

The Web

Cooking up a storm

By Scott Balson

A pioneer of computer based marketing in Australia

Scott Balson started building floppy disk based interactive presentations for the Dos platform in 1989. In 1990 his innovative work was recognised and he was invited to set up his fledgling business at the Bentley Technology Centre in Perth, Western Australia. In 1992 he was the only non-academic speaker at the first International Multimedia Symposium held in Perth. In 1994 his company won the award for the best Windows based application in Australia (*QANTIM – the electronic Qantas timetable*). In 1994-1995 he was the Project Manager for the Ipswich City Council (Queensland) *Global Info-Links* project which became one of the first council provided Internet services in the world. In 1994 he established the first web building company in Australia, Global Web Builders, (gwb.com.au). In 1996 he was a winner in the first Australian Internet Awards for his five year old son's website scribbles.com.au (still a cult site in the USA). That year he launched the first online daily newspaper in Australia. His book "*Murder by Media*", published in 1999, was the first Internet best seller in the world. Since then he has written and published eight books. Today he has several successful online businesses which operate utilising many of the tips and hints given in this book.

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The ingredients behind a profitable website Facts and fantasy...

This book is aimed at those wanting to make money through the Internet and will uniquely concentrate on the key ingredients behind making your website profitable. This book will strip away the fallacies and provide you with a firm foundation on which to build your profitable Internet Business.

But there is more! We will show you how to resell your profitable web site and the value of generic domain names.

But there is still more! All our simple solutions will be supported by real life examples and quotes from leading businesspeople who have successfully adopted the strategies we set out in this book.

So let's start by getting rid some of the fantasy!

- Flash adds value to my website
- Big images and graphic pages rule!
- Attractive graphic link menus are the better option.

Look at any of the major web sites like Google, Microsoft or eBay and you will soon discover that it is the application, not design, that is the basis of their success.

In this book we will show you how their successful strategy is being effectively implemented by a growing number of online businesses.

Several of these businesses no longer rely on the sometimes costly print based marketing options such as The Yellow Pages or newspaper advertising.

Chapters

Overview – what makes a website profitable.

The new cyber real estate market

Selecting your niche online business

Content is king

Structuring your web site

Strategies for maximising visibility

Back end software engines such as shopping carts

Making your website proactive

Newsletters

Social networking and videos

There's Gold in Them Generic Domain Names.

Overview

For most of you the Internet will feel like a surreal world where nothing seems familiar. A world of screens, images and information which appear to have little real value in this busy world we live in today.

That is why in this overview we will look at the overlap between the cyber world of the Internet and your local corner hardware store. Simply put the big difference between these two worlds is geography. Your local hardware store has a very distinct local market while your web page on the Internet, depending on the products you sell, has a global reach and potential to open up new markets you could only dream about! Apart from geography, the same business principles apply.

To simplify the core elements of a successful web page we are going to compare your local hardware business to an online web site.

In the property market they talk about position, position and position being the key to a property's value. The same applies on the Internet – with the position factor being your visibility on the key search engines – like Google. A web site that appears on the first page of Google when the key search words are selected can be equated to a successful business that is ideally placed in a busy population centre. The “land” the business sits on is the domain name. The domain name is the unique URL that you have selected for your web site (for example www.leadgenerators.com.au). In this book we will discuss the importance of making the right domain name selection to help you get your business located in that busy population centre.

The web site you build on your “block of land” can be equated to the buildings established to conduct your business. The big difference is that potential clients do not talk to a salesperson. They peruse the information on your pages and then should be prompted to make a buying decision. The building, or content on your website, is a critical part of clinching the deal and gaining favour with the search engines. A professional looking design reflects a well thought out shop window while a poorly designed page reflects badly on your business. This aspect of your online business will be discussed in this book.

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What business could operate today without an effective phone system? Just like a good phone system, the development of quality links with other web sites is a key ingredient to building your network and a prominent position on the search engines. Again this issue will be discussed in this book.

Now that we have identified the three main ingredients to building the foundation for a successful online business – effective domain names, relevant content and quality links – we need to look at just what we are going to sell.

Unlike the corner hardware store you can target your website assets to a global audience. Not only that but these assets might cover a wide range of opportunities such as products, e-books, services, information etc..

In years to come when you have created your own little niche on the Internet you might decide to sell your business which includes the land (domain name), the building (content and structure) and stock (your saleable commodities).

Top ten key ingredients to optimise your website for the search engines:

1. Choice of Domain name/s
2. Content
3. Structure
4. White hat techniques
5. Web stats analysis
6. External links to your site
7. Blogs, social networking and videos
8. Descriptive headers
9. Meta tag description
10. Site Navigation

IMPORTANT NOTE: While this PDF booklet provides important clues on gaining visibility on the Internet there is not enough time or space to cover all the various strategies required to customise your presence for maximum exposure on the web.

Contact Scott Balson at gwb@gwb.com.au to have your new website designed and tailored for maximum results or phone: 07 38927333 (Australia)

The new cyber real estate market

When you go and buy a property today one of the key factors you need to look at is the position of that property. For example, an excellent investment in the past has been a beachside property that looks out straight over the beach and across the sea without the impediment of a house or block of flats restricting your view.

In this comparison we need to look at how that property compares with domain names which are, in effect, cyber property. After all a domain name will be your location on the Internet.

There are three main criteria for selecting domain names. These are:

- Generic
- An exact copy of your business name (without Pty Ltd)
- A short acronym

Do not use hyphenated domains, long domains or domains with a mix of letters and numbers when that combination makes no logical sense. (i.e. like a password).

Of the three the **generic domain** is the most important option when it comes to selecting a foundation domain name on which to launch your business online. As long as your business is related to the generic nature of the domain (eg timberwindows.com.au) there is no legal problem or technicality in securing this.

We recommend to clients that they also secure the domain name mirroring their **business name** and use this as their portal website – with the generic domains pointing to the portal and adding weight to the key words represented in these domains.

The short **acronym domain** is becoming harder and harder to come by and the three letter acronym is almost impossible to secure now – even the most obscure with “z”. However four letter acronyms in the .com.au realm are still available and are an acceptable option.

If your company is *Hazels Used Car Lot* then the acronym *hucl.com.au* is always a better option than the longer domain

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hazelsusedcarlot.com.au encapsulating your lengthy business name.

So what I am saying is consider a powerful generic domain like owning a valuable beachside property with unobstructed views to the ocean and the beautiful sunrises or sunsets – where the views and sunrises are your prominent position on Google. In this online commercial world it is YOUR visibility that matters. This is the reality of cyber property represented by generic domain names.

Google gives great strength to the key words representing your business reflected in the domain name. Do a search on Google and you will quickly see that what I am saying is true.

So in the real world you look out at the sea and enjoy the view – creating the value while in the cyber world the sea is the billions of potential clients from around the world who can see you from their computers through a search on your key words. You just have to be a few pages back on Google to be lost in the suburbs and lose the value of key domains.

Like buying your first home, your domain name is your block of land.

In fact I recommend my clients (and I do) register my online businesses in the name of the domain – for example *leadgenerators.com.au Pty Ltd*.

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Selecting your niche online business

So you have successfully purchased your block of online land, like the domain macau.com, (you should be so lucky as this domain was sold for US\$ 5 million!)

Well done... so whether your business is in pizza ovens (pizzaovens.com.au) or fitness and health (pilates.com.au), those generics are a very powerful foundation on which to build your cyber empire.

In 2003 I started building the concept of “village homestays” as an alternative to staying in traditional hotels when travelling around the world. One of the first things that I did was to buy all the domains which represented the major continents and the word homestays attached. My portal became “villagehomestays.com” and my four year pilot project was initiated in Fiji (fijibure.com)

Now targeting villages around the world as an alternative to staying in a traditional motel or hotel is something you could not do in traditional marketing platforms away from the power of the Internet. The Internet has no geography so the nature of culture and adventure reflects an entirely new niche market opening up new markets across the world.

In 2009 Village Homestays has started spreading across the world with new participants, run by local agents, being spawned in Africa, South America and Asia. The profitability of the project is best reflected by the several thousand guests who have already visited our participating villages in Fiji.

In this unique concept (the beauty of the web) the participating villages have been pulled out of poverty and in 2009 the village of Namuamua will have its library rebuilt in a project shared by FijiBure and Round Square – an international charity.

Now Village Homestays is a very special online business and demonstrates the expansive nature of the Internet in the creation of niche market based businesses that were previously impractical.

There are millions of opportunities out there right now for you to establish a profitable niche market based business with the web

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site being the building that sits on top of your cyber property (the domain name).

In the history of mankind there has been no such medium as the Internet which provides so much equality and opportunity to those who can carpe diem (seize the day).

Content is King

So you have selected your niche market on the Internet and acquired the all important domains that best represent the key words your potential clients will tap into Google.

You have done well!

You will soon know if your strategy has worked, but first you have to get the right text content into the web pages promoting your products or services.

When I say “content is king” what I really mean is that the key words reflecting the product or service you provide needs to be represented in the text of the web pages linked to your home page (opening web site page).

While we have talked about the domain name being the “cyber-property” and the website being the “building” the content can be likened to the attractions in the shop front window. The compilation of the key words, the core content, is not aimed at your potential client but gaining the attention of the search engines like Google.

So for example if you are trying to sell spanners, think of every key word that can be related to a Google search on your product and make sure that that string is included in your home page text.

While including the key words is critical to your success do not lose sight of the need to ensure that your content flows and is easy for the potential client to read.

The use of the description meta tag is a key flag to potential clients who find your web site through the search engines. This descriptive tag will be attached to your listing on their page.

So in summary, the key to your success is meeting the criteria of the search engines.

As I have always said, *“What good is a pretty billboard in the Nullabor Desert? After all no one will ever see it.”*

While on the subject of content the power of having blogs, forums and articles linked to your web site cannot be underestimated.

Structuring your web site

I would like you to compare your website to a multistorey building.

The home, or landing page, is the page first seen by potential clients. It is also the first page visited by the search engine worms. From this entry point the search engines will slowly investigate every linked page on your web site. The algorithm attached to the search engines worms starts by noting the content on your home page. It calls back at a later stage and starts visiting all the secondary pages or linked pages within your web site.

You will probably find when your web site first appears on Google that only your landing page has been recorded. A few weeks or months down the track you will suddenly see those secondary pages being linked by the search engines – a clear sign that your entire web site has been visited by the worms.

At the top of this page I talked about the home page being like the entry to your multi-level building (website).

Now what good would a multilevel building be to anyone if there was no staircase or lift to provide access to the other floors?

The cyber equivalent of this is a trap so many uninformed businesses fall into. In the mid-1990s websites built in the “frames” structure were popular and are still found on the web today. Web sites built in frames have multiple web pages linked into one page and are best identified by the content disappearing under the header at the top of the page when you scroll down rather than the header disappearing as you move down the page. To set up a frames page requires a few lines of code describing the position of the linked pages. The actual all important content is lost to the search engines because it does not appear in the code. So a frames based web site is about as useful as “tits on a bull” if visibility on a search engine is important to you.

Other common traps that businesses fall into are graphics based links – which the search engines cannot follow and frames based pages which, once again, do not serve any purpose for the search engine worms.

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How many times have you been shown flash-based web sites that have fancy animations but no visibility on Google? If I could tell you of all the examples I have seen it would take up a whole book!

The KISS Principle

There is one basic principle that should form the basis of your web site foundation and structure. Keep It Simple Stupid! *Have text based links to the key pages of your entire web site on all the main pages.* Text based links can be easily followed by the search engines. If you follow this simple principle you will provide the search engines with the lifts and stairs for them to access all floors of your “building” (or your entire web site). This will allow them to build a more positive picture of the importance of your website (relevant content is king) and, as a result, even the obscure but important pages which might carry product model numbers or obscure brands will be displayed on the search engines.

If you have a preferred design on your web site you can always place the key text links at the bottom of the page where they will not distract from the visual impact but will provide the search engines with the fodder they seek!

Strategies for maximising visibility

You now have the equivalent of a multistorey building with floors of potential selling space. You have used the correct structure so that the search engines can work their way through every nook and cranny of the building or web site. Now it is time to look at tweaking your web site to gain favour with search engines like Google.

There are many ways you can do this. The ones I have found most successful include:

Satellite websites pointing at the portal:

The portal website is your main web site where you have your multistorey structure with links and content. The satellite web sites are the generic name websites that carry the key words in the domain name and in the single page of content they carry. It is important that all content is unique and not parroted from another web page or one within your web site. The search engines will pick this up and penalise you! Critically your satellite web sites link to the portal.

At the beginning of this book I talked about the three types of domain name. Your portal could well be the acronym or business name domain with the key word generic domains being the satellites pointing to your main website and, through the link, screaming to the search engines “Hey look how important this web site is”.

Key words in links and headers:

If you sell garden products and one of your main lines is water tanks make sure that you have text links incorporating the word “water tanks” and that the related page incorporates the words “water tanks” in its header and its bold subtitles on the page.

Through this process you will draw the search engine worms to the importance of these key words. Having a satellite website with the domain name “watertanks.com.au” pointing to your portal would be a major bonus!

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Drop down menus incorporating geographic areas

If your target market is the entire greater Brisbane region then make sure that you have every suburb listed on your home page. This is easy to achieve – simply have a drop down menu with every suburb listed in it. Its practical purpose to the potential client might be minimal but what it does do is ensure that the search engines note every suburb as an option for presenting your web site when someone searches for a product matching the ones that you sell.

For example, if you do not have a drop down menu with all the suburbs and someone types in “water tanks Moorooka” your web site will not appear. However, if you have done this your web site will appear – and put it ahead of 90% of your potential clients who have not considered this option!

External Links to your website:

I talked earlier about having satellite websites pointing to your portal. A very powerful pointer to the search engines about the relevance of your web site is having links to it from third party websites.

In “Google’s eyes”, the more important the website pointing to yours, the more weight given by the algorithm in its final placement of your website in key word related listings.

Google Maps:

Google Maps are a fairly new feature on Google. By having a Gmail account you can list your web site under Google Maps which appear prominently on the related web site search. If you go to Google and search on a product and a specific destination like Brisbane you will see the Google map entry and related matching websites prominently displayed.

There are many other techniques which can be used to tweak your website but the complexity and variety make it impractical to list them all here. We would be happy to assist you in this area if you are looking at building a web site.

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Back end software engines; shopping carts etc

One of the biggest mistakes made by businesses incorporating online shopping carts into their web pages is the selection of back engine software driving their online shop.

What you do not want to do is build a complex shopping cart which restricts the access of the search engines to every item in it.

If you search on common items on Google you often find that you are taken to an item listed on eBay – smart!

However most smaller shopping carts established by businesses have no visibility on the search engines – so 99% of your potential market is lost.

The same applies to any backend information that you want to make visible to the Internet community through the search engines.

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Making your website proactive

Most websites are reactive – i.e. a potential client has to visit the website before they find out what you are selling.

One of the most effective ways of marketing products or services is by encouraging visitors to your website to leave their email address through the promise of a monthly newsletter which offers incentives. These incentives might be alerts to products that you are selling on your website at a discounted price or a reduced fee for a course etc.

Having a mailing list gives your online business additional impetus and will increase sales. Your newsletter will also draw additional traffic to your website.

Another thing that I have found very useful is the inclusion of a piece of code which allows a potential client to simply click on a link on your home page to add it as a “favourite” in their web browser favourites.

Placing this code prominently on your home page will help draw repeat visitors and increase sales.

Newsletters

If you do build up a mailing list on your web site you can compliment this list by getting the email addresses of all your current business clients.

Every month I send online newsletters by email to my client and prospect lists. The newsletters are subtly different in the message delivered in the email. For example I relate to the client list as clients “as a client of XY Company” etc... while with prospects I talk in more general terms.

The newsletters are a summary of further information carried on my website. The subjects listed in the email have a link directly back to this website page which might be helpful information or a product being sold at a special price.

There is a twofold purpose for the email newsletters

1. draw past visitors to my website back to have another look
2. to sell excess product or build consultations during a traditionally quiet period

There is a secondary positive impact brought about by continually updating your web site. The search engines love it! It demonstrates to the search engine algorithm that you have a dynamic and topical website.

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Social Networking and Videos

Another powerful linking technique is to get friends and family who have social networking pages like Facebook and MySpace to place links from their social web pages to your website.

Some web sites have been able to get hundreds of social networking pages pointing to their home page with a major beneficial impact in their placement on the search engines.

Likewise, the use of YouTube clips in your web site not only adds a point of interest but it also, if you include your website address, when loading the video clip, impacts favourably on your listing position.

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There's Gold in 'them' Generic Domain Names

One of my long term clients is a company known as Highway Diesel services. The Brisbane-based company fixes and tunes diesel engines.

A few years ago the owners asked me how they could improve their visibility on the Internet. I asked them what the two key areas of their business would be in the future.

They said:

Fuel injection services;
and the new technology known as
Common rail diesel

So we registered *fuellinjectionservices.com.au* and *commonraildiesel.com.au* for Highway Diesel Services and now if you search Australian Google you will see that they are listed number one out of many tens of thousands of competing web sites on these matching strings. These satellite sites point to the main website providing an enormous and growing inflow of business.

Another example in this area, out of many dozens of clients now utilising this strategy, is Cost Effective Maintenance. At my suggestion they purchased the name *dieselsmoke.com.au* and are now listed number one on Google – dramatically boosting sales of their products.

There is more to purchasing generics than just putting up a page – as demonstrated in the examples above. This is where Global Web Builders can help your company gain prominence while not paying large fees to Search Optimisation Companies.

So for an effective online marketing strategy that works contact:

Global Web Builders on 07 38927333 or email us at gwb@gwb.com.au. Our website can be seen at: gwb.com.au