

4 Simple Steps to Growing Your Business... Online

The Internet might seem like a complicated place. Gone are the days where a business with “AAA” in its title could get ahead of other businesses in the yellow pages. Alphabetical listings are replaced with complicated search algorithms, plain text replaced with HTML. As more people use the Internet to find everything – from research on school papers, to finding local businesses – every business needs to consider this marketplace a top priority. But, it doesn’t have to be complicated; keeping 4 simple steps in mind you will be able to grow your business... online.

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There are four major steps to a successful business online:

- Planning (of the development, maintenance, and marketing)
- Development
- Maintenance
- Marketing

Planning

*Did you know that, according to eMarketer’s growth estimates, approximately 73.7% of those aged 50 – 64 are currently actively using the Internet?** For some, this may be a shocking statistic! This fact may not be significant to your business, but, if you took only the first step, you could easily find similar, relevant information on your own target audience.

Planning, the first, is the most important phase, but often the most neglected. Planning refers to a complete map of how your online audience – and they are online – will be targeted. Ideally this should be a part of the marketing portion of your business plan. Remember, a website is only a small portion of the plan.

Key questions to ask yourself include, where is my key audience online? Are they at trade websites; are they in social networks, etc.? What role will my website play? What features do I want it to include? What features does my audience want to include in my website? How will I get *future clients* to my website? How will we maintain the website, or who will update it?

Development

With a solid plan in place, development is a simple process. With an end goal in mind a good team of programmers, designers, and writers, can generate a successful web presence. But, if you are on a budget I would highly recommend using a free blogging service to start. A great service to start with is **WordPress.com**.

Maintenance

Maintenance, the third step to Internet lead generation is **very** important. You must use your website as the tool it was planned, and developed to be. Without updates, additional text, news & events, etc. it becomes stale - and even with proactive marketing - can fall short of your goals.

Marketing

When you setup a website people **won’t** just magically come to it. You must attract them through additional content and marketing. Much like any business you need to get your website out there. Talk about it, network,

participate in blogs and communities, advertise, provide an email newsletter, do pay per click marketing, purchase banner ads, etc.

Keeping these four steps in mind you should have no problem growing your business... online.

*"Seniors Online: The Picture Is Changing." EMarketer. 2005. 22 May 2007

<<http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?id=1003406>>

Hi, I'm Zach Katkin, owner of the local Internet Marketing and web development company, Atilus. Thank you for taking the time to read this article (I know this one was boring – but now that we have the basics out of the way we can really dig into the juicy stuff). Next month I hope to discuss the basics of marketing your business online, namely **Search Engine Optimization**! In the meantime if you have any questions please feel free to email me at: zach@atilus.com or give me a call at: (239) 362-1271.