



Getting Your Business Online

The world of online business is a rapidly growing one in which many people have made a great deal of success. There are many attractions to starting a web-based business. Some of the most significant advantages are that the startup costs and risks are almost negligible. Even if things don't work out, you generally don't have much to lose. However, making money online is not without its disadvantages and there is no such thing as an honest and practical way to get rich quickly on the Internet. It will take patience, perseverance and the willingness to learn about how the Internet and online marketing works. You'll need to learn how to research competitors, understand how social networking works and learn at least a little about the more complex aspects of web design and hosting. The following steps will introduce you to the basic strategy to starting your first online venture.¹

Registering and Hosting Your WebsiteThe first thing you'll need to do is register a web address. This is also known as a domain name. This is the most important step to building up an online presence. You can consider your domain in the same light as a trademark and your piece of online real estate. Unlike traditional businesses, however, the costs are extremely low. Eg. Digital Pacific offers .com.au domain names for only \$12.45 per year. You should choose a domain registrar and web hosting company carefully and dedicate some time to getting the most suitable hosting package available. Always do your research first by reading user reviews. Secondly, you should take care to choose a suitable domain name. It should be fairly short, easy to remember and, ideally, contain some keywords which are relevant to the content that you're going to provide. Generally, you'll want to register your web address with the same company that you use for web hosting. When choosing a hosting package, you'll want to pay attention to important elements such as data storage capacity, percentage of time that the service is online, security and other features. Many web hosting companies provide a useful set of tools for getting your website up and running quickly. If you want to start a blog, for example, you may want to go for a hosting package such as the WordPress hosting package from Digital Pacific.²

Designing Your SiteDesigning a site does not necessarily have to be as complicated as many people think it does. A lot of web hosting companies provide a set of user-friendly tools which you can use to build your site from scratch without having to know much, if anything, about the technicalities of web design and coding. If you're starting a blog, things are even easier, thanks to popular free tools like WordPress. While there is still a learning curve, it's not a particularly daunting one. If you want to create something like an online shop, for example, things start getting a little more complicated. A plain website or blog is fairly straightforward by comparison, since you can start off with a free template and use popular, amateur-friendly web design tools. If designing the website you need is beyond your capabilities, then you may want to consider hiring a web designer. This can be quite a considerable investment, however. Professional web designers tend to use advanced software such as Dreamweaver which, while providing a highly sophisticated set of features, also has an enormous learning curve. Hiring a web designer does not have to be as expensive as you may think, thanks to the increasing popularity of outsourcing websites where you can find a freelancer to do the work for you for a negotiable price.³

Setting Up Online Payments and Delivery MethodsIf your online business is going to be about selling products and services rather than affiliate programs and advertising revenue, then you're going to need to think about online payment and product delivery methods. PayPal is one of the most popular payment methods on the Internet. Subscription websites, online shops and many other websites use it. Though it can be time consuming, setting up a PayPal account is at least free. Even if your site is not going to be selling anything itself, you'll still need a PayPal account for accepting payments from advertising and affiliate programs. For online shops, you'll probably want to use an online shopping cart such as PrestaShop or Magento. For delivering products, you'll need to find a courier company for collecting and shipping physical goods. If, however, you are providing digital products such as eBooks, online services or software, your costs will be considerably lower as you'll be able to use an online fulfilment company instead.⁴

Getting Visitors To Your SiteFor many, the most time-consuming and frustrating element of online business is actually getting enough people to visit your website. Building up site traffic is not something that can be done overnight. It's something that you will need to continually focus on for the life of your online business. No matter how good your site or product is, it's of no use to your online ventures if your website doesn't even appear in search results. Most people ultimately reach a website by coming from one of the major search engines such as Google, Yahoo or Bing. Search engines index new and updated websites regularly, using robots known as "crawlers." These crawlers don't work in quite the same way as people do. Instead, they look for things such as specific keywords which are frequently repeated in a page of content and then index and categorize your site accordingly. Making your website more accessible to the search engines is known as search engine optimisation (SEO). You should use suitable key words and phrases in your content, fill in title fields and descriptions and use a suitable, search-engine friendly design for your site. Listing your website on directories and social networking sites is also essential. You should have a Facebook and Twitter account at the very least. On such sites, you can share with the world the latest updates for your business and expand your online presence. Content marketing using video and audio marketing can also be effective and, with popular video sharing sites such as YouTube, it doesn't even have to cost you anything. You'll want to start tracking the growth of your online business from the very beginning. Using a free tool such as Google Analytics, for example, will provide you with all sorts of useful information such as sources for your web traffic, which pages are most popular and much more. To find out more about the services offered by Digital Pacific including domain name registration, web hosting and cloud hosting solutions, visit our website at www.digitalpacific.com.au or call us on 1300 MY HOST.

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