

27 ESSENTIAL RULES OF INTERNET MARKETING

27 'Must-Know' Rules For
Internet Marketers Who Want To
Get **More** Traffic, Sales, and Leads!



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Introduction

Internet marketing is a complicated venture. It is fraught with creative challenges, analytical work, and human interaction. It's hard to reduce, hard to explain, hard to simplify, and hard to teach correctly.

There are so many moving parts in each Internet marketing campaign that providing people with a one-size-fits-all plan seems deeply misguided. It gives the impression that success in Internet marketing isn't a dynamic process.

It ignores the fact that creating a real, successful business with actual customers isn't as easy as taking the parts of a shelf out of a box and assembling them according to the instructions. Being a successful Internet market is very different. It is not only about good plans, good principles, and good approaches, but it is also about flexibility, responsiveness, and dynamism. And that is exactly what I had in mind when I wrote this.

Instead of giving you a "recipe" for success, I'm going to give you a set of rules that are general enough to get you results and to set you on a path, but can do so without straight jacketing you into a "business template," where there is no room for your own thought, creative freedom, and responsiveness.

In the following sections, I will reveal the 27 rules that I believe that all Internet marketers should follow because they will always bring results. Unlike other ebooks, this one won't attempt to stuff you into a rigid template.

Instead, I will simply tell you what will work without mixing it with stuff that "might work" in certain situations.

Some of it will be philosophical; some of it will be concrete.

But, at the end of the day, all of it will help you to improve your mindset, your business, your relationships with your customers, and your bottom line.

Rule #1: Think in Terms of Real Customers

One universal piece of advice that all Internet marketers should be forced to hear is this: don't think about your business as being impersonal just because it's on the Internet.

Your customers are real. They have real wants, real desires, real problems, and real money to spend on your products. So treat them like real people--not product-purchasing units.

This might sound like generic advice, but it is the best starting point for all Internet marketers.

So, before you draft your next product idea, start by conjuring up a picture in your head of who your customers might be. Better yet, find them on blogs, in forums, and other places on the Internet.

Locate them and find out who they are, what they want, and why they aren't satisfied with the current products or services they are using.

Don't treat them as if they're not people. Figure out what makes them tick; and use that to make your business appeal to them.

Rule #2: Solve Someone's Problems

This rule follows from the first. You have a real business with real customers. Whatever you might think about the importance or efficacy of sales letters, text ads, banner advertisements, and video content, there is one additional thing you should always keep in mind: selling a product that has no purpose is much, much harder than selling something that solves a problem that many people have.

Of course, when you're creating a product, this isn't always the easiest question to ask and to answer, but it's an important one to keep in mind. Many Internet marketers simply don't ask it. They ignore what customers might want; and instead spend time figuring out how best to trick them into buying.

Please follow my advice and do not follow in their footsteps. It will lead you down a path of failure and disappointment from which you may never emerge as a successful, skilled Internet marketer.

Instead, start off by locating your customers. Again, look for them on forums, on blogs, and wherever else they might be. Find out what problems they have; and create a product that SOLVES those problems.

Whatever you do through your sales letters, text ads, banner advertisements, and social media marketing efforts will be greatly amplified by the quality of your product. You won't start off with the great disadvantage of needing to sell a bad product that no one needs.

Instead, you will genuinely be helping people by telling them about your product.

Rule #3: Create a Credible Website

As I mentioned in the introduction, this book is a mix of practical and philosophical advice. And there are very few pieces of advice that are more practical for an Internet marketer than to establish yourself through a credible website.

So don't rely entirely on marketing efforts that direct traffic to affiliate links; or that send your customers to a sketchy, untrustworthy site that includes six dashes in the URL.

Instead, start with this approach:

1. Frame your business clearly in your mind. If you're like many Internet marketers, the frame for your business may simply be your own personality. If this is the case, your site could revolve around you, the products you make, and your trials and triumphs in Internet marketing. On the other hand, if you don't sell to the Internet marketing crowd, then your business may be framed around the niche of products you sell. Whatever the case may be, take some time to solidify this framing before you move to the next step. If the theme isn't clear to you, it definitely won't be to your customers, either.
2. Select a domain name that matches your framing. It can be your name or the name of your business, but in general, it shouldn't be a giant string of words connected by dashes. Nothing will kill your credibility faster than using a URL like that.
3. Purchase your domain name and hosting. Use this site to compare domain registration and hosting services: <http://www.findmyhosting.com>.
4. Download an open source "what you see is what you get" WYSIWYG editor for your website, such as this <http://net2.com/nvu>.

Use it to implement what you had in mind originally. Be mindful that your site content and theme should be clear and navigable.

Otherwise, it will baffle buyers. By the end of this process, you will have a narrowly-themed site with a clear purpose that appears credible to visitors.

This is the best place to start if you want a business that has the potential to expand limitlessly in the future.

Rule #4: Build a List

Another practical piece of advice for all Internet marketers is to build a list. It doesn't matter what you're selling, who you're selling it to, or how well your current efforts are working.

Building a list is always a surefire way to

- 1) allow you to make more sales to your existing customers; and
- 2) convert your website traffic better.

Now, when it comes to list building, the best place to get started is by getting an autoresponder account. You can do this through one of the two major autoresponder services:

1. <http://aweber.com>
2. <http://getresponse.com>

Unfortunately, purchasing an autoresponder service is the easiest part. Actually getting things rolling, building a list, and using it to convert subscribers into buyers, and buyers into repeat buyers is the truly challenging part. Fortunately, there is a process for this, too.

Start with the following five steps:

1. **Create some content for your autoresponder.**

It doesn't matter whether it is a free newsletter, a free report, a free book, or something else. What's important is that it has to be free, it has to provide value, and it has to entice to site visitors to join your list. Beyond that, you can be creative. If you create low-quality content and use it as your hook to get people to sign up, it might work initially, but once people read it, they'll be disappointed. In the long run, this will translate into unnecessarily forgone sales. So do it right the first time.

2. **Create a "squeeze page" or an "opt-in" page for your site.**

Unless you are only selling one product on your site, this opt-in page should not be on the main page of your site. Instead, it should be located on a sub-

domain. In fact, if you want to split test your results by trying different squeeze pages, you should have more than one of these sub-domains – each with a slightly different setup. Then send identical traffic to it (perhaps through PPC sources) and test your conversion rates.

3. **Alter the main page on your site to include an opt-in form.**

You might do this through a non-invasive "slide-in" or "hover-over" ad. Alternatively, you could include it in a sidebar, at the bottom of your main page, or at the top.

4. **Finally, send traffic to your opt-in forms.**

Do this through pay per click campaigns, text ads, and joint venture partnerships. But when you do it, send your traffic to distinct sub-domains. This will allow you to track the convertibility of your various traffic sources, so you can determine which are profitable and which are not.

5. **Monetize your list.**

This is often the trickiest part of the list marketing process. Fortunately, there is a large variety of different ways in which you can do it. I personally suggest that you do it by periodically giving away free reports that guide your readers into making purchases through affiliate links (or from your own product selection). This will usually be more effective than direct marketing attempts.

Of course, list marketing is a complicated process; and there is a lot of debate over the best way to do it. But without even knowing the best way, you can benefit significantly by creating a list and using it to market your products. And this is precisely why I suggest you do it immediately if you haven't started already.

Rule #5: Outsource Stuff You're Not Good At Doing

This rule is important for people who feel that they should play the role of jack-of-all-trades. As an Internet marketer, this is not your role. There may be many things you are good at, but there's at least two things you are best at: managing and marketing your business.

So stick to managing and marketing your business; and leave the details to people with more experience and better credentials. Your business will benefit greatly from this; and it will free up time for you to spend on important administrative and marketing tasks.

As a general rule of thumb, if you don't feel comfortable doing something yourself, start by going to Elance.com to find someone who does. Start by looking at existing projects to find out whether another business has hired

someone to complete a similar project--and, if so, what they paid for it and whether or not they were satisfied with the work.

If you're still not sure whether you feel comfortable letting someone else do it, go ahead and post your project on Elance.

See how freelancers respond to your request and what types of proposals they offer. If none of them seem promising, you don't have to assign the project, so you will lose nothing other than the amount of time it took you to create the project listing.

Rule #6: Watch Your Competition

Creating a successful, thriving, profitable Internet business is a dynamic process. It can't be reduced to assembling parts, connecting the dots, or some other process where you take out a template, follow it carefully, and then experience the exact results you were told you'd see.

It's more complicated than that. It's a dynamic process that not only involves you, but your competitors: people who do better when you do worse; people who sell the same products as you; and people who have already experienced success where you have not.

This is both good and bad news. It's bad because it means you can't just use the same static business template and realistically expect good results each time. But it's good because it means that you'll always have someone successful to copy.

And this is precisely what I suggest you do: start by finding your competition.

Once you've done this, follow them carefully. How can you get started? Search for keywords related to your business on Google. But instead of looking at the organic search results, look at the sponsored results from businesses who are running Adwords campaigns.

The businesses you see here are PAYING to get leads. This means that there is a good chance that they're earning MORE than they pay in order to get those leads, which means they have a successful business model.

Otherwise, they'd eventually go out of business. Follow these ads to your competitors' sites. Bookmark each of them; and visit them on a regular basis. When they announce that they're going to sell new products, follow the site closely to find out what features those products have and what problems they're attempting to solve.

If they create a mailing list, join it and follow their emails. Another important thing to consider is their sales material. Look at their sales letters, opt-in pages, and free product offerings.

Are these similar to yours or different than yours? If your approach isn't similar, you may be doing something wrong.

Next, look at their marketing strategy. You can follow this loosely by searching for "link:<URL of your competitor's site>" on Google. This will give you all inbound links to their site, which will help you to reverse engineer their marketing strategy.

Are they better exposed than you are? If so, where are they advertising that you are not? These are all important questions to ask.

And by asking them, you give yourself the opportunity to expand your business operations, to improve your competitiveness, and to seek out other avenues of profit.

Rule #7: Remain Open Minded

One common failure among Internet marketers is that they often don't remain open-minded to different approaches. Once they experience a little bit of success with one approach, they milk it for all it is worth, but neglect other avenues of traffic generation and monetization.

And what's the end result?

Instead of continually expanding into a business that earns more profits, they limit themselves to a "reasonable" income and let the business stagnate there. I highly suggest you do not do this.

Of course, you should be milking the profit sources that have proven themselves for you already; however, you should also constantly be seeking out new avenues for profit.

This is the only way in which you can be assured that your business will grow over time; and constantly provide you with a better standard of living.

Rule #8: Look for Opportunities for Expansion

If you're like many new business owners, your enterprise relies almost entirely on a few concentrated sources of traffic and buyers. Outside of this fixed pool of

buyers, it isn't clear to you how you might expand your business, scale it up, and bring in more profits as a result.

For the time being, you might think this is fine. But once you've expanded to your business's maximum size within this pool of customers, you'll want to expand, so keep an eye open for opportunities to expand and market.

For starters, consider each of the following marketing strategies for locating new leads:

1. Banner ads
2. Pay per click ads
3. List-building
4. Social media, such as Facebook and Myspace
5. Viral videos
6. Product giveaways
7. Joint ventures
8. Firesales
9. Paid email advertisements
10. Print advertisements
11. Free reports
12. Creating an affiliate program
13. Blogging
14. Forum posting
15. Article marketing

You have many options. And it may be the case that none of these is the best for you, but at a bare minimum, you should consider each.

You should also pay careful attention to new channels through which you can market. For instance, viral videos and social media marketing have become two powerful channels for driving traffic to websites.

Even if you don't feel comfortable using these channels yourself, you could hire a freelancer from Elance.com, Guru.com, or Rentacoder.com to do the work for you.

At the end of the day, your open-mindedness, flexibility, and willingness to consider different advertising channels will reward you with constant growth while other businesses plateau or stagnate.

Rule #9: Seek Out Talented JV Partners

Earlier, we spoke about outsourcing work that you don't feel competent to

complete yourself. Another way in which you can do this is to form a joint venture partnership with someone who has different skills or resources.

For instance, let's say you own a site that provides resources for dog owners. You might have an excellent product for dog owners, but no list to audience to market it to.

As a result, you don't move your product; and you don't make profits.

Now, if you're willing to venture outside of your comfort zone, you might be able to make thousands of dollars. And all you have to do is propose a joint venture partnership that involves your resource to a pet site that generates traffic, but is in need of a product to sell.

Start by making a list of these sites. In particular, look for any site in your niche that generates a lot of traffic. You can do this by performing a simple Google search and seeing what organic and sponsored results show up on the first 1-3 pages.

You can also check Alexa.com ratings for sites you are already familiar with to find out whether they receive a lot of traffic. Once you have your list of sites, sit down and decide how you want this joint venture to work.

If you're bringing nothing other than a product to the table, you won't want to ask for too much in your proposal.

After all, they have the customer base. As an example of what you might do, consider the following joint venture proposal letter:

Dear Tom,

I recently discovered your site, www.fakesite.com, and noticed that you provide your visitors with high-quality resources and products.

I'm contacting you because I'm planning to launch a product in the near future and wondered if you are interested in participating in a joint venture partnership.

Specifically, I'm planning to launch a new product, which I will release only to my readers and the readers on one more site.

If you're interested in working with me, I will select you as the sole additional distributor and allow you to sell it at an 80% commission.

Let me know if you're interested. If so, I will send you a copy of the product, as

well as more information about my launch plans.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely, Jeff Thompson

Again, the particular form of the letter is not critical. The most important part is that you make an effort to start contacting people, pitching your role as a JV partner, and finding good matches for your plan.

Rule #10: Make it Easy for Others to Help You

No matter what you're doing with your business, it's always a good idea to remind yourself that you should make it easier for others to help you. After all, the easier it is to help you, the more people will do it.

Take for instance affiliate programs. A casual browsing of www.clickbank.com will make it obvious that you have thousands of different affiliate programs you can promote.

But when it comes to selecting a program, which one will you choose?

If you're not terribly worried about making money, you might just pick any program at all. If you're profit-oriented, you'll probably spend some time making a careful choice.

You'll probably consider:

1. Whether a product is relevant to your site's niche
2. Whether the product has a history of converting and is popular with affiliates, as given by Clickbank's rating system
3. Whether the product pays a large commission.
4. Perhaps most importantly, you will consider the convenience of each affiliate program. For instance, you will check to see whether they have pre-made text ads, premade banner ads; and whether they provide lists of relevant keywords for PPC advertising.

You will also look for a program that provides additional sales materials, such as squeeze page code and salesletters--all stuff that would make it easier for YOU to make a profit.

Keep this in mind when trying to get others to help your business do well.

Whether you're doing this through viral marketing campaigns, an affiliate program, or joint venture marketing, make it extremely easy and virtually costless for them to promote you.

The better you do this, the better your exposure will be.

Rule #11: Create a Blog

One of the best ways to generate traffic for your website is to create a blog, update it regularly, and optimize it for search engines.

You have many options when it comes to creating a blog, but 2 in particular are very popular among Internet marketers:

1. <http://www.blogger.com>
2. <http://www.wordpress.com> or <http://www.wordpress.org>

After you have your blog setup, spend some time researching popular tags on sites like www.technorati.com, which index blogs. Once you do this, create several categories for your blog posts based on these tags.

Once you finish updating your blog, ping all of the blog directories by using a service like <http://pingomatic.com>.

Your entry will automatically be added to the categories on those sites for which you tagged it.

If you spend some time to create high-quality content, there's a good chance that visitors to these directories will recognize it, read it, and vote positively on it (if it has a social ranking system, such as Digg's).

This can significantly expand the reach of your blog; and subsequently your site and products.

Rule #12: Find Ways to Generate Leads

As a rule of thumb, spend at least 50% of your time each week trying to generate new leads when your business is new and unprofitable. Once your business expands to become profitable and to maintain a steady customer base, aim to spend at least 15% of your time looking for new sources of leads.

Once your business becomes successful, it is very tempting to ignore new leads and to focus on shoring up consistent profits with your customer base, but in

the long run, this is the model of a dying business.

In order to expand, you need new leads and new sources of leads, so find time during each week to make sure you do this. If you feel like you've run out of good ideas for generating leads, spend some time spying on your competition to find out what they do.

There's a good chance you've overlooked some of their most profitable sources.

Rule #13: Join Forums and Contribute

While paid forms of advertising can be highly effective and targeted, one of the best ways to promote your business is through the passive approach of posting on forums and blogs. The goal here is to make yourself useful; and to make an overt attempt NOT to sell anything directly.

As you build rapport and as people come to appreciate your posts and advice, you will want to use very subtle ways to make your business.

These methods include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Create a high-quality report and give it away for free. No matter what niche you sell in, forum readers will appreciate this-- especially if your content is good. In order to get some kick out of this approach, be sure to include links to resources on your site in your book. Also, include links to the opt-in page for your list.
2. Include a signature with each of your posts that explains who you are, in which areas you are an expert, and why people should contact you. Also, include a link to your site, your product, or your list.
3. Become a moderator on the forum without asking for anything in return. This will involve a little bit of sacrifice on your part, but it will pay off in terms of the credibility and authority you gain among members of the forum.

If you're not sure where to start, go to <http://www.big-boards.com> and search for forums related to your website's niche.

Spend a few hours each week on a handful of relevant forums that receive a lot of traffic. Find out which of these forums is likely to be the most profitable; and then make an effort to concentrate your time and resources there.

Most importantly, do not show up on a forum with the express purpose of reaping a profit and then taking off.

If it becomes clear that you have no interest in contributing to the community, forum members will be unlikely to respond well to you.

Rule #14: Use PPC Advertising

Many new Internet marketers make the mistake of focusing exclusively on "free" traffic sources. What they generally ignore is that these sources are not truly free: they require you to spend exorbitant amounts of time doing menial tasks--and often for meager returns.

Pay per click campaigns provide a viable alternative to mindless amounts of menial labor. They allow you to cut through all of the nonsense and directly send high-quality visitors in a way in which you can control very carefully. A good way to get started in PPC is to create a Google Adwords account.

Other services, such as Yahoo! Publisher Network may be a good place to expand after you've had some success with Adwords.

In order to setup your first Adwords campaign, you will need to draft a short text ad, select a list of relevant keywords, and select a daily budget. For now, keep the budget small; and focus on creating an ad that converts well.

When creating Adwords text ads, there are several important rules of thumb to keep in mind:

1. If your site sells raincoats, then most of your keywords will also contain the word "raincoat." This means that people who searched for a phrase that contained "raincoat" will see your ad. For this reason, you will want to include the actual keyword in your text ad, so that it will show up bolded when someone searches for it; and will set it apart from other ads.
2. Always split-test your ads to determine which do a better job of converting readers into site visitors. Since Adwords rewards you for a high click-through rate (CTR) by placing your ad higher, you will want to make sure your ads are converting well around this dimension. You can test this by making minor changes to your ad test; and then checking how it affects your CTR over a several-day horizon.
3. Always split-test your ads to determine which ones produce higher-quality traffic. If some ads are written in a way that generates visitors

who do not spend time on your site, do not buy products, and do not join lists, then you will want to either rewrite those ads or use them with a different keyword lists.

In addition to those brief rules of thumb, there are a lot of other best practice guidelines you will want to use in order to improve your results; however, for the time being, it is sufficient to focus only on those three until you significantly improved your results.

Rule #15: Track Your Results

If you follow skilled, successful marketers, you'll notice that they frequently exhort new marketers to "test and track." And this is great advice, but unfortunately, it is seldom followed.

New marketers usually either don't have a strong understanding of how they can test and track; or they are not confident in the ways in which they are 1) setting up the test; and 2) tracking and interpreting the results.

If this is where you stand currently, understand that this can change. And if you're willing to let it change--to learn how to test and track--you can truly gain mastery over your own results by becoming better at understanding and controlling the results.

Your first step should be to get a website statistics tracker that will provide you with a sufficient amount of detail. Regardless of which hosting service you use, there's a good chance you already have one. Simply login your administrative account and check the control panel.

You should see one or more icons on your panel that look like a graph. These will provide a comprehensive break-down of your traffic statistics. If your site does not already come with a free website traffic statistics tracker, create a free account at <http://www.statcounter.com>.

This will give you a sufficiently comprehensive break-down of the traffic statistics for your site. Once you have a tracking system in place, the only thing that remains is to carefully design tests.

Whenever you do this, you will want to keep two things in mind:

- 1) as many things as possible should be held equal
- 2) you should allow for a long time horizon to pass before you reach a conclusion.

For part one, you can do this by using PPC traffic exclusively for your tests. This will allow you to be certain that the quality and relevance of the traffic you're sending is roughly equal for you're the two sales pages or squeeze pages you're testing.

For the second part, you will want to keep in mind that you will need a large set of observations before you can draw an valid inferences from your sample about your target population.

Consider running your campaign for several weeks with identical traffic and different ads to see whether there are significant conversion rate effects.

Finally, and most importantly, remember to make only small changes when you split test two ads.

This might mean only changing the headline on one salespage; and comparing the results to the original salesletter.

This will make it much easier to be sure that you are capturing the effects from the headline change when you view your results (rather than some other change you made simultaneously).

Rule #16: Stop Doing Things That Don't Get Results

One important part of any successful Internet marketing campaign is figuring out how to do things the right way; and then following through once you do. Another important thing is to stop doing things that don't get results.

Frequently, new Internet marketers simply don't know how to do this. They know that they aren't getting results, but they feel like they have too few options, so they cling to marketing strategies that are proven losers.

If you find yourself in this situation now, the best thing you can do is to set aside some time each month to re-evaluate your marketing efforts.

For each marketing campaign, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do I have a reasonable way to test and track my results? Can I setup tests that allow me to determine how different sources of traffic impact my campaign differently? Can I test how my conversion rates vary with changes in my marketing campaign?

Can I measure my results fairly well?

2. When I check my results from these tests, what do I find? Is it clear that my current campaigns are better than the obvious alternatives? Is it possible that I could improve my campaigns by making small or large changes?

3. Are there any marketing campaigns that clearly are not bringing in enough revenue to cover the associated costs? If so, is it likely that this will change in the near future? Or is there reason to believe that things will not change unless you make major changes?

These are all important questions to ask. And until you answer them, you'll never know whether your current marketing campaigns are money-makers or simply dead-ends.

So do yourself the favor and start one of these evaluations tonight.

Rule #17: Copy Successful Business Models

One of the best parts of Internet marketing is that it is relatively easy to observe other business models. Not only can you see what other business owners are doing in your niche, but you can carefully pick it apart by reading their salesletters, signing up for their lists, following their forum discussions, observing their product launches, and back-tracking the sources of their traffic.

But before we get ahead of ourselves, let's break this down, step-by-step. Let's examine each of these methods more closely.

Method #1: Salesletter

If your site is selling only one product, there's a good chance that your marketing efforts amount to crafting a salesletter and then marketing it carefully. If you haven't done this already, it's a good idea to find out how competitors have approached this same challenge.

Start by going to www.clickbank.com. If you don't have an account already, create one. Once you do that, search the directory for affiliate products within your niche. Sort the results by either "gravity" or "% referred."

These two orderings will give you an idea of how successful affiliates have been pitching these products. If gravity or "% referred" scores are high, this implies that affiliates have had a great deal of success selling the product, which signals that its salespage is probably good.

Once you've selected the products you plan to observe, use a multi-tab browser to open up 4-5 of the associated pitch pages simultaneously. In addition to that, open up your own salespage in another tab.

Compare the work in the other salesletters to your own. Think about what you're missing relative to their salesletters. Is it only traffic? Or is your salesletter missing important features?

For instance, are you missing testimonials? Or are you missing a catchy story that will bring in readers? Or, compared to your competitors, is your headline relatively weak? These are all things you must consider.

Method #2: Sign Up for Email Lists

Another great way to reverse engineer your competitors' success is to sign up for their email lists. I've mentioned this several times earlier, but here, I'll emphasize the features you should look for when you do this:

1. How frequently do they send out emails? Every two days? Every week? Every two weeks? Irregularly?

This is important. The pace of emails will play an important role in determining how interested followers will be; and also whether or not they decide to opt-out.

2. How frequently do they pitch to their list? This is also an important determinant of success. Pitching too frequently will turn off subscribers and will cause them to lose interest or unsubscribe. Not pitching frequently enough leaves a lot of money on the table.

3. What methods do they use to monetize their list? Do they directly pitch through advertisements? Do they promote affiliate products? Do they send out reviews of existing products? Do they give away free books and reports that subtly promote their own products?

Once you complete this process, make some revisions to your own email list. Consider changing the spacing between emails, the amount of free content you give away, and the frequency with which you pitch to customers.

Method #3: Follow Forum Discussions

Follow discussion in Internet marketing – as well as many other niches – business owners own forums; and use them to communicate with buyers, prospective buyers, and subscription site members.

This is a great place to find out about the inner workings of a successful

business model. Start by identifying relevant businesses.

After you've done this, sign up for their forums, and a handful of their subscription sites. Follow discussions between members. Find out what it is that is causing these subscribers to come back; to maintain interest in the business; and to buy products.

Also, look for what is not working: what are they complaining about? What are they seeking advice about? Where has your competitor left gaps that you can fill?

Method #4: Following Product Launches

If you've spent a lot of time as an Internet marketer, you've probably learned this important gem of wisdom: if you want to know what successful marketers REALLY do to make money, WATCH them, rather than listening to them.

Why do I say this? They might tell you all the important things you must do; and these might all be true, but there are many intangibles that come with a product launch that you simply cannot discern by reading. Fortunately, product launches happen every day.

And these provide the most revealing record of how marketers make money. So, next time you hear that a big name marketer is launching a new product, think about how you can copy her launch process, rather than wondering whether you can afford her \$500 ebook.

Important things to look for include the following:

1. The extent to which they use joint venture partnerships;
2. The extent to which they use affiliates;
3. Whether or not they (or other people) are promoting them through PPC;
4. How they subtly make an attempt to gain the attention of forum-posters; and
5. What changes they make to their site in order to attract attention for the launch.

Method #5: Back-Tracking Traffic Sources

As with method #4, pay careful attention to how Internet marketers actually generate traffic, rather than how they say you should do it.

You'll probably find the following is true:

1. Successful Internet marketers receive more traffic from word of mouth than from attempts at traffic generation. What do I mean by this? If you look at most successful businesses, people search the business out because they've heard good things about it, rather than searching blindly and stumbling over it.
2. Viral marketing campaigns are an excellent tool for quickly inflating the size of a company, but they're usually either spectacularly successful or spectacularly pathetic. If you plan to use viral videos, viral ebooks, viral reports, or anything thing else like that, then you need to make a concerted effort to do it the right way.
3. An important source of traffic for most websites is direct links from other places. This includes links embedded in website content, links posted on forums in reference to the website, and links posted on blogs.

Of course, you will want to augment this list with the results from your own analysis, but in general, you should find those things to be true of your competitors.

Rule #18: Be Critical of Yourself and Your Business

As a business owner, it's easy to become set in your ways and to convince yourself that you approach things as best as you can.

When you see others doing better, making more sales, or operating more efficiently, instead of looking for what they're doing right, you'll try to find out something they've done worse than you. This is fine. It's a natural tendency.

And it can be painful to see others do better than we have with our own business model. Furthermore, it can be very hard to criticize your own work.

In some cases, it'll be terrible and you'll see it right away; in other cases, it'll be better than normal for you and you'll know it. But often, it falls somewhere in between; and it will be impossible or nearly impossible to evaluate the quality of your work.

Now, you might throw your hands up and say "there's nothing I can do about that. All I can do is try my hardest and hope my work is good." But in reality, there is.

One of the best ways to get better is to allow others to criticize your work – to tell you what's wrong with it and how you should improve it.

For instance, let's say you've just written a piece of sales copy; and you think it's pretty good.

The problem is that you don't know what other people think about it; and you can't until you've already wasted the money to send traffic to the page.

A good way to save some cash here is to post your sales letter on <http://copywriting.com/community/forums.html> and to ask people to rip it apart constructively. Not all of the advice will be useful, but much of it will.

So take the bad with the good; and figure out what changes will help. As another example, let's say you've just concocted a marketing scheme for your website.

You're not sure if it'll work, so you're hoping to get some advice for seasoned marketers. Well, head to <http://www.warriorforum.com>, create an account, and ask for some advice.

Rule #19: Stay Active and Maintain a To Do List

Since you're frequently working on your computer, it is very easy to drift off into other activities at the same time you work.

You might think you're really accomplishing a lot, but if you were to back-track your day, you might learn that you had actually spent 3 to 4 hours surfing the web aimlessly; and another 1 hour checking sports scores or watching YouTube videos.

This is precisely why it is important to keep tabs on things you need to do. You can do this with a calendar, with a simple to do list, or however you think is best. The most important thing is that you keep track of all tasks that you need to do.

Why is this a good idea? Because it gives you something to do the minute you get distracted. Instead of wandering off further, you'll remember that you have something important to do; and you'll get on top of it, rather than letting things slide. When it comes to "to do" lists, there are good and bad items to add.

I personally suggest that you try to break everything up into very small parts, so that each individual task seems easy. This will reduce your resistance to starting each of these tasks, which will make it easy for you to fill your day with them, rather than becoming bored or wasting time.

So keep yourself on a tight schedule, create goals for your accomplishments, and make sure that you always have many small, but important tasks you can do whenever things get slow during the day.

Rule #20: Offer Sales

Sales serve many important purposes. When business is slow, they give you a channel through which you can increase sales.

When business fine, they give you a channel through which you can garner customer interest (so that they have a reason to revisit your site frequently). What's interesting is that there is often a large disparity in the amount of sales a new Internet marketer will offer relative to an established Internet marketer.

While the former will almost never hold a sale, the latter will do it frequently.

Now, the reasons for this aren't complete clear, but what is true is that holding sales more frequently will make your business stronger and more successful. It will give you the ability to control your flow of sales; and it will generate interest among customers.

So, if you've never had a sale, start today. Pick some old products that no longer sell as well as they used to. Bundle them together and offer an excellent price. Market it through your site as a limited-time special offer. Use PPC and list marketing to drive traffic to it.

Finally, use the methods I mentioned earlier to see whether your sale worked. See whether the special page on your site for the sale generated more revenue for you than your original pages for those products over the same time horizon.

Rule #21: Entice Customers to Return

The previous rule hinted at something very important: if you don't give customers a good reason to return, they probably won't. After all, it's a big Internet out there. They have many choices from which they can select. They can go to other sites, buy other products, and get other people's advice.

And you should be mindful of this when designing your site and updating your content.

So how can you respond to this important fact? I'd suggest you:

1. Hold monthly contests.

It doesn't matter what the contest is; all that matters is that your visitors will find it sufficiently attractive to return each month. In most niches, a contest that offers people the potential to win products, cash, and other prizes will be a powerful mechanism for luring in repeat visitors.

2. Create a list.

We covered this earlier in depth, but it's important to repeat: one of the best ways to get people to keep coming back to your site is to create a list. With a list, you can constantly solicit people who join for sales and for other activities. You can also pitch every new product you create.

3. Create a forum on your site.

Initially, there might not be much posting, but if you receive a fair amount of traffic; and you make an attempt to get the conversation rolling, you could have a bustling forum with many members in a matter of months.

4. Update your layout, your page, and your prices.

After a person returns to your site twice and finds no changes whatsoever, they'll have almost no incentive to continue returning.

5. Create a blog. This will allow people who find your site content sufficiently interesting to keep up with you on a regular basis. It will create a sense of continuity and dynamism that they cannot get from most sites; and, as a result, they will frequent yours more often.

6. Create videos occasionally and embed them on your website; and post them on YouTube. This is also a way to create continuity, to provide updates, and to make your website seem more lively and engaging. As a result, you can expect your visitors to return more frequently.

There you have it: six ways in which you can entice visitors to return. Now, get to work implementing them on your site. The longer you wait, the more visitors you will willingly allow to disappear without becoming attached to your site.

Rule #22: Don't Overwork Yourself

You've already heard the other side of this story: work hard and you'll get ahead. But there's something else you should take into consideration: if you work too hard, you'll become burned out, dull, uncreative, and uninspiring to those you encounter.

In short, working hard can work against you. So instead of staying up until 4am, pounding away at meaningless tasks, give yourself time to replenish your

energy, think creatively, take a walk, see the people you are most important in your life, and enjoy things other than work.

If you don't do this, you'll soon find yourself as many new Internet marketers do: feeling purposeless and without any success--feeling like the amount of work you put in cannot be justified by the results and that the entire enterprise of Internet marketing is not worthwhile.

So save yourself the heartache, lost sleep, stress, and feelings of hopelessness. Put a cap on your work hours, take breaks, and don't wear yourself out.

Rule #23: Sell New Products to Your Old Customers

One common thread in marketing discussions is that retaining old customers and selling them new products is much easier and less expensive than locating and converting new customers.

No matter what business owner you talk to you, you're likely to find that they agree with this. And this is precisely why you should take it into consideration when focusing your marketing efforts.

If you're like many other Internet marketers, you think your relationship ends with the customer once the transaction is finalized. You think that once a person clicks "buy," enters his credit card information, and downloads the ebook, there's nothing left to be said or done.

Well, the people who think this couldn't be any more wrong--at least if their goal is to make money. In fact, the first time you sell to a customer should always be the beginning of a long-term relationship of mutual benefit--at least if you have a good business model.

So how can you shift things around to make sure this is the case? I'd start by taking the following two steps:

1. Add a product pitch on your download page.

Most people who haven't tried this think it sounds crazy. "Who would want to buy something else immediately," they ask. But, in fact, many people do, which is why you'll notice this style of pitches on most successful marketers' product download pages. The only important thing to keep in mind is that you'll want the pitch to be relatively low-key.

Instead of using a slide-in, a pop-over, or a check-out button at the top of the download page, instead include your pitch below the download button. Another important thing to keep in mind is the scope and nature

of the pitch you make.

One good rule of thumb is to match small product sales with large product offers; and large product sales with small product offers. Of course, it is best to test this for yourself and find out what sells best with your particular model.

2. Revitalize your email list.

One common problem that Internet marketers have is that they spend the time to build a robust list to which they can market, but they never seize the opportunity to truly use it to earn money.

Once the original autoresponder sequence goes out to customers, they send out very few emails after that; and rarely anything of interest. This is a big mistake. Revitalizing your email list isn't the easiest thing in the world to do, but it is perhaps one of the most inexpensive ways in which you can get leads, which is why you shouldn't overlook it.

Relative to finding new leads and converting them, it will almost always be much, much cheaper. Now, there are several ways in which you can revitalize your list. I personally suggest you do it by giving away a spate of free, but highly valuable products.

Consider giving away ebooks, free reports, and prizes. You might even consider requiring people to email you back in order to enter a contest. If they're successful, you'll give them a cash prize or something equally attractive. This should do the trick. After a few weeks, people will stop ignoring your emails; and will pay attention to the information you send them.

So there you have it: one of the best and cheapest ways to make sales is to make new products, but sell them to old customers.

Use the above two ways to do this; and you'll open up a whole new source of traffic and sales that you've been willingly throwing away for months or even years.

Rule #24: Create Products that Market Other Products

Another great way to expand the reach of your marketing efforts is to create products that market other products. In practice, this is relatively easy to do. Let me give you an example. Normally, you might create a 15-page report that explains how people can make more money by setting up single-product sites and marketing them through PPC advertising. You'd charge \$10 for this report

and market it through your list and some forums.

But there's another alternative. You could create that some product, fill it with relevant affiliate links and links to your site; and you could then give it away for free.

Imagine how much greater the reach would be if you did this. Since your report would be completely free, hundreds more would download it; and many would take your advice and purchase multiple products through your affiliate links. At the end of the day, this can be considerably more profitable than selling a report for \$10.

Another alternative to giving your report away for free is giving people the right to sell it.

Business owners are frequently looking for high-quality content to sell to their subscribers and visitors; and if you can offer them the rights to it for free, you might be able to get your report in the hands of thousands of people with very little leg work on your part.

Rule #25: Stay Educated

As a rule, it's always a good idea to stay educated when it comes to Internet marketing. As with any enterprise on the Internet, things change fast. And if you're relying on information you read four years ago, you're likely to be unpleasantly surprised when you find out things have changed.

So keep this in mind. When it comes to Internet marketing, things change, rules change, and business practices change. And if you don't change with them, you'll soon find yourself in a very bad position.

You'll be matching your outdated methods against much sleeker, more efficient, better-educated competitors. Not only will you be missing critical information about how best to optimize your site for search engine traffic, but you won't even be aware of new ways in which you can find customers.

One clear example of this is the recent social media explosion. Those who have paid attention to it, followed it closely, and harvested its money-making power have seen phenomenal success.

They've found ways to quickly locate tens of thousands of highly-targeted individuals--and direct them to their respective websites. On the other hand, many marketers have missed this revolution entirely.

They're still using old methods to generate traffic, which may be useful, but which will slowly become outdated over time. So, don't put yourself in this situation. Learn to stay abreast of current developments in Internet marketing.

Read forums and blogs to find out what cutting edge techniques are being used. Even if you don't feel comfortable using them yourself immediately, you should at least know that they exist; and that they can provide you with another alternative for generating traffic should you opt to use them.

Rule #26: Learn to be Patient

As I said in the introduction, the keys to success in Internet marketing aren't all entirely practical. Some are primarily philosophical. In particular, this rule is philosophical, but will bring you a great deal of success if you can actually follow it.

So what it is? Learn to be patient. You can start doing this today by lowering your expectations. Want to become a millionaire by tomorrow? Practice patience by cutting that down to a more reasonable figure. Expect only \$500,000 by tomorrow.

When you realize how ridiculous it sounds not be satisfied with \$500,000 by tomorrow, cut it down further. Chop it down to \$250,000; and then \$100,000; and then something reasonable.

The sooner you can accept that you won't become rich tomorrow, the sooner you can give up on your wild dreams and start making real, intelligent, well-thought out business plans that can truly offer you the hope of one day having a thriving, successful business that could indeed make you a millionaire.

So, as stupid, simple, and trite as it sounds, learn how to practice patience. Don't become overwhelmed by wild aspirations; and feel the pressure to succeed immediately.

Instead, be patient and lay the foundations of a real business that provides true value to customers.

Rule #27: Systemize Your Business

Here we are at rule #27. It may be the last rule, but it's actually the most important. And it happens to be related to a common problem that Internet marketers have: they never systemize their business processes.

To understand why this is a problem, just think about one of the things that

characterizes the difference between an efficient, scalable corporation and a small business that cannot grow beyond \$500,000/year in revenue: ad hoc decision making.

If you're not familiar with the term "ad hoc," it refers to anything that is designed for a specific purpose. And this is exactly how we can characterize the decision making of small businesses: there's a new decision for each new situation; and no plans for future contingencies.

To the contrary, large corporations plan, work out contingencies, and create systems that can be re-used without spending the time to re-invent the wheel. Take, for instance, the concept of franchising. This makes it possible to create hundreds of retail stores or restaurants without coming up with an "ad hoc" plan for each individual store.

Instead, there's an existing template that can be used and is sufficiently general so that it will ensure the success of the business. The same thing applies to Internet marketing. Consider how hard it would be to manage an affiliate program if you didn't do it through Clickbank.com or through some affiliate program software.

You would have to talk to each affiliate individually, take her contact information, and record a massive amount of payment information. Instead, you can reduce the amount of time you spend on these tasks to virtually nothing through the use of some systemization and automation. Now, reducing the amount of ad hoc decision-making you do isn't just a lofty suggestion.

There are many concrete ways in which you can do this to further the systemization of your business; and to improve its efficiency. I personally suggest that you do the following five things at a minimum to streamline your business processes:

1. Create templates for everything you do. Whether you find yourself frequently sending out the same emails, frequently posting the same information on forums, or frequently explaining the same concepts to joint venture partners, make a template for it using Word; and then use it to send all subsequent emails. This will make your life much easier and cut out a lot of unnecessary re-writing.
2. Download a free password-manager and form filler. Add all of your relevant information to these programs; and then use them in the future whenever you need to fill out a form or fill in a password. This will save you a great deal of time and effort in the long run.

3. Spend a full day re-arranging all pertinent information related to your business. Create a database using Excel or Access to keep track of important client information. Create an elaborate system of folders to keep track of all of your business information, so that you can quickly locate it when needed, rather than searching through endless amounts of disorganized information.

4. Create templates for all of your outsourcing tasks. This might include templates for projects you frequently hire freelancers for, templates for joint venture proposals, and templates that you use to pursue new affiliates to sell your product.

5. Spend some time drafting process diagrams that clearly define how tasks should be carried out in your business. Consider things such as how you find leads, how those leads translate into buyers, and how projects flow from you to your workers; and then back to you. This will help you work out a logical outline in your mind for how your business should operate; and how it can build systems that will allow it to become scalable.

In short, putting systems in place is one of the best ways in which you can eliminate hundreds of different ad hoc decisions; and instead replace them with processes that clearly delineate what you should do in each situation.

Conclusion

Internet marketing is not easy. It is filled with many complicated challenges that can push you off track, confuse you, and prevent you from succeeding.

Reports and ebooks that attempt to give you a one-size-fits-all approach miss a very important point: successful Internet marketing requires you to be a dynamic, intelligent, and flexible, so a set of static, unchanging plans is unlikely to make you successful.

That's exactly why I drafted this guide: instead of giving you a paint-by-numbers approach, I've given you a set of rules that will provide you with a firm, workable framework within which you can build a successful business.

At the same time, they will leave you with the flexibility to remain responsive and to come up with dynamic responses to dynamic problems. And with that, I leave you to build your business.

So get started, put the rules I've listed to work, and experience the long-lasting success that comes with building a business on strong principles.

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