STEP-BY-STEP program to build and grow your own newsletter...

STEP 1 -- Orientation -- Who's it for, and what benefits will you deliver?

Before deciding upon **what** you'll write, decide **who** you will write for. Most obviously, you'll publish a newsletter for **potential and existing customers**. But how about one for investors in your company, or your suppliers and vendors, or resellers, etc.? Once you know **who**...

What benefits will you deliver to your subscribers? Will you provide a tip of the day? Will you digest news in your field down to a small number of key snippets each week? Or will you write an original article with valuable info once per week, or month?

There's no limit to what you can do. Spend some time on this -- choose a unique and valuable format that provides a solid benefit for your readers.

Before developing the concept too far, check for competitors, both among the [one-way](#) and the [two-way](#) media. Once you know what's out there, develop a conceptual [USP](#) for your e-zine.



STEP 2 -- Format -- Lay out the newsletter for easy reading by your subscriber, and for easy development by you.

The best way to show this is by example. Please review the [sample newsletter in the next sub-chapter](#). (Click in either page margin to trace back to this spot after you review it.)



STEP 3 -- Schedule -- Don't do a weekly at first. A newsletter sucks more time than you realize. And quarterly is just not often enough. So a monthly schedule is a good place to start, at least until you have all bugs worked out.



STEP 4 -- Set up a Web page to "sell" the subscription and get the e-mail address. You **only** need the e-mail address, and maybe the first name (it's a nice, personal touch when you mail merge with the first name -- [here's a nice way to get the first name](#)).

Don't make the mistake of turning your subscription **Response Form** into a market research survey, asking for all kinds of information to "better know your customer." If you do that, you'll drastically cut down subscriptions.

SiteSELL Sidebar

[Review the basics of designing a form that works.](#)

STEP 5 -- Develop a separate Web page to allow people to **unsubscribe**. Do not provide this link anywhere on your Web site. Just mention it in your welcome letter and in each issue of your newsletter. The [CGI script](#) should check to make sure that the e-mail address entered is valid, **and that it exists on the database**. If it does, the script deletes it, then puts up a confirming page. If not, it tells the visitor that he is probably receiving the newsletter at a different e-mail address, and to please enter another address.

STEP 6 -- Provide a link to your subscription Web page on almost every **relevant** page of your site.

STEP 7 -- Automate -- the CGI script that handles the e-mail-gathering **Response Form** adds the address to a database that is kept on your server. When you are ready to send your subscribers the newsletter, a second CGI script sends out your newsletter [server-side](#), at your command, to the database. While you **could** do this manually and [client-side](#), why bother?

STEP 8 -- Develop high-quality content -- good information is the trade-off that allows you to do a little gentle selling.

Provide what **your customer** wants to hear, **not** what you want to talk about. Make him happy, provide a benefit, ease his pain, and you will have a customer for your products, sooner or later. **Make him look forward to receiving the next issue!**

Content does not have to be "text-only." Tie the type of content to the type of product that you sell. If you run a porn site, you'll have millions signing up for your "free-pic-of-the-week" newsletter! ;-)

Where will you get your content? Most importantly, out of your own head -- you're the expert, after all. But you'll need some help to stay on the cutting edge, **and** seed great ideas for articles -- luckily, there are **lots** of sources...

- [PR Newswire](#) and [PR Web](#) and [Internet News Bureau](#) -- These services send out press releases. You can subscribe to receive those that are relevant to your industry.

- [E-zines and daily e-mail news related to your industry](#) -- subscribe to every one, especially your competitors'.

One word of warning about content... Don't give away the farm! Make sure your subscriber still needs your primary product that is for sale.

The topic should also provide you the opportunity to work your business and product into the copy. All the rules of good writing in this book apply.

Don't be shy to weave mention of your products into the content. As long as you are providing valuable information, people expect a gentle self-plug to come with the content. And if someone **does** UNSUBSCRIBE because of your product mentions, was he a potential customer in the first place? Remember, **it's not worth the effort if it doesn't bring a return.**

The bottom line... Talk to a friend, offer outstanding content, and blend in some gentle selling.

SiteSELL Sidebar

1) For the technical how-to stuff, see [Power-E-mail below](#). All the principles are the same.

2) Most e-mail software now reads html. So you can even send your newsletter as an html document, with graphics, forms, etc.

3) Assume that everyone will see your e-zine, including competitors, special interest groups, etc. Judge your content accordingly.

STEP 9 -- Deliver it (via e-mail) on time -- regular, timely delivery **establishes credibility.** You can do this manually via your own computer by using the [bcc function](#) of your e-mail software.

When you outgrow that (over 250 subscribers), try a full service, mailing list manager

program with database-to-e-mail merge capabilities, like **WorldMerge...**

WorldMerge Home

WorldMerge

<http://www.linkmedia.com/merge/index.htm>

But no matter how you cut it, if you have over 1,000 subscribers, it's just too slow doing it client-side. The manual subscribing and unsubscribing is tedious and time-consuming. And the time it takes to send a mere 500 e-mails through a dial-up connection is... well, it seems like forever.

So, **automate, automate, automate** -- go totally server-side.

Your Web hosting service can set up a server-side Majordomo mailing list for you on their computers, for little or no monthly cost. While Majordomo is nice and cheap (it's freeware), it's complicated to learn. Ask your Web host for details. **Or...**

Commercial packages are easier to learn and offer powerful features. For example, **Revnet** has a range of products, both client-side and server-side...

REVNET

Revnet

<http://www.revnet.com/>

SparkLIST and **L-Soft** are two other popular e-mail list-hosting services...

SPARKLIST

SparkLIST

<http://www.sparklist.com/>

L-Soft

L-Soft

<http://www.l-soft.com/>

Some companies **give you a choice**. They will handle your list for you, **or** you can use their software to **do it yourself...**



Lyris Technologies
<http://www.lyris.com/>

Finally, you can decide to customize for the specific needs of your own business by developing **your own CGI script that does it all...**

- handles subscriptions and **un**subscriptions and bounce-backs (see next topic) -- in doing this, it modifies and maintains the online database of e-mail addresses (and other information that you may have requested, like first name, etc.)
- maintains a backup copy of the database
- **provides a special admin page...**
 - It has an [html-to-CGI form](#) for you to enter the text of your newsletter, as well as the subject, salutation, reply-to address, etc.
 - It e-mails to everyone (from server-side) on the database at the click of a button, in a matter of minutes.
 - It will e-mail you a backup copy of the online backup database whenever you request -- a good idea in case of server disaster.

Developing your own custom CGI script is not too expensive, if you can find a solid techie. It's the route I choose for my own online business.

STEP 10 -- Handle bounce-backs -- People change their addresses and don't tell you. So about 1-3% of your e-mail addresses will bounce back each month. Your list software should either handle bounce-backs automatically, or you can set your CGI script to do what we currently do manually...

We enter bounce-backs manually into a database. If we get two bounce-backs in a row from the same address, we delete the address. Once we see that there's

nothing to learn from doing it manually, we will automate this, as well.

Which brings us back to a good concept regarding automation... **do it manually until you've got all the bugs out and you're just plain wasting too much time. Then automate.**

STEP 11 -- Publicize -- once the bugs are ironed out, you're ready to publicize. **The Zine & E-zine Resource Guide** outlines an excellent program for promoting your publication...



How to Publicize Your E-zine

<http://www.zinebook.com/publicz.html>

And there's a **pleasant bonus** when you market your newsletter. Not only will you build your e-publication, you will build more traffic to your site (if you provide a link from your subscription page to your Home and/or Opening Page).

STEP 12 -- Back issues -- include back issues on your Web site. Intro each issue with a brief line or two that "teases" the reader to click for more info. For example...



PGOLD XPRESS Back Issues

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgoldxpress/index.html#BACKISSUES>

And that's about it. Follow the above steps, and you'll soon be **ONE BIG STEP** closer to building a **long-term online business that SELLS!**

SiteSELL Sidebar

The "Informal" Newsletter -- Keep a database of people who have inquired about your product, but have **not** specifically subscribed to your newsletter. If you have more than one product line, track **which product** interested them. Announce upgrades, new product launches in similar categories, etc. to these people, but only for the product that interested them. Mention the newsletter in each announcement.



14.5.6. Sample Newsletter Format

Below is a sample of our PGOLD XPRESS newsletter. Comments in red explain what's happening...

```
~~~~~
PGOLD XPRESS
Note the use of a single > tag to highlight important points in blue, and two tags ( >>
) to highlight other points in green.
A Free-zine dedicated to showing you...
> ... how to invest in penny mining stocks
> ... how to avoid being part of the 97% who lose money
> ... how to join the 3% who make money (from the 97% who lose!)
Stresses benefits to subscribers.

~~~~~
>"I get the facts... I study them patiently... I apply imagination."
  -- Bernard Baruch (1870-1965),
    legendary financier and adviser to U.S. presidents
~~~~~
March 13, 1998
Issue #003

PGOLD XPRESS is a FREE monthly newsletter about penny mining
stocks. Here's what PGX delivers:

1) Sharp, original articles show you the ins and outs of
this fascinating, exciting investment arena. Totally original,
you will not read this information anywhere else.

2) Over time, you will become invulnerable to "the story." PGX
will keep you from getting sucked into all the frauds and scams.
```

PGOLD XPRESS is NOT a "tips" or recommendations newsletter. The information herein is based upon sources which we believe to be reliable, but is not guaranteed and may be incomplete. You must DO YOUR OWN investigation and make YOUR decision based on YOUR results.

Stresses benefits to subscribers.

Tips just don't work, especially not penny mining stock tips... they are often just a paid-for part of the promotion... or what I call "the story."

While PGOLD XPRESS *WILL* make you a better penny mining stock investor and while it *WILL* keep you from becoming part of the 97% who lose money, it won't bring you into the fold of the 3% who win at penny mining stocks. Only PennyGold can do that.

PennyGold is powerful software that will turn you into a self-reliant, successful penny stock investor.

Lets subscribers know where the “good stuff” is.

NOTE: There are only two ways to get on the PGOLD XPRESS mailing list: 1) You have purchased PennyGold; 2) You visited the PennyGold Web site and subscribed. If you wish to unsubscribe, send an e-mail to unsubscribepgxprss@goodbytes.com, with UNSUBSCRIBE as the subject.

Always include easy SUBSCRIBE and UNSUBSCRIBE info. Also remind them that it is they who subscribed. People forget and some will actually think you are spamming them. When we get the occasional flame, we remind them that a subscription request came from their computer, if not from them personally. We actually include a copy of the request!

>PGOLD XPRESS back issues are available at:

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgoldxpress/>

If you have good content, they'll want to explore back issues, which brings them closer to re-visiting your site.

~~~~~

> \\\

IN THIS ISSUE:

- SPECIAL NOTE
- ARTICLE OF THE MONTH
- WEB SITE OF THE MONTH
- PENNYGOLD FAQ OF THE MONTH
- PENNYGOLD NEWS
- POSTSCRIPT



### Creates urgency.

>2) Updates to Web site -- since the last issue of PGX, the junior markets remain super-depressed. Here's a quick random sampling of penny mining stocks for you to check out:

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/quotes-ext/index.html>

Note this time, however, that a few of those stocks have already doubled or tripled. There's a lot of action to come in the months ahead!

### Invitation to revisit.

#### >3) NOTE TO PENNYGOLD OWNERS:

I have posted the PennyGold Research Room in the PGPers Club. This central "library" contains the cream of the entire World Wide Web. Up-to-date information is available on just about any junior mining stock you can imagine, from almost anywhere in the world.

Use the Research Room to:

- Build lists of high-potential stocks.
- Get the data PennyGold needs.
- All simply by clicking!
- All totally for free!

The beauty of the Research Room, of course, is that as the Web continues to grow, the RR's resources will just keep getting better and better. And all totally free! It's an amazing world.

### Give sense of missing something, which they are!

>4) Feedback on PennyGold has been gratifying. I have added a few new comments from PennyGold owners to the following Web page:

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/PGuserfeedback.html>

### Testimonials are especially powerful.

More information on PennyGold is available at the Web site:

#### > Home Page (frames/music)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>

#### > Home Page (no frames/music)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pennygold.html>

#### > Concept Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/concept.html>

#### > What Do I Get Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/300.html>

#### > Current State of the Junior Mining Markets

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/quotes-ext/index.html>

MYSSI!... The Backup Response

> 10-Times-Guarantee

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/500.html>

> Exclusive Club Page (1,000 copies only)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/600.html>

> Order Page (price and ordering info)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html>

> PennyGold FAQ

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/FAQ1.html>

> PennyGold Site Map

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/SITEMAP.html>

Just in case they wanted to check something.

~~~~~  
>>POSTSCRIPT

Include any needed legal stuff here.

DISCLAIMER

As you know, I am NOT an investment adviser. Please do not take what I say as investment advice. YOU have to be the final judge in how to best use the information contained in this newsletter (or whether to use it at all). In the final analysis, we all have to be responsible for our own decisions.

Ask for feedback. Include an e-mail address and phone number.

LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

I want to make PGOLD XPRESS as useful to you as possible. If you have any suggestions, tips, or other comments, please e-mail me at kevoy@goodbytes.com. Or call me directly at 450-458-1064.

~~~~~  
Written by Ken Evoy, M.D.,  
President of GoodBytes Information Products Inc.  
(c) copyright 1998 GoodBytes Information Products Inc.

Encourage pass-ons -- it can only help. But assume EVERYONE will see it and adjust your content accordingly.

>This publication MAY be reproduced and transmitted to  
>others, as long as it has been copied in its entirety.

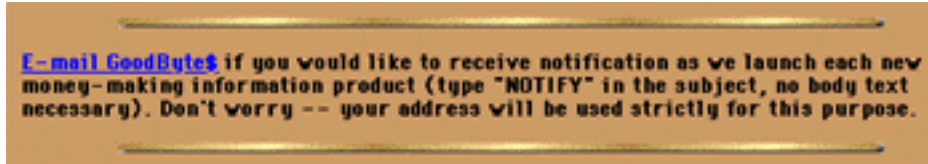
~~~~~  
~~~~~



### 14.5.7. Getting Signups for Future Notifications

This is probably the weakest of my Backup Responses. After all, **the benefit to the customer is not the greatest. And it's vague...**

At strategic points in the PennyGold site, people may request to be informed about future InfoTools...



This graphic  is not a link.

This provides me with a list of people, serious people, who were sufficiently convinced by the tone of the Web site to exchange their e-mail addresses for future money-related notifications.

By the time you read this, I will have e-mailed to that list for the first time... to tell them about this book. If you are one of those who bought **this book** after receiving that letter, you know it works!

Actually, I doubt if this ever generates us much business. But part of my philosophy about the Web is...

**“If you don’t try, you’ll never find out!”**



### 14.5.8. Freebies -- Your Chance to **SELL!...** or **SMELL!**

Whether you offer a freebie as an **appetizer for the MWR**, or whether your freebie is **the main course of your Backup Response...**

... make the **FREE** obvious. **Free** is a powerful word -- people just love **free** stuff. So use the word... *highlight it.* You might as well... after all, **it's FREE!**



But **FREE** does not mean that your freebie should be cheap or ill-thought out. **Your**

**freebie will often be your customer's first true experience with some kind of product from your company.**

Do you want your customer's first exposure to your products to be a negative experience?

Or would you rather that she marvel,

**“Wow! If that's what their free products are like...”**

**Think about it.** You're on my Web site, close to buying, but unsure. You ask for a freebie. It's lousy. What's your next move?

Yup, **bye-buy...**

What a shame! You designed a great site that **SOLD!** You convinced your customer to exchange her e-mail address for your freebie. **Then, just when you had the chance to shine,** you convinced her that your products are poor.



## 14.6. **Getting the Backup Response**

Duplicate the formula that you used to get your **MWR...** design a **sharp offer**, a **clear call to action**, and the [Response Form](#) for delivering the **Backup Response** itself.

And just like for your **MWR**, do this while placing yourself inside your customer's mindset.

**Who** is your Backup Response for, and **what** are you trying to achieve?



### 14.6.1. **The Compelling Offer**

**Your freebie is not really free.** It's going to cost your customer some anonymity. A name and e-mail address are not given lightly.

So, as always, **stress the benefits** of the freebie. Add a **testimonial** or two. **Build a strong case to “buy” your freebie.**

**Make the prospect send you her e-mail address.** If she won't do that little thing, you do not have a motivated customer. **Do not just give info away by allowing anonymous download.** No one builds a business with tire-kickers.

**Guarantee not to use the e-mail address for any other purpose.** Over 80% of Web users feel that content providers do not have the right to resell user information. If you violate this, you're in big doo-doo. And you **will** get caught if you sell your lists -- some people put identifying tags in their e-mail addresses to detect if their info has been sold.

See the PennyGold privacy message below (right under the SUBSCRIBE NOW button)...

---

**If you would like a **FREE** subscription to PGOLD XPRESS, just fill in the following info, then hit SUBSCRIBE NOW**

|                                                                                                                        | <b>E-mail Address</b> | <b>What I'd love to see...<br/>(optional)</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Enter info</b>                                                                                                      | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>                          |
| Please double-check e-mail address for typos.                                                                          |                       |                                               |
| <input type="button" value="SUBSCRIBE NOW"/>                                                                           |                       |                                               |
| Don't worry -- your e-mail address is totally secure.<br>I promise to use it <b>only</b> to send you the PGOLD XPRESS. |                       |                                               |

---



### 14.6.2. The Crystal-Clear Call to Action

Just like for the **MWR**, make it clear what you want your customer to do. **Tell him... exactly.**

Then make it quick and easy... get the least amount of info necessary.



### 14.6.3. Automate Your Reply to the Backup Response

Unlike your **MWR**, your **Backup Response** does not immediately build your business or add to the bottom line. It will be free, so it will be popular (if you do it

right). While it does not immediately generate a profit, do not turn it into a money-loser, either.

Receiving **Backup Responses**, and replying to them, should not take up a single second of your company's time. **Automate totally...**

**Provide only one way to respond... online.** For a PennyGold sale, I'll send a dog sled to pick up the order. But for the free **Backup Responses**, reduce your costs of doing business to zero. Use online methods only, such as a [html-to-CGI Response Form](#), e-mail to autoresponders, etc.

**Keep the Backup Response Form short and sweet.** Only ask for the e-mail address, and perhaps the first name if you would like to merge that into your communications with the customer. **The more info you request, the fewer inquiries you will get.** Why? Because it takes time and it's personal.

And **automate your reply as well** -- this should include a thank you, a brief and gentle sales letter, and whatever else is relevant to the particular response. **It should be automatic... and it should be immediate.**

*SiteSELL Sidebar*

[Review the basics of designing a form that works.](#)

[Please see below for a full discussion on automated e-mail.](#)



MYSSI!... “Well, that’s done!” .....NOT!

# 15. “Well, that’s done!” .....NOT!

When you are through changing... you are through.

-- Bruce Barton, co-founder of BBDO ad agency

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Change is a comforting thing. It’s the only thing you can count on today. And there are very few things that you can count on any more.

-- Roy McAvoy, pro golfer in the movie *Tin Cup*

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**Your site is never done.** It’s a constantly ongoing, evolving project. Kind of like advertising, or brushing your teeth. Never stop building and improving your site.

If you ever entertained thoughts of finishing your site, **don’t**. It will evolve for as long as you are in business. **If it doesn’t, it will go the way of Darwin’s other creatures that stopped evolving.**

**A digital store is “electron-cheap”... keep trying new things.** Keep improving. Try harder copy. Try softer copy. Try different layouts, etc. Keep what works. Drop the rest.

Hey, it’s not like you’re turning part of a forest into 100,000 brochures! It costs almost nothing to try a new page, better sales copy, a provocative graphic. If it works, keep it. If it doesn’t, return to the previous version.

**Hone until it’s razor-sharp.** Then make it better.

Try... try... and try again. That’s the way to succeed.

OK, I guess you got the message. ;-)

Let’s talk details...



MY **SSI!**... "Well, that's done!" .....**NOT!**

## 15.1. How to Analyze Traffic to Boost **SALES**

Every time someone hits your Web site, information like **IP address**, time and date of access, error messages, etc., etc. are recorded into log files. These log files are stored in your server's computer.

There are **up to** four files -- **access (or transfer), error, agent (or browser), and referrer files**.

More and more often, the transfer, agent, and referrer are being combined into a **combined file**. The error log is still often supplied separately.

Here's what a (simplified) line from PennyGold's log file looks like, broken down for easy explanation.

**1998-06-03 18:55:58 168.144.2.125 GET /index.html 200 4442 Mozilla/3.01+(Win95) http://goldsheet.simplenet.com/**

What's that you say? Too small to read? Geez, what a complainer! OK, let's break it up, bolden each part in blue, and then add a little explanation. OK?

**1998-06-03 18:55:58** ➡ Date and local time of access

**168.144.2.125** ➡ IP address of visitor

**GET /index.html** ➡ visitor requested (GET) the index.html page, PG's Home Page.

**200 4442** ➡ **200** is the code for successful access (if the user had asked for index5.html, which does not exist, we would see the famous 404 code instead of 200 -- there are several other possible outcomes). **4442** is the number of bytes transferred.

**Mozilla/3.01+(Win95)** ➡ Visitor is using **Netscape 3.01** and is on **Windows 95**.

**http://goldsheet.simplenet.com/** ➡ Visitor came from GOLDSHEET, my favorite penny mining site on the Web.

If my visitor had come from the Excite search engine instead of GOLDSHEET, this final bit might look like...

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<http://search.excite.com/search.gw?search=penny+stock> ➡ Note that we also see that the visitor had looked up "penny stock" to find me!



Your server should provide you with log files like this (preferably in large enough type to read!). If your ISP can't or won't supply all four, **it's worth switching** to one that will. At a minimum, insist upon the **access** and **referrer** log data.

**Log file analysis software** analyzes these files and assembles the data into results like...

- number of hits
- number of visitors
- most popular pages
- most frequent entry and exit pages
- etc., etc.

A "hit" is merely a single line in your Web site's log file. It is **not** the same as a page view or a visitor -- each graphic is a hit, for example. The number of hits is a very rough measure of traffic, and not really of much use. You could double the number of hits you get simply by adding a bunch of invisible [GIFs](#) to each page of your site!

So what **is** important?...



... Visits, visitors, and what your visitors do.



### 15.1.1. The Ideal Log File Analyzer

Knock, knock! Here comes another...

MYSSI!... "Well, that's done!" .....NOT!



... visitor to your Web site! Wouldn't you like to find out more about **what your visitors do during their visits?**

**Log file analysis software** digests the zillions of lines of raw data in your log files (you saw a single line in the previous section) into usable data and graphs. There is a near-infinite variety of ways to slice and dice the log files. While none of them yet give enough information about behavior, they do yield some helpful information.

I've communicated with many marketing people responsible for their Web sites (from individuals to small-mid-sized businesses). **Their #1 request -- they want to know, and not guess at, visitor behavior. Once you know how visitors act on your site, you will understand how to change your Web site in order to improve your Conversion Rate (CR).**

---

**The current state of analyzers only permits us to guess at behavior. That is not good enough.**

Based on the comments of Web marketers, here's what the "ideal log file analyzer" should do...

**1) Yield more useful data** than is currently available. Summary data like **number of visitors** and **most frequent entry/exit pages** are of some use.

But they still don't give us enough info to know where to improve the **CR. Visitor behavior** is where it's at, **not** summary data that hides the action.

---

**2) Web marketers want to do this themselves** on their computer's desktop (if it's easy to do). They want to have the software right there on their hard disks, to download the log files, and then to analyze.

---

**3) They aren't interested in most of the bells and whistles** offered by the

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\$10,000 packages. For example, who cares about real-time, on-the-spot analysis. You need to get enough numbers together to see the patterns anyway. Weekly analysis is more than sufficient.

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**4) Interactivity** -- they want a product that they can "drive" to ferret out the information that is important for their site. They don't just want some static report that slices and dices down to the atom.

They do **not** want a lot of complicated set up time -- no CGI, no server-side stuff. Just give them the tool, then get out of their way.

---

**5) The individual to small business marketer wants it at a reasonable price** -- under \$200, definitely. Mid-sized marketers were more price-flexible.

As far as we can see, after a rather complete review of what's available, **nothing comes close to providing the functionality required.** We'll have to "make do" with what's available, out in the real world...



### 15.1.2. The Best Traffic Analyzers for Your

**The best value for the money is freeware.** What **Analog** gives you for free is amazing. Yes, there are fancier, costly products that deliver a **bit** more info. But if you want to get 80% of the benefit with zero cost...



**Analog**

<http://www.statslab.cam.ac.uk/~sret1/analog/>  
(mirrors all over the world)

After Analog, it's amazing. The prices range from \$995 to \$55,000 (except for WebTrends at \$299). Price is directly proportional to bells and whistles, but seems to have no relation to getting "under the hood" and ferreting out **info that is useful** to increase the effectiveness of your Web site.

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Not even the products costing tens of thousands of dollars deliver what Web marketers really need. You just don't get a lot more **useful** info than the freeware delivers. I mean, I don't need to know how many people from Sweden accessed my site... between 4-5 AM... and who are over 6 feet tall!

---

The most well-known **commercial** package is **WebTrends**. They have a free trial download. Try it and compare it to Analog. Then decide if it's worth the money.



**WebTrends**

[http://www.webtrends.com/wt\\_main.htm](http://www.webtrends.com/wt_main.htm)

Recently, **HitList Pro** has reduced their price from \$995 to \$295, the same as WebTrends. Compare their free trial with WebTrends.



**HitList Pro**

<http://www.marketwave.com/hitlist/pro/default.htm>

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For those who have more advanced needs, here are a couple of comprehensive listings of log file analyzers...



**Access Log Analyzers**

<http://www.uu.se/Software/Analyzers/Access-analyzers.html>



**Yahoo! - Business and  
Economy:Companies:Computers:Software:Internet:World Wide Web:Log  
Analysis Tools:Titles**

[http://www.yahoo.com/Business\\_and\\_Economy/Companies/Computers/Software/Internet/World\\_Wide\\_Web/Log\\_Analysis\\_Tools/Titles/](http://www.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Companies/Computers/Software/Internet/World_Wide_Web/Log_Analysis_Tools/Titles/)

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OK, now that we all have a trusty log file analyzer in our arsenals, let's briefly discuss what the current crop of common log file analyzers deliver...



### 15.1.3. Data from Log File Analysis

Here's the type of data that you can get from most decent log file analyzers, including the freeware above...

**Hits or visits** -- A hit is just a line in your log file. Every separate item on each of your Web pages generates a hit. So any HTML page counts as a hit, and so does every graphic, every sound file, etc. on that page. A page with seven graphics would generate eight hits -- seven for the graphics and one for the page itself. If you're using frames, each [frame](#) loads as its own separate page, generating its own series of hits. Obviously, if you're trying to figure out how many people come to your site, hits is not the way to do it!



**Page views** -- This is a better way to measure site activity. The term "page views" refers to the number of HTML pages served, no matter how many graphics or other things may be on the page. If a visitor surfs through ten pages of your site, ten page views will be generated.



**Visits** -- A visit is a trip to the site by one individual in a "session." If a visitor comes to your site and hangs around for 20 minutes looking at various pages, a "visit" is generated. If she leaves, then comes back more than 30 minutes later, another visit is generated, even if she only stays for a second on the Home Page and then leaves.



**Requests for each page of the site** -- Most programs will prepare a list of the most popular and least popular pages. This lets you see what visitors seem to like (or want) the most on your site.



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**Average number of HTML pages per visit** -- This figure shows how many pages the average visitor goes to before leaving. If this figure is one or two pages you know your site sucks. If you follow the advice in this book, this number should soar!



**Average time per visit (usually in seconds)** -- The software calculates how much time the average visitor spends on the site.



**Most common referring pages** -- Wouldn't you like to know where visitors link from, in order to get to your site? This tells you who has links to your site and which search engines you are properly listed with. A very useful bit of info.



They will also give you a lot of data which is not particularly useful to improving the sales effectiveness of your site...

**Browsers used** -- This breaks down what type of browsers people tend to use.

**Most popular operating systems** -- what OS your visitors use.

**Most popular visitor's organizations** -- This will show you the percentage of com, net, org, etc. visitors.

**Most common countries** -- This reveals which countries visitors come from.



#### 15.1.4. Number of Visitors and the **Conversion Rate**

The single most important piece of information that a log file analyzer should deliver is the **number of visitors** per week.

**As discussed earlier**, if you know this number, you can calculate your **Conversion Rate (CR)** by using this simple formula...

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**CR** = # of **MWR** per week, divided by # of visitors per week.

Knowing the **CR** is critical. Here's why...

1) You can make a change to your site and measure the effects on the **CR**. Say you change a headline on your **MWR Closer Page**. Your **CR** plummets by 80%. Put the old headline back. If sales triple, keep it!

Or what if you change your submit button from **GO!** to **BUY NOW!** If your **CR** drops, return to **GO...** but do not collect \$200! ;-)

2) Let's say that you are considering paying for banner advertising on a click-through basis (i.e., you only pay when someone actually clicks on your banner and visits your site). You negotiate a fee of \$1 per click-through to your site.

OK, time for some simple math. Let's also say that your site's **CR** is 5%. For a \$2,000 test, you get 2,000 click-throughs to your site. Therefore, with a **CR** of 5%, you expect **100 MWRs**. If you get 200 **MWRs**, you confirm that this is a highly targeted audience. If you only get 50, it's not. Track this across several different banner vendors to get an excellent idea of where your **best** audiences are.

Without the **CR**...



... yer shootin' in the dark, pawdnah! It is the perfect indicator of **your site's sales power**. It is also a useful adjunct when measuring the effectiveness of [traffic-generating programs](#).



### 15.1.5. Do You Know Where Your Visitors Come From?

Address:

The smaller and more unknown you are, the less likely that anyone will type your

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**URL** (into the **browser** software) to get to your site. **Unless you are Microsoft, most visitors will hyperlink to you**, whether from a **search engine** (where they click on your listing), or from a site that offers a link to yours, or from a banner ad.

---

The **referrer page** is the URL that your visitor **was** on, just before coming to you. **As discussed above**, it is a critical bit of info to know. It is vitally important for measuring and managing your...

**1) search engine campaign** -- the search engine (**SE**) info is vital. Each link from a search engine **includes the keywords** that your visitor used to find you (**see example above**). **The search engine and keyword info is invaluable** -- it tells you...

- which search engines you must improve upon
- how much business your keywords generate
- which keywords need work to improve SE-deliveries.

**2) link exchange program** -- by following how many links you receive from other sites, you can decide whether to continue link exchange arrangements (remember, a link out **loses** your visitor).

**3) banner advertising** -- you can verify the **number of click-throughs** by seeing how many visitors came from each banner ad. Even if the banner ad is sold on a "per-view" or "per-impression" basis, you can calculate the click-through percent (# click-throughs divided by # impressions).

You'll find that the same banner on different sites perform differently. And that some banner designs "pull" much better than others. **Drop whatever doesn't get the job done.**

---

**If you run your own server**, configure it to include the referrer field in the log file.

**If you do not run your own server** and if your ISP does not, and will not, supply referrer fields, **switch ISP**. Period. It's that important.

As long as you **do** get the referrer field, there are several software packages

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(above) that do a solid job analyzing this data. They break down the referring sites, and provide numbers that come from all sites, including the different search engines and which keywords were used to find you.



### 15.1.6. Use Visitor Behavior to Boost **Conversion Rate**

Besides the number of visitors, and where they came from, **you need to understand how they behave during their visit to your site. And you want to use this info to improve the site to increase sales.**

Understanding how people (mis)use your site can help you to improve the site, which in turn will improve your **Conversion Rate (CR)**. Here is what is commonly available today...

**1) Entries** -- What are the most common entry pages?



**2) Popularity** -- Which page is the most popular? Which pages do they stay on longest?



**3) Exits** -- Of course, everyone leaves sooner or later. But **why** do they leave? After all, we know they came because they had a level of interest. They may have left because...

- They came to the wrong place -- these people leave from your **Home Page** or the **Opening Page** of a pathway. This is an acceptable reason for a one-page-Home-Page-visit. But it's the **only** good reason. If your **Home Page** or **Opening Page** is a common exit page, it may not be doing the job of "hooking the customer" with benefits.
- They read all your info, but decide **not** to buy -- these ones leave from your **MWR Closer Page**. You'll have a higher percentage of multi-page visitors. This is a good-bad reason to leave. If your **Closer Page(s)** accounts for a high percent of exits, this is "good" because you are succeeding in delivering them to your **MWR Closer Page**. But it's "bad" because they did not respond. **It hurts to....**

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... wave good-bye to these "almost" customers. Improve your offer, your call to action, and/or your MWR Response Form.

- If any other page sticks out as an exit page, it's doing something wrong. You may have pathways that confuse your visitors. Worse still, a key page in a pathway may say the wrong thing, killing the visit or hurting progress through the path. Fix it, or drop it, or move it to a side-branch off the main pathway (depending on its intended function).
- If you can differentiate between first-time and repeat visitors (via cookies), calculate the **CR**'s for each. Most people order during a second or later visit (the more expensive the purchase, the more this is true).
- You may have pages that hurt your **CR**, but are not themselves exit pages. I call these "negative predictors." If you feel that a negative predictor page actually does hurt the **CR** and is not just a coincidence, fix it, or drop it, or move it to a side-branch.

---

**4) Commonest pathways** -- common path sequences through your site. This is getting closer again to delivering useful information, but still does not get into true behavior on the site. The Web marketer needs to be able to track groups of users through key pages and find out what happens. Do people drop off the pathway? Do they go back to the Home Page. Do they quit the site completely when they hit certain pages?

---

Here's the problem. We can only use raw numbers and pathways to infer and guess at behavior. **But we need to interactively probe those log files to know and understand behavior.** Hopefully, these tools will improve and deliver usable info **about how your visitor behaves on your site.** With this knowledge, you can make **logical** changes to...

... truly optimize the **CR** of your Web site.



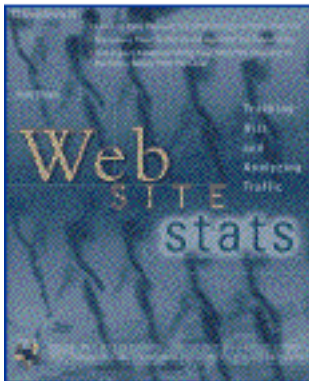
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### **15.1.7. More Info On Analyzing Your Traffic**

Detailed discussion of Web traffic analysis is beyond the scope of this book. Suffice it to say that **you are working in the dark if you are trying to improve your site's sales power without watching how your customers are getting to your site, and how they use it once they are there.**

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For more information on Web traffic analysis, please see this book...



**Web Site Stats**  
by Rick Stout  
published 1997 by Osborne McGraw-Hill  
**ISBN 0-07-882236-X**

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And here's a great article on traffic analysis...



**Analyze Your Web Site Traffic**  
<http://www.cnet.com/Content/Builder/Servers/Traffic/?dd>

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Ralph Wilson also has many good articles on this subject in his **Web Marketing Today Info Center.**

## WEB MARKETING INFO CENTER

Web Marketing Today Info Center

<http://www.wilsonweb.com/webmarket/>



### 15.2. **Quadrupling your Conversion Rate**

Generally, you should expect a **CR** of anywhere from **0.25% to 5%**, depending on...

- product and price
- the nature of your target market
- how targeted your traffic is
- how powerful your site is.



Over time, you can increase your **CR** by...

**1) Improving your site** -- Hey, that's where this book comes in handy!

**2) Targeting your traffic** -- If you generate highly targeted traffic, your **CR** will increase. If we advertised PennyGold with a "FREE SEX" banner, we'd certainly get a lot of traffic... but the only **response** would be angry e-mail.

To see how targeted your traffic is, use your [log file analyzer](#) to see the average number of pages viewed per visitor. If your average visit is only 1-2 pages, you either have a terrible Home Page or inappropriate traffic.

**Everyone loses if you adopt a high-volume, low-targeting traffic-building strategy.**

**3) Using other techniques** -- for example, your biweekly [newsletter](#) generates repeat exposure to you and your products. This pulls repeat visits to your site. **Repeat traffic is highly targeted and motivated**, with a much higher **CR** than first time visitors.

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Everything else being equal, of course, **the way** to multiply your **CR** is to increase your site's **SALES** power! Whatever your **CR** is right now, I won't feel like this book has succeeded if it does not at least quadruple (yes, 4x) it!...



### 15.3. A Checklist for **Quadrupling Your CR**

OK, you're getting some **Most Wanted Responses**. Congratulations!

Once I received my first Order for PennyGold, I knew it would succeed. **It was just a question of increasing the CR.**

After you calculate your **CR**, double it. Then double it again. That's all it takes to 4x your **CR**! What could be easier, right?

What?... Details? **You want details? OK...**



Quadruple your **CR** by improving upon one or more of these critical site-**SELLING** features...

- ✓ • **The Product** -- do you offer a high-quality product that meets a targeted need? Can it be improved?
- ✓ • **The Opening Page** for each product line, especially...

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- the [opening paragraph](#) -- does it stop visitors in their tracks?
- [key headlines](#) -- do they keep visitors on the site, wanting to know more?
- [the joint](#) to the next page -- does it pull through to the next page?
- ✓ • **The MWR Closer Page** for each product line, especially...
  - [the offer package](#) (price, bonus, time).
  - [the call to action](#) -- does the site tell your customer what to do?
  - effectiveness of the **MWR Response Form**.
  - [key headlines](#).
- ✓ • **Use of Backup Response** -- long-term, this **will** increase the **CR**.
- ✓ • **Other Content Pages...**
  - [the guarantee](#) -- people read your wording carefully. Is it solid, honest, and simple? Does it reassure?
  - [testimonials](#) -- letters from happy users, product reviews.
  - [headlines and joints](#) for each **Content Page**.
  - [look & feel](#) -- warm and trusting? Or does your visitor see a loud, shrill effort? Or a big, cold, couldn't-care-less multi-national?
  - **other site content** -- does it add to the selling effort?
- ✓ • **Usability**
  - [user-friendly, overall?](#)
  - [readability and scannability](#) -- clear and easy to read/scan?

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- [navigation](#) -- can your dumbest visitor navigate easily?



Remember... for every buyer, there were **10 who came very close**. They were so close, they took out their credit cards. But that final barrier of trust/doubt/inertia kept them from hitting the **ORDER** button.

**Put yourself in that person’s shoes** and ask yourself...

“What do I have to add or remove or change to **get the Most Wanted Response????**”

Figure it out. **There is an answer!**

**Keep a backup copy**, though. If your experiment lowers your **CR**, just put the previous version back up!

Also, always keep notes in a “Site Log” of what changes you made to your site, and when. **One week later, measure your CR. Has it gone up, down, or is it flat?**

Once you figure out how to double the **CR**, **do it again!**

**There you have it... you’ve quadrupled your CR!**

Oh, right, you **still** want to know **how!**...



### **15.3.1. How to Test and Measure Site Improvements**

**It’s impossible to know what the market will respond to, or what the best approach is -- so you have to test, test, and test some more.**

**Don’t prejudge** anything -- not the best price, not the best headline, not even the best **MWR**. The marketplace will vote with their pocketbooks. All you have to do is measure it via the **CR**.

So, **test to be best**. Review your site critically -- what could you improve in the [checklist above?](#)

**Then do it.** Here’s an example...

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**Headlines** are easy to test -- the ones on your **Opening Page** (especially **The Opener**) and the **MWR Closer Page** are critically important. Let's say that you receive 5 **Most Wanted Responses** per day. Try a radically different headline on your **Opening Page** or **MWR Closer Page**. If that doubles your **CR** to 10 per day, keep it. If it kills your sales, drop it and replace with your backup copy.

Let your customer's response to your site tell you whether your site is working.  
**Always try to outdo the current "best" approach.**

Once you have a site that is working, **only change one thing at a time**, or else you won't know which change is affecting the **CR**.

Your Web site is a process in constant evolution. Keep fine-tuning to find the most effective selling elements. The Web truly is an electronic experiment in Darwinism -- it's "survival of the fittest."

If you know that you have a **great product that offers true benefits**, if you focus on your target, then keep going **until you find the hot button that sells**.



## 15.4. **Update the Old and Develop the New**

There is nothing worse than a site that announces some exciting, upcoming conference to be held in August, 1997...

... when it's already 1999! What does **irrelevant, outdated info** tell you?

**At best**, you look sloppy and careless. **At worst**, your visitor is smart enough to realize that you don't care much about his experience on your site -- fatal. Bottom line?...

**Schedule a total site content review at least once per month.**

**Keep your Web site current.** Update features such as...

- Price changes
- New info -- a Web site is never "finished"

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- Product updates/modifications/new models
- New product lines/businesses
- New graphics
- Updating broken links
- Improvements in usability and navigation.



You **have to** stay on the cutting edge. Actually, I’ve worded that badly. If you don’t **like** change, and if you feel like you “**have to**” stay on the cutting edge, you’re probably in the wrong business.

Hopefully, you **love** the idea of staying on the cutting edge.

Keep your site new and healthy. Weed out the old stuff. Improve the existing material. And add, add, add, new features and content continuously.

If you’re on the Web, you’re much like a...



... shark. You’ve got to keep moving to stay alive!



#### **15.4.1. Borrow New Concepts and Technologies**

If you work on the Web, you have to surf the Web. Revisit the [best of the Web sales/marketing sites](#) frequently. Go to the sites they discuss. Go to the search engines and look up topics like “Web sales” and “Internet marketing.”

**Subscribe to mailing lists, newsletters, e-zines.** Follow the links they give. Keep linking. Get off the beaten track.



Be on a constant lookout for **new features and technologies** to “borrow” for your own site... new services, better ways to persuade, cleaner methods of navigation...

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give more and more useful services and info to your readers.

**Pay attention to how new concepts, features and techniques** (like [Live Picture](#)) **affect you.** Strong new moves will stir you. Notice your reaction. This is something that you may want to borrow, improve, and customize for your own site.

For example, you come across a site with an outstanding [bulletin board](#). You've never been impressed with the interface of bulletin boards, but you find this one excellent, and the threads can be moderated. E-mail the Webmaster, asking them who sells the bulletin board software. An hour later, she replies, raving about the **Ultimate Bulletin Board**, from Prime-Web...



**Ultimate Bulletin Board**  
<http://www.ultimatebb.com/>

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Here's another example...

I was surfing the Web one day, and came across a clever idea. The site asked its visitors to e-mail a short letter to one or more friends, referring them to that site. In return, they offered them something of value. Now, this idea is actually a **traffic-building** move.

But when I saw it, I figured that I could also adapt it to increase the sales power of the PennyGold site. That's how I came up with the [modified Refer-A-Friend concept](#) for PennyGold.

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The point is to **surf, surf, surf.** Keep your eyes open for good ideas. Then **borrow, adapt, and improve them to meet your own, and your visitors', needs.**

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

But don't steal. There's nothing wrong with using someone else's marketing concept on your site. But if you use their code or their graphics, that's just plain stealing.

One of our penny stock competitors did this. We shut them down by complaining to

MYSS!... “Well, that’s done!” .....NOT!

their Web host -- we explained that one of their sites was violating our intellectual rights and that we intended to pursue **all** parties in court.



## 15.5. Use Customer Questions to Increase SALES

I can’t tell you how long it took for me to realize that **questions are feedback in disguise.**

How many times did I get asked,

“How much does it cost?”

or

“What exactly do I get if I buy PennyGold?”

I thought, “Gosh, what idiots!”

One day it dawned on me...



...I was the idiot!

What if you got these questions in the middle of **testing** the usability of your site? Wouldn’t you consider these questions as valuable feedback?

**Of course you would!**

Now, for every person who takes the time to e-mail you a question, remember this... **there are 100 more with the same question, who don’t bother to write.** So the person who sends you a “stupid question” is **really** sending you **valuable feedback.**

Your site is **constantly** in the middle of usability testing. Treat questions, even the “dumbest,” as invaluable user feedback.

MYSSI!... "Well, that's done!" .....NOT!

As soon as I adopted this attitude, I fixed those pages. I don't get those questions any more.

**There is something to be learned from all e-mailed questions** (except the truly profane -- just hit "Delete").



## 15.6. **How to Fix Invisible SALES-Losing Errors**

Review your [error log](#) with your techie every now and then. **Fix what's broken.** The most common two errors that you will see are...

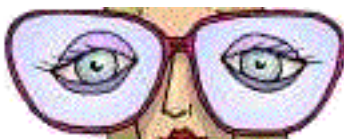
- 1) **"Lost connection" errors** -- this means that the user gave up and hit the STOP or BACK buttons. It is usually caused by slow-loading pages. Streamline this page.
- 2) **404 ("File does not exist") errors** -- this dreaded error means that a link on your page no longer exists. Fix it. It can also be caused by the user entering a wrong URL -- but that's obvious when you look at the report (as long as it includes the requested URL).

**Fix these two errors -- you'll eliminate 95% of the errors that happen on your site.**



## 15.7. **Revisit Later with Fresh Eyes**

Look at your whole site every couple of months. After 2 or 3 months, you will forget much of the "basics" of your site, even if you are adding new, special content on a regular basis.



...So you'll be looking at the site with **fresh eyes** again.

Weaknesses will hit you. You will spot vague or confusing areas when you haven't looked at the site for a while.

MYSSI!... “Well, that’s done!” .....NOT!

If you ever wonder whether any part of your site is vague or too complicated or meandering, **it is! Chop, chop, chop.**

**You’ll spot new ways, and get new ideas, to improve sales.**

**Improve your site. Constantly.**



## **15.8. Bottom Line... It’s Never Done!**

**Your site is never “done.”**

Constantly look for new ways to improve your site in order to...

- **attract more traffic**
- **increase the CR.**

If you have an existing Web site, decide **now** to **quadruple your traffic and** to **quadruple your CR.** Gosh, that would multiple the number of **MWRs** by 16!

**Go for it! It’s under **your** control.**



## 16. Using E-mail to Close the SALE

You've set up a killer site. People are **buying**. And they're signing up for your free newsletter in droves. Not only that, but they simply can't resist asking for your giveaway software! E-mail inquiries are arriving 24 hours per day...

So where the heck are **you**? If you take longer than 24 hours to answer, people forget they even contacted you! **Goodwill and a potential sale are gone forever.**



We live in the nano-nineties. So it's very simple. **Answer immediately and accurately.** Do that and you'll shine.

Of course, if you are totally **customer-focused**, this comes naturally. Because you know that **what your prospect or customer wants now is a fast and competent response**. Make it **friendly**, too, and you're on your way to mastering the art of power e-mail.

After all, if you don't follow-up, and fast, when someone sends in your **Most Wanted Response**, or when someone has a question about your product, **what's the point of nailing "The Big 3"?**

Bottom line?...

**Make your back-end as strong as the front-end. Power e-mail is the first step...**



### 16.1. Power E-mail

Everyone uses it. It's fast. It's free.

It's the killer app of the Internet. It's...



Encourage your customers to use it. Then **respond...** immediately. Let people know they've been heard.

E-mail is a powerful way to cement a relationship... or to kill one, totally by accident. Here's how to turn your e-mail software into a **SALES-generating tool...**



#### **16.1.1. For a Pro-Looking Letter...**

Here's how to get it down on (electronic) paper, clean and sharp.

**Short letter?** Sure, write it directly in your e-mail software. But...

If you are composing a **longer message**, use a good **text editor**. Do **not copy-and-paste from your word processor** -- the text from a word processor is **not ASCII**. You will get all kinds of weird symbols when you paste into your e-mail.

**Two of the best text editors** are **UltraEdit** (Windows) and **BEdit** (Mac OS)...

# UltraEdit

UltraEdit

<http://idmcomp.com/>



BBEdit

<http://web.barebones.com/products/bbedit/bbedit.html>



Also, since there is no formatting in ASCII-land, **lay things out very clearly and simply**. And use **super-short paragraphs** -- there's nothing worse than long dense ASCII paragraphs.

As you type your letter into your text editor, don't worry about where your line breaks appear. You'll clean that up in a moment. But **do** put **two returns between each paragraph**, so there is a clear horizontal space between each one.

Proof-read and spell-check, and then...

Proof-read and spell-check. **Yes**, again.

**Then edit some more...**



... keep polishing 'til it **shines**.

When you're done, **remove all [line breaks](#)** (this feature exists in both of the above text editors), **then set hard line breaks at 65 characters**. This gives your message a nice, professional look. And 65 characters is a comfortable reading width.

If you go wider than 65 characters, your recipient may have e-mail software that wraps these wider lines. In that case, she'll get this ragged look (and wonder why **you** would compose it like this)...

When you're done, remove all line breaks (this feature exists in both of the above text editors), then set hard line breaks at 65 characters. This gives your message a nice, professional look. And 65 characters is a comfortable reading width. If you go wider, some e-mail software will wrap the lines giving this look that you've probably seen...

Instead, it should look like this...

When you're done, remove all line breaks (this feature exists in both of the above text editors), then set hard line breaks at 65 characters. This gives your message a nice, professional look. And 65 characters is a comfortable reading width. If you go wider, some e-mail software will wrap the lines giving this look that you've probably seen...

**Once you're done, just copy and paste it into your e-mail software.** If your e-mail software allows you to set fonts, choose a standard Courier 10 point (same as in the example e-mails above). Don't get fancy. **Now it's ready for e-mailing.**

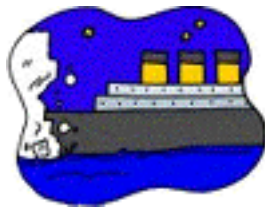


### 16.1.2. Soften Your Writing

Hard ASCII text is cold. No one sees your face to know if you're kidding. Don't just zip off an e-mail. Your customer may easily misinterpret a short, straight e-mail as being curt and rude. So...

**Write carefully, and with kindness.**

Deliver a personal, one-to-one message, not a slick pitch letter. Your e-mail must **not** read like an ad, rather more like news that you are sharing with a friend. **You know what to think about?...**



**... The Titanic!** Think of how you would tell a friend what a great movie it was, and that they should really go see it. **That's the tone to use... simple, direct, friendly.**

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

If you receive an e-mail that spurs you to write an angry response, **don't send it.** Same goes if you write e-mails when you are in a foul mood. **All negative emotions come across ten times stronger than intended.** Draft it, but put it aside for a few hours. You'll be glad you did. :-)

**Emoticons** can soften your writing by conveying your facial expression. The three most common ones are...

:-) or just :) -- convey happiness

;-) -- just kidding

:- ( or just : ( -- convey unhappiness

Use emoticons unless you are sure that your reader hates them, or if you are dealing with a real newbie who may not know what they mean.

Even if your viewer thinks they're a little sappy, she will still feel that you are a "nice person." Cold letters on a computer screen have no emotion -- they are simply too easy to misinterpret (at worst) or leave the recipient feeling cold (at best). **Use emoticons to melt the ice.**

For example, suppose you say,

**"Thanks a lot!"**

It's possible to read sarcasm into that. But **not** if you say,

**"Thanks a lot! :-)"**

See and feel the smile?

**When your customer gets an e-mail from you...**



**... this is what she should see.**

---

Beside emoticons, make every effort possible to **soften your writing**. If you are unsure as to whether gentle constructive criticism could be misunderstood, write, "I offer this only with constructive intent." Err on the kind and gentle side.

**NEVER WRITE IN ALL CAPITALS BECAUSE PEOPLE WILL THINK YOU ARE SCREAMING AT THEM. SAME FOR EXCLAMATION MARKS!!!!**

---

Just before sending any e-mail, re-read it one last time and ask yourself, "Could this be misinterpreted?" **If you have any doubt, clarify.**

Try to be helpful, and don't expect it back. In the long run, you build yourself into a strong brand **by handling yourself well, and with consideration for others.**

Bottom line? **Write with a gentle but firm spirit. Be considerate of your reader -- if people like, trust, and respect you, they will do business with you.**



### 16.1.3. Write to **SELL!**

Your first priority is to **provide the answer the customer wants**. Of course, as you do that...

Make the **body copy** short and sweet. Short words, short paragraphs, short lines. No gimmicks like html, huge attachments (unless requested by customer), sound, etc. **Just get to the point quickly.**

Provide great content, and into that content...

**... weave benefits (personalized to your correspondent), your USP, the offer and a call to action** -- whatever is appropriate for that particular letter.

In other words, all the rules of writing “copy that **SELLS**” apply.

Once your content cooks, **proof-read and spell-check it**. Nothing ruins a letter faster than gross typos and spelling errors.

**Then craft your headline...**



### 16.1.4. The Subject... Your E-mail “**Headline**”

Here's a well-kept secret to writing **SALES-generating e-mail... labor over your subject**. The subject of your e-mail is the equivalent of your headline.

**It has all the power of...**



**... a headline.** If it's slack and sappy, it sets a terrible tone for your letter, **if** the recipient chooses to read it (which is unlikely).

If it's sharp, active, and benefit-laden, you're half-way to the sale. Your prospect will read it, and read it with enthusiasm. **So take your time and write a great subject.**

If you want to make sure your e-mail is read by someone you hardly know and/or for

Mr./Ms. Very Busy, **guarantee it!** Perfect **the subject** of your missive. Take a bit longer than a twitch of the keyboard... you'll deliver an e-mail that is much more likely to get "opened" and read with gusto.

**But don't make it cutesy or misleading.** That's a sure way to be ignored in the future. Think back to what you yourself delete without even opening...

- How to Make BIG, BIG Money At Home!!
- \$64,000 in JUST 5 WEEKS!!!!!!!
- CABLE DESCRAMBLER NOW ONLY \$6!
- 8 Million Email Addresses! FREE!!

What turned you off? They're crass. LOTS OF CAPS and exclamation marks. Since it's so totally impersonal by its very nature, spam never relates to **you**. **People only open messages that relate directly to them or to their business.**

So... personalize the subject. Put the **name** of the recipient into it -- this is a powerful way to get attention. Include an **important, relevant benefit**.

**And, whatever you do, do it with conservative class.**



### 16.1.5. Sig Files That **SELL!**

A **sig file** is a combination of business card and P.S. Depending on who you're writing to and why, you can pump your sig file with sales power...

... or reduce it to a simple business card attached to a letter.

For example, I add this "aggressive" sig file to reply to potential customers...

```
~~~~~
>PennyGold -- Powerful Penny Mining Stock Software
Become a sharp-thinking, independent, successful investor
~~~~~
>"I get the facts,I study them patiently,I apply imagination."
-- Bernard Baruch
~~~~~
>Web site ==> http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/
kevoy@goodbytes.com voice:450-458-1064 fax:450-458-1068
~~~~~
```

---

Use a **sig file that sells** when you post to a targeted [newsgroup, mailing list](#), or any place else where it will be seen by many. **It's a powerful and "legal" way to attract targeted customers.** It amounts to free advertising. And it's acceptable, unless you design a 48 line sig file!

If you fear that a certain mailing list or newsgroup would **not** accept a hard-sell sig file, **design a softer one...**

```
~~~~~
>PennyGold -- Become a sharp-thinking, successful investor
~~~~~
>"I get the facts,I study them patiently,I apply imagination."
-- Bernard Baruch
~~~~~
>Web site ==> http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/
kevoy@goodbytes.com voice:450-458-1064 fax:450-458-1068
~~~~~
```

---

Since a sig file is located at the end of your letter, it essentially **serves as a P.S.** Direct mail experts will tell you that your P.S. is the second most important part of any sales letter.

So make good use of your sig file -- it's the ultimate in free advertising. **Every time you send out an e-mail, your sig file should be there.**

---

If I am writing to a PennyGold owner (i.e., someone I am **not** trying to sell), or if advertising is **not** my main motive for contributing to a mailing list, I'll use my most conservative PennyGold sig file...

```
~~~~~
> PennyGold http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/
"I get the facts,I study them patiently,I apply imagination."
-- Bernard Baruch
>kevoy@goodbytes.com voice:450-458-1064 fax:450-458-1068
~~~~~
```

Or, if I'm sending **tech support** to a PennyGold owner...

```
~~~~~
PennyGold Tech Support
~~~~~
>>For tech support e-mails, please copy previous
>>e-mails so that I can "pick up the thread" quickly
~~~~~
Web site ==> http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/
kevoy@goodbytes.com voice:450-458-1064 fax:450-458-1068
~~~~~
```

**Sig files are powerful, flexible and **free** tools. Here's how to design them...**



### **16.1.6. Composing the **Perfect** Sig File**

The perfect sig file...

- hits the key benefit by stating the [USP](#).
- has the **appropriate** amount of “sell” for your target.
- could contain a great quote or slogan, possibly as the USP.
- should contain a **FREE** offer, if you have one as a Backup Response.
- includes your name, e-mail address, and URL of Home Page. Some people would argue about including your e-mail address. But it allows your customer to cut-and-paste your address into a fresh e-mail to you...
  - many newbies don't know about the Reply button
  - others just do this out of habit
  - and when you post to a mailing list or newsgroup, it's the only way for people to reply to you.
- has a nice, clean, professional-looking layout.
- has a simple top-line divider (bottom optional) to set it apart from the main body of e-mail. Be a pro -- use simple dividers like the equal sign (=====) or the tilde (~~~~~~) or even just the lowly dash (-----).

- does not try to cram in too much info.
- is less than 8 lines, including divider. 6 lines is better.
- is never more than 65 characters wide ([reasons above](#)).
- is left justified, not centered. Keep it simple because different e-mail software will wreak havoc on fancy layouts.
- contains no typos or spelling mistakes. Proof-read it to death. An **http:** with a single slash after it is deadly. If you were to send me an e-mail with a typo in your sig file, how could I ever consider doing business with you?
- is never finished. Keep improving it.



Once you've designed the "perfect sig file"...

Send an e-mail with your sig file to yourself and a few friends. Check for...

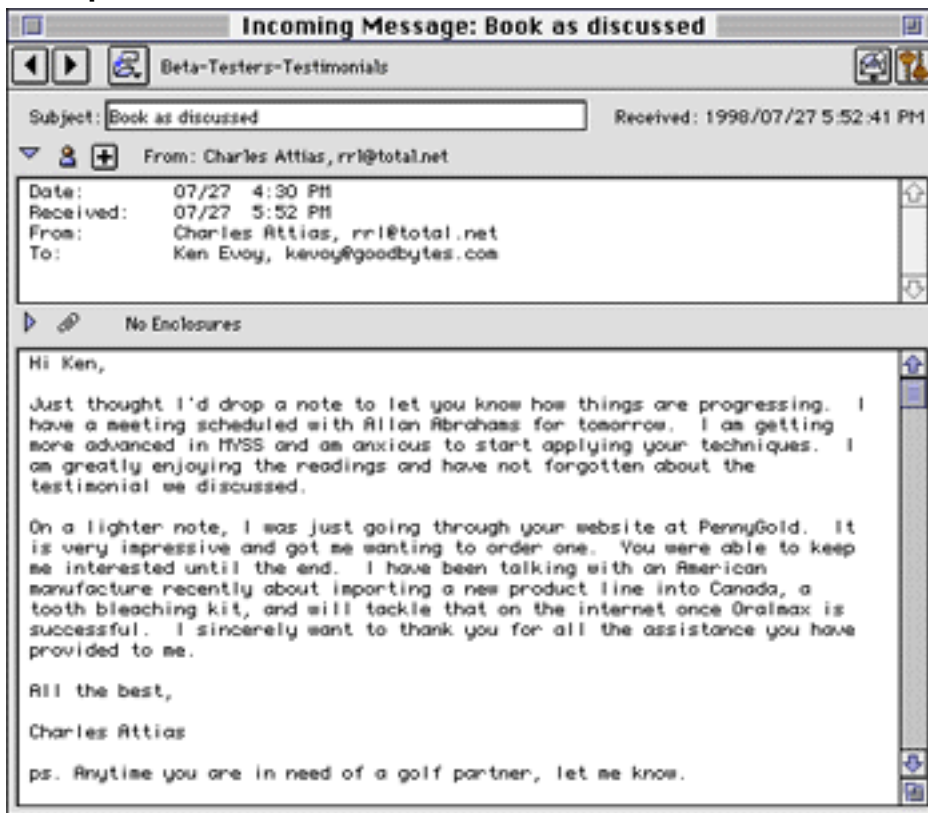
- overall appearance
- impact of copy
- typos
- links -- do they work?

That's it. You're done... **the perfect sig file.**



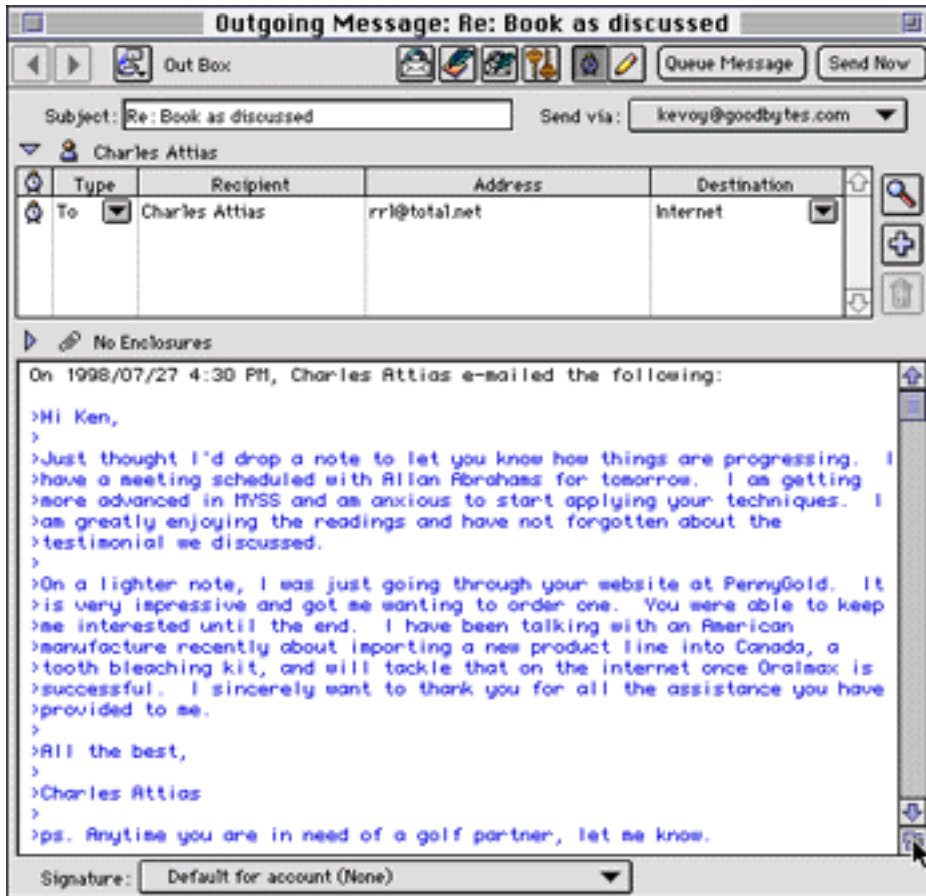
### 16.1.7. How to Hit **Reply** for Best Effect

**When replying** to an e-mail, **hit the Reply button**. That will put the entire contents of the letter into your reply, along with the e-mail address of your recipient. **For example...**



...hit the reply key, which pops up...

...this reply...

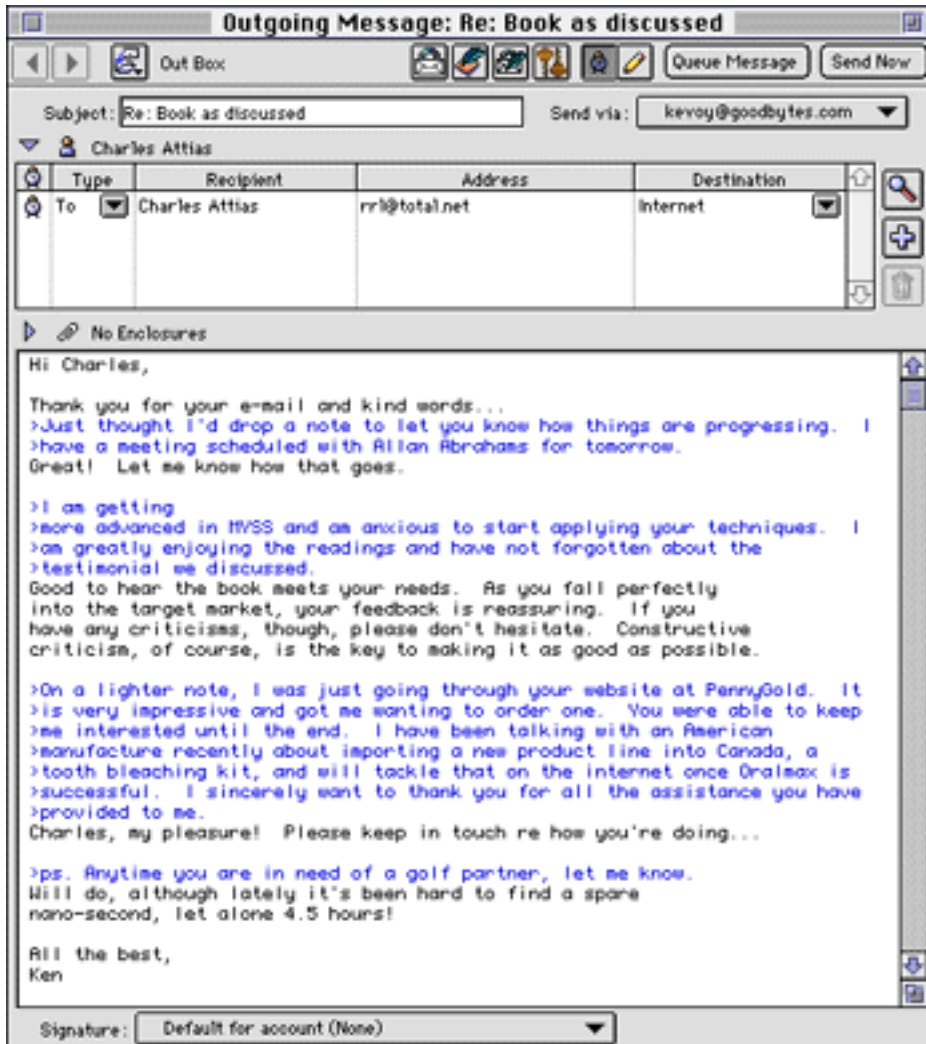


Next...

- select and eliminate any unnecessary quoted (blue) text
- rearrange it into blocks of relevant copy
- add answers under each block.

Here's what the final reply looks like...



### This approach...

- keeps all issues organized
- reminds your customer about the context
- helps your customer to organize his reply back to you.

**People send and receive a lot of e-mail.** A solid, organized reply shows your consideration for others, and your experience.



### 16.1.8. How to Use the “>” Tag for Special Effects

Did you notice that the quoted text (in the preceding “Reply” example) was **in blue**? Most e-mail software packages can be configured to **assign color** to quoted text (i.e., text with the “>” tag at the far left of a line).

For example, in the “Preferences” section of my own e-mail software, I press on the colored buttons below to assign any color to five levels of quoted text...



With no tags, text looks like this.

> With one tag at the far left, it looks like this.

>> With two tags, it looks like this.

>>> With three tags, it looks like this.

>>>> With four tags, it looks like this.

>>>>> With five tags, it looks like this.

Many people **do** this -- you should, too, if your software permits. The colors clearly show successive levels of “replied-to” e-mails. So when you receive an e-mail, it’s clear at a glance what the sender wrote, and what she was replying to. And, when **you** reply to that, your own replies are easy to organize.

And here’s a great way to take **extra advantage** of the “>” tag...

Use it to **highlight important lines**. Did you write something that you **really** want a recipient to see? Add a “>” tag to the far left of that line (i.e., before any other character on it).

Examples... see the [sample of the PGOLD XPRESS newsletter \(above\)](#) or my [reply to the request for more information about PennyGold \(below\)](#).



### 16.1.9. Special Considerations for E-mail

When you want to c.c. someone, use the regular “c.c.” field. Type in “c.c. Joe Schmoe” at the bottom of your e-mail, so your primary recipient knows about it.

If you want to send the same message to ten different people, **whose privacy should be protected**, use your e-mail software’s “bulk” or “blind c.c.” or “bcc” fields.

---

Don’t spam.

---

When you write the **URL** of a site in your e-mail, include it on a separate line so it can’t be missed. For example...

```
Hi Dave,  
  
Just visited this terrific Web site, PennyGold.  
  
Check it out. It’s at...  
  
>>    http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold  
  
All the best,  
Sam
```

Add **two tags (“>>”)** at the far left of the URL line. They point **to** the URL **and** they color the line differently. So **if** your recipient’s software does **not** display URLs as an actual clickable link (many still do not), it will at least stand out due to its color difference.

One last thing -- leave the URL free and clear from any other letters, punctuation, etc.

---

Ready to send? Wait! Check and make sure it’s going to the right recipient at the right address.

My wife once sent an e-mail to the manufacturer of our car, asking if it was Y2K-compliant. We received a reply that was obviously intended only as an internal

message. It discussed how such inquiries should be handled. Talk about embarrassing -- and I'm sure their legal department was not too happy.



### 16.1.10. How to Turn It Around in Hours

Get your e-mail...



... **flying** out of your company.

Foresee the different types of e-mail that you will receive. Set up accounts for each major function...

- sales@your-company.com
- support@your-company.com
- info@your-company.com
- prez@your-company.com

Use these addresses throughout your site, so that mail automatically goes to the correct employee. **Make one person responsible for each mail box that you set up.**



If it's **only you** at the helm, use a [catch-all e-mail account](#). Now you can use a myriad of e-mail addresses, such as all of the above and a whole bunch more. Since it's a catch-all account, they all come to you when you check your mail. Program your e-mail software to automatically filter and sort these appropriately.

Whether you have two hundred e-mail accounts for two hundred employees, or if you are only giving that impression via your catch-all account...



... set a "chiseled in rock" rule...

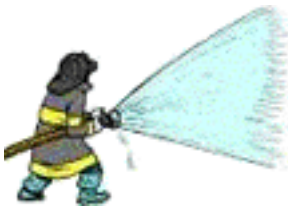
### Reply to all e-mails within 6 hours.

Check your e-mail **at least** three times a day... first thing in the morning, lunch, and just before leaving. Don't put anything aside, to be answered "later."



### 16.1.11. Putting Water on the **Flames**

**If you get flamed**, realize that most of these people are not "psychotic jerks." **So don't get upset...**



... **pour water on the flames**, not gasoline.

This is your chance to shine. Select the strongest, nastiest parts of their letter to you and hit the **Reply** key. This highlights their worst words in your reply.

Then answer in a friendly but professional tone. Apologize if it's appropriate. When the person sees what a jerk he was, he'll apologize. **If he doesn't, maybe he is a psychotic jerk!**

Do this right, and you'll be amazed at how many converts you score.



### 16.1.12. How to Use Autoresponders to **Get SALES**

When a customer sends an e-mail to a certain address manned by an autoresponder, this powerful "mailbot" automatically fires back an e-mail response, usually an informative sales letter. **And it does it...**

- **immediately**
- **24 hours per day**
- **for a fairly low additional monthly fee** (some hosts offer autoresponders for free).

Autoresponders are the e-mail equivalent of a "fax-back" service. Think of it as

“e-mail on demand.” They can save you hundreds of dollars -- use them for basic tech support, product inquiries for more details, sales-oriented letters to all kinds of questions, and...

... for whatever your creativity allows you to dream up! You can literally set up hundreds!

---

### **Autoresponders add an extra dimension to your Net-selling efforts...**

- some people prefer to get info via e-mail than via the Web.
- many people still use only e-mail. They can get your info via an autoresponder, but not via your Web site.
- many people like the gimmick aspect, while others like the automatic, “no salesman to talk to” approach.

---

While writing the letter that will be sent by an autoresponder, remember this...

... **all the rules of writing good copy apply.**

Talk to your techie if you have a use for this versatile tool. Be sure you get two important features...

- unlimited hits for your \$10-20 per month fee
- unlimited free changes to the copy of your letter -- you **will** change it frequently until you find one that works best. So this is important.

---

#### ***SiteSELL Sidebar***

When people use the term “autoresponder,” they generally mean **server-side** autoresponder. And this is definitely the way to go, **if you anticipate huge volumes.** However, there is a way to do it **client-side**, too...

**Use your e-mail software.** Most e-mail packages nowadays will allow you to set a response to an e-mail received **at a certain address.** The disadvantages are...

- the response only happens **when you get your e-mail.** The software **then**

prepares a response and places it in the **OUT** basket, ready for you to fire off.

- if we're talking large numbers, this gets very tedious.

**The advantages** of using a **client-side** autoresponder are...

- it's free
- it's easier technically to set up -- you can do it yourself.
- the delay in sending (mentioned as a disadvantage above) is also an advantage. When your customer receives a response within seconds, she knows it was automated. But when she gets it hours later, or the next morning, she'll think it was sent personally.
- you oversee the process manually. Spot a bug? Iron it out. Perfect your letter. See how people respond to your message. Once all is smooth, **then** automate if the volume is too high to justify this "hands-on" approach.



## 16.2. Real-Life Example of Closing the Sale

The following e-mail sequence shows...

- the doubts that Web shoppers still have
- how to use e-mail to close the sale.

Throughout the following sequence, please note that I do **not** convince someone who does not want PennyGold. I simply provide content for this motivated inquirer. And I blend in some gentle sales copy, in a tone that is appropriate for this customer.



### 16.2.1. Letter From Interested Customer

On April Fool's Day, I received the following letter (reprinted with his permission)...

Received: 04/01 06:05  
From: Viktor, viktor\_harder@paralynx.com  
To: Ken Evoy kevoy@goodbytes.com

Dear Mr. Evoy!

I first found your Web site back in November. I was impressed by the layout of the site and the salesmanship contained therein. Apart from that I considered it to be a nicely laid out scam. The price of PennyGold was quoted at \$199. I figured "sure its going to go up". Well, darn it, it seems to have done just that. From where I sit I don't know if that is good or bad.

I contacted one of your customers here out of Vancouver to get some more feedback but I haven't heard from him yet. I also took a quick look at Tracker with the data. Will have to spend some more time on it.

Still thinking.  
Regards,  
Viktor Harder



### 16.2.2. The **Three Rules** of Power E-mail

**First rule...** read the letter. **Generate a first impression.**

From the above, it's obvious that it's full of doubt. I did not succeed in differentiating PennyGold sufficiently from all the scams out there. I'm a little disappointed. If I had answered the e-mail at this stage, it would have been a disaster.

---

**Second rule...** read it again. **Get a better feel for the customer.**

Whoops! He's been following the site for six months (November to April). His letter is very well constructed. And he's motivated (has contacted a PennyGold owner, and has downloaded Tracker). This person is the ideal customer for PennyGold. I **know** that he will love it and use it well.

But **he** doesn't know that yet.

---

**Third rule...** answer **all** e-mail **fast and well**. Provide the content your customer wants, and just the right level of sales copy. And please, show the customer that you understand both his desires and his worries.

In Viktor's case, I am e-mailing to my favorite kind of person. Intelligent, motivated, and genuinely seeking more info and some reassurance...

**Within a few hours, I replied to Viktor...**



### 16.2.3. Prompt, Friendly E-mail Reply

Hi Viktor,

Comments like yours teach me more than all the compliments!

One of the big challenges of the Internet is for the "little guy, the small vendor" to convince the consumer that they are for real.

I am actually writing a book on this subject and would like

your permission to use your letter. Please confirm, and let me know if I can use your name and city of residence, or if I can only use the text.

Anyway, back to your letter. You are right. We had just started in November. We have now sold 261 units, which is double the rate of 1 per day that I had planned. Which is why the price has gone up. Ultimately, I want the price to cut sales back to 1 per day, for nice steady growth.

Feedback has been very positive -- and I guess the best evidence of that is that we are starting to get sales referred by PennyGold owners. I add to the list of testimonials frequently -- if I actually asked for feedback, I'd probably have five times as many, but I just wait for the comments to arrive and then ask for permission to use.

>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/PGuserfeedback.html>

Viktor, PG is for real. There is more than enough info on the site for you to check and cross-check to be sure. And it certainly seems like you have done most of it!

But if you have any ideas as to how I could convince a "serious, but doubting" visitor such as you, I would absolutely love to hear it.

How do I know you're "serious"? You've done it all... Decision Helper, Tracker, e-mailed PG users.

Like I say to my wife, though, it's impossible to make a wrong decision on the PennyGold Web site. For those who do all the work that you do and decide to buy, they have the right blend of willingness to work, doubt and good judgment to use PG effectively. For the lazy who won't do the work, PG is not for them and I don't want to change their minds.

But for folks like you who are willing to do the work, and who still have doubts, these are the people that fascinate me the most.

What do you feel it will take to make them understand that PG (and other products from small vendors) is true? What can one say to help them sort out the "true efforts" from the "scams"?

I write this not to convince you to buy PG (it's not worth my time to write a letter like this just to

MYSSI!... Using E-mail

"get the sale"). I am asking because the whole art-and-science of ethical sales on the Internet fascinates me.

Thank you for any ideas you may have on this topic.

All the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.



#### 16.2.4. High-Tech Opens, High-Touch Closes

The Web site **opens** the buying process. But no matter how warm and trusting your Web site, cyberspace is still a cold, impersonal place. Your customer still asks, “What if...?”.

E-mail correspondence adds a **little** warmth -- it’s personal and obviously customized. It gives the reader a slightly better feel into who you are. But it’s still just a bunch of electrons!

The more expensive your product, the more likely that you will require some kind of “high touch” follow-up to close the deal. If you sell a \$100,000 software networking package, this will likely involve several face-to-face meetings.

PennyGold occasionally (but not often) requires a phone conversation...

Two days later, Viktor called me. We talked for over half an hour.

He had lots of **good** questions -- questions always indicate interest to me. **Good** questions (i.e., those not answered on the site, or very “nuts-and-bolts” oriented) indicate **serious** interest.

While I “lost money” on an hourly basis for time spent with Viktor, I should have paid him for the lessons learned. (If you’re reading this Viktor, thank you. :-))

Viktor ordered. And he gave me permission to use his letter.



#### 16.2.5. Prompt, Friendly E-mail Follow-up

Within minutes of our conversation, I replied to Viktor...

MYSSI!... Using E-mail

Dear Viktor,

It was a pleasure talking to you today about PennyGold. If you put the same effort into PG as you have into evaluating it and me, you will indeed do very well with it.

Thank you for your permission to reprint your letter in my book on Web selling. Naturally, I will send you a complementary copy as soon as it's done.

As I said, once you are up and running, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask.

All the best,  
Ken



### **16.2.6. It Was More Than Worth the Effort**

Viktor is **the ultimate careful shopper**. He spent a lot of time on the Web site. He e-mailed people who had provided testimonials. He downloaded Decision Helper and Tracker, and subscribed to the newsletter. He followed the story.

An obviously intelligent person, he had been burned by other offers on the Internet. Yet ours stood out for its thoroughness and honest feel.

He just needed the time and space to think it out. But if I had been sloppy or late or offensive in my e-mail reply to him, I would definitely have lost that order. We would have both lost.

Instead, **we both won!**

**Postscript** -- Viktor is an active PennyGold owner, one of the most interested and vital members in what has become an excellent group of individuals. He contributes great ideas via our PGPer Digest, and posts his files on company “finds” to share with others.

**Meeting (and “selling”) Viktor was more than worth the effort.**



## 16.3. **Automate Replies to the “Same Old, Same Old”**

We’re entering the third millennium. If you are answering the **same old questions** over and over by hand, let me put this as gently as I can...



**...You’re stuck in the wrong millennium!**

For example, let’s say someone asks you for more info on your product. Take the time to craft an excellent answer... **once**.

The next two or three times the opportunity arises, **make it even better**. **There will soon come a time when you just can’t make it any better.**

**After that, use that same answer over and over.**

Here’s an example...



### 16.3.1. **Best Answer to the Request for More Info**

Let’s use the request for more info as an **example of “automating your e-mail”**...

The first time I got an e-mail requesting more info, I snickered. “Hey, it’s all on the Web site. What more do you want from my life?” I mean...

If potential customers ask for more info by e-mail, **why would I bother?** My Web site is supposed to do that, and will do it much better! Odds are that this is not a serious request... or the person is just some frivolous, in-a-big-hurry tire-kicker. Right?



**Wrong again, beagle-breath!...**



That’s why I added that **second rule** of power e-mail ([outlined earlier](#))...

**Read it again. Get a better feel for the customer.**

A request for more info is just...

**... a request for more info.** Don't look any deeper than that. Don't assume that he has even visited the site. He may have just seen your e-mail address in a posting or an article somewhere. Who knows?

**So...**

"Assume nothing but the goodwill of your inquirer."

**Based on this premise,** I drafted a good answer and sent it.

The next time I got the same question, I reviewed my original letter. **Then I improved it.** After 4 or 5 improvements, I felt it was about as good as I could make it.

---

**Now, when someone asks for more info, I just cut-and-paste-and-mail the following...**

Hello Joe Info-Seeker,

Thank you for your request for more information about PennyGold. Full information is available at the Web site, far better than I could ever convey in this e-mail to you:  
>> <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>

Allow me to give you "the personalized" tour by providing you with the direct URL addresses of some of the most important pages:

>> Home Page (frames/music)  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/>

>> Home Page (no frames/music)  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pennygold.html>

>> PGOLD XPRESS (free subscription to our newsletter)  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/pgxprs.html>

>> Concept Page  
<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/concept.html>

MYSSI... Using E-mail

>> What Do I Get Page

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/300.html>

>> Current State of the Junior Mining Markets

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/quotes-ext/index.html>

>> 10-TIMES-GUARANTEE

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/500.html>

>> Exclusive Club Page (1,000 copies only)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/600.html>

>> Feedback from PennyGold Owners

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/PGuserfeedback.html>

>> Order Page (pricing info)

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/6012899.html>

>> PennyGold Site Map

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/SITEMAP.html>

>> The PennyGold FAQ covers the most common questions:

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/FAQ1.html>

Or please call me directly with any questions -- 450-458-1064.

Thank you again for your interest.

Ken Evoy, M.D.  
President

Now, if the "more info" inquiry was a serious request, I have advanced the sales process. If it was just a frivolous waste of time, it has taken less than 20 seconds to **cut-and-paste-and-mail!**

---

Of course, **your automated answer must meet your customer's needs. Or you can do more damage than good.** Here's an example of how...

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

This section covers questions that do **not** belong in a FAQ (such as the "more info" question above). For those that do, **see the earlier discussion.**



## 16.4. Real-Life Example of Losing a Sale

InfoSeek does not seem to realize that many sites that list with it **eventually become their paying customers**. As a matter of fact, every penny of their banner ad revenue comes from a site in its [index](#).

In **MYSSI** lingo, InfoSeek's **MWR** is the **sale of a banner ad**. But their **Backup Response** is for a company to **list in their index** -- it's free and it starts a relationship. In other words, when I list my company with InfoSeek, I am **their prospect**.

Based on the following correspondence between myself and InfoSeek, **you be...**



... **the judge** as to whether InfoSeek gets it!

In the traffic-building **bonus report**, I describe [the disaster that happened](#) to my InfoSeek-indexed site when PennyGold received a listing in their directory.

I wrote to InfoSeek (support@infoseek.com) about the sudden disappearance of our Web site from their [index](#) after listing in their **directory**. All I received back was stock, cut-and-paste answers **that were...**

- **totally uninformative.**
- **awkwardly unpersonalized.**
- **extremely confusing** -- although I used their reference numbers and the name of the support person each time, my e-mails were answered by **three** different people. **What a confusing mess.**
- **and worst of all... unhelpful.**



### 16.4.1. First Letter to InfoSeek

At first, I didn't realize that there was a direct connection between the directory listing and the [big drop in our index listing](#). I sent them the following letter, asking what had happened to my PennyGold site...

Hello,

My site has disappeared from your search results. Well, actually it's still in your database. But it no longer turns up on the first page when someone looks for "penny stocks." This happened about the same time we were listed in your directory.

This is a serious, successful and well-regarded site. Many have written us to say that it is the single best site about penny mining stocks, that even if they don't buy our software, they have learned a lot about a unique and powerful approach.

Please let me know why we have been dropped by your algorithm. I resubmitted, but I doubt if it will do any good, because it is still there when I do a search for

"http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/"

All the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.



### 16.4.2. InfoSeek's Reply

Here's their reply...

Hello,

You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support group.

Infoseek does not guarantee ranking positions for any URLs in any of our search results. Our index is a dynamic one in which thousands of pages are submitted, updated and deleted constantly.

We also continue to tweak our search algorithms to provide our users with the best results possible for their queries. As a result, URLs for a particular search result will change positions.

MYSSI... Using E-mail

To change your current rank, you can update your page with more relevant information for a specific query and resubmit it to Infoseek via e-mail or our Add URL form. Please review our Guidelines and Policies to make sure you are in compliance and our Troubleshooting section for tips.

Thank you for using Infoseek.

Regards,  
R.Aguilar

Needless to say, I was not impressed...



### 16.4.3. Second Letter to InfoSeek

Dear Mr. Aguilar,

Wow! A cut-and-paste reply, compared to Excite's personal responses and help.

There is no way your stock reply answers what I sent to you. Our site is fully compliant, uses no tricks, and is highly regarded by all.

Furthermore, tweaking does not explain Page 1 #5 for months, then dropping out of existence, to be replaced by many sites which have little or nothing, and certainly far less than ours, about "penny stocks."

But thank you for the 2 seconds it took to cut and paste your reply.

All the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.

To which Mr. (? Ms.) Aguilar replied...



### 16.4.4. InfoSeek's Reply

Hello,

You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support group.

As we said in our first response to you, our index is rather dynamic. More people than ever are submitting new or updating pages in our index. Since January 1998, we've seen an increase of 60% in our Add URL submissions alone. As people submit and update their pages, their relevancy rank changes for specific keywords. Given the large number of submissions, the change has been more dramatically apparent.

While we can't give out proprietary information about how our search algorithm works, we can tell you to try to narrow your keywords to specific ones rather than broad terms, i.e. 'beagles' instead of 'dogs.' As stated in our submitting tips, you should use a highly descriptive title, include a META tag description, and create META tag keywords that contain comma-separated phrases. Infoseek realizes that there are many folks who "play by the rules" and are making every effort to track down those who are not. Infoseek is constantly re-engineering our search algorithms in order to make everyone's experience with our service the best it can be.

Thank you for using Infoseek.

Regards,  
R.Aguilar

This must be their **“stock answer #2 if stock answer #1 doesn’t cut it.”** Obviously, PennyGold did not get a Page 1 #5 ranking by not knowing the trite stuff he talks about above. Note too, that the support person refers to himself as “we.” Poor one-to-one technique.

But it was nice of him (?her) to **again** let me know that...

“You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support group.”

But what the heck, I'll try again...



### 16.4.5. Third Letter to InfoSeek

Dear Mr. Aguilar,

Thanks for the answer. It still doesn't explain the SUDDEN disappearance. I suspect that when the directory listing changed my title and description, your algorithm killed my ranking.

MYSSI!... Using E-mail

All the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.

Which got the following response from a **new** support member...



### 16.4.6. InfoSeek's Reply

Hello Ken,

Sorry to hear that your web page has been removed from Infoseek's directory and for the problem you have had in our index. Web pages can be removed from the directory for either technical or editorial reasons. I will resubmit it to our Directory Team for them to look at.

Infoseek's URL Review Team consists of several off site contractors to whom Infoseek has hired to review any and all URLs that are submitted for our Directory within Infoseek's Channels. You will not receive a reply from them.

The normal time frame is within 1 week, however, this sometimes can take up to 2 weeks given the amount of submission request that they have received. If after 2 weeks, you do not see your URL listed within the directory, you can resubmit your URL again for review after 4 months of your original submission.

We thank you for your patience, and for using Infoseek.

Regards,

L. Skinner

He obviously misunderstood the situation. If you forget that, though, at least the letter was **personalized, friendly, responsive, and informative**. Clearly a much better effort, but **not helpful since it was totally off-base**.

What else would you expect? L. Skinner was not aware of the contents of my **first** letter to Mr. Aguilar. By now, I'm beginning to wonder about why InfoSeek bothers with a reference number in the subject of each e-mail they send...

Re: Infoseek Customer Support Reference 028498

Every e-mail from them has a **brand new** ref number. Why bother, if it does not track back to the original support person? And shouldn't the number remain the

**same** for the same topic? Whatever the reason for all the ref numbers, it's to make **their own lives** easier, which is the...

**Wrong focus.** Prospect first, always.

However, I decided to give it the old college try...



### 16.4.7. Fourth Letter to InfoSeek

Dear Mr. Skinner,

Thank you for your e-mail.

You misunderstood my e-mail. Our site has not been removed from your directory.

Here's the problem... when you decide upon the title and description of the site for your directory, it changes the index's title and description too, which has destroyed our ranking in the search results of your index.

On the day that we were listed in your directory, we disappeared from our Page 1, #5 ranking for "penny stocks" which we have had for months. No coincidence.

All the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.

I sent this one, not knowing who would answer or what would happen. And also getting tired of an ever-growing number of reference numbers, not sure what the heck they were for...



### 16.4.8. InfoSeek's Reply

Hello,

You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support.

Your request to have your site removed from our directory has been forwarded on to the correct department for action. I have also asked that your title and summary be changed back to reflect your original submission in our index.

Thank you for using Infoseek!

Regards,

E. Lott

### **Wow! Someone else!**

And Mr. (?Ms.) Lott decided unilaterally that I wanted our site removed from their directory! Perhaps it would have been smarter to ask what I thought the title and description for the directory listing should be, with a reminder to be conservative? Or simply to ask if I would prefer to be removed from the directory?

But I did appreciate the reminder that...

"You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support group."

Well, I'm in too deep to let it drop now. So I responded...



### **16.4.9. Fifth Letter to InfoSeek**

Dear Mr./Ms. Lott,

I did not specifically request (letter above) that my site be removed from the directory. However, *\*if\** it is impossible to have a directory listing *\*without\** modifying the index listing's title and description, then you have correctly deduced that this would be my first choice.

Thank you very much. Just to confirm the details, to avoid any misunderstanding...

- o you are removing <http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/index.html> from the InfoSeek directory

- o you are restoring the title and description of the abovementioned URL for listing in your main index. I include a screenshot of that listing (screenshot.gif). It was at Page 1, #5 for "penny stocks" for at least 6 months until it was listed in the directory.

The title was...

"PennyGold: Powerful Penny Stock Software"

MYSSI!... Using E-mail

and the description was...

"PennyGold: powerful penny stocks book/software shows you how to make money by investing in penny stocks... AND gives you ALL the tools to DO IT."

But I guess your spider will pick that up again via the META tags?

Mr./Ms. Lott, will the site suffer any penalty points in your index's ranking algorithm for requesting such a change?

Thanking you again, and wishing you all the best,  
Ken Evoy, M.D.

I mentioned Mr./Ms. Lott's name a few times in the letter. It was an attempt to get some kind of personalized response back from that **same person**. Well, I did get a response back from the same person, but...

**... decide for yourself on how personalized this letter is...**



## 16.4.10. InfoSeek's Reply

Hello,

You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support. I have asked that your site be removed from our index. We reserve the right to make changes to your title and summary if they are included in our directory. And once we make the changes you requested to your site, Infoseek does not guarantee ranking positions for any URLs in any of our search results.

Thank you for using Infoseek.

Regards,

E. Lott



**Yes, another robotic reminder, just in case I was totally brain-dead, that...**

"You sent the included message to Infoseek's customer support group."

At this point, I decided to leave R. Aguilar, L. Skinner and E.Lott alone (**doesn't anyone there have a first name?**). I don't think I could have survived it if they thanked me for using InfoSeek again.

I suspect that the index's algorithm will **penalize** PennyGold for publicizing this, and you'll never see it in InfoSeek's index or directory again. I'll wait to see what happens...

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

The above correspondence occurred from August 27-30, 1998. I still feel that InfoSeek does a good job of indexing sites, as mentioned in the traffic-building special report. But the directory issue is a problem that needs fixing.

**And they sure need to learn how to deal with their prospects.**



### **16.4.11. Comparison with Excite**

Just in case you think that all search engines behave like this...

Compare InfoSeek's e-mail support to the help one receives from **Excite...** personalized, helpful, and the problem gets corrected. And your e-mails are always answered by the same person!

A big thank you to **Excite**, and especially to **Larry Little** who has gone "above and beyond" to help. Here's an answer **from Larry**, in response to the time when Excite mysteriously dropped PennyGold from its database...

Janice,

I just went into the database and manually added it.  
'Addition of <http://www.pennygold.com/> to urgent support list'  
I really hope you see it reappear within the next two weeks.  
Let me know if it doesn't.

LL

Direct, relevant, personal, in context... and he even **invites us to write back if there's a problem!**

MYSS!... Using E-mail

The above response was **not** a unique, “one-time-only” event. Larry has conducted himself like this every time we write him.

We’ll be experimenting with banner advertising for this book. **Which engine do you think is going to get our business?**

Yup, I’m **Excited!**



## 17. After the Sale

Strictly speaking, **MYSS!** is about **getting** the sale.

“But what happens **after** I get the order?”, you ask?

Well, nothing too important. Just a few minor points, hardly worth mentioning, really...

- you get paid
- you ship the product
- you build a powerful, long-term relationship with your customer.

Like I said, nothing too important. ;-)

But, as long as you're here and I'm here...



### 17.1. How to Get Paid

You've got a great product. Awesome sales site (I'm **so** proud!). Tons of sales. You're home-free, right?

Nope. If you don't get paid for your products, your wonderful cyberstore will soon be **cyber-bankrupt**...



#### 17.1.1. Unable to Get a Merchant Account? **Here's How!**



Credit card will be your #1 way of getting paid, by far. So you need a merchant account for **each** credit card that you want to accept.

**At a minimum**, set up a merchant account with VISA and MasterCard. That's what we did for the PennyGold site. We did **not** bother with AMEX. Why?...

While you can use the same point-of-sale terminal for authorization VISA and Mastercard orders, **you need a different one for AMEX**. For our purposes, this was not worth the bother (or the additional monthly expense)...

... especially because almost everyone who has AMEX also has either VISA or Mastercard. We have lost only 3 orders out of more than 500 (as of this writing) by not offering AMEX, and only 1 due to a lack of Discover.

Start with VISA and MasterCard. As your biz grows, and if you feel you need to offer more credit card options, secure AMEX, Discover and others.

**Remember, K-I-S-S.**



If you are a company or individual of some substance, securing a merchant account will not be a problem. Just start the ball rolling with your bank manager. **But if you are a "little guy"...**

OK, you're all set to sell your Widg-O-Matic on the Web. You apply for VISA and MasterCard merchant accounts. Whoops!

As an Internet merchant, you are considered a "Mail Order/Telephone Order" ("**MOTO**") account. That's because more than 30% of your transactions are taken with the actual credit card not being present ("card not present").

**It is hard to get a merchant account for a Web business if you do not have a standard retail operation.** Banks and card processors are shy of businesses that sell **only** through the Web. If you have a substantial net worth and/or a good business relationship with a bank, **you should be able to get a MOTO account.**

**If not**, Independent Sales Agents (**ISOs**) are willing to come to your rescue. **ISOs** secure credit card merchant accounts for Internet, home-based, and retail businesses. **For example, ECS** claims a 95% approval rate...

**Electronic Card Service**

**ECS**

<http://www.acceptvisamastercard.com/>

MYSSI!... After the Sale

[Ralph Wilson](#) has a list of ISOs and Internet-Friendly Banks at...  
**Web Commerce Today, Issue 17, December 15, 1998**  
<http://www.webmarketingtoday.com/research/iso.htm>

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**Other companies provide credit card processing and verification for you. But beware.** This is called “factoring.” There are lots of sharks, and **the fees** can be stiff -- comparison-shop. Some do provide excellent service, including secure servers and shopping cart software. Check out **Multicards’** useful and informative site...



**Multicards**  
<http://www.multicards.com/>

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**Kagi** does an efficient and thorough job of handling orders for others. The process is clean, quick, and easy. They provide a list of clients on their site. So you can check satisfaction with their service before using them. Which, in itself, is a nice [credibility-builder](#), don't you think?

kagi

**Kagi**  
<http://www.kagi.com/>

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**For more info** about third party “getting paid” solutions, see...



**GetPaidOnline**  
<http://www.getpaidonline.com/resource.html>



And, of course, don't miss the **Credit Card Sales** section of Ralph Wilson's [Electronic Research Room](#).



### 17.1.2. Don't Step on These Credit Card **Land Mines**

Two major credit card land mines could blow your financial legs right off (sorry for the graphic analogy, but I hope it made its point)... **frauds** and **chargebacks**.

Don't step on these...



... land mines.

Although the credit card field is full of explosives, **you have no choice but to walk in that field**. There is simply no better, more convenient, more universal way to accept payment... there's **not even a close second!**

So, let's see how...



... to avoid the land mines that could put you **out of business**.



### 17.1.3. How To **STOP** Credit Card Fraud

The media never cover this, but **it's you, the vendor who really gets hurt by credit card frauds**. The cardholder's loss is limited to a minimal amount, \$50. But the vendor who gets hit with that fraud **loses the whole amount**.

So if someone purchases a \$5,000 stereo system, and it later turns out to be a fraud, the thief has your stereo, the "real" cardholder loses only \$50, you're out the \$5,000 system...

**... and are you ready for the best part?** Your credit card company is **ahead \$50** (from the customer) **and** whatever your penalty fee is! It boggles the mind!

**"No problem," you say?** You've received your customer's credit card information. You've relayed it to your credit card processor and they fired you back an authorization number, depositing the correct amount into your account. **Home free, right?**

**Wrong!**

As protection for you, **that authorization number is almost worthless**. As a **MOTO** merchant, you don't have much protection. All your authorization code **really** tells you is that..

1) No one has reported the card stolen. Big deal, here's what easily fools this test...

- a crooked gas station attendant has stolen the card number (but not the card) off a carbon copy of a credit card purchase. He uses the number for as long as "the good times last." And if he does it from a free e-mail account, buying software or other software-type product, he'll be virtually uncatchable.
- a thief steals the card, but no one has noticed yet.
- a high-tech fraud simply generates a phoney card number that passes the test (easily done -- you can buy these number-generating algorithms on the Internet)! Believe it or not, this "authorization" does not cross-check to see if it is even an existing, real account. It only runs a mathematical test to see if it **could be** an account.

2) The card is **not** over its credit limit, so they have deducted that amount from the card's outstanding limit. Again, big deal. Most stolen cards will **not** be over the limit.

And even some algorithm-generated numbers have been known to pass the test.

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

If you are in the U.S., and if you are selling **hard goods** (i.e., not software), and if a high percentage of your customers reside in the U.S., ask your credit card processor about Address Verification System (AVS). By verifying the on-record billing address with the “ship-to” Order Form address, you can get **slightly** more protection... but many fraud artists know how to defeat AVS.

If you are shipping digital goods directly **via Web-download**, of course, AVS is useless since there is no billing address.

---

Bottom line? The credit card company's authorization **does nothing** to protect you. **It's up to you to protect yourself.** So...

**It's very simple ➡ Verify the credit card for every order.** Here's how...

**First**, on the Order Form, get the **exact** name of the customer as it appears on the credit card. Also get the **customer's address** with postal code, and **phone number**.

---

**Second**, look for any lurking **red flags** in the **order...**

- ▶ different “bill to” and “ship to” addresses (if you give this option on your Order Form).
- ▶ international orders. Once your merchandise crosses a border, forget about ever getting it back, even if it's the crassest fraud. And don't even think about shipping an international order with different “bill to” and “ship to” addresses.
- ▶ orders that come from **free e-mail services** (more on this below).
- ▶ order value of over \$100 (or whatever amount you determine is worth the time to prevent).
- ▶ orders with next day delivery (since they aren't paying, they'll just want to get your stuff ASAP)!

---

### Third...

- If the dollar value of the order is low, and if no “red flags” have shot up during the order, process it via your merchant terminal and ship the product once you get your authorization.

- If the value of the order is high, or if you spot a red flag, follow these three steps...

**STEP 1** Phone your credit card company and ask them to verify the credit cardholder's name and address. They will request the number, expiration date, name and address. They will say “OK” or “No good.”

If the verification fails, e-mail the client. Politely explain that there was a “problem” with the credit card and to contact their bank, or to please use an alternate card.

If the verification passes, and the card later turns out to be a fraud (some thieves have all this info, too), **you're still on the hook for the money!** So proceed to **Step 2** if you're really worried.

**STEP 2** Call the customer to “process the order” by phone. Tape the call, and let your customer know that it is being taped, so that you can use the tape in court, if necessary. Serious buyers won't balk. Frauds will.

#### Verify that the person on the phone...

- is the cardholder, at xyz address and at the phone number you are currently talking to (repeat the phone number)

#### and...

- is indeed ordering the merchandise.

**Also request some extra info...** the name and phone number of the bank that issued the credit card, the exact name on credit card, and the exact billing address.

If all the info matches and the “order processing” proceeds without a hitch, proceed to Step 3. **If you have any doubts, call the issuing bank directly and triple-check before going to Step 3.**

### STEP 3 Ship the product.

---

More information on **credit card verification** appears on Ralph Wilson's [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#). He has tons of state-of-the-art info on this.



#### 17.1.4. How to **Eliminate** Credit Card Chargebacks

Since you do not physically run your customer's card through the "click-clack" and have him sign the chit, he can always say that he did not order or receive the merchandise. If you can prove delivery via a shipper that can document delivery to the customer's shipping address, including a copy of the customer's signature upon receipt, the customer will at least have to send the product back. But if it's software, of course that liar **will keep a copy on disk**.

The customer can also chargeback for a variety of other reasons, many of which will shock and dismay you...

"Product was not what I expected" or "it doesn't work the way you claimed" or "product arrived damaged." No matter how clear you make it and no matter how good your product is, the customer can always claim this -- and you're out of luck.

You are **so vulnerable** that your customer does not even have to bother with a phoney excuse. He can merely request a copy of the card imprint with signature. Since the very nature of your business makes this impossible, and since failure to provide it can result in a chargeback, **you lose again!**



Chargebacks are made by two types of clients, the **outright fraud** and the **dissatisfied customer**.

The best way to eliminate the **dissatisfied** customer is...



...to not have any! Specifically...

- **sell a great product at a great price** -- if your customers senses that he has been tricked into buying bad value, you're headed for a chargeback.
- **conduct your business in such a way that people like you** -- as discussed earlier, [customers buy from people they like](#). They don't chargeback, either. So design your site and write your e-mails appropriately. On the Web, nice guys (and gals) do **not** finish last!
- [see the discussion on how to reduce claims on your money-back guarantee](#).

**Bottom line?** "Being nice" is not only a "nice" way to do business, it's a powerful way.

---

A fraudulent chargeback is **basically...**



... **legalized theft**. The best move to prevent **fraudulent** chargebacks is verify all orders by phoning the customer back, and by [taping all such calls](#).

The recording will intimidate people from charging back, since they know that you could always provide the tape as proof of purchase. It will keep all but the nastiest frauds from cheating you. And when a chargeback does occur, it provides a first level of defense... but it will not defeat the hardened fraud artist.

If telephone verification is not practical for your product/business, just do a regular manual verification and **monitor this problem closely**. Too many chargebacks not only damages your bottom line, it upsets your credit card company -- **they may even cancel your account**.

**Let me repeat -- they may even cancel your account.** So it's up to you to do all you can to keep chargebacks to a minimum, best below 1-2% of total sales.

If you don't do your homework well and put a solid prevention program into place, chargebacks can become a nightmare. **AntiFraud.com** has some good info on chargebacks...



**AntiFraud.com**

**<http://www.antifraud.com/>**

You can do all the credit card verification in the world to make sure that the frauds don't get you **before** your ship. But chargebacks get you **after**.

**Don't cut corners -- arm yourself with information, then protect yourself.**

#### ***SiteSELL Sidebar***

If you are selling hard goods, each unit has a true "out of pocket" cost to you, the expense of the product itself. So you must be extra-careful. Frauds and chargebacks against hard goods really hurt.

If you are selling digital goods (downloaded software, information products, etc.), each unit costs **zero** to make (excluding development costs). So there is a temptation to totally automate the ordering process via **real-time verification**. You may be willing to simply factor a certain **% loss** into your digital business.

**This attitude is a huge mistake.** "Why?" you ask?...

Since downloaded software is not delivered to a real street address, it's easy for your thief to disappear into the ethers of cyberspace. So stealing from providers of **digital** products is especially common.

Be aware that if you start to get a lot of fraud or chargebacks (see below), every fraudulent charge does end up costing you time and **very real hard dollars**. Here's why...

Ultimately, **every fraud gets discovered**. And when it does, the bank will not only deduct the original amount from your merchant account, **it will also assess you a penalty fee**. You **lose time** investigating and working with the bank. The bank looks at you as a risk and **may increase your discount rate**.

And if you get hit with too many frauds or chargebacks, **your bank may even shut your merchant account!** You go on a black list. And once that happens, it is almost impossible to get a MOTO merchant account. Which kicks you right out of the Web sales game.

Which brings us right back to the message above. If you are planning on using real-time verification, consider combining it with a good fraud screen.



### 17.1.5. How to Do Real-time Credit Card Verification

If your sales volume is high and your per-order dollar cost is low, manual verification and authorization may simply not be worth the hassle. In this case, you might want to consider **real-time automatic credit card verification**.

**ICVERIFY** is the leader in providing **electronic transaction processing software**. This software enables **your secure server (or ISP)** to accept and verify all major credit cards, debit cards, purchase cards and private label cards. ICVerify collects credit-card information from an Order Form. It processes and authorizes the orders in real-time, while the customer is logged onto the site. Finally, it deposits the correct amount into your merchant account.



**ICVERIFY**

<http://www.icverify.com/index2.html>

---

Instead of buying ICVERIFY's **software**, you could use the **services** of a company that offers real-time verification **via its own secure server**. Although the real-time verification and authorization occurs away from your own site, the money is still deposited into your merchant account.

Leading examples are **CyberCash's CashRegister 3**, **Mpact Immedia's BuyWay**, **PaymentNet**, and [CyberSource](#).

With **CyberCash**, your Order Page remains **on your own secure server**, but the credit card info is encrypted and cleared on CyberCash's server. (As of this writing, Cybercash was in the process of buying ICVERIFY.)

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CyberCash

<http://www.cybercash.com/cybercash/merchants/>

---

Most **third-party real-time verifications services** host your Order Page on **their own** secure servers. **BuyWay** is a top-notch example of this. They initiate order fulfillment, **enable easy, secure, bank-approved, real-time, credit card payment over the Internet**, and provide other value added features.



MPACT Immedia's BuyWay Program

<http://clubweb.mpactimmedia.com/>

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PAYMENTNET

PaymentNet, Inc.

<http://www.paymentnet.com/>

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**Sophisticated credit card fraud artists can defeat real-time verification.** So, whether you sell digital or hard goods, **a real-time verification system should be combined with some kind of “fraud screening” algorithm.**

**You could design your own anti-fraud screen...**

Get your techie to design a [CGI script](#) that detects the **red flags outlined above**. If the CGI script does **not** detect a **red flag**, it allows the order to continue on for real-time verification. **Otherwise...**

The CGI script sends a **red flagged order** for manual verification by you, aborting the real-time process. It also puts up a polite message to the prospect -- this alerts him to a snag in order-processing and it tells him what to do. The message could even vary according to **which red flag** was violated!

For example, if an order arrives from **@hotmail.com**, the CGI script would **stop** the real-time process. **Instead**, it puts up a new Web page confirming all other entered data, but asking him to enter an ISP-based address instead of a free one.

**Don't care to design your own fraud screening CGI?** Use a real-time verification service that offers it. Ask them what they are doing to "kick out" the red flags **without** "insulting" the true orders.

Already, **CyberSource** and **Anacom** offer decent fraud screens during their own real-time verification process (as for most [third party services](#), your Order Page resides on **their** secure server)...



**CyberSource**

<http://www.cybersource.com/>

If you offer a high-end item, the CyberSource algorithm is **the** Cadillac. But it's rather pricey, so it makes the most sense for expensive software.



**Anacom**

<http://www.anacom.com/>



### 17.1.6. Want to Scare Away Thieves?

Here's a few fraud-intimidators to consider using on your site...

- **Notify customers that you do “random phone verifications”** to eliminate credit card fraud. Ask for a “best time” to call them.



- I spotted this message on the site of an order-processing service...

Your IP address of 209.41.157.228 will be recorded so we may investigate disputes and fraudulent use of credit cards. Abuse of credit cards will not be tolerated.

Posting the user's IP address is a simple matter for your Webmaster. And it makes the customer worry, **“Geez, what else does he know about me?”**



- **Add the following to your Order Form**, just above the “Submit Order” button...

**ELECTRONIC AUTHORIZATION SIGNATURE:**  
By pressing “Submit Order” below, I hereby agree to authorize  
<<Insert name of your business here>>  
to charge the above specified credit card for the amount shown here.



Of course, you have to balance “intimidators” against the possibility of scaring away honest customers.

And that, dear reader, is **your** call. :-)



### 17.1.7. Resources to Help You **Avoid The Land Mines**

**AntiFraud.com** has a wealth of information. Don't miss their free **Prevention Tips**. By implementing their basic tips, they claim that you can reduce online fraud by approximately **80%**.

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**AntiFraud.com**

<http://www.antifraud.com/>

**To sum up their most important recommendations...**

**1) Insist upon** exact name, full address and phone numbers.

**2) Refuse free,** web-based, or Email forwarding address. It's just too easy to run frauds from these e-mail addresses. Insist upon an ISP- or domain-based address, since these can be traced back to a "real" person. You can check this against **an up-to-date list** that Antifraud.com maintains at...



**Red Flag Email Domains**

<http://antifraud.com/redflag.htm>

**3) If in doubt,** call the phone number listed on the order. Verify that they are the cardholder and that they ordered the product. I would also add -- [tape the call](#). You won't lose the honest customers.

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For more information on protecting yourself from online scams and cyber-criminals, see Don Janal's book, **"Risky Business: Protect Your Business from being Stalked, Conned or Blackmailed on the Web,"** (John Wiley & Sons, April 1998, ISBN 0471197068).



Don Janal's Risky Business

<http://www.janal.com/>



### 17.1.8. Other Anti-Land Mine “Devices”

There are other **electronic verification protocols** designed to help you avoid credit card land mines. **They protect both you and your customer.** Sooner or later, one or more of **SET** (Secure Electronic Transaction), **Verifone** and **First Virtual** will affect the way you take credit card orders.

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**Secure Electronic Transaction (SET)** is a credit-card processing **protocol** that uses digital certificates to ensure the identities of all parties (customer, vendor, bank) involved in a purchase.

Using a Web browser “wallet,” SET encrypts credit and purchase information before transmission. The vendor never sees any of the credit card info -- talk about secure! The vendor merely passes the encrypted info to a processor service, which decrypts, clears, and authorizes.

Originally developed by VISA and MasterCard, it is now supported also by American Express, many large high-tech companies, and by most card-issuing banks. However, its introduction has been delayed substantially and other formats may develop an insurmountable lead.

If/when the **SET** protocol arrives, hopefully the fraud and chargeback problems will be eliminated. It's a phenomenal system, and it has recently started testing.

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But who knows **when** it will be available?

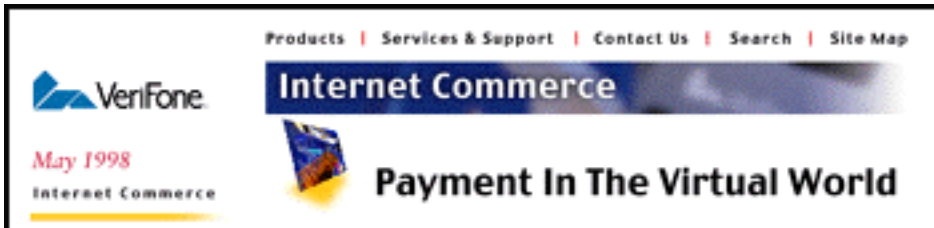


**Mastercard** (among others)

<http://www.mastercard.com/set/>

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**Verifone** uses a helper application called a “**wallet**.” Your customer has an encrypted code that refers to their credit card. When she buys from you, the wallet passes the code to the vendor, who immediately sends the code and purchase price to Verifone, who verifies the transaction with the credit-card company. Once authorized, it transfers the funds to the vendor along with an authorization to ship.



**Verifone**

<http://www.verifone.com/solutions/internet/>

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**First Virtual** issues a VirtualPIN to the customer. Like the wallet, your customer uses their VirtualPIN that is related to the credit card number.

For each purchase, First Virtual asks your customer for confirmation via e-mail. Once First Virtual receives it, they process the transaction off the Web. Then they e-mail the vendor to authorize shipment.

Worth a look...

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First Virtual

<http://www.firstvirtual.com/services/merchant/>

### 17.1.9. The Ins and Outs of Electronic Cash

**DigiCash** offers eCash, the digital equivalent to cash. It allows consumers to pay real money for purchases on the Internet. It's simple for consumers and maintains their privacy.

To use eCash, both users and merchants must have an account with an issuing bank. Your customer takes funds from her regular account, transfers it into eCash via purse software, and then stores it on her hard drive in encoded form until she purchases.

When purchasing, she sends the correct amount to the vendor who relays them to the bank (which verifies and redeems them into the vendor's account).

#### Advantages of eCash...

- allows for privacy, something that credit cards do not
- low transaction costs
- can be divided into smaller denominations than exist in the real world (allowing for micropayments).

**The big problem?** There are few people who use it and few vendors who accept it! **Whoops!...** Long-term, I don't think this is a viable format, but in case you're interested...

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Digicash

[http://www.digicash.com/index\\_e.html](http://www.digicash.com/index_e.html)

OK, want to see why you'll never have to hear, "The check is in the mail"?...



### 17.1.10. Accepting Online E-Checks!

Tens of millions of people are maxed out on their credit cards, but have money in the bank. Millions more don't even have credit cards, but there's cash in the checking account. Many small businesses don't have a corporate card, and many more prefer to cut checks. And you know what?...

They all have...



... cash in the bank! So here's some good news!

**You can actually accept checks directly via the Web.** Use software (below) to import data that your customer has entered into your **Order Form**. Then, using that data, you actually print the bank drafts and take them to your bank! Save the credit card fee, and no need to wait for the check to be in the proverbial mail.

It's that fast and easy.

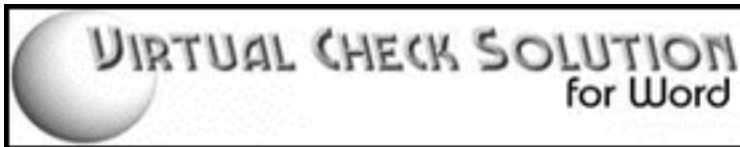


**However**, many of the fraud and "chargeback" issues are the same as for credit

cards. Here are the key safety tips...

- Don't accept orders from customers with free e-mail addresses.
- Record the customer's IP address, in case you ever need to trace the user.
- Careful with customers from outside of your country.
- Before you process the order, call the customer's bank and verify the account number, account holder's name and current funds to clear the check.

Several companies offer e-check software. For example, **Virtual Check Solution** has an excellent site, with a great demo and informative FAQ. From the same company that brings you Antifraud.com...



**Virtual Check Solution**

<http://softwaresolutions.net/vcheck/>

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**CheckFaxe**

<http://www.chekfaxx.com/introduction.html>

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**ChecksNet**

<http://www.checksnet.com/>

Informative site, with good section on some of the dangers.

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OR...

... if you prefer **have someone else do it for you. For a fee, of course...**

**RediCheck** empowers you to accept personal and business checks online in real-time and have them guaranteed in seconds.



**RediCheck**

[http://www.itransact.com/redicheck/merchant\\_info.html](http://www.itransact.com/redicheck/merchant_info.html)

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**CrossCheck Inc.** offers a slick check approval and (optional) guarantee service. Here's the demo...



**ChecksByNet**

<http://www.cross-check.com/core.htm>

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For more info, as always, check with Uncle Ralph, who has a section in his [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#) reserved for **Accepting Online Checks**. Check out the legal and fraud aspects fully before using this interesting payment method. Many more payment schemes will spring up before one or two grab market share -- stay up to date at the Research Room.



### 17.1.11. Using 1-900 Phone Billing

**Internet Billing Company** offers a variety of money collection systems. The most interesting is their 1-900 billing service, called **Web900**. When your customer chooses to pay via this option, she will simply add the cost of your product to her phone bill.

But there's a catch. The commission for i-bill is 20%. Phew.

And there's a second catch -- as they say on their site, "Clients who sell tangible merchandise should not use Web900."

Whoops! Third catch... only for amounts under \$35.



**Internet Billing Company Web900 Service**

<http://www.ibill.com/web900.html>



### 17.1.12. The **Tried-and-True** Boosts Income, Too!

Many customers still insist on using more traditional payment methods -- **yes, even though they surf the Web!** We receive **personal checks, money orders and certified checks** by regular post every week.

Anyone who would take the time to do that must have strong, personal reasons for doing this. If you don't provide these options, this is likely lost business. However...

**Even with money orders, fraud is possible.**

Our own bank here in Montreal has been plagued by fraudulent money orders and certified checks. Develop protocols for how to handle each way of getting paid...

- **Money order** -- For postal money orders. Call the U.S. Post Office at **1-800-868-2443** to verify that the serial number on the money order is valid. If the amount is for more than \$100, you can also hold the front of the M.O. up to the

light... if it's good, you'll see a shadow of Benjamin Franklin in a gray oval on the left.

### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

**Canadian money orders** -- the 1-800 number is on the back of every M.O. Instead of Ben Franklin, you'll see beavers <sheesh -- **blushing** Canadian here>.

- **Bank money orders/certified checks** -- Get your customers to provide the local phone number of the bank. Call to verify that it's good.



- **Personal check** -- make it clear to your customers that you don't ship product until the personal check clears. Or don't bother at all -- it's a hassle that may not be worth the effort.
- **C.O.D.** -- call your local courier. It's still done, but not cross-border.
- **Bank transfers, purchase orders** -- for business to business sales.

Bottom line? **Accept payment in as many ways as possible, or you will lose sales needlessly.** If you are going to eliminate a payment modality (ex., AMEX or personal check or Verifone), have a good reason.



## 17.2. The “Final” Step... Fulfillment

OK, you’ve got the order and received payment. Now you need a simple, organized protocol for physically taking the product from inventory, packing it, shipping it, and tracking it until delivery. In other words, **put a product fulfillment program into place.**

If product fulfillment is beyond your in-house capabilities, you can contract this out to a third party. Consider using...

- **a fulfillment house.** It will cost you more than if you did it in-house, but it may be worth it if you are just starting. See this list from Yahoo!...



**Yahoo! List of Fulfillment Houses**

[http://www.yahoo.com/Business\\_and\\_Economy/Companies/Marketing/Fulfillment\\_Services/](http://www.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Companies/Marketing/Fulfillment_Services/)

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- **drop-shipping.** If you're selling a hard good **and** if you're a small biz, consider paying the manufacturer to ship the product to the customer **directly**. Here's how it works...

Let's say you've just written a book. You're selling an Acrobat Reader version via direct download from the Web (hey, this sounds familiar). And you're also selling a **hard copy** of it. Geez, you don't want the **bother and expense** of a shipping department, right? So...

You contract with a digital printer to make a few hundred at a time, **and** to ship them. When the online credit card order clears, it gets written to an online database. The database file can be accessed online by the manufacturer.

The manufacturer uses that data to print **your own** label, pops the book into the padded envelope, and sends it via UPS to the customer.

Your customer can't even tell that it came from a third party. All you have to do is negotiate price for the manufacturer's service.

**Advantages?** Pretty obvious. **It's cheap and easy to get going.** There's no inventory to maintain in a warehouse of your own, no personnel, etc.

**Disadvantages?** Not so obvious. But think these through and you'll be OK...

**1) Negotiate a fair price.** It may cost you a bit more than if you do it yourself. But it will be more than worth it (unless you already have the staff and facilities to easily organize in-house warehousing and shipping).

**2) You must establish a database and communications protocol** to be able to easily track orders, shipments, returns, stock levels, back-orders, etc. Hey, a special Web page, well-protected, is ideal! Do this well and life's a breeze.

**3) It may be tough to find manufacturers who are willing to drop-ship.** Larger ones tend to avoid the bother, or may not give you good service -- will the maker ship immediately? What if they back out and decide **not** to "drop-ship"... after you've gone to all the time and expense to set up a Web site and advertise? **Smaller** manufacturers tend to be more reliable -- but **check them out well.**

**4) If you offer several different products from several different manufacturers,** drop-shipping becomes impractical.

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

Ideally, the order-taking and fulfillment system is tied to your inventory tracking. In other words, when you ship one unit of Widget 982, one unit is subtracted from inventory in your records.

**If you decide to do this yourself...**



... **Give your customers a variety of shipping options.** Each option should have a **clear price/speed difference from the others.** Don't confuse your customer with a whole bunch of options with only minor differences. Here are some possible options...

- **courier** (choose one only -- don't make your customer choose between five different couriers). Each courier has a zillion ways to ship and bill. You can charge according to price of order, weight, number of items, volume, region where customer lives. It's enough to make your head spin. Your mission? **Simplify it for your customer.**

- **regular mail** -- this is generally a poor option, since you can't prove receipt. But

the postal service does have a variety of courier-type services. So check them out.

- **download** from your site (the best -- it's fast and free, but only if you're selling a digital product). Actually, if you sell a digital product, offering download **only** is fine. That's what we do for PennyGold -- and we have lost exactly zero orders by restricting customers to this option.

You'll have to decide whether to make shipping a profit center, or just charge your cost. But whatever you do, obey the usual “**\$x.95**” rule. If it's \$6, charge \$5.95. Shipping costs can cost you an order. Make them **look** as cheap as possible.

Ship the product as close to the **time** of ordering as possible. Note that I did not say “as close to the day of ordering as possible.” In other words, ship **immediately**. Technically, you are supposed to ship **before** you take payment. But after what you just read about credit cards...

**And maintain a database that tracks** order entry, credit card status/verification number, date shipped, and **confirmed receipt**, along with the date for each. **This is critical for practical and legal reasons.**



See Ralph Wilson's [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#). He has lots of solid, up-to-date info on **fulfillment issues**.



Naturally, as enlightened Web vendors, we know that fulfillment is not really the final step at all. **It's actually the first...**

... in a mutually rewarding long-term relationship with your customer.



### 17.3. **Nurture Your Customers to Grow the Relationship**

So you've got a...



... **customer?** Super! Treat him like he's the only one you have.

Cement the relationship!

**At the time of order**, enthusiastically congratulate and thank him. Remind him of your after-care support program. Give him an e-mail address and phone number to contact should he ever have any questions.

**But don't stop there...**

Develop a caring, after-sales program. Perhaps a combination of e-mail follow-up and a strong on-Web customer-support department. In short... **pamper him.**

A happy customer **will buy from you...** again and again.

And it takes a lot **less work** to keep a customer happy than to find a new one.

Ultimately, the long-term success of your business depends on repeat business. Customers will do repeat business with you because of the **relationship** (assuming you have a good products, of course).

A Web site does **not** build relationships. **People do.**



### **17.3.1. Automated, Yet Personal, E-mail Follow-up**

Your single, most important tool for deepening a personal relationship with your customer, no matter where he lives, **is...**



... **e-mail.** E-mail is personal and friendly, one-to-one... but **only if you make it so!** But how do you develop **one-to-one** relationships with **thousands** of people? Simple...

## Automate.

Yes, **you can automate and still be personal.** Here's how...

Let's say you have just received your first order for ProductX. **Time to write your first "thank you reply."**

You are warm, friendly. Thank your customer, reassuring him what a great purchase he has made and how you will support the heck out of him. Make it a strong letter. Remove buyer's remorse. State your commitment to his happiness with your product.

Of course, **actions speak louder than words.** The rest of this chapter will show you how to **deliver** on your promise. Whoops! Here comes the second order for ProductX.

So you re-read the first letter. See a few places to **improve it? Good!**

**Over the next few orders, you'll get to the point where you feel that letter is about as good as it can be. When you re-read it, you just don't see a way to improve it.**



## Time to automate!

Is it any less personal now that this letter is sent automatically upon receipt of your order? Of course not -- **it still contains the same, original heart-felt message** that you wrote in the first place. Just make sure that your automation process itself does not compromise the personal feel.

Now automate a one-week follow-up in the same way ([more on the "how to" of automation above](#)). Remind them of special features, tech support, etc. Offer a subscription to a newsletter for ProductX owners.



**E-mail offers wonderful opportunities for spontaneous, friendly follow-up. Use it well, and creatively. Leverage yourself** through automation.



Maintain a database of all people who have purchased from you -- name, e-mail, phone, address, status of shipment, communications, returns, which site they came from, whatever else seems relevant.

The database allows you to manage tens of thousands of clients, in a friendly one-to-one fashion, effortlessly.

**Contact your customers every month**, usually just to provide some good info and to see how they are doing with your products. Don't try to sell them... just provide info and support.

Build a solid, friendly relationship with your customers, not by hokey stuff like holiday greetings (unless you truly believe that your clientele would appreciate this), but by focusing on their **needs**, even after the sale.

When it comes time to announce an event, special sale, new product or product upgrade, you'll have enormous credibility. **Care for your customers and show it...** they will buy from you over and over.

After all, when **you're the customer**, and when you know that a company's product is good, and that its support and service is warm and outstanding, **do you hesitate on future purchases?**



### **17.3.2. Delivering Super Customer Support**

Let me repeat... **your customers are a terrific future source of sales. Maintain a solid one-to-one relationship with each. They will become the most valuable asset of your business.**

Everyone loves being recognized, loved, supported, and appreciated. Give that to them, and mean it -- your customers **will stay with you forever**. And they'll spread the word.

Be indifferent (or worse, rude) to them, and they'll do more than just leave you. They'll spread the word, **and they'll do it with a vengeance, telling everyone they know.**

Even today, when one-to-one customer management is fashionable, **very few companies do it.** Who knows why? Who cares? It only means that you'll stand out... **way out.**

In today's digital age, it is more than possible -- it's almost easy.

But you'll have to adopt **four all-important attitudes** to succeed...

### 1) Be a customer...

To truly understand Web biz and what a customer feels like on the Web, do as much of your own personal buying on the Web. Get direct experience as a customer.

**Notice what makes you feel...**



... **good**, successful, smart, appreciative and appreciated. **Integrate that into your own online business.**

**Notice what...**



... **peeves** or frustrates you, what makes you doubt certain vendors. Do you do anything like that in your business? **Eliminate it!**

---

### 2) Whatever you want, however you want it...

A customer may want a brochure snail-mailed instead of a pdf file. It's OK to reply,

"You know, I could fire you a **PDF** brochure by e-mail in a few seconds. It would look just as good and you'd have it immediately, **if you like.**"

But if she insists on receiving dead trees in her mail box, send it that way.

Sure, use the Web as your central headquarters for sales. But you must foresee all the ways that **your customers** like to interact. Just because **you** prefer to e-mail, everyone is different. **If you allow your customer to work with you on her terms, you will have a very appreciative customer.**

This is important -- allow customers to do business the way **they** want.

- Want a print catalog? It's in the mail.
- Need support? Use our online interactive tech support... **and** we have trained specialists standing by via e-mail and phone, if you need to talk to someone.

Let's look at Web-based support first...

---

### 3) Beat "the real world"...

**The Web allows your customer support to be better than the real world.** Here's a few examples of how...

- Ship digital product **instantly** -- it's just a download away!
- Tie your ordering mechanisms into your **inventory database...** check inventory and tell your customer **immediately** when you're out of stock... and when you'll be back in stock.
- **Shipping** FedEx or UPS? Automate a script to check their sites -- when delivery is confirmed, automatically e-mail your customer...

Hi Jill,

Well, FedEx tells us that you received your ISDN modem this morning. I hope you enjoy its speedy access and reliability.

If you have any questions at all about installation or using the modem, don't hesitate to call us at 1-888-SUPPORT, Monday to Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM, EST.

Or check out the tech support Web site at  
>> <http://www.isdnmodem.com/support/>

Supporting you is priority #1 for us.

All the best,  
Jack

See how you can go **way beyond the real world?** The above letter costs you nothing, is totally automated, is very personal, and reached your customer immediately. And, as we said before, it really **is** personal. There's no need to have

to do an action manually just to make it personal.

You can use the Web to customize and personalize a wide variety of customer service/support opportunities. Here's just a few more examples...

- **Give your user a customized link** to check the status of an order. This is much better than phoning, taking up your customer's time and yours explaining the order, the date, the order number, etc.
- **Your Web tech support can offer incredible detail**, minute bits of information, that most of your human tech support would not remember. Once that info is on the Web, a motivated user will drill-down to get the needed answer. You know how many drivers would rather find their own way rather than ask for directions? Well now your users can do both!... and save you tons of "real-life" support time.
- **Support anonymity... or not** -- If people don't have to reveal who they are, they may be more willing to do or try certain things, while remaining anonymous. On the other hand, if you need to keep prying eyes out, username and password access does the trick. Depending on your circumstances, you can go either way.
- **Build community** -- This, of course, is basically impossible in the real world. But a username and password are the first step in turning a group of devoted customers, scattered all over the world, into a community. For example, our PGPer Club has the PGPer Digest, special download zones, frequent e-mailing, etc. They **are** a group, and they feel like it. They belong. This is an important human instinct.
- **And it's all free...**
  - for you -- You can offer free samples, minor upgrades, chapter of a new book, free newsletter subscriptions.
  - for your customer -- She can get support from you, wherever she is in the world, 24 hours per day.

---

**Above all, do it all in a warm and friendly way.** Don't let your techies rule the day, even in the tech support area.

**Be nice... play nice.** People will come back to play (and buy) if you do.

Even though Web-based customer support is superior, for years to come, **many**

**people will still prefer to hear a human voice...**



#### **4) Leave nothing to chance...**

People who handle one-to-one **personal** e-mails and individual phone orders/support must be...



... well-trained, pleasant and totally customer-focused. Remember, as far as your customer is concerned, **they are your company.**

**So leave nothing to chance for employee with direct “real voice” contact with your customers.** Develop a series of telephone scripts for all recurring situations. For example...

- **Build a list of the most common questions** -- prepare the replies.
- **Enter every problem encountered** -- develop your answers. Improve upon them constantly.
- **Keep track of any other common situations**, and what to do about them.

Enter this information into a database for quick and easy access. Improve replies constantly.

From the opening “Hello” to the parting “Glad we could help, have a good day,” **leave nothing to chance.**

**Finally, your live support staff must be more than knowledgeable. They must “smile” on the phone.** If your customer likes you, they’ll come back forever.



### **17.3.3. Maximizing Support / Minimizing Time**

Your prospect expects an answer to her e-mail... **fast!** Your customer needs support... **yesterday!**

**But here's the kicker...** you'll make a much better impression if it doesn't look automated... as if a real human answered.

In other words, they want to eat their cake, and have it, too. Give it to them... automate whatever you can... **wherever it's appropriate.**



So how do you do this? Geez, you ask all the right questions, at just the right time! Here are several ideas for you to get started...

**First, automate replies via CGI scripts.** For example, newsletter subscriptions can be handled via a [html-to-CGI Response Form](#) rather than e-mail. A simple CGI script can build a database of e-mail addresses, send a welcoming e-mail (after you have manually developed your best reply), and then send the current issue.

**Second, automate any incoming e-mail that has a clear, unambiguous purpose.** For example, do you offer a special report? Just have your visitor hit your [mailto: link](#) to send an e-mail to a pre-defined e-mail address, such as [report@yourcompany.com](#). Now comes the automatic part...

[Autoresponders](#), if used appropriately, respond immediately, are cost-effective and sell for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. And they don't eat up any of your time!

Have your techie set up an autoresponder to answer all e-mail to [report@yourcompany.com](#) by sending your excellent report/sales-letter. A good autoresponder will also keep a database of e-mail addresses and send you a daily or weekly report regarding activity.

**Third, potential customers have many inquiries, and actual customers have many support questions, most of which you have heard a million times.** Identify the most common. Make a list. Develop, then automate, the replies as follows...

- [FAQ](#) -- Develop two FAQs, pre-sale and post-sale. Depending on the particulars of your product and target market, this may work well for product inquiries but not for product support. Or vice-versa. Or if you've got a huge product line, or a thousand possible questions, the FAQ format starts to strain.

So let's explore **other** options...

- **E-mail support** -- always provide a support@yourcompany.com address. E-mails with open-ended questions cannot, and should not, be automated -- they will look canned and will usually be off target. So what to do?...

Build and maintain an offline database of “best answers” for all of the most common scenarios. This database can actually be the same one you use for online support. When you get an e-mailed question, simply look it up, then cut-and-paste-and-mail the answer. Customize if necessary -- if you have to customize too much, add this to the database with its own question. **Done right, the result is personal, yet fast and good.**

Occasionally, you'll get a question that requires a custom reply. Support staff should be confident in answering, or refer to someone who is.

For a great example of how **not** to use automation, and how to **destroy** (rather than nurture) a relationship through poor e-mail support, [re-read the InfoSeek example](#). **It contains many important lessons** -- better InfoSeek should teach them to you, than you learn them the hard way!

- **Database driven** -- OK, time to call...



... **your techie!** Now that your **offline Q&A database** is functioning well and answering most questions...

... **put that database online.**

Your support-seeking customer enters a keyword into a search field. The search engine searches a large database of possible questions (questions you have previously entered into the database). Up pops five questions that contain that keyword (or questions with answers that contain it). Customer clicks on the question that is closest to hers.

---

To summarize, **let your customers (both prospective and actual) deal with you however they like.** If you automate properly, most will love the speed of reply and the personalization.

An automated reply system is **valuable for large companies, reducing man-hours tremendously.**

**But for the small entrepreneur, it is invaluable.** You become more productive, freeing up several hours each day for critical functions such as product development or marketing.

If you've ever wished that you could **clone yourself...**



... this is how!



#### **17.3.4. The Best Way to Build A Long-Term Biz**

Sell a great product. **Then build a strong, supportive one-to-one relationship.**

The Web offers a host of customer service opportunities. Get creative -- a lot of what you do now can probably be automated and offered on the Web, in a friendly and personal manner.

**Treating your customers promptly, and with care and respect, develops a strong, trusting relationship... and a solid business based on repeat purchases.**

And if you have any doubts about this “goody-goody” way of doing business, consider this final real world example...

Jim Ellington is a happy PennyGold owner. After his purchase, he required just a little support, which I provided in the usual manner. He later e-mailed me some wonderful feedback about PennyGold. I asked him for permission to use his comments as a testimonial on the Web site. He graciously agreed.

Of course, this appearance on the site generates inquiries to Jim. Here's what he e-mails to people, whether they ask him about me personally or not...

*My last comment regards Ken Evoy and his organization. They are top notch. He has perfected an idea, and stands behind it 100%.*

MYSSI!... After the Sale

That is VERY rare in this business. Honesty and integrity are almost non-existent anymore. He is the very refreshing exception.

No need to add more about the power of doing business properly. **Thanks, Jim.**



### 17.3.5. Walk the Walk...

It is an immutable law in business that words are words, explanations are explanations, promises are promises -- **but only performance is reality.**

-- Harold Geneen (former CEO, International Telephone & Telegraph Company)



You've read what it takes. **Knowing** is one thing. But if you don't **do it**, it won't do you much good.

As a customer, I fail to receive replies to e-mails regularly, even when I'm a prospect, but especially when I have an after-sales question. The former loses **my order**. The latter loses **my ongoing business**.

Some of the worst offenders?... Web marketers who preach how important one-to-one marketing and responsiveness is!

As a result, those who reply **quickly and well stand out** -- people like Matt Hockin at [I-Sales...](#) and Paul Lang at [Sell It!](#) They have a five-mile **head start** on 99% of their competitors, who have slow and sloppy e-mail habits.

And why **don't** the 99% respond **quickly and sharply**?

**Because it takes effort.** You have to actually **do it**. No excuses, no "we'll start tomorrow." You can't just talk the talk. **You have to...**



... walk the walk.

**Do it.**





## 18. **Sites that SELL!**

As of this writing (Summer, 1998), about one in a hundred Web sites **SELL** effectively. I've picked four sites **for you to see how it's done in the real world.**

Two are large, well-financed companies. Two are small, one-product efforts. The point, of course, is that **it doesn't matter how large or well-financed you are...**

**If you have the product(s), and if you have the smarts, you will succeed on the Web!**

As you explore these sites, **review them against [this "must do" checklist of critical site-SELLING features.](#)**



### 18.1. **How Small Companies SELL!**

Smaller companies have to **SELL** more **actively**. Since they are unknown, they must make creative use of strong **credibility-building aids** and **selling techniques** like...

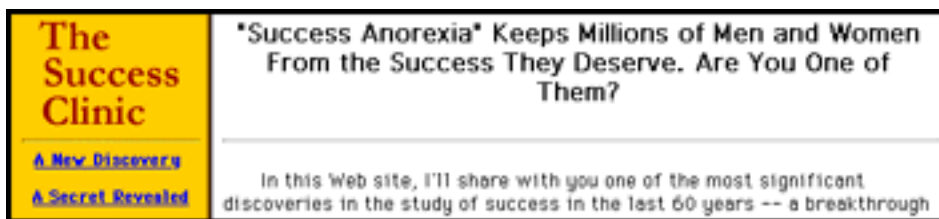
- riveting opener
- headlines that hold
- joints that pull
- testimonials that convince
- Gibraltar-solid guarantee
- irresistible offer and forceful call to action.



### 18.1.1. Do You Have Success Anorexia?

I have no idea whether the product is any good or not (I suspect it's great), but this is a terrific sales site. Its strengths are...

- Sharp, short text.
- Benefits-oriented.
- Clear and concise.
- The copy drags you through to the end, then forces you to respond.
- They even have a nice, simple domain name that relates directly to their product.



**Do You Have Success Anorexia?**

<http://www.preparetowin.com/>

**And this entrepreneur experiments** -- on the Web, if you have a great product, simply **keep trying until it works**. Two months after I visited the above **Opening Page**, the site led off with the following copy instead...



**Do You Have Success Anorexia?**

<http://www.preparetowin.com/>

See how a one-man band with a single product does it. Explore the site now. Pay special attention to how Noah St. John **builds credibility** and **SELLS**.



### 18.1.2. Web Pages That Suck

This site looks fun and irreverent, **but it follows all the rules.**

All I can say is, check out **Web Pages that Suck**, then buy the book. Teaching by “how not to do it” is very effective. **It’s full of great lessons.**



**Web Pages That Suck**  
Learn Good Design by Looking at Bad Design

The folks at **computer literacy** are sponsoring a contest where you match wits with us about sucky Web design techniques. The prizes are cool and if we could enter this contest, we would in a heartbeat.

Make sure you enter.

**The Book**  
Contains excerpts from the book, background information, and some material that, for one reason or another, just didn't make the book.

**Buy it here!**  
Find out where to get it. Contest details... win prizes

**These Suck**  
Some of the examples from the award-winning Web Pages That Suck plus others from the book.

March 19, 1998

Webdeveloper.com likes our book!  
Webdeveloper.com is one of the premier sites

**Web Pages That Suck**

### Web Pages That Suck

<http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/home.html>

And **they constantly improve their site, too.**

For example, they learned that their title was confusing prospects (“I thought it was just a book about sucky Web sites.”). To make the title more benefit-focused, they added “**Fixing & Preventing**” before the “**Web Pages That Suck**” -- so now their **Opening Page** starts like this...

Fixing & Preventing...

# Web Pages That Suck

Learn Good Design by Looking at Bad Design

## Homepage

**The Book**  
Contains excerpts from the book, background information, and some material that, for one reason or another, just didn't make the book.

**Buy it here!**  
Find out where to get copies. There's a limited number of autographed copies available. Get Vincent and Michael's autograph before they overdose on the media hype!

**Book Updates**  
Important and interesting material available only for those people who bought the book.

*Fast Company* magazine calls WPTS the "Best for Improving Your Site's Look and Feel."

"One of the best ways to learn is by example. Here's a site, produced by a pair of graphic-designer professionals, that shows you what *not* to do." (June/July '98, p. 196.)

Speaking of things not to do, [the front page uses a very pretentious technique called an animated splash page](#). The problem with this type of page is it's only cool the first time you see it. Then it ages faster than a bad wine.

### Book Signing at Borders

The bad boys of Web design will be up in the heartland of good design for a book signing at the Borders Bookstore in San Mateo, California. Here's the details:

**Date:** September 10  
**Time:** 7pm  
**Place:** Border's Bookstore  
**Location:** 2925 El Camino Real, San Mateo, CA

I can't promise what we'll do, but we'll certainly try not to be boring.

## Web Pages That Suck

<http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/home.html>

While they have created a wonderfully **offbeat-funny** look and feel through their graphics and words, look underneath the hood. **It's a site that takes dead aim at getting the order...**

- Both the old and the new page (above) **lead** with a strong review from a well-known and respected source -- **these are the best testimonials of all.**
- **The strong content and super-friendly approach** creates a strong empathy for these two "smart wackos." Geez, I bought it just because they deserved it!
- The **Buy it here** is front and center -- it can't be missed.

**Make no mistake about this site -- the more you explore it, the more you'll realize that it follows all the rules.**



## 18.2. How Big Companies SELL!

Large, well-known companies don't have to spend the same degree of effort on outstanding copy, brilliant headlines, etc. Their customers arrive with different mind sets.

In a sense, you could almost say that when someone comes to Microsoft's site, "The order is theirs to lose." Just don't make any mistakes.

At least, this conservative "just don't blow it" approach seems to be the norm. Too bad -- in many cases, they could do much better. Just add a **bit** more salesmanship -- a testimonial here and there, benefit-oriented copy, a newsletter...

However, allowing for this orientation and for the individual circumstances of each company and its products, you will see that the big companies who "get it" basically follow all the rules, too.

**Their special emphasis** lies in **fast downloads** and **tight navigation** and the other **usability issues**. It's easy to make navigation flawless if you're only selling one product (at least it **should** be **now!**). But to do it when you are Cisco, well, that takes some special design skill.

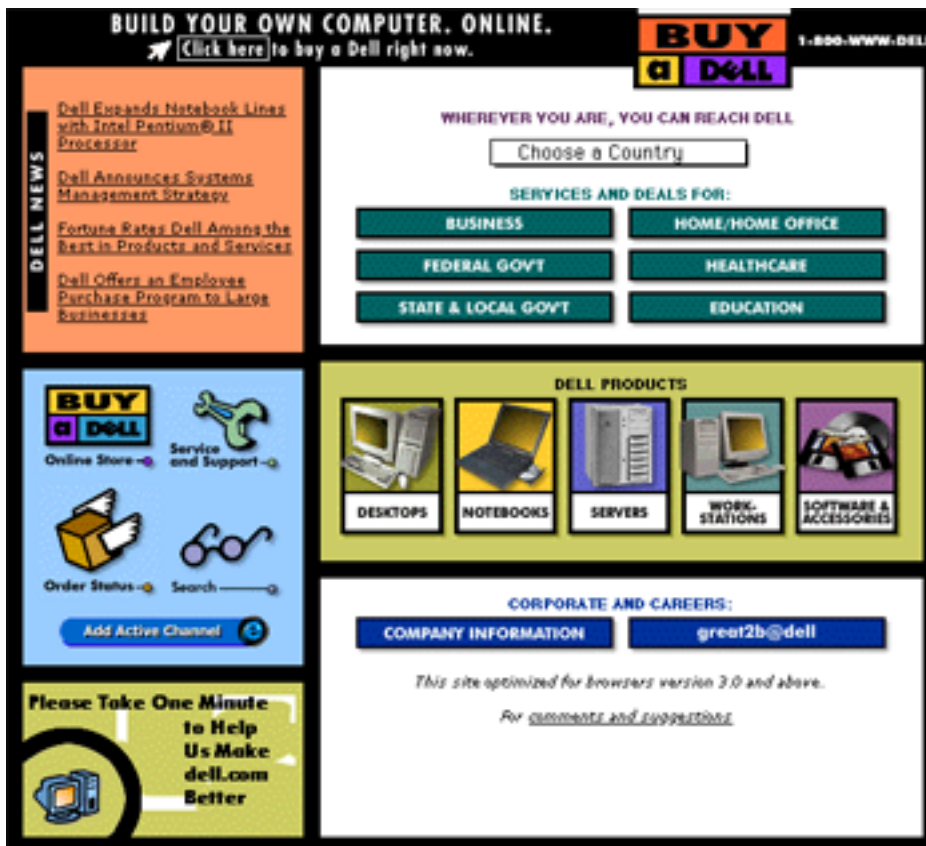
[We've used Cisco already](#), so let's take a look at two other large companies who "get it"...



MYSSI!... Sites that SELL!

### 18.2.1. Dell

As my techie says, “**This site rules.**” They have perfected the art of selling computers on the Internet... except that if you check back in a few months, you’ll find it’s even better!



Dell Computer Corporation

<http://www.dell.com/>

And **guess what?** Dell never rests either! Sure enough, three months after the above was written, Dell launched this new interface...

MYSSI!... Sites that **SELL!**



### Dell Computer Corporation

<http://www.dell.com/>

This Home Page is much wider than the old one (which is why the type, etc. looks smaller in the graphic -- I have **shrunk** it to be the same width on the page). Unlike the earlier Home Page, it's too wide to fit on a 640 x 480 monitor screen.

But Dell does **not** make “mistakes” like this **accidentally**. Obviously, they are happy to make this **tradeoff** to get the additional “real estate.”

After all, on a 640 x 480, you can still see **all** the important stuff -- you can even see enough of the “**Dell News**” section (gold column on the right) for you to know it's there **if** you want it. And hey, this little inconvenience might even convince a few prospects to buy a larger monitor! ;-)

But do you know what's **most** interesting? Whereas [the small companies above](#) modified **sales-related issues** to improve, Dell has modified **usability...**

- The graphical layout is cleaner, “easier on the eye.”
- The organization of the site is more apparent.
- The navigation is more intuitive, easier to follow.

**The whole page just feels a whole lot more user-friendly.** And that's important for a big company.

Beyond the Home Page, their navigation system makes shopping for **the computer that's just right for you** a snap. Surf Dell now to see how they do it.



MYSSI!... Sites that SELL!

### 18.2.2. Amazon.com

Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon.com, said it best -- “the smallest amount of **friction can stop people**” from proceeding through your site. So for a large site, the main concerns are navigation and other usability issues. **Good usability makes the experience “frictionless.”**

Let’s talk [USP](#) for a moment...

Do you see it, just below “Welcome to Amazon.com”?...

... Yup, **EARTH’S BIGGEST BOOKSTORE** -- isn’t **selection** what buying books should be all about on the Internet?

Mr. Bezos and Amazon clearly “get it”...



**Amazon.com Earth’s Biggest Bookstore**

<http://www.amazon.com/>

You didn’t really think Amazon was going to rest on its laurels, did you? **Nope,**

MYSSI!... Sites that SELL!

there are changes here too. Again, like Dell, the changes relate mostly to navigation. In the few months since the earlier Home Page, Amazon has added the music biz to its repertoire.

So now, when you hit their Home Page, you see a **BOOKS** tab and a **MUSIC** tab above the main categories...

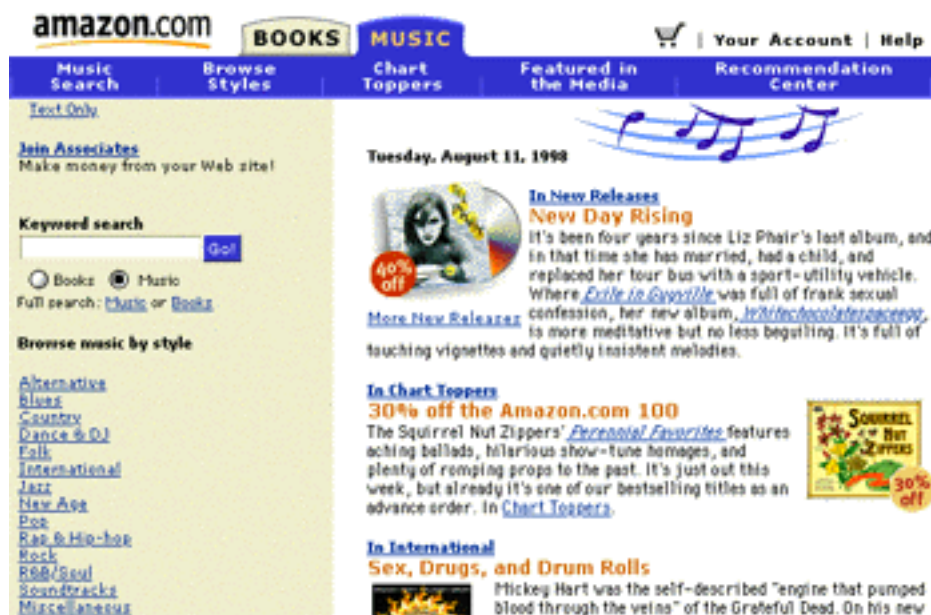
The screenshot shows the Amazon.com homepage as of Tuesday, August 11, 1998. The header features the Amazon logo and the tagline "Get what you want. 3 million titles. Save up to 40%." Below this are navigation tabs for "BOOKS" and "MUSIC", along with links for "Your Account" and "Help". A secondary navigation bar includes "Book Search", "Browse Subjects", "Bestsellers", "Featured in the Media", "Award Winners", "Gift Center", "Kids", and "Recommendation Center". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column contains a "Text Only" link, a "Visit our Music Store" link with a musical note icon, a "Keyword search" box with a "Go!" button, and a "Browse books by subject" dropdown menu currently set to "Business". The right column features a "Welcome, first-time visitors!" message with a "click here" link, a "Hot This Week" section for "Legal Eagles" by Tony Hillerman (marked "40% off"), and another "Hot This Week" section for "New Day Rising" by Liz Phair (also marked "40% off"). At the bottom, there are links for "PlanetAll", "Join Associates and make money!", "Pre-order your copy of Titanic on video today!", and "Amazon.com's Summer Reading Picks".

Amazon.com: Books, Music & More!

<http://www.amazon.com/>

Geez, too bad the music division made the "EARTH'S BIGGEST BOOKSTORE" slogan inappropriate. Oh well, might as well check out some CDs. Let's click on the **MUSIC** tab...

MYSSI!... Sites that SELL!



## Amazon.com Music

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/subst/home/music.html>

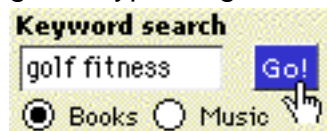
Clearly, the main focus of the change is to **accommodate the music division**. Other than that, there are only some small cleanups and minor functional improvements.

But then again, it's hard to improve on perfection. Want a few examples? Sure!...

**1) Personalization** -- whether I want books or CDs, Amazon is ready to help me along with a few good ideas, based on previous preferences... just like my corner bookseller in my little village...

**Welcome back, Ken Evoy.**  
**New! We've improved your book recommendations!**

**2) A Truly Useful Site-Search Engine** -- say I'm looking for books on fitness for golf. I type in "golf fitness" and click Go!...



This finds over 30 relevant books! Let's say I choose Gary Player's "Fit for Golf." When I get there, I get an excellent synopsis and interesting reviews from other

MYSSI!... Sites that SELL!

readers, but here are my favorite two features...

• I can see what other like-minded shoppers are buying...

**Customers who bought this book also bought:**

- [Exercise Guide to Better Golf](#); Frank W. Jobe, et al
- [Stretch and Strengthen Your Way to Great Golf](#); Greg Comeaux
- [The Fitness Approach to Power Golf](#); John Carrido

• I can do a search for all other golf books with a fitness orientation...

**Look for similar books by subject:**

Browse other [Health, Mind & Body](#), [Sports & Outdoors](#) titles.

- ☒ [Golf](#)
- ☐ [Training](#)
- ☐ [Physical education and trainin](#)
- ☒ [Physical fitness](#)
- ☐ [Athletic Training And Conditioning](#)
- ☐ [Sports & Recreation](#)
- ☐ [Health & Fitness](#)
- ☒ [Exercise](#)

Find books matching ALL checked subjects

i.e., each book must be in subject 1 AND subject 2 AND ...

**3) Interaction** -- Amazon asks its readers for book reviews, and it gets them.

These no-cost reviews are then offered to others interested in this book, an "instant reader survey" -- valuable to those trying to make the decision.

**Customer Comments**

Average Customer Review: ★★★★★ Number of Reviews: 1

A reader from Lexington, Virginia, 05/15/98 ★★★★★

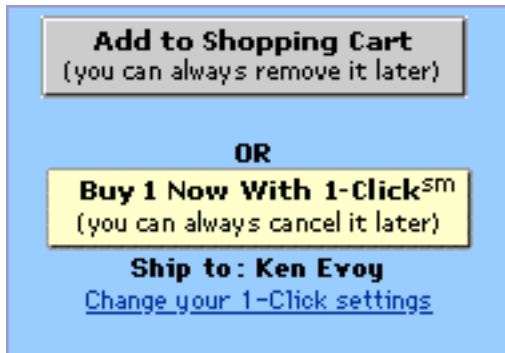
**An excellent general exercise book.**

Gary Player is known to be a exercise maniac. In this book he describes his program and illustrates 100 or so individual excercises. I found it almost too general and not specific to excercises designed to improve "golf" skills. Do you really need Gary Player to demonstrate the "push up"?

If one followed Mr. Player's program you would be fit for golf, life or just about anything else.

MY**SS!**... Sites that **SELL!**

#### 4) Ordering made unbelievably easy...



While the shopping cart is just a nice, solid shopping cart, **1-Click shopping** makes buying easier than picking up the phone to order from your local bookstore!

**Awesome site. The **cream** of the Web. Check it out now and find at least five more outstanding sales-oriented features.**



### 18.3. Experience Speaks

OK, time for some pearls of wisdom from others who have “been there, done that... and won!”

These entrepreneurs have trial-and-errored their way to success. Through months and years of relentless experimenting, they have learned what it takes to succeed in Web sales.

And now they’re going to share this priceless info with you. OK, enough of my voice for a while. **Here’s what **others** feel you must do to...**

**... Make Your **SITE SELL!****



### 18.3.1. Learning from the ShopIrish Webstore

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

**Creative Irish Gifts** brings the largest selection (500+) of unique and hard-to-find Irish gifts to the Web. It came into existence over ten years ago for a special purpose... to support the peacemaking efforts of the Irish Children's Fund (ICF), a non-profit organization.

More recently, Creative Irish Gifts has extended its support to the Northern Ireland Children's Project, another peacemaking non-profit organization. Purchases from Creative Irish Gifts support peace in war-torn Northern Ireland through these charities.

Rory O'Conner <St.Patrick@shopirish.com>, the Webmaster at Creative Irish Gifts, shares these inspirational lessons they have learned. Copyright (c) 1998, Rory O'Conner, all rights reserved. Used by permission.



**Creative Irish Gifts**  
<http://www.shopirish.com/>

Creative Irish Gifts is a unique specialty item catalog with a non-profit focus that began on our family's dining room table ten years ago. Being homegrown, we've always operated under the principles of simplicity (doing a lot with a little) and innovation. We realized the potential of a website, but didn't have much money with which to play. So I built one myself.

The Creative Irish Gifts website went live in October of 1997. Since then we've received more than \$60,000 in sales directly over the Web. Web sales have grown steadily from 1% of our total business in the beginning, to 5% more recently. For Creative Irish Gifts, 5% annualized is a \$200,000 chunk of business. Our out-of-pocket cost? About \$8,000 in both site development and marketing.

Building, maintaining and marketing the site ourselves has been a rich learning experience. We've learned from both our successes and our mistakes. First, our

successes:

## LEARNING FROM SUCCESSES

**1. HAVE A PASSION FOR WEB MARKETING.** This is the most important element. I love everything about what I'm doing -- from design, to programming, to interacting with customers. If I had anything less than passion, the site would not be a success.

**2. CONSTANTLY ACQUIRE BOTH TECHNICAL SKILLS AND WEB MARKETING EXPERTISE.** It's a beautiful thing to dream up a Web marketing strategy and know how to execute it technically. I couldn't sit down and write any "fresh" JavaScript or Perl, but I know enough about coding to "re-heat" most any freely-available script on the Web and make it work for us. Cross-functionality of discipline is the way of the future for the cyber-savvy marketer.

**3. MAINTAIN SITE STRUCTURE AND AESTHETIC INTEGRITY.** I'm not a designer by nature, but I do understand that people won't hang around (much less buy from) a site that looks shoddy and disorganized. Shopirish.com is not cutting edge, avant-garde design; but it's got a "classy" image, sensitivity to download times and intuitive navigation. Customers tell us so.

**4. TARGET YOUR ADVERTISING.** We bought banner space for several Irish-related keywords on Yahoo, as well as on the Boston Globe's website. Both turned out to be well worth the investment.

**5. STUDY LOGFILE STATISTICS.** I know exactly where people are coming from and what they are doing on the site. The information is readily available for me to make fact-based (vs. "shot-in-the-dark") marketing decisions. That is, I know what customers are interested in and can make sound judgments based on that knowledge.

**6. OFFER VALUE AND INCENTIVES.** The Web is not so different from any other marketing medium. Offer good enough value and customers will buy. Offer incentives on top of good value and customers will buy more. Our sales peak when we announce special offers such as free shipping or web-only sales. We save on overhead when customers use the Web, so we use the cost savings to "incentivize" the purchase.

**7. COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS.** The web marketer's Field of Dreams is, "Communicate, and they will come (in droves)." We offer visitors the option to be included on our e-mailing list to be updated on sales, special offers and other new developments at Shopirish.com. We communicate regularly... and those

little reminders go a long way. It is a no-fail way to drive sales over the site.

**8. OFFER FEATURE-BASED CONTENT.** I have the unique advantage of being a photographer and have stockpiled a good number of Irish scenes of my own. So another “hook” for us is our “Irish Photo Gallery” and a “Send an Irish Postcard” system at the site. The latter in particular has turned out to be an enormous success. Site visitors actually drive more site visitors by simply drawing their friends to the site to pick up postcards. On top of good value, we give visitors more reasons to come to our site again and again.

**9. INCLUDE A “REQUEST FOR CATALOG” OPTION ON THE SITE.** Hard reality: shopping from a Web catalog is still not as rich an experience as shopping from a print catalog. But one thing the Web does offer is incredible reach. By allowing new customers the choice of shopping from the Web or requesting a free print catalog from the site, the potential for customer base expansion is infinite. Getting a nice print piece in the mail also validates the legitimacy of a website.

**10. OFFER ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT OPTIONS.** Even though we offer SSL, some people still don’t want to give credit information over the Web. Our “Call me for credit info” option allows customers to place a web order minus credit information, which we call them for the next business day. It isn’t ideal for us, but once we have customers’ information they can use the “Repeat customer -- card info on file” payment option. While we don’t have the top-of-the-line software that “remembers” visitors’ information, repeat customers appreciate not having to input card info with every order. Obviously there is potential for problems, but we’ve had very few. It’s another way to build attachment.

**11. COMMIT TO TIMELY, QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.** We respond to customer e-mail inquiries with quality information within 24 hours. We value the voice of our customer and give visitors feedback opportunities all over the site. I need to hear how the site is functioning, if there are any bugs, etc. So listening to what our customers say is critical to the site’s success. Also, the positive feedback and encouragement keeps me going.

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## LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

But it’s not all gravy. Here are a few valuable lessons I realized the old fashioned way -- by making mistakes.

**1. DON’T USE FRAMES.** [Frames](#) seemed like a good idea at the time I built the

site, but they've caused much heartache. To my surprise, not all of our visitors have frames-enabled browsers. I tried to have some NOFRAMES tags for these people, but it just isn't adequate. Even worse, search engines are not indexing the sub-pages of our site because of the frames. By using frames we've lost much potential in terms of exposure. Don't do it.

**2. ADVERTISE YOUR SITE TO EXISTING CUSTOMERS.** If we could do it all over again, we wouldn't just list the site URL in our catalog, we'd advertise it. When we started out we were tentative about the Web as a viable medium for shopping, so we put the URL in our catalog in with our contact information (just more small type). Our catalogs have been our primary form of communications with our customers and print only once a year, so there was no going back once we realized the site was proliferating. On our printed materials next year we'll be urging customers to SHOPIRISH on- line. Why? St. Patrick would.

**3. CUTTING CORNERS IN THE INTEREST OF TIME.** I still have to go back and edit weak HTML I hastily coded in the early days. I always thought I could get to it when I had "more time." "More time" never came and before long I was looking at hundreds of HTML pages that needed editing. There are solutions, but it's always easier to spend the extra time up front getting it right.

**4. NOT GETTING DIGITAL PRODUCT IMAGES FROM THE SOURCE.** We made the mistake of assuming we could get the images from our print catalog designer in a digital format. Wrong. They wanted \$50 per image to exhume the images from digital tape and put them on a Zip disk. Being a small operation we simply couldn't handle that cost for 300-400 images. I had to scan images from the catalog, resulting in marginal image quality.

**5. USING A SHOPPING CART THAT CAN'T HANDLE SIZES.** The products database is four times bigger than it needs to be and is a nightmare to maintain simply because I need a separate SKU for every size in the catalog.

Creative Irish Gifts (<http://www.shopirish.com>) is proof positive that you don't need millions of dollars to launch an effective Web marketing campaign. In fact, you don't even have to quit your day job -- I'm a "moonlight marketer." What does help is to have an already-existing direct marketing business in place, a good understanding of both marketing and technology, and most importantly, **passion**.



### 18.3.2. Advice from Signature Software

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

**Signature Software, Inc.** is the leading international producer of custom handwriting fonts and the only producer of **custom cursive handwriting fonts**. Their mission is to build and improve personal and business relationships utilizing personalized handwritten correspondence. Headquarters and primary production facility are located in Hood River, Oregon, USA.

Dave Fenwick <DFenwick@SignatureSoftware.com>, President and Chief Web Weenie of Signature Software Inc., has written this experience-based advice to help you sell on the Web. Copyright (c) 1998, Dave Fenwick, all rights reserved. Used by permission.



**Signature Software**  
<http://www.SignatureSoftware.com/>

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The concept behind the products of Signature Software is to **provide a personality** behind the inherently soulless computer and computer correspondence. So the SigSoft web site needs to project a persona of its own, both to extol the benefits of SigSoft's personal handwriting font products and to entice potential customers into buying.

Although the site offers company background, product support, and even a fun live video camera out our office window, the primary purpose of the site has always been to make it as easy as possible for a visitor to buy. The current design is simple yet interesting, familiar yet new, **but most of all informative**. The site will entertain the most intrepid surfer with hidden links to obscure pages, while at the same time provide straightforward answers to questions with a **minimum of time and clicks**.

The SigSoft site has undergone three major transitions since its birth in late 1995...

- The first was a plain, text-only, three-level deep site with answers to common product questions and a list of phone numbers that our marketing department threw

together from existing sales literature.

- A year later, we then paid \$5,000 to have a professional design and build us a creative, unique site that was completely different from anything on the Internet (as far as we could tell). We achieved our goal of a unique site and got way more than our money's worth, but the design was so obscure that it really only appealed to a very narrow segment of web browsers.
- After a year of customer (and employee) comments, the marketing department returned to the drawing board and created a straightforward site that has the familiar look of our print ads, and most importantly, **has a direct way to buy.**

After all the trials and tribulations, we distilled our web site requirements down to ten basic tenets...

**1. BE QUICK.** The home page has to load and come up quickly before a potential customer has a chance to look elsewhere. If graphics are used on the home page, make them small and light on storage. Make sure all pages are understandable without graphics. If you need to provide more detailed graphics, then just provide a thumbnail and link to a bigger graphic. Most animations are out because they take too long to load and run. Code for the lowest common denominator of visitor on the home page; you can then be more demanding about their hardware, plug-ins, and connection speed in further links.

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**2. BE CONSISTENT.** Tie all the pages of the site together with a familiar header, footer, logo, banner, layout, etc. in the same place on every page. Once a potential customer has four or more pages open in their browser, there should be a way to instantly identify a site by some recognizable landmark so they become more comfortable on your site. And comfortable customers buy.

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**3. BE DIRECT.** From the home page, provide a direct means to satisfy the needs of potential customers regardless of their destination. In other words, have an easy-to-find map to understandable topics. Recognize the primary destinations of your customers and route them there quickly. A potential customer may get frustrated looking for Downloadable Software Updates if it's hidden in a Help link off the Products page.

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**4. BE ENTICING.** Right on the Home page, offer a special deal just for “coming in the doors.” This could be a free giveaway, discounts, coupons, information, whatever. Make your potential customer feel special the moment they arrive. Try to use or feature products in the presentation of your pages. Signature Software actually uses examples of handwriting fonts to make “personal” appeals.

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**5. BE CONVENIENT.** Make it easy to BUY! Provide a fast means to order every possible way. This includes by phone, fax, online, US mail, using check, ANY credit card, cash, almost anything. The last thing you want to do is place an obstacle in your potential customer's way by not allowing them to use their beloved American Express card. Mail or fax-in order forms should be simple and easy to complete. If you cannot afford your own on-line order fulfillment, one can be provided for you. You can simply arrange to have one of the thousands of on-line malls to carry your products and link to them. They get a piece of the action, of course.

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**6. BE HONEST.** Offer a money-back guarantee. Customer service should be easy to find and customer satisfaction is EVERYTHING! Word-of-mouth is your best advertising and customer referrals are free.

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**7. BE INFORMATIVE.** Don't just explain your own products, inform your potential customer about the entire market you're in. Become the source for all knowledge in your field and visitors need not go elsewhere to make an informed decision.

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**8. BE COOPERATIVE.** Align yourself with complementary marketing partners. Cross links between multiple sites will bring in more potential customers for you both. This is one of the least expensive ways to advertise.

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**9. BE REAL.** On the web, a fly-by-night operation can look just like Ford motor company. Assure your potential customers that you are a real company and you're here to stay and you've really sold products over time to others. Signature Software even has a live video camera at the office that's always available for viewing on the

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web! Brag about how many products you've sold because it will reassure potential customers that they're not the first customer, nor likely to be the last.



**10. BE VISIBLE.** Promote your site everywhere possible. Post announcements in newsgroups. Put your web site address at the bottom of email signatures. Buy banner advertising at related sites. Build co-marketing relationships. Create reasons for everyone to visit your site. The best problem you could have is not enough bandwidth to your site to handle all the hits.



By following these ten basic tenets, Signature Software has found a way to BE SUCCESSFUL! Although the web was not SigSoft's first marketing venture, it is quickly becoming our best. If you're passionate about what you do, that passion will become apparent through your web site.

**So get out there and SELL!**



### 18.3.3. The Success Clinic's "Words to Succeed By"

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

Noah St. John is the founder and President of The Success Clinic, and publisher of a terrific book entitled, "Success Anorexia: What Really Causes The Fear Of Success And How To Finally Let Yourself Win."

He is a past recipient of The National Merit Scholarship for Academic Excellence and is the President of the Toastmasters International Club of Hampshire County (Massachusetts).

His Web site is a great example of how an entrepreneur can develop a unique, proprietary product, then write a solid site that successfully SELLS!

Thanks to Noah <noah@preparetowin.com> for agreeing to help you with "what works" on the Web. Copyright (c) 1998, Noah St. John, all rights reserved. Used by permission.



**The Success Clinic**

<http://www.preparetowin.com/>

The purpose of this article is to tell you how to build a site that sells your products or services. I'll share with you the thinking that went into the making of my company's Web site, why we did things the way we did, and how it's worked out.

If you are launching a site, this will be a good article for you to have handy, because I'll share with you step-by-step the thinking process that went into making our site an award-winner and one that sells.

If your site is already up, this article can help you improve your results by re-thinking and perhaps repositioning your site to be even better.

We've had plenty of mistakes along the way, but one of the main things we've done right is to make sure that every word on our site has a definite, specific purpose for being there. And that purpose is simple:

**To tell the visitor how, why, and that they will benefit from hanging around our site.**

The first thing I did when I sat down to build our site was ask myself one question:

**“What is the purpose of this Web site?”**

I know that may sound like a silly question. But have you ever gone to a site and wondered, “What the heck were they trying to accomplish with THAT?” or even “Why is this here?”

Well, we wanted to avoid that. So I wanted to make sure that I could justify every page, every link, every word on our site. If every word could not be justified, then it had no reason for existing.

**The purpose of The Success Clinic’s Web site is threefold:**

1. To sell our products.
2. To build community.
3. To offer solid information and content.

I put every page and every word through that threefold test; and **if it doesn’t pass, out it goes.**

You might take a moment and ask yourself, “What is the purpose of our site? Why does it exist? What do I really want it to accomplish?” From the looks of things out there, I believe that if you asked most Web designers, they couldn’t come up with an honest, concise answer to those questions.

The second essential thing we did is to make sure that our site positions us as people who are here to serve other people. I am adamant about our site not being one of the millions of “I, Me, We” sites that you see out there.

It’s like that joke about the fellow who says to another fellow, “But enough about me. What do YOU think about me?”

**Frankly, nobody gives a hoot about you or me!** They care about themselves and “What’s In It For ME?” This is known as the WIIFM principle (What’s In It For ME?).

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I make sure that for every “I, Me, We” on our site, there are at least 20 “you, you, you’s.” Dale Carnegie said it very well when he wrote, “People care 1,000 times more about their little aches and pains than the news that 10,000 people died in a monsoon in China.” It may sound cynical, but it’s really just human nature.

Why fight it? Instead, **accept it, understand it, and use it to your advantage.**

How? Simple.

**State the BENEFITS to the reader** for staying at your site. One way we do this at our site is by “teasers” at the end of each page, which almost force the reader to click onto the next page (if they are interested in our subject, which is why people starve themselves of success and keep themselves from getting the very thing they want).

For example, one of our teasers reads, “Click here if you want to find out more about why people starve themselves of success...”

Now, if you’re interested, you’ll click. But imagine if I had written, “Click here for more information about my company.”

Who cares about my company? Probably me and my mother.

Well, those kind of numbers don’t exactly make for a good business model.

Therefore, **structure your entire site, and every paragraph, sentence, and word in it to BENEFIT THE READER.** It’s really simple once you understand that human nature never changes. People will always be 1,000 times more interested in themselves than in you.

Also, make sure that every page title is really a BLH: a **BENEFIT-LADEN HEADLINE.** You must make it crystal clear what’s in it for the reader for visiting -- and staying on -- this page of yours.

For example, “Welcome to Joe’s Home Page!” is NOT a BLH. It’s an ELH: an **Ego-Laden Headline.** Who cares about Joe except Joe and his mother? This is not the kind of thing that makes people stay.

Here are a few examples from our site...

“Are You Suffering From Success Anorexia?”

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“Why People Starve Themselves of Success”

“Our Better-Than-Risk-Free Guarantee To You”

Do you see the difference? The entire focus of the page is **What’s In It For The Reader**. In each instance, we offer content, information that’s interesting to the visitor, and makes it worth their while to read and hang around.

Finally, the Internet is a marketer’s dream for many reasons. But the most important is a four-letter word: **TEST**.

The Web provides the most instant and inexpensive methods of testing ever available. Think of it... you don’t have to print expensive brochures or pay thousands of dollars for commercial advertising, only to find out that your stuff doesn’t sell.

If you want to, you can change your site **daily**. This flexibility allows you to gauge your site’s effectiveness and constantly work to improve it.

Bottom line: Don’t try and convince anyone that you’re the best, you’re #1, or even that you’re any good. Tell them what’s in it for them (and tell them often and tell them specifically) when they hang around your site, and let them decide for themselves how good you are.

Frankly, people don’t care if you’re #1 or #57, as long as you **give them what they want**.

**If you do, you’ll find that soon, you ARE #1 in their eyes.**



### 18.3.4. Mind Food Media's "Food for Thought"

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

Mind Food Media is an interesting company that decided to reject the "reduce competition by niche-selling" approach. Instead, they go head to head with biggies like Amazon.com and CDNow. Yes, they sell books, music, videos and software! They started from scratch, well after the biggies were well-entrenched, and with only \$10,000!

Brenda Do <admin@mindfoodmedia.com>, President of Mind Food Media, has written these Web sales pearls of wisdom just for you. Copyright (c) 1998, Mind Food Media, Inc., all rights reserved. Used by permission.



**Mind Food Media**

<http://www.mindfoodmedia.com/>

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No matter what you are selling or want to sell, **your web site design is crucial**. You can have the best product at the most competitive price and offer the most attentive customer service, yet if your site is designed poorly, chances are that your customers will be frustrated or lost before they can discover how wonderful your product is.

In building a successful sales site, it is imperative to provide the basics...

- ease of use
- quality content
- reminders
- efficient order processing.

Now, let us review each one:

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## Ease of Use

**Navigation** Keep your pages organized logically and have a simple and clean table of contents readily available. It is frustrating for your customer to have to go through four pages just to find an e-mail address to contact you. It aggravates people when they need to hit their “back” button several times to get back to a main page that could have easily been a link on your table of contents. When designing your table of contents, keep the words basic and recognizable. For example, if you have a link to contact you, label it with something understandable such as “contact us”, “e-mail us.”

**Easy Reading** No one likes to stumble over words. Keep your vocabulary simple and paragraphs short. You want to get your point across without confusing or boring the customer. You want to clearly explain the purpose of your site and clearly offer the benefits of what you are selling. Web users are an impatient bunch. If your customer does not know your message within the first couple of lines, they are not going to continue reading through the other 20 paragraphs to find out. Once you lose a customer, chances are they never come back.

**Consistency** Make your site user friendly and visually friendly. If you have different colors for links on each page, your customer may not recognize them and bypass important information. If you have links back to main pages, keep the verbiage or graphic consistent, and if you can, the location as well. This allows your customer to easily move around your site.

**Fast Download** Keep each page to about 50-60K in total size. Some people get carried away with color schemes and site design. Yes, you probably did learn a lot of “cool” graphic tricks but spare your customer the aggravation of animated objects bouncing, flickering, scrolling, or blinking everywhere. They are not only distracting, they also increase your page’s download time. Use animation and graphics tastefully and sparingly. Your customers want content, not “wow.”

You, or your designer, must make your graphic images as low-K as possible. It helps decrease download time. Your customer could be on a 14.4 modem. So if you’ve got your own T1 running into your computer and the graphic heavy pages load quickly for you, keep in mind that there are a lot of slower modems out there. For the person staring at a fragmented screen, having to wait 60 seconds for a page to appear is like an eternity.



## Quality Content

**People are naturally skeptical.** It is especially true when a potential buyer can't see, smell or touch what they are purchasing. On the Web, there is no personal contact, no one cracking an off the cuff joke, offering a welcoming smile, filling the room with potpourri to help you linger...you get the picture. In order to lessen the buying fears, you must design your site with as much helpful content as possible. Fact is, out of every 1000 customers, only two will actually make a purchase. And it takes those two people at least 2-3 visits before they purchase. So if someone isn't convinced the first time, they're not coming back.

**Clearly quantify benefits.** When describing your product, be sure to offer the benefits of what you are selling. Anyone can make a widget so why is yours so special? In the case of MindFoodMedia.com, our product is rather basic. Anyone (and a lot do) can sell the same books, music, software and videos. Some features that differentiate us are how we take care of the customer and how the order is processed. Distinctly quantify why your customers should purchase your product rather than your competitor's. I do so by giving customers facts. For example, instead of telling people that we have a fast delivery time and low prices, we tell them that their orders can be shipped out the same day if received by 12:00 p.m. and we offer up to 40% off retail prices.

**Build consumer confidence.** Use your content to build the consumer's confidence in your product. In the case of something like a book, one would think it is a rather innocuous purchase but most hesitate quite a bit before they actually buy it. To build their confidence in the pending purchase, offering first chapter readings, publisher reviews, author interviews, and customer reviews are helpful. By doing this, the customer sees a variety of sources giving their opinions about the book. This helps convince the customer why they should buy it and not because the retailer said "buy it because you should."

**Double check everything.** Lastly, remember to proof-read everything and check all links. The site is usually the customer's only representation of your company and product. If you can't be bothered to check your spelling, customers will wonder how safe it is to give you their money. If you have dead links, your customer will most likely give up and leave the site. Have someone else look at your writing and test your site as well. Usually, other people spot things you may have missed after staring at it all day.



## Reminders

This is my own term for what one needs to do: remind customers to keep coming back to your site. Remember the statistics earlier? It takes at least 2-3 visits before a customer will make a purchase.

**Newsletters** Newsletters keep your customer informed of product changes, special promotions, upgrades, etc. They are an inexpensive way to remind customers to return to your site and take another look around. Since your customers voluntarily signed up for the newsletter, it is an unobtrusive way to contact your customers and it is not spam. Use your newsletters as another sales tool. Keep the content interesting and informative. Give your customers a reason to visit your site again.

**Customer profiles** Depending on your product, it may be helpful to have another voluntary form to fill out that details their preferences and interests. To entice customers to fill out the form, offer something in exchange. A free subscription to a popular newsletter, a discount on products, an Elvis clock... For example, at MindFoodMedia.com, customers can fill out a form that tells us their birthday, category interests and such. So on their birthday, we send them a greeting and a gift certificate to be used towards any product in our store. Or we can easily look up a popular category and send an e-mail out letting those who signed up for it know that there is a special on popular titles in that category.

Customer profiles are not only effective ways to build customer loyalty and relations, they also offer an excellent source for marketing information. When you design your form, keep in mind what information you would find helpful in deciphering your target market.

**Club offers** You know those ubiquitous coffee cards that promise one free cup of coffee after you buy 10? Do it on the Web! You just need to keep an accurate database. Our products, albeit generic, easily work with club offers. We have a program called the Feed Your Head Club that tracks customer purchases and when a customer accumulates \$120 in purchases, he receives \$10 off the next purchase. Such programs build loyalty and customers like to be rewarded for their purchases.



## Efficient Order Processing

**Secure online ordering** If you are going to sell over the Internet, you must offer secure, online ordering. Do not take chances by taking credit card information over

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e-mail or using an outdated, cheap program that processes credit cards with minimal security. If you end your sales pitch with a “call 1-800-555-5555 to place your order” or “write us with your order,” then you are going to lose that customer. Impatient Web users do not want to be inconvenienced or have to go through more steps than necessary to make a purchase. Also, if you want to look like a credible, reputable Internet retailer, you must be able to take orders online.

**Three click order process** Most customers will only click through three different pages before an order is finally processed. So once a customer decides to buy, don’t have him chasing through a maze of pages and forms to actually place the order. It’s like throwing sales away.

Keep several links conveniently placed throughout your pages to allow customers to make their purchase at anytime. For example, after your initial page describing the features and benefit of your product, place a “buy now” link at the end of the paragraph. Some customers may be ready to purchase without needing to read on. For those who do, add another “buy now” link to each stage as you continue to build the excitement and desire for your product.

**Reassure** Although online purchasing is very popular, most people still are not familiar with the process. Explain the ordering process succinctly to build customer confidence. Let them know that their credit cards are not charged until the order is shipped. Add any other details you feel your customers want to know such as the commerce software you use, programming specifics, security guarantees and such.

**Options** Give your customers choices. Not everyone likes to use credit cards or trusts typing their number over the Internet. Give people the option to pay by check, fax or phone their orders too.

## Summary

Whether you are selling information or a unique tangible product, keep in mind that customers are hurried, cautious and skeptical while reading your sales copy. Make your site fast and easy to use. Clearly state your benefits (don’t push too hard). As a result, your customer will read on. Finally, when the customer is ready to order, make it easy! Best of luck!



## 18.4. Words from the Wise

Let's move from the **entrepreneurs** to the **experts**. Too many so-called "experts" write the same old drivel that doesn't work.

Not the two who appear here! Paul Lang and Nick Usborne understand the process of selling on the Web. I've asked them to share their thoughts with you, and they were very kind to accept the challenge...



### 18.4.1. The Ten Secrets of Netsavvy's Sell It!

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

Want to build a Web store or Internet storefront? Then Netsavvy Communications' Web site, **Sell It!**, is the resource for you. You'll find all the information you need here, including step-by-step guides to building a successful Internet storefront, Web commerce news, shopping cart reviews, interviews with Web store owners and critiques of other peoples' Web stores. And you can also subscribe to a **free weekly e-commerce newsletter** that has all the latest e-commerce news, analysis and reviews.

Paul Lang <paul@netsavvy.co.uk>, President of Netsavvy Communications, keeps his finger on the pulse of selling on the Web. Here he reveals his top ten secrets from all that he has learned about Web sales. Copyright (c) 1998, Netsavvy Communications, all rights reserved. Used by permission.



**Sell It On the Web**

**<http://www.sellitontheweb.com/>**

Building and running your own Web store can seem like running an obstacle course, having to continually overcome a series of technical and commercial hurdles. From selecting the software and hardware through to arranging a credit card merchant account, the list of things to do can seem endless.

In essence there are only three steps to creating a successful online store:

- **building the store**
- **attracting people in to it**
- **selling to them when they arrive.**

Although each of these steps has its own challenges and problems, the last step can often be the most difficult. So I'd like to share with you ten secrets for how to turn your visitors into paying customers.



### **1. Encourage people to return**

Apart from the occasional visit by a passing surfer, a new store will remain empty unless its owners actively work to entice customers in to it. This can be an expensive, time-consuming process. And if that isn't bad enough, new Web store merchants will quickly discover that visitors are unlikely to buy on their first visit, particularly if the store carries high-priced items.

Clearly, in order to get the best results from your marketing efforts, you need to maximize the conversion of first-time visitors into repeat visitors and then on into customers. So make sure your site has some valuable content or feature that will encourage your visitors to bookmark it and return.



### **2. Make it easy to buy from you**

Take a good look at your Web store or, even better, have someone else look at it for you. How easy is it to track down the product or service they're looking for? How easy is it to place an order? Any difficulties here mean that you need to re-look at your store design and the shopping experience you provide.



### **3. Build credibility**

Although Internet scams are greatly exaggerated by the media, they do exist and unless you trade under a major brand name you will need to convince potential

customers that you're not going to take their money and run. As a minimum, you should include details of your bricks-and-mortar address, telephone number and fax numbers. You should also consider including verifiable testimonials from previous customers, offering a satisfaction guarantee and registering your site with Verisign or TRUSTe.

And if you are accepting credit cards online, take the time to explain to your customers why ordering this way is safe. Remember that there are still a lot of Web shopping "newbies" about, and their numbers are growing.



#### **4. Get global**

Remember that the first two "Ws" in "WWW" stand for "World-Wide" and that your store will be accessible to people around the world. According to a recent report from Forrester Research, a U.S. company can expect 30% of the traffic on its Web site to come from outside the United States.

As a minimum, you should include details of what the shipping costs and transit times to international destinations will be. Depending on the type of customer you are expecting and the product or service you are offering you may want to consider offering information on exchange rates or having your Web pages translated into other languages.



#### **5. Remember to sell**

Don't forget the basic tenets of successful selling. It is amazing how many stores miss out on this, by not selling the benefits of their product or service, or by failing to ask for an order.

And many sales promotion techniques that have been proven to work in the real world will work equally well on the Web. Contests, promotional discounts, coupons and aisle-end specials are all used successfully in Web stores.



#### **6. Price realistically**

Visitors to your store know that it is cheaper for you to do business on the Web than in a bricks-and-mortar store, and expect to see this reflected in the price that you are charging them. This will not be a major concern to you if you are selling in to a niche market, but if you are selling a commodity item you are going to have to price your

products competitively.

---

### **7. Pre-sales support**

Provide every possible piece of information about your product or service that a customer might need to reach a buying decision. Make yourself easily accessible should the customer require more information and respond promptly to e-mails (preferably within 24 hours but definitely within 48).

---

### **8. Provide several ordering methods**

Although most Web stores are set up in the expectation that the majority of orders will be received on line, the reality is that many customers prefer to use the Web to aid in the selection of a product, and then place their order by more traditional methods. So make sure you offer your customer several options for placing their orders for example, secured online order forms, fax, e-mail and snail mail.

---

### **9. Accept alternative payment methods**

When it comes to accepting payment over the Web, most discussions center on the use of credit cards. But what about consumers who don't have a credit card or don't feel confident enough to use it on-line? Make sure you are in a position to accept payment in as many ways as possible, in order to maximize your sales. Options include credit and debit cards, paper and electronic checks, electronic cash, micropayment systems and specialist solutions such as eCharge.

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### **10. Post sales support**

The real secret to success in your Web store lies in your ability to turn first-time customers into repeat customers. Maintain a high level of service after you receive the order. Aim to provide an acknowledgement of each order with a unique reference number, an on-line tracking facility or a dedicated e-mail address for order progressing and an e-mail shipping confirmation. And most importantly, remember to ship your goods in a timely fashion.



## 18.4.2. The Seven “Must-Remembers”

### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

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[forkinthehead.com](http://www.forkinthehead.com)

<http://www.forkinthehead.com>

Building a site is easy. Building a site **that sells** is hard. It's easy to get distracted along the way and lose your focus. To stay on track, keep my “Super Seven” firmly in mind...

### 1. Plan and build with a purpose in mind.

If you build a bricks and mortar shopping mall without planning it, without architect's drawings, without a view to how people are going to get in and out, your mall will be a disaster. If it doesn't collapse in a heap of dust, killing everyone instantly, it will likely fail because you haven't planned the layout of the stores and the flow of customers in a professional manner.

Building any successful retail business takes research, planning and a clear purpose in mind – offline and online.

Online, we often make the mistake of believing that just because the price of admission is low, we can fudge it as we go along. Not so.

The first step towards a successful site that sells is to plan it with a very clear purpose in mind. Any aspect of the site that doesn't drive towards that one purpose is irrelevant and should be discarded.

## **2. Keep a clear picture of your customers in mind as you plan and build your site.**

Don't build the site to please yourself, your kids, your boss or your colleagues. Build your site to sell to your intended customers.

Of course, to achieve this, you first have to carry in your mind a crystal clear picture of who your customers are. What sex are they? What age? Where are they? What is their education and their income? What do they spend money on and how much do they pay? Where do they go and what do they look for in a store? Which are their favorite web sites?

As I like to say, repeatedly, "If you don't know who you're talking to, how the heck do you know what to say?"

---

## **3. Make buying easy.**

Let's go back to our ill-conceived, unplanned, bricks and mortar store. Imagine if we compounded our earlier errors by hiding the merchandise in boxes, removing the signage that tells people where to find everything and, just for good measure, let's hide the checkout counters in the basement, with no lights.

Sounds crazy. But this also describes the average online store. Poor navigation aids, incomprehensible organization and no clear pathway to follow.

If you want to sell, you need a short, clean pathway between your home page and the page where you close the sale. Make it happen within two or three clicks.

That doesn't mean that you can't have 500 pages of great information and testimonials and stories and product pictures. But don't MAKE me go through all these pages to buy something. Leave the choice to me.

And when you get me to the page where I buy – make it easy for me. As with any sales channel, you'll be losing people at every stage of the sales process. The worst place to lose them is at the point where they were about to buy. Get your eight-year old kid to make a purchase on your site, unaided. If he or she can't do it, replan it, rewrite it, redesign it until he can.

#### **4. Don't forget to ask for the sale.**

You laugh, but it happens all the time. Site owners invest money and time in getting people to the order page and then get all shy and coy about asking for the sale. Don't be that way.

If you have a top-selling product, stick it on the first screen of your homepage with a hypertext link that says Buy It Now!

It's ok to have special offers. It's ok to offer discounts to repeat visitors. It's ok to work like hell to close the sale.

If you can't ask for the sale, what's the point of creating the site?

---

#### **5. Be there!**

We'll take one more look at our poorly planned mall. It's in danger of falling down, the merchandise is hidden and nobody can find the checkout counters.

As our final master stroke, let's make sure that none of our employees ever turn up for work.

Online, the equivalent error is to create the site and then sit back and wait. Every successful business person online that I know turns up for work – at the site – five or more days a week. Your site has to be always changing, evolving, reacting, resolving. An advantage we have online is that we can add and subtract products, product lines, whole departments with relative ease. The more responsive you are, the faster you'll be able to profit from the hesitation and absence of your competitors.

But to achieve this, you have to work on your site, behind the screen, every day. You have to turn up for work.

---

#### **6. About words. Never forget, it's the words that close the sale.**

On a good day in our bricks and mortar store, we'll have sales staff ready and waiting to close the sale, again and again. On your site, there's nobody there. So to

close the sale, **you need the right words.**

How do you find the right words? Choose words that follow the purpose of your site to the letter. Choose short, simple words and put them together in short, simple sentences.

**Above all, be clear.** Clarity comes first.

Make the process simple. Your words must hold a simple, targeted promise and simple directions on how to make a purchase. If you want your words to sell, don't use them to educate and fill people's minds. Use them to reveal a customer need or desire that will be satisfied by the purchase of your product.

And if you don't think you can achieve this, hire someone who can. After all, you likely paid for a programmer and designer. So why wouldn't you pay for a writer?

**It's the words that close the sale.**



## **7. Last, and most important of all, build a site that loves to listen.**

A virtual store has a disadvantage. You can't see or hear your customers. You can't eavesdrop on their conversations or observe their interactions. This can leave you blind to what's really happening.

So you need to build in some very proactive feedback mechanisms. Encourage your customers to complain. Maybe build in a real-time chat function so you can have staff 'on the floor' and ready to help. Send out newsletters or virtual coupons. Use surveys. Have contests. Create a frequent buyer program.

In short, do everything you can to create an environment in which your visitors love to get back to you. Then you'll get a quick heads-up if something is going wrong – or going right.

But if you don't listen, you'll never know.

Of course, there are more than seven things to remember when creating a site that sells, but if you remember these seven, **you'll be way ahead of the pack.**





## 19. It Ends With Traffic

Do you remember this?...

“To succeed in a Web-based sales venture, you only have to succeed at three levels...

- develop a great product
- write a Web site that **SELLS!**
- attract targeted customers to the site.”



Traffic-building is the...



... final piece to the Web sales puzzle.

Once you’ve got a **great product**, and a **killer sales site**, it’s time to start bringing customers into your digital store.

I also mentioned that, when it comes to building traffic, I have tried it all. As usual, when you try it all, **you end up discovering what works...** i.e., what fits into the long end of the 80-20 rule.

From struggling along at 5,000 hits per week, I built PennyGold traffic up to a high of 60,000 hits per week... and with much less effort. Sales, of course, increased proportionately, because my methods involved attracting only **targeted** customers... people with an interest in what I was selling.

The special traffic-building “chapter” has grown into a monster, almost-200 page report. **It contains everything you need to know about building targeted traffic**

**in the most time-and-money-efficient way possible.** It covers...

- the best **online** ways to build traffic
- the nutshell on how to do it **offline**
- the single most important method of all... **the Search Engines.**

**This report includes everything you need to know to attract customers to your site via the Search Engines. And how to do it powerfully, ethically, in such a way that even the most sensitive, stringent Search Engine won't object.**

Actually, they'll love the way you do it. Because you work **with** them, not against.

**This report completes the package. From **product**, to a **site** that SELLS, to bringing targeted **traffic** in to your site, you will be in control of what it takes to SELL.**

[Click on the blue link \(above or here\) to open the bonus report.](#)



## 20. Wrapping It All Up...

**Wow! Time to wrap it all up already...**

We've come a long way together. You've learned how to...

- set and get your **MWR**
- write and design a selling, usable, trustable, likeable Web site
- close on your **MWR**, and how to set and get a **Backup Response**
- continuously improve your Web results
- build a long-term, one-to-one relationship with your customer
- develop **product** and **traffic**, the other two keys to succeeding on the Web.

**And now it's time to...**



**... tie it all up into a nice, neat package...**



### 20.1. **When to Break the Rules**

There are times when you will break from the advice in this book.

**Think hard before doing it. But once you're convinced it's right, do it.**

After all, the Web is the perfect testing ground. Be daring -- **go ahead and rearrange a few electrons**. Post it to the Net. Doesn't work? Put it back the way it was.

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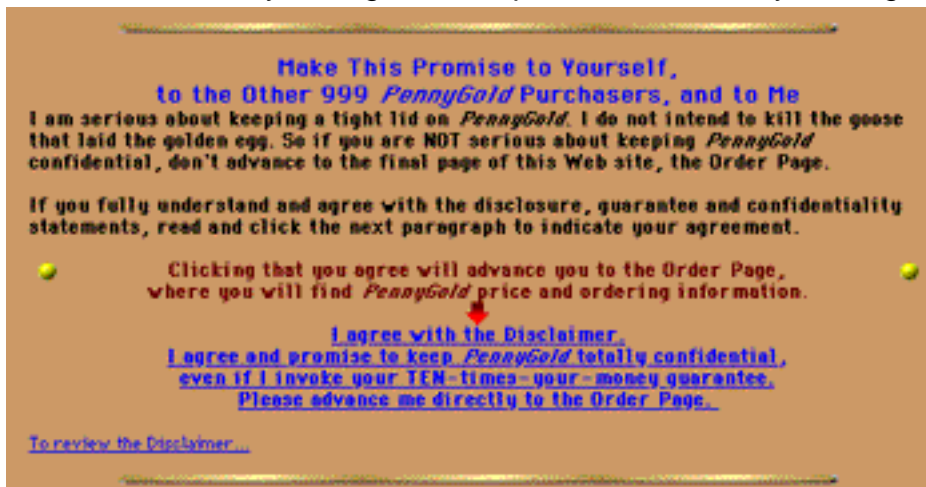
For example, one of the most basic rules is to provide access to your **MWR Closer Page** from every page of the pathway towards your **MWR**. PennyGold doesn't do that. Why?

With PennyGold, it was important for the customer...

- to know that we were only selling 1,000 copies
- to click his agreement to keep it confidential.

So the site only provides access to a critical **Content Page**, my “pre-order page,” from every other page of the path. The customer has to click his agreement to access the **Order Page**.

I realized that I would lose some people because of this. Our log files confirmed that we lost about 20% of the people who arrived at the “I agree” page. I accepted that. Since we were only selling 1,000 copies, it wasn't really costing money, just time...



### A Very Exclusive Club

<http://www.goodbytes.com/pennygold/600.html>

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So, to repeat...

**Think hard before “breaking the rules.”**

But once you're convinced it's right, **do it.**

If you were wrong, put it back the way it was.



## 20.2. Manipulation **vs.** Ethical Sales

The tools in this book are powerful ones...



They can be used wrongly to **cheat and fool** people.

**Please use them ethically.** For example, in my PennyGold site, after I initially **stop and interest** my target market with my USP, I break several of the rules outlined in this book.

Why? Because it is not my goal to **fool** people into buying PennyGold. After I have qualified people who are interested in my USP, I blend good sales copy with heavy, verifiable, documentation.

Why? Because the site's goals are...

- **weed out the dumb and the “get rich quick” people.** They would be very unhappy if they bought PennyGold, because the process requires work and judgment.
- **convince the smart and the careful that PennyGold is for real.** These are the people who will use and enjoy the tool.

Net result? **The visitor simply cannot make a wrong decision.** Here's why...

If penny mining stocks don't interest you, if you're too lazy to gather the on-site evidence to overcome your doubts, or if you're just too dumb to understand why PennyGold works, you won't buy the product. **And “not buying” is the correct answer, in this case.**

If you spent hours on the site, cross-checked some of the proof, then called me to

ask a question or two, and then concluded that it's all for real, you're the right person for PennyGold. **Because you're exactly the type of person who will make great use of the product.**

Using the tools in this book, I could have written the site far more aggressively. We could sell 50,000 copies at \$50. But PennyGold would have stopped working (too many investors in a tiny niche). That would have cheated a lot of people -- and that's no way to live.

**So use the power in this book well. But use it fairly.**



## 20.3. Practical Nuts-and-Bolts “To Do List”

The pros call the practical nuts-and-bolts issues the “infrastructure.” Infrastructure covers everything from your Web hosting service or in-house server, to your accounting system, to your fulfillment and tracking systems.

It's the boring “to do” stuff that's necessary to get you, and keep you, up and running.

If you tried to get everything in place at once...



... you'd go nuts and give up. So instead, **start with a minimal set up. Do only what you have to do, in order to get going.**

Then build as you succeed.

The details of infrastructure are beyond the scope of this book. The master, as always, is Ralph Wilson. Be sure to visit his site, the [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#).

But let's get you started here...

First, we'll review the **minimal infrastructure** you need to start a business that sells

one or two info-products. Then we'll look at the **total package** required for a full-blown, big-company Web effort.



### 20.3.1. **The Min -- Enough to Get You Started**

If you are selling only one or two info-products (i.e., non-hard goods), you need the following systems in place before opening your virtual doors...

- **Hosting** -- a Web hosting service or in-house server, and Internet connection.
- **Web Site** -- displays and sells your products (the topic of this book!). [K-I-S-S](#).
- **Promotional Program** -- search engines. Use them to generate targeted traffic to your site.
- **Order taking system** -- every way possible. Be able to take an order by every communication device known to mankind.
- **Money** -- merchant credit card account. You must be able to accept credit card orders. Without this capability, you're spinning your wheels.
- **Systems** -- "as needed" basis. You can get away with simple "do it yourself" systems for order tracking, packing, shipping (downloading), purchasing, accounting, etc.

Don't spend a lot of money on infrastructure -- just get the basics up and running. **Reinvest profits to build infrastructure as you grow.**



### 20.3.2. **The Max -- The Whole Nine Yards**

For a major Web effort...



... the "to do" list grows considerably.

- **Web Site** -- the Web pages can be static html, dynamic html, database-driven, or

whatever. No matter how sophisticated it becomes, never lose sight of the bottom line...

... the site must **SELL!**

- **Ongoing Web site maintenance** -- develop a program to continuously update and freshen the site.
- **Promotional Program** -- list with the search engines. Know how to use them to generate targeted traffic to your site. Above and beyond that, develop a comprehensive [traffic-generating program](#).
- **Order taking and retrieval system** -- as you grow, a [secure server](#) becomes a **must**. A one-product company that offers a sharp, in-demand product to motivated customers can get away without a secure server. **You can't**. You need a [shopping cart](#) and a secure ordering and retrieval system.
- **Money** -- your credit card capabilities include real-time verification.
- **Systems** -- while you can get away with a rudimentary spreadsheet when you're small, bring in the pros as you grow. Integrate your accounting software, inventory tracking, and order-taking system.
- **Warehousing** -- how you store, track, and manage your inventory.
- **Shipping** -- how you pack and ship the goods (postal, courier, etc.). Offer "immediate shipping from inventory."
- **Tracking fulfillment** -- how you track the goods, from order entry to delivery.
- **Tracking sales commissions** -- including affiliate programs.
- **Customer service program** -- a combination of Web-based, e-mail, and telephone support.

Many of the above systems already have "off-the-shelf" software. Some packages integrate many of the above systems into one large "store-building" package. However, some parts still require custom software, a far more expensive option.

Research available [store-building software](#) carefully. Begin with the basics, then integrate other systems as needed (and as justified by profits). Choose the correct store-building software **for you** -- it's vital to your success.

**More and more of the above infrastructural systems will be integrated into total all-in-one packages.** Stay up to date at Ralph Wilson's [Electronic Commerce Research Room](#).

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

If you're a one-product entrepreneur, it's still important to read the above. Understand the issues. Don't wait until you **suddenly** need the above **tomorrow**. Plan ahead.



## 20.4. Building Your Web Team

Like any team...



... **you need people with specialized skills.** A well-rounded Web design team has three major capabilities...

- 1) **copywriting** -- generate sharp, tight, sales copy.
- 2) **design** -- [html](#) and graphics skills. Design a classy, appealing, usable, professional-looking site, yet still remain within today's low bandwidth constraints.
- 3) **technical** -- handle the more advanced techie stuff... CGI, database, server side includes, and all kinds of other terms that I won't bother including in the glossary!



**If you're a one-man-band**, you may **be** the team. More likely, you need the help of at least a techie. Obviously, you are the one who will use the info in this book to design your site.

If you can code some html, so much the better! If not, you will also need a Web designer. Remember this... **you** will be the one telling the Web designer what needs to be done, and **not vice-versa**. A commercial Web site is not a painting, it's a sales tool.

Remember, **you** are the expert. **So what** if you don't know html? Consider yourself as the architect and your Webmaster as the "guy with the hammer."

The rest of this chapter is aimed more at the person who works in a larger company, **but has relevance for the entrepreneur**. So read on...



If you're heading up a large division or company, who should you put in charge of your Web site?

Ready for a surprise?



#### 20.4.1. Sales V.P. as "Head Designer"?!

Who should **oversee** the development of a sales-oriented Web site. **Simple...**



... your Sales V.P.!

If a key sales exec is not responsible for your site, **you're making a mistake**.



"SALES V.P. AS **DESIGNER**?! " you scream?

Yes, I know he wouldn't know a great graphic if it bit him on the eye! And he couldn't program his VCR to save his life. But **he is totally response-oriented** -- and that's what it takes.

**Don't worry about his lack of Web knowledge**. If he reads this book and spends a few hours general-surfing the Web and checking out the competition, he'll know enough.

Web-selling is one-to-one selling. The model is **not** the TV commercial. It's

one-to-one, **get-the-order**, selling. That's "sales territory."

**Your marketing department** should be responsible for generating targeted **traffic** to the site. That is consistent with marketing's traditional role. **But "sales" should do the selling!**

**Let the pros sell your product.** Put the sales force in charge of the site itself.

When Marketing whines, explain to them that their job is to **bring traffic to the site**. This division of labor is closer to that of the offline world!

**Your Web site is *not* a TV commercial -- it's a sales tool. *Let sales handle it.***



### 20.4.2. Hiring or Assembling a Team

OK, time to choose your team. You can either...

- hire a preassembled team (i.e., an agency)

**OR**

- build your own.

**Either way, though...**



**... you're the maestro!**

---

**Hiring an agency** -- Before hiring an agency, ask to see a few of their sales-oriented sites. **But refuse demos.** If the design firm explains the site, you have lost the "virgin eyes" opportunity!

Visit their sites yourself, **unguided**, the same way a typical Web surfer would. **Pretend you are the customer.**

Assess how well those sites meet the criteria outlined in earlier chapters. Is the

navigation clean? Do you get excited about the product? Is there a **MWR** for each product line? Does the site make you want to hit the **MWR**?

Once you've chosen a team, make sure it is on the same wavelength as you. Give them this book. Better still, get them to buy it -- thanks. :-)

Tell them that the quickest way to lose your business is to violate any of the major principles in this book. If they are uncomfortable with that, you are heading towards a designer-driven Web site.

**Look elsewhere.**



**Building a team -- It's more cost-effective to build your own team.**

Whether you're a big fish...



... or a small fry, **outsource** your copywriting, design and technical needs. There are thousands of sharp people working out of their home offices. They work at reasonable rates due to competition and low overheads.

Your major job will be to **find them**, and build them into a team. If you locate the techie first, she will often be able to turn you towards a solid Web designer. Or vice-versa.

The bigger challenge will be to find a good **copywriter with Web experience**. There aren't many of these animals. You have a few options...

- If you're an entrepreneur, learn to do this yourself. Be honest with your capabilities, or you could do some serious damage here.
- Find a free-lance writer, best if she has some general copywriting experience.
- If you have an internal copywriter on staff, recruit her to the team.

Whoever you choose as Web-writer, they must study this book, especially the [chapter on sales copy](#). **It's the words that ultimately do the job.**

As you interview each part of the team, ask your candidates to read **MYSS!** (Geez, is this a clever way to generate sales, or what?). Inform them that this is your philosophy. Once again, if they're uncomfortable with important areas...



... choose someone else.



### 20.4.3. Experience Counts

Whether you hire an outside agency or build your own team, you need someone with solid experience in building sales-oriented sites. This book, **MYSS!**, turns you into a Web sales expert.

But, until you've succeeded at your first Web sales venture, you're a "theoretical expert." If this is your first Web sales effort, real mistakes will be made in the **real world**. So hire an agency that has built many sales sites. Or make sure that one of the members of the team (that you build) has this experience.

And **then** remember, you've read this book. **You're the one who best knows the product, the customer, and what you want.** Direct them, while making maximal use of their experience.

**Don't struggle through someone else's learning experience, on **your** time and money...**

**Hire experience.**



### 20.4.4. The Legals

Outside parties must specifically convey copyright ownership to you by written agreement (unless they are employees of the company). The agreement must specifically state that the work is a work-made-for-hire. In addition to the "work-for-hire," get a written outright assignment of all proprietary rights to you.

If your designer codes his own CGI, the design fee must also include a license to use the CGI forever, and that you have access to the source code in the event that your relationship is terminated for any reason.

Lay out the Web site specifications (number of pages, features, etc.) in detail in the agreement. Specify what criteria must be met to consider the work acceptable.

Develop a three or four step process. Allow for termination of the agreement at the end of each step. Do not make a large "upfront" down payment. Do cover the cost of the first step, once it is done to your satisfaction. The first step may be fairly expensive, as this step involves doing research, then developing concepts and original designs.

Withhold payment for the last step until all pages have been tested and accepted. Withhold half of the payment for the last step until 30 days after going live, to make sure no unforeseen problems arise once your site is "live."

Obtain warranties that their work for you will be their own, and that they will not violate the intellectual property rights of another party. They should indemnify you against all suits related to these issues.

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

**Reassess your working relationship with your team at regular, defined intervals...**



**... Are you pulling teeth?** Or are you sailing along smoothly? Choose someone else if you feel like a dentist (your agreement with your design firm must allow you to bail upon the completion of each stage).



### **20.4.5. Maintain Your Site**

**As discussed above**, your site is never done. You must constantly update content, optimize to maximize your **Conversion Rate**, build traffic, etc., etc., etc.

**If yours is a large company**, you can either do this in-house, or use the same outsourced team.

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**If you're smaller**, it makes more sense to keep your designer on a monthly retainer. Use your techie and copywriter as needed.

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**If you're a one-or-two person operation**, you really must learn some basic html. If you don't like the way you've worded a phrase, you must know how to modify it and ftp it, so that you are "live" with your new version in 5 minutes. And, as we said earlier, you must be able to update your shopping cart easily and quickly.

Leave the major programming like advanced html, new CGI features, navigation, etc. to your developer (under your supervision, of course). **But if you can't do the quick and easy, frequent necessary changes, you've got a problem.**



## 20.5. **Web Sales Newsletters & Sites...** **The Cream of the Crop**

Like most other matters, online Web Sales resources follows the 80-20 rule. **Here's the cream of the crop.** These are truly extraordinary sites and e-mail newsletters that deliver **original thoughts** and **valuable content**.

The Web's a big place. If I've missed any that deserve a spot here, please e-mail me at [kevoy@sitesell.com](mailto:kevoy@sitesell.com).

We'll start with sites and e-publications that focus on **SELLING**, then go a bit further afield to round out your education.



### 20.5.1. **SELLING on the Web**

The following sites stand out -- they deliver original, top notch, and **useful** Web-sales-oriented information. The first three are the "**crème de la crème**," as we say here in Quebec.



### Wilson Internet Services

<http://www.wilsonweb.com/>

This Web site covers it all. Ralph Wilson writes well, thinks originally, and sifts through hundreds of sites and articles to bring you **the** most relevant info. If you only visit one site, visit this one. There's tons of outstanding free content, including a free subscription to the **Web Marketing Today** e-mail newsletter.

And subscribe to his (paid) **Web Commerce Today** newsletter. The subscription fee gives you access to the paid sections of the site. The newsletter alone is **more** than worth the price -- add in access to the Research Room, and you get one of the best bargains on the Web. Don't even hesitate about whether you'll be happy with it. **Subscribe now.**



### Sell It! Your Web Commerce Resource

<http://www.sellitontheweb.com/>

Paul Lang produces an outstanding newsletter dedicated to online sales and E-commerce in general. This is a "must subscribe."

Paul distills current Web commerce news down to a few "most relevant and interesting" nuggets. He features excellent interviews with Web store owners, product reviews, and lots more Web-sales-related info. The site is full of invaluable info, too -- much of it drawn from past issues of the newsletter.



### **I-Sales Digest**

<http://www.audette-media.com/i-sales/>

The **best** Web-sales-related discussion group. This [moderated mailing list](#) discusses online sales issues, with excellent questions and answers from those on the front lines... us. Daily, via e-mail.

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### **ClickZ Network Today**

<http://www.clickz.com/>

Frontline tips, techniques and strategies straight to your e-mailbox. And the Web site is developing into a terrific resource for Web marketers.

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### **The A.I.M. E-zine**

<http://www.inetexchange.com/inet-mailer.htm>

Kevin Needham puts out a weekly newsletter. Don't miss his Feature Article, which is generally a well thought out, original piece about Web sales or marketing.

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### **MARKETING BONANZA NEWSLETTER**

[jason@mailback.com](mailto:jason@mailback.com)

Jason Peery writes a unique, hard-hitting, down-to-earth, monthly, "labor of love" e-mail newsletter about how to create killer marketing copy that grabs peoples eyeballs and glues them to your sales message. He touches on everything from how to write good online sales copy to how to reduce claims on your "money-back guarantee" to almost zero.

This newsletter has no boring academic fluff or theory, just information you can use immediately in your business. A must-read, the Marketing Bonanza Newsletter will undoubtedly help you boost the response to all your e-marketing campaigns. To

subscribe, just send an e-mail to [jason@mailback.com](mailto:jason@mailback.com) -- the autoresponder will immediately send you a little "welcome" note and a back issue of the newsletter.

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

Jason discontinued his newsletter in late 1998. I'm trying to talk him into reviving it.



### **20.5.2. Traffic-Building**

The following two sites will deliver just about all you need to know about building targeted traffic to your site. You should **review both these sites and subscribe to their newsletters.**



#### **Search Engine Watch**

<http://www.searchenginewatch.com/>

Danny Sullivan is "it" when it comes to search engines (SEs). Go through his site with a fine-tooth comb. Then subscribe to both his free and paid e-mail newsletters. Round out MYSS!'s [solid, never-out-of-date, traffic-building SE info](#) with his up-to-the-minute SE data and sharp-thinking, well-researched articles. That's about **all you'll need to do** to nail the SEs!



#### **VirtualPromote Gazette**

<http://www.virtualpromote.com/gazette1.html>

Jim Wilson is the master of Web marketing and promotion. His newsletter is valuable, original, **useful... and free!**



### **20.5.3. General E-commerce**

Interested in **Web sales**? Stay up-to-date with general happenings in the world of e-commerce. These newsletters will fill that bill...

MYSSI!... Wrapping It All Up...



#### **Internet World Weekly Digest**

<http://www.iw.com/digest.html>

The single best resource to keep your finger on the world of e-business and Internet technology. This e-mail digest summarizes Internet World's hard copy newspaper.

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#### **Jesse Berst's AnchorDesk**

<http://www.zdnet.com/anchordesk/>

A great read. Thoughtful, provocative, original.

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#### **CNET.COM**

<http://www.cnet.com/>

The CNET Dispatch carries all the latest tech news on-line, with links to important Internet stories of the week.

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#### **Nua Internet Surveys**

<http://www.nua.ie/surveys/moreinfo.html>

A weekly, free e-mail newsletter, it reports on the major Internet trends and surveys of the week. It also offers a sharp editorial which puts things into perspective. It's well-done, it's intelligent, it's a cut above.



#### **ICONOCAST**

<http://www.iconocast.com/>

Good general e-commerce coverage, with some rather iconoclastic, original-thinking commentary at the end of every issue.



### **20.5.4. Miscellaneous, but Important...**

And finally, this collection of important e-publications that didn't fit anywhere else...



#### **eRetail.Net Daily News List**

<http://www.etail.net/maillist.htm>

The **eRetail.Net Daily News List** offers Internet merchants news and information about Internet retailing in a simple, straightforward reporting style.



## The Alertbox: Current Issues in Web Usability

**Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox**

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/>

Jakob Nielsen is **the** usability guru. Notice (above) that I couldn't find a graphic from his site to "screenshoot"? 'Nuff said. Subscribe to his biweekly newsletter. Read all the back issues, or at least the ones that he **highlights** as the most important.

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**BUILDER.COM**

<http://www.builder.com/>

Whether you plan on writing your own site or not, you should learn at least the basics. CNET's Builder.com is your one-stop shopping solution. And while there, subscribe to their free BUILDER BLAST e-mail newsletter.

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**Webreference Update Newsletter**

<http://www.webreference.com/new/>

A truly well-rounded newsletter, this weekly covers it all... news, html, e-commerce, techie stuff.



## 20.6. **The Future is Slo-o-o-o-ow...** **'til 2003**

Many people who read the preceding chapters will rebel at the [K-I-S-S](#) concepts outlined in this book. Especially designers and marketers who love bells and whistles.

They'll argue that users will soon want more than a presentable-but-minimalist, usable structure.

Well, they'll be wrong. **Your customers want info...** they want enough info to decide to purchase.

**And they want it delivered fast.** They not only want it fast, but **they want to understand** it fast.

**So keep your site simple and predictable.** Users do **not** want innovations in Web design. Ultimately, they want **ease of use**. They don't want to lose time figuring how your site works, nor do they want to interpret what you're saying. **Be clear, both in navigation and in meaning.**

It doesn't matter whether you think this is a good thing or a bad thing... or whether it upsets your artistic sensitivities. **Keep it simple and you will sell more.**



### 20.6.1. **Bandwidth Forces Everyone to K-I-S-S**

**Fast access will be slow to come for the mass market.**

**Bandwidth** is the amount of data that can be transmitted per second. New, high-bandwidth technologies, such as ADSL and cable modems, will eventually be widely available. **But it will be years before they are cheap enough for the mass market to buy.**

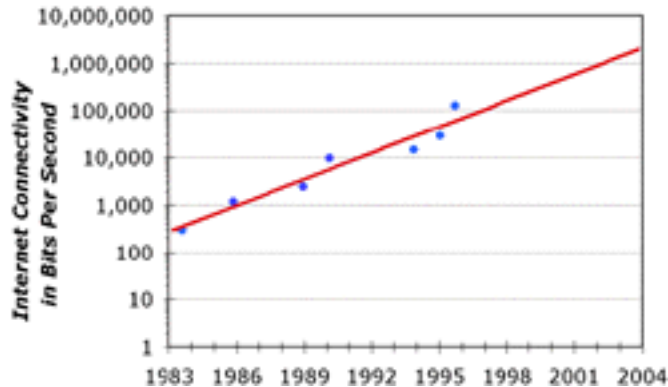
The user base broadens as the world connects. Newbies **today** are more likely to be low-end users, so the **average** connection speed is actually decreasing. Only 1% of America Online's customers are at 56K (at the time of this writing, summer/98). Most visitors to Yahoo connect at 28.8-33.6K.

And even if you upgrade to a high-speed connection, **you don't get the full benefit.** That comes gradually... as the Internet and the host servers improve, as the telcoms improve the infrastructure, etc. And it will be **very** gradual, since the number of people surfing the Web is skyrocketing, slowing transmission to a crawl at times.

If your customers are high-tech companies who all have T1 access, you can ignore the low bandwidth advice in this book. But if you are after the typical Web surfer, **you must design for slow speed connections for years to come. Your site cannot survive if you don't cater to the mass market, which means 28-56K circa 1999.**

---

A high-end user's connection speed grows by 50% per year, according to **Jakob Nielsen**, the usability guru...



#### Nielsen's Law of Internet Bandwidth

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/980405.html>

But the mass market lags years behind the high-end users. Mr. Nielsen doesn't foresee fairly widespread high-speed connections until approximately 2003.

So for the next five years, as Nielsen says, "**Minimalist design rules.**"

---

Bottom line? We're at least 5 years away from being able to effectively use the phenomenal multi-media potential of the Web.

And that's **great news** for the little guy. If the Web was flying at gigabytes per second, great Web design would be ruled by those with the dollars.

Right **now**, a good Web site is cheap because we must stick with the simple stuff -- **K-I-S-S**. All you have to be is... **smart**.

And you **are**. After all, you're reading this book!



### 20.6.2. And Don't Be Tempted by "The Latest and Greatest"

Users have been downloading Version 4 of Netscape and Explorer at a slower rate than previous browsers. There are several reasons...

- 1) In the early years, the Internet was populated mostly by techies. Today's users are **not** the "propellorheads" of yesterday. They care about content, not about bells-and-whistles technology. Older versions satisfy those needs.
- 2) Today's "non-techie" users do not know how to upgrade their browser. And they don't care to learn.
- 3) Previous browser upgrades delivered truly useful, quantum leap improvements in benefits. The new ones can't say the same.
- 4) The new applications are gigantic. It's a pain to download, and that's **if** you have the hard disk space.

Combine all of these reasons, and **it will be at least the Year 2001 before 95% of the market is using Version 4+ of the two major browsers.**

**And**, if your visitor **does** use Explorer 4+, for example, and if you **do** design a site to deliver the special "advanced html and other features" that it supports, there's a big drawback. It's slower than straight and simple [html](#).

So... the most cost-effective use of your time is to **design for the lowest common denominator... Netscape 2 and Explorer 3**. Tell your Web designer not to take advantage of the "advanced features" of Netscape 4+ or Internet Explorer 4+ for now.

And that goes for Java too, for the same reason...

MYSS!... Wrapping It All Up...



... it's just too darn slow!



## 20.7. A Great Way to **Know** **You're Succeeding!**

How do you know you're succeeding? Easy. **Listen to your customers.** They'll tell you!

Do you remember the **MWR** of the PennyGold site? To **get the order** straight off the site.

But since we were only selling 1,000 units, and since PennyGold is a serious tool, we also wanted to **eliminate** the get-rich-quick junkies, the lazy, and the dumb. They would not be happy with PennyGold.

Of course, I couldn't just put up a billboard that says...



But I **could** structure the site so that the overall look and feel, the sheer amount of data, the location of the Order Page, and a variety of other techniques **would all combine to find the right people**, and repel the rest.



Your customers will **tell you** what they think of your Web sales efforts. We often get letters like this...

I am writing to compliment you on the way I have been treated in

MYSSI!... Wrapping It All Up...

my effort to acquire PennyGold. I found your site by accident while looking for small cap stock sites and found myself somewhat engrossed, and almost frustrated.

It took no small effort to get through all the information on your web site. I also found it reassuring that your Website virtually discourages the casual observer, as if a "weeding out" process was occurring.

Your staff was quick to respond to my net request for contact to purchase, extremely thorough, and entirely pleasant to deal with.

More businesses could take a lesson in customer service from you and your staff.

While I am relatively new to investing and totally unfamiliar with mining stocks, I find it an exciting opportunity and look forward to the learning process. Thank you for your generous efforts in providing so much for so little.

- Rick Sinclair, rick\_sinclair@cityling.com

**That's when I know the site is "spot on."** If you're not getting great feedback, **totally unsolicited**, from your customers, take a hard look at your site, because...

... something's wrong.



## 20.8. **11 Steps to a Site that SELLS!**

OK, we're getting pretty near to...



... **the end!** Congratulations! If you've reached this far, you know how to construct a site that **SELLS!** You can do it better than 99.9% of all people on the face of this digital planet.

Now it's time to take that theory and **use it**. To help you, let's boil it all down **to...**

...the essential steps to...

## Make Your Site SELL!



### 20.8.1. Prepare... Don't Repair

First though, a little preliminary research...

Do it even if you're a one-product company, and you're designing your own site. If you've got a team, do it with them. They must understand your business, customers and competition. And if you have a number of product lines, you should answer the following questions for **for each one**.

**The answers will form the core of the program that will turbo-boost your Web site into a high-sales tool.**



#### 1) Nature of Product

First, evaluate your product and make sure it's [appropriate for Web sales](#). If it's not, modify it (or modify the **Most Wanted Response (MWR)** -- remember the [coupons for McDonald's?](#)), or kill and start over.

Next, think deeply about your product...

- **Features** -- What exactly is this product and what does it do?
- **Benefits** -- More importantly, what is your target market looking to get out of your product?



#### 2) Target Market

Develop a [thumbnail sketch/profile](#) of your target market(s).



#### 3) Offline Marketing

Outline the current offline...

- promotional mix

- product price
- channels of distribution.

Consider how the Web effort fits in. If you do not currently have an offline program, will there be one in the first year?



#### 4) The Competition

Do a **brief competitive analysis**. Find the Web site **URLs** of your three most important competitors for this product. What are they doing on the Web? How are they approaching matters?



#### 5) Goals of the Site

Obviously, your first goal is to get the **Most Wanted Response (MWR)**. Next, to get the **Backup Response(s)**.

What **other functions/goals** do you have for the site (tech support, customer service, etc.)? These may or may not contribute to getting the **MWR**. **If they don't, they must help develop a long-term relationship with your customer.** Anything else just isn't contributing to your bottom line.

Careful, don't get distracted -- your first priority is to get the **MWR**, which brings us to...



### 20.8.2. Set, and Get, the **MWR**

Set a **MWR** for each product (or product line) that you sell on your site. What do you **most** want your visitor to do? Think hard and decide well -- you will build your whole site toward getting the **MWR**.

Once you know your **MWR**, **how** do you want your prospect to deliver the **MWR**? **Lay out the response methods.**

Outline how your target makes a decision, step by step. **Where could this process get derailed?** What are the main reasons why your target market might **not**

purchase this product?

What must you do **online** in order to get the sale, or the **MWR**?



### 20.8.3. Backup Responses...

For every customer who delivers your **MWR**, there are 10 who will come close... then reject your offer. But those 10 **will** hit your **Backup Response**. And ultimately, you have a good chance to convert a good number of these people into sales.

Develop **at least one** Backup Response.



### 20.8.4. Design & Usability

Settle on the “look and feel” of the site. Develop a “template page” that has all the basic elements. Then...

- design the Home Page (and next LEVEL of [Link Pages](#) if needed)
- develop the site’s navigational architecture
- lay out the pathway(s) -- how you plan to lead your customer to each **MWR**.
- re-read the [usability chapter](#) -- keeping these principles firmly in mind **now** will reduce the need for post-test revisions **later**.



### 20.8.5. Write the **Opening Paragraph**

OK, now let’s jump to the **start** of each pathway, the **Opening Page**.

Hit with your biggest gun... your [USP](#).

Also jot down other important benefits and points that you want to cover in your **Opening Page** (or “pages”, if you have more than one **MWR** pathway).



## 20.8.6. **Write the Pathway**

OK, time for some...



... serious writing. Do the following for **each MWR pathway...**

**First**, surround yourself with a...

- **Thesaurus** -- don't keep saying "great" use short, punchy synonyms like "super."
- **Book of similes** -- similes bring life, excitement, and unexpected shocks to keep the reader awake.
- **Book of quotes** -- quotes are a quick and effective way to find a well-known and respected person to "support" your position. Make them short and on-target.

Ready? Good!



**Second**, drill the **MWR** into your brain. From here on in, everything that you do is geared towards **convincing your visitor to deliver your MWR.**

**Start your MWR Closer Page by writing down the MWR** (that you set previously) -- **exactly** what must your customer **do**? If you have some initial ideas for the offer and call to action, jot them down, too. The rest will hit you after you've written the pathway pages that come before...



**Third**, the **Opening Page**. You've written your opening paragraph, your big gun. Now **flesh it out** with sales copy and headlines. **Finish with a joint...**



... no, not that kind of joint! **The kind of joint** that pulls your customer to the next page.

### **SiteSELL Sidebar**

If you are a small one-product company, the **Home Page** will likely also be your **Opening Page**, the first page on the pathway towards your **MWR Closer Page**. If you are a large company, your **Home Page** has other functions. These are outlined above in **Navigation**.

---

**Fourth**, write your next 2-4 pages that lead to the **MWR Closer Page**. Develop the most critical aspects like testimonials, the guarantee, product features, headlines and joints.

If your word processor offers an **outliner** function, it's a terrific way for laying out the hierarchy of your site, then developing the text for each page of each pathway. It's especially useful for larger sites, with multiple pathways and **LEVELs**. Kind of like having a **storyboard** of your entire site in a single document!

As you type into your word processor, underline what will appear as links on the Web. Insert notes about ideas for graphics in the appropriate places. But don't write the **html** yet. That comes last.

---

**Fifth**, build an irresistible offer and a crystal-clear call to action into your **MWR Closer Page**. Specify all the ways that your customer can deliver the **MWR**, including the **Response Form**. **Flesh out the Closer Page** with copy and headlines.

---

**Sixth**, same as **fifth**, except do it for the **Backup Response(s)**.

---

**Seventh**, review all pages. Divide groups of paragraphs into logical blocks of text. Develop **powerful headlines** for each block. Spend as much time on the headlines as on the overall copy. Make sure each page ends in a **joint** that pulls the visitor deeper.

---

Great! You've got the beginnings of a **Web Site that SELLS!**

Of course, you know that you're not finished yet. As a matter of fact, you know that **you'll never be finished!...**



### 20.8.7. Re-write<sup>4</sup> -- Tighten and **Activate**

Now... go back to the **Opening Page** and re-read it. Like the first draft? **Make it better, even if you do.**

Make sure the **Opening Page** ends with a joint that pulls-through to the next page. Then review and re-work the next page.

Keep going like this until you have completed the **MWR Closer Page** with an offer and call to action that compels your visitor to trigger your **MWR...** or at least the **Backup Response**. Let me repeat...

**... the offer and call to action must force your visitor to RESPOND!**



**Whoa!** You're not done yet! Weren't you wondering what that **"Re-write<sup>4</sup>"** means?

It means "re-write to the power of 4." Re-write. Then re-write it again and again, **and again.**

**Remember?...**



**... Cut, Chop, Axe, & Prune.**

Rewriting is the hard work. Truly hard work.

**Tighten, chop, activate.** Make it so tight that it squeaks... sharp, active, benefit-packed.

Rivet your reader to the screen. Make the **headlines** suck the reader through to the next section on the page. Make your **joints** pull the reader through to the next page.

Get boring for a second and whoops!... back to InfoSeek and see what else that search for “ISDN modems” turned up. **Gone... to your competitor!**

**Never stop fine-tuning.** This is the Web -- it’s digital. There are no printing plates. No dead trees to pay for. If you keep pushing the envelope, you’ll create some mind-bending breakthrough approaches that **SELL!**



### 20.8.8. The 10-Point **Pathway** Checklist

Finished writing, re-writing, polishing and honing? Good...

Check to make sure that all of the following are present in your product pathway, from **Opening Page** to **MWR Closer Page**.

#### *SiteSELL Sidebar*

If you have more than one product line, each of which has its own **MWR**, you need a product pathway for each. Do the following checklist for **each product pathway**.

- ✓ 1) Does the path finish with a solid **MWR**? Do you have a **Backup Response**?
- ✓ 2) Is your opening line a “**big gun**”? Does it transmit the major benefit, the USP, to your customer? In the next two paragraphs, do you build on that?
- ✓ 3) Scan through each page of the path. Is there a logical progression that builds to the **MWR**? Have you covered all the other major benefits?
- ✓ 4) Does your **MWR Closer Page** build an offer than makes the **MWR** irresistible? Did you remind your visitor of the major benefits again? Did you make an offer (product, bonuses, and price) that **you’d** be afraid to pass up? Did you develop a strong and logical reason why action is required **right now**? And did you bundle that all into a clear call to action where you tell your visitor exactly what you want her to do?
- ✓ 5) Have you offered **proof** and major credibility-builders? Do you get an overall good, believable **solid feel** from the site?
- ✓ 6) Does your visitor understand **exactly what she gets**? Don’t take this for

granted.

✓ **7)** Have you eliminated your customer's **risk** (i.e., guarantee, trial download, etc.). Is that clear to your customer?

✓ **8)** Did you develop and maintain a “**you-oriented**” focus throughout the site? With your text editor/html program, do a find for I, we, my, our, us, and we. The only place you should find them is on the “About Us” page!

✓ **9) Final copy test** -- Read it all out loud, to your colleague or spouse. If anything rings hollow, embarrasses you, or just plain doesn't kill, make a note. Once done, come back to all your notes and fix those spots.

✓ **10)** Once you have made it as good as you can, spell-check it. Then proof-read for spelling errors that your spell-checker won't pick up (ex., “your” instead of “you”). Review it also for reasonable grammar. If you make a lot of changes, run it through your spell-checker one last time.



### 20.8.9. Html and Usability Testing

OK, convert your finished product to [html](#). Review the “on-disk” html version with your team until you're all happy with it. Adjust usability and navigation as needed.

Drag anyone (with fresh eyes) you can find into the office to check the site for usability. Once you've corrected all problems, it's time to “go live.” [Post the site.](#)

**Now it's time for a little mini-[usability testing](#)...**

Call 5 people who have a history of giving you straight, honest answers. Ideally these people should be in your target market. Get together so that you can watch them -- tell them you want “**blunt, honest opinions.**”

If they never get lost and if they ask whether they can buy your product now, **then you know you're ready for full usability testing!**

Odds are, though, that they'll spot several problem areas. Fix flaws.

Then proceed to more formal usability testing.

### SiteSELL Sidebar

Your site should be “live” for usability testing (to create true bandwidth scenarios). But it should **not be accessible** to real, live traffic. Ask your techie to tuck it away where others won't find it. If you'll be testing for more than two weeks, he should keep the search engines' spiders away with a [robots.txt](#) file.

---

OK, done? Testing is great? No one gets lost! Everyone wants to buy?

Great! It-t-t-t-s-s-s-...



### 20.8.10. Showtime!

You're “ready-for-prime-time” live! **Yes, it's...**



... showtime!

Move the site to it's real online location. Then...

**Promote lightly** (for example, post to HotBot only, or take a banner ad or two -- just enough to generate low traffic). Use your initial traffic as a “live test.” Ask customers for frank feedback -- offer them something of benefit for their help.

Watch the site closely. Is it doing what you want? Study the log files. How are the pathways? Are you getting your **MWR?**

Back in the real world, **are you responding to your customers fast and well?** Is your [infrastructure](#) working well?

Adjust, adjust, adjust.



### 20.8.11. Build Targeted Traffic

**Fantastic!** Now that you've got a SALES-generating Web site, [it's time to attract customers...](#)

---

**And that's it!** After all, if you've got a great **product**, a **site** that **SELLS**, and a steady stream of **targeted traffic**...

... how can you **not** succeed??

---

## 20.9. The Top 6 Rules in 17 Words

Here are **the** very top rules for a great site that **SELLS**!...

- 1) Feel customer's needs.
- 2) Make navigation clear.
- 3) Load fast.
- 4) **K-I-S-S**.
- 5) Write actively and clearly.
- 6) Ask for "the order."

Say them to yourself over and over, every night when you go to bed...



... Sweet dreams!

---

## 20.10. The Bottom Line

The goal of your Web site is to generate the **MWR**...

- 1) Set your **Most Wanted Response**.
- 2) Fire your biggest **benefit** gun on the Opening Page.
- 3) Pull your customer from the Opening Page to the **MWR Closer Page** via a tight, customer-oriented, easy-to-use-and-navigate pathway, one that is crystal-clear

at every point.

4) On the **MWR** Closer Page, make an irresistible offer and finish with a clear call to action.



**The basic response-generating strategy is timeless.** Most of the information in this book will be every bit as valid in five years. Sure the Web will be faster. But the basic concepts will remain **the same**.

You **can** succeed on the Web, **no matter how big or small you are... at least for the next 5 years.** All you have to do is...

- Get a good product.
- Make a site that **SELLS!**
- Bring in targeted traffic.

Go to it. I **would** wish you good luck. But if you master **product, traffic and sales**, you won't need good luck...



... You'll need Brinks. :-)>



*With sincere wishes for outstanding Web sales,*

*Ken*



MYSS!... So... What Do You Think?



## So... What Do You Think?

I deeply hope that this book has met your needs...

Help make the next edition of **MYSS!** even better! If you feel that it has excelled in certain areas, I'd love to hear about it. If it has let you down in others, I'd **really** love to hear about it. :-)

To thank you for your help, you'll receive a **free PDF copy** of the next edition. And here's an even **better offer**...

Fire me a comment or idea that is **so useful** that I use it to improve **MYSS!...** I'll send you a **free printed copy** of the book! So...

Just hit the link below to visit our "**So... What Do You Think?**" page, and let me have it right between the eyes! If you do...

... I'll let you have it, too! (A free PDF or printed version of the book, that is!)



**So... What Do You Think?**

<http://www.sitesell.com/views.html>



MYSSI!... Subscribe to **SITE-SELL!**



## Subscribe to **SITE-SELL!**

The **SITE-SELL!** e-zine focuses on making **your** site **SELL!** Each issue is packed with practical, **battle-tested** ways to boost **your** site's SALES.

No complicated, expensive, hard-to-put-into-action ideas here. Just powerful, profitable, proven-in-the-trenches techniques that you can **use... immediately.**

How can we afford to give this valuable information away **for free?** Easy...

... we make it up on the volume! ;-)

Stay on the cutting edge of Web sales. **Subscribe now...**



**SITE-SELL!**

<http://www.sitesell.com/subscribe1.html>



MYSS!... **Better** than a Job!



## **Better than a Job!**

You **now** know how to sell on the Web... **really** sell. Put this information to good, practical use -- you'll be ahead of **99%** of Web marketers. And...

If you're looking for something to sell, consider **MYSS!** itself! Remember the "partnership" philosophy outlined in [the discussion on affiliate programs?](#)

Well, our program goes **way beyond** that. It pays a generous commission on...

- 1) the first order by a customer who was referred by you
- 2) **every** subsequent order (for other products) by that customer... forever!
- 3) sales generated by affiliates who were referred by you.

If we were **only** marketing **MYSS!**, the residual income generated by this program would **still** be extremely attractive. But, when you consider all the additional e-commerce goods and services coming down the pipe...

... talented, hard-working people (such as yourself) will be able to do much better than just "make a living."

In the words of Denis Goutier, an authority on affiliate programs...

*After spending over 300 hours researching everything and anything that deals with affiliate/associate programs, and continually doing so every day...*

*... I have to say that sitesell's affiliate program is the best there is. This program will become the template of many new programs in the future. It will be one of the reasons for a change in the affiliate program system.*

-- Denis Goutier, [dgoutier@realprograms.com](mailto:dgoutier@realprograms.com)

Denis's right. This program will generate truly significant income for motivated affiliates. The bottom line is very simple... empower the talented and ambitious to truly excel and earn more than they would in a job in "the real world."

Come visit and see why Net-savvy marketing gurus are saying things like...

MYSS!... Better than a Job!

... the program you have outlined is the \*best\* I have seen. It's fair to you, it's fair to your affiliate partners. Quite frankly the program excites me and I can't wait to get started.

-- Paul Lang, publisher of Sell It!, paul@netsavvy.co.uk



**The 5 Pillar Affiliate Program**

<http://www.sitesell.com/affiliateprogram.html>





## Order the Printed Version

Yes...



... a print version **is** available...

Suitable for reading at your leisure in the sun room... or while sitting in the bath!  
Take it with you on the plane... or to the cottage on the weekend.

After people read the [PDF](#) version of **MYSS!**, they ask why we sell it so cheap. We believe in delivering valuable info at a ridiculously low price.

And that carries through to our beautifully printed and bound copy of **MYSS!**.

Please see the Web site's **Order Page** for more details...



**Order Page**

<http://www.sitesell.com/order1.html>

