

How just one simple
letter, used with three
different words, can

grow your business,

slash your costs and

dramatically

improve your

bottom line!

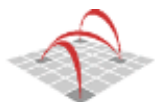


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How just one simple letter, used with three different words, can grow your business, slash your costs and dramatically improve your bottom line!

Introduction

Want to know a secret, the secret to online business success?

The secret is three simple words, all starting with the same letter:

1. *e*mail
2. *e*marketing
3. *e*fficient

The secret to your online business success rests with how effectively (yes, another '*e*' word) you master their use.

It's not about having fancy Flash websites. It's not about having a thousand different products for sale on your website.

It's not even having a tremendously expensive design team give you a great 'look' for your website.

No - the secret is simple, and blindingly obvious once you know it. And it is *not* knowing this secret that loses more businesses more money in their online ventures.

So let's get started.

The first e: *e*mail

Email is the easiest way to keep in touch with your customers, clients, suppliers, employees, shareholders and other interested parties.

It is the 'killer' application of the internet, the one application that dwarfs all other software and business systems in both its user base and its usage.

It is estimated by those who study such things that on any given day more than 5 billion email messages are sent around the world.

Which raises two crucial questions for business – how can they not only stop the flood of junk email hitting their inboxes and wasting staff time, but how can they also make sure that they don't add to the level of junk and waste their clients' valuable time?

Because as much as it is annoying to receive junk email, it is even more damaging to your business to be seen as a junk emailer.

Like the little boy who cried, "Wolf!" just once too often, those businesses that use email overzealously end up having their key marketing messages ignored.

If your messages have been ignored once, the chance of them being ignored again and again increases with each ignored email. A spiral effect – annoy your prospect or client once and you may get away with it. Annoy them more than once and each time you send them something they will have a higher likelihood of deleting your message unread.

They may even go the extent of adding in a 'rule' to their inbox organiser to **automatically delete** your messages upon receipt, **before they have even read them!** Or else they will unsubscribe to your mailing list, meaning you may never contact them again without their permission.

So what are the secrets to making sure that your emails are both read and, more importantly, acted upon?

There are several key factors:

- Relevant to the reader
- Personalised to the reader
- Of interest to the reader
- Of value to the reader

- Succinct, to the point and mindful of the time pressures on the reader
- In a font and style easily scanned by the reader

Let's look at each point in turn and consider ways to maximise your chance of your email being read and **not being deleted**:

1. Relevant

The email must be relevant to the reader's needs. No point sending them an email about the nappies you have on special this week if the reader is not the parent. Make sure that you are sending a message that they will understand and appreciate.

2. Personalised

These days 'Dear householder' emails just don't cut it. The reader will know that the email is a bulk email, sent out to all and sundry on a mailing list, and will treat the email and your company with a degree of contempt that varies from reader to reader, but is never pleasant. At best they will forgive you and await your next email. At worst they will delete your email, unsubscribe from your mailing list (you DO allow them to do that, don't you? It's against the law not to!), then forward your name and their negative comments to as many people as they know, including online discussion groups that will relish throwing dirt at you.

There is plenty of software around that can personalise your emails for you, putting each person on your mailing list as the name after the 'Dear', **and most importantly**, putting their name in the TO: address box **and** the subject line of the email.

Think about it: don't you almost instinctively react to something that has your name on it? Which would you rather receive - email with a nondescript subject line, or email with a non-descript subject line that has your name at the front of it? Which would you open first?

I've looked at a few software packages that can personalise your email in this way. The best so far seems to be [Mailloop](#) from the Internet Marketing Center, [WorldMerge](#) from Colorado Pro, and the autoresponder services of Aweber and [GetResponse](#).

The autoresponder services are paid monthly services, whilst the [Mailloop](#) and [WorldMerge](#) software are up-front, sit-on-our-pc, software. [Mailloop](#) IS expensive, but it does a whole stack of brilliant things that the business keen on reducing its support and service costs online would be WELL advised to investigate.

3. Of interest

Any email that hits the reader's inbox **MUST** be of interest to them. It's a difference between **NEEDS** and **WANTS**.

There's an old saying that runs along the lines of 'give the people what they need and they will make you rich'.

Of course, any marketer worth their salt will tell you that such advice is a guaranteed way to go bankrupt.

People might **NEED** a pension or superannuation scheme, but what people **WANT** is something altogether different.

Find out what people want, then work out how to give it to them.

To go back to our nappy example – the reader might **NEED** your discounted nappies, but if they aren't the person who buys groceries in the family, or never go shopping for such items, then they will not **WANT** to know about your fabulous offer.

Similarly, they might **NEED** to know about your fabulous fuel additive that cuts emissions by 50%, reduces engine noise by 60% and increases economy by 70%, but if they are only interested in using their car to get from A to B and **WANT** to spend their time and energy focusing on other things, then they won't **NEED** your product and consequently will ignore/delete your email message, at the same time being annoyed that you wasted their precious time having to open and read it to find out they didn't **WANT** it in the first place.

People buy with **EMOTION** and rationalise afterwards – they buy **WANTS** not **NEEDS**.

The only people who buy **NEEDS** are the very poor, who will have so little disposable income that it would be a foolish marketer who tries to convince them to buy.

4. Of value

Similar to the previous points, being **OF VALUE** to a reader means giving them something that they can use straight away to improve their lives, be it working or family lives.

Largely theoretical material, whilst perhaps of interest to the academic, is of no real interest to the majority of your customers. They value easy to digest, instantly usable information that will make their life better.

Give them that sort of information and your email, and you, will be of value to them. They may even forward your email on to others and without you trying, increase your market reach.

It has happened more times than I care to think about – my monthly newsletters get forwarded onto others who then either subscribe themselves or, better yet, contact me to ask for advice, help, assistance, etc.

I might have never reached these people by ordinary marketing methods, but because of the power of a well-written, focused and precisely targeted email, I have grown my business.

5. Succinct

Your email needs to get to the point. Don't waste the reader's time. We are all too busy these days and have no time for social 'chit-chat' and meaningless false smiles and compliments – 'cut to the chase' immediately.

On the internet you have seven seconds to engage the reader – after that they are gone.

This is the same for your website as it is for your emails – **7 SECONDS!**

6. Easily read

The average reader today doesn't have time to read emails composed in a bizarre, hard-to-read font. Whilst you might *think* that your carefully crafted message looks really warm and friendly in Lucida Script, in actual fact your reader will take one look at it and decide, "Too hard!" Taking action based on their immediate response, our messages go past unread – PLUS you pick up the additional 'bonus' of having annoyed them, making them less likely to read your email in the future.

We scan our world these days; such are the time pressures on us. We scan magazines, we scan newspapers, we scan websites, and we scan emails – all with the purpose of quickly deciding if it is worth our time to read in more depth.

By laying out your email with clear headings and sub-headings, your reader can quickly scan down the email and decide if they want to read it, whether they want to read it now or later, whether they want to print it or for later reading, or whether they want to just delete it.

The same goes with your web pages, too. If you have a look at my newsletters, you will see that throughout them I give the reader the opportunity to print the newsletter off and read it later. Why do I do this?

Because the font that works best on the internet, a sans-serif font like Arial or Verdana is very hard on the eyes. It doesn't flow easily, unlike a serif font like Times Roman or Book Antiqua (which is the font you are currently reading). The curves (the serifs) make it easier for the eye to distinguish word shapes and allow your brain and eyes to work slightly less hard than if you used all sans-serif characters.

Follow the 'print off and read later' links on my newsletters and you'll find the exact same text, but in a serif font (Times New Roman), which is a lot easier on the eye and brain when reading from paper.

These fonts don't work so well on the web, which is why you will find the vast majority of websites use a sans-serif font (like Verdana, Helvetica or Arial) on their web pages. Different fonts for different purposes.

But DON'T make your reader have to work harder than they need to. Your reader is probably time-poor – your insistence of a hard-to-read font will just encourage them to give up and delete you from their screen that much quicker.

So how do I structure a good email?

Great question.

As mentioned before, you need strong headers, strong sub-headings so that the reader's eyes can quickly scan the email to ensure that it meets their own internal criteria of relevancy, value, interest, and so on.

So here are some rules for effective emails.

Writing an effective email that gets the result you were looking for is not as simple as just opening up your email software and hitting the keyboard with your fingers.

Writing emails is an art form – get it right and the reader reads it effortlessly. Get it wrong and it reflects **really badly** on you.

So if I have just ONE tip to pass on to you it would be this:

When writing your emails throw everything you learnt in English classes out the window!

Instead, use the following tips to make sure that your communication is as powerful and effective as it can be:



1. **Personalise:** People love to see their name. So personalise your email to them. Even if you are sending out a bulk email to many different people, there are software tools that allow you to personalise each and every email so that it looks as though it has come direct from you and direct to them -- one-to-one.
2. **Write just like you talk:** Use plain, easy to understand English. Nobody cares if you can use xenophobia and ostentatious in the same sentence. Write almost like you are talking to your best mate over a beer. So that means use contractions. Be friendly and personable in your writing.
3. **Put passion in your email:** Since you don't have the luxury of seeing your prospect eye-to-eye to gauge their reactions you need to put extra passion into your message. Even if you think you are overdoing it when you write, your email will seem understated when it gets read. Get enthusiastic!
4. **Write to one person:** Especially important when you are writing an email that will be sent to more than one person, try to think of the ideal prospect/client as you are writing and make the message just for them. Even if the message will be read by thousands of people, every person will read it one at a time. Use "you" and "your" liberally. Focus on them, not yourself.
5. **Keep your sentences and paragraphs short:** Keep your sentences and paragraphs short and simple.

Period.

Sentences (even paragraphs) can even be one word like that last one. And paragraphs should be no more than 4 or 5 lines. You want your email to look easy to read with lots of white space. Make it inviting. Long blocks of words are scary. Paragraph breaks do NOT need to be determined by content.



6. **Use plenty of compelling subheads:** Subheads should be like mini-headlines. Use them to break up large bodies of text and to bring people back into the body of the email.

A lot of people will scan your email so you need to make your subheads give a complete selling message by themselves. Also, be sure to use different graphic embellishments.

7. **Eliminate excess wording:** Simplify. Convey your message in a clear and concise manner -- but remember that doesn't mean 'keep it short'.

My personal guru of direct marketing, Ted Nicholas, repeatedly states that copy can never be too long, just **too boring**. All things considered equal, longer copy will always outperform shorter copy, AS LONG AS the copy is compelling and not boring. And you need to ruthlessly edit your email for flow.

8. **Use action verbs whenever possible:** If you see too many "as", "is", "was" or "were" replace them. Sentences using action verbs are more powerful.

When writing your email you want it clear enough so that any high school student can understand it. Now, you probably think that your prospects/clients are a lot smarter than the average high school student. But nobody has time anymore to sit down and figure out what you're trying to say -- so keep your writing simple and straightforward.

Oh, and go through your text and cut out the word "that" wherever you possibly can. It's a 'dead' word that reduces the impact of any sentence.

Or you might like to read the above sentence as: It's a dead word and reduces the impact of any sentence.

Which one do you think is more powerful?

Important particulars

There are a few important points you need to be aware of.

1. Always give people the option of being removed from your mailing list. This is very important now that Privacy Laws are coming in.



2. Make your links 'clickable'. In order to make it easy for people to go straight from your email to your website you need to make your links 'clickable'. Here's how a link should be written in your email:

<http://www.yoursite.com.au>.

Most email programs will recognise this as a link.

And if you want to make an email link you should write it as:

<mailto:emailaddress@yoursite.com.au>

There we are! You now know almost as much as I do about writing emails that are more likely to get read and work in your favour, rather than against you.

Personalise it, John!

Did you know that several online marketers swear by the rule of personalising each email to the reader? Something as simple as 'Dear Michael' rather than 'Dear Friend' works miracles in terms of response. So too does having the reader's email address in the 'To:' box. And so too does having the reader's own name as the first word in the Subject line.

Don't believe me? Try it out for yourself and see which draws the more favourable response.

Signatures

Signature files are the way that savvy online marketers let their communications quietly promote them.

The signature is normally some text that says who you are, your phone number and url (domain name). You might also want to consider putting in a reason *why* someone should visit your site, such as free and useful information or a discounted offer on a product or service.

Here's some examples that not only highlight who you are and what your contact details are, but also *why* someone might want to visit your site.



Example 1:

```
...blah blah blah
...text text text.
Regards,
John
=====
John Smith - Marketing Director - Your Company
Tel: +61 8 8388 5171      Mob: +61 410 642 052
www.yourcompany.com.au      john@yourcompany.com.au
  Visit our site and sign up for powerful FREE
    ideas and tips on marketing your business
=====
```

Example 2:

```
=====
John Smith                      Marketing Director
www.yourdomain.com             john@yourdomain.com
"Helping people take back control of their lives"

  Visit our site for a FREE copy of our 20 page
    report, 'Your Financial Freedom: what the
      insurance industry doesn't want you to know"
=====
```

Example 3:

```
=====
Jeremy Lee                      Marketing Executive
www.yourwealthinc.com/lee      Tel: (08) 8388 5171

ATTENTION: if you are sick of your job and want
to earn more money visit my site for information
on how you can build financial freedom one brick
at a time WITHOUT having to give up your day job.
Within a few years you could be firing your boss!
=====
```

Example 4:

```
=====
Michael Bloggs                  www.bloggsareus.com
Tel: (08) 8388 5171           Mobile: 0410 642 052

Bloggs are the latest, coolest toys around. Kids
just LOVE THEM! Visit our site to grab the latest
designs, colour schemes and accessories. There's
FREE screensavers and sound files too! Go there!!
=====
```

You can even go the 'whole nine yards' and create your signature in html format, for sending out with html-formatted emails (like I send out to the majority of my contacts).

Why do I send them an html email rather than the smaller 'plain text' variety? Because research has shown that html, with its colours and nice formatting, is **more likely to be read**, that's why.



Here's my own signature:

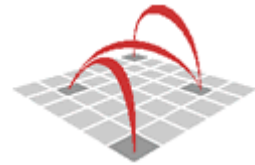
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In each example there is a way of contacting the author via a website or email address (you'd be amazed at how emails get forwarded around the world and the original author's email address gets cut). There's also a (hopefully) compelling reason to visit the site.

Experiment with different ideas for your own signature - email me (lee@hopkins-e-strategy.com) with them if you want a comparison opinion.



The second e: *e*marketing

Marketing online is both similar to traditional marketing and at the same time and very importantly different in key ways.

Offline, you can take the time to tell your story, weave your spell and dazzle them with ingenious and cleverly-cut material as it falls out of the envelope onto their kitchen table or office desk. Online, you can't impress them so easily.

You might *think* that you can "WOW!" them with a clever animation, perhaps created in Flash, but the reality is very often utterly different.

If the reader cannot view and GRASP the meaning and relevancy of your message in the first seven seconds then THEY ARE GONE - PROBABLY FOREVER.

You might have spent a small fortune on getting a developer to create a compelling animation in Flash, but if your reader on your website can't view it within seven seconds THEY WILL GO unless you have a VERY compelling reason for them to consider staying.

And telling them, "This is great! You'll love this!!" is not enough.

Create shedloads of envy in your local traditional marketer

HOWEVER, marketing online gives you a TREMENDOUS opportunity to shedloads of create envy in the traditional offline marketer.

You can personalise your message. So can they. You can create a great sales letter. So can they. You can publish and print yours for FREE.

Hah! That's where you stump them - because they can't do that!

It costs them a fortune to print out their four colour, multi-page sales and marketing extravaganza and send it out, hoping for a 0.5 - 1.0% return. You can print one page or a thousand pages in 65,000 colours, pay no postage, deliver around the globe in seconds and depending on your market and your sales message receive anywhere from a 0 to a whopping 35% response rate!

That's pretty cool!

Who's doing what with your message?

Unlike the traditional marketer, you can track your marketing messages to see which message worked best, who received it, who didn't open it, who forwarded it on.

That is powerful information.

I know of one conference organiser who sent out a swag of emails to its clients and potential clients, advertising a forthcoming roadshow.

They were able to track who read the emails and subsequently telephone those who didn't open the messages! And you can bet that their response rate was high after that! They were able to make sure that EVERYONE on their mailing list was made aware of the roadshow – I understand that attendance was exceptionally high as a result.

Not only that, but they were able to see who forwarded the message on to others.

If you get the chance to read Seth Godin's follow up work to the ground-breaking *'Permission Marketing'*, entitled, *'Unleashing the Idea Virus'*, you will understand instantly the concept of 'sneezers'.

'Sneezers' are people who, whether paid or not, promote your message for you.

The roadshow organisers were able to find out who the online sneezers were in their mailing list – a tremendous informational advantage when it comes time for their next marketing campaign.

Places to find prospects

Another fabulous advantage of online marketing that traditional, offline marketers don't enjoy, is the ready access to meeting places where target markets 'hang out'.

These are called 'Discussion Groups', or 'Forums'. There are literally thousands of online discussion groups and forums (and email discussion lists) where people interested in a particular topic 'hang out' to talk both bona-fide information and bollocks.

And believe me, with over 33,000 discussion groups in the world, there is most assuredly SOMEONE meeting and chatting with someone else who is interested in your area of interest.

For example, there are discussion groups on:

Accounting, asian movies, assassination, chinchillas, chrome, circumcision, dreams, drinks, drugs, dumpsters, Elvis, fluff, foreplay, flyfishing, hillbillies, jedi knights, ketchup, kids talk, locksmithing, lucid emacs, peanut butter, pessimism, pro-wrestling, prophecies, psychoactives, Captain Pugwash, queen of cans jars, reciprocity, roast beef, Toronto Jews, the Tree of Knowledge, Truntfest, vampires, waste water, Wednesday, the Welch Family, whistleblowing, wiccan, wicware, wolves, women, working holidays, yoga and zoophiles.

See what I mean? Everything from the urbane to the extraordinary. From foot fetishists to podiatrists, from alien watchers to (quite possibly) aliens.

You can find your target market, talk with them, engage in conversation with their main 'sneezers' or 'talkers of influence', and get them to recommend your product or service. All without you having to blatantly advertise - which would get you kicked off the discussion group anyway, and possibly 'mailbombed' in retaliation (which is an online form of terrorist retribution, where your email server is blasted by huge emails from anonymous sources until, under the relentless barrage it collapses and you lose valuable business while your server undergoes extensive and expensive 'surgery' after its nervous collapse).

Golden Rule: don't blatantly advertise on the discussion groups!

HOWEVER, having said that, most discussion groups DO allow you to attach a small signature file to your posts.

As discussed in the section on email, signature files, if used wisely, can drive traffic to your website, wherein a free report or similar informational product can help you grow your market reach And at the same time obtain another name and email address for your marketing records.

Servicing your clients and prospects is marketing too!

Many businesses forget this, but customer service is also a marketing activity. Indeed, marketing purists will probably take me to task about how ALL activities in a company should be 'marketing' led. Not sure that every CEO or business owner will necessarily agree to that one...

But never mind; supporting your sales process, including after-sales care, IS a fundamental activity of a business and SHOULD fall under the remit of the Marketing Department.

And it is here that the online marketer AGAIN has it all over the traditional marketer.

You see, the traditional marketer and business owner considers that it is a 'hands on' role that needs staffing by expensive people.

The savvy online marketer knows different, however.

The online marketer knows that you can set up your support systems and processes to drive customers, clients and prospects to your website first, BEFORE they pick up the phone. On the website will be all manner of self-serve information - installation guides, order forms, competitor comparisons, product specifications, frequently asked support questions, online knowledge bases where the visitor can ask the most esoteric of questions and find their answers from your pre-posted and regularly updated service technicians' knowledge and brains.

In this way your customers and prospects can sort out their questions, their queries, their ponderings, in their own time, when it's convenient to them. Even if that time is 3am on a wet Wednesday morning.

Similarly, the prospective client or employee can find out all about you when it is convenient to them, without you knowing or having to answer their 'dumb' questions.

So that when they DO eventually contact you they are already partly skilled-up and knowledgeable about you. This way they and you don't waste each other's valuable time and can 'cut to the chase'.

The third e: *E*fficient

So now we get to the point where you can reduce your costs in your 'back-end' processes by increasing the efficiency of your business and its resources.

Numbers stuff that your bean counters will love.

I'm talking here about enabling your business to slash costs yet at the same time improve processes and net margin.

For the bean counters...

But are there companies actually saving money?

Yes, is the answer. And for a great example let's use 'Big Blue' itself.

According to *CFO Magazine*, IBM began to realize during the 1990s that the internet and its technology offered tremendous potentials. By January 1999 IBM had achieved some dramatic improvements in HR payments and vendor processing productivity. Let's have a look at some areas where they made and measured improvements:

Table 1. Performance improvements from IBM's HR Payments E-Engineering

Performance Measure	Before	After	% Improvement
Expense Reports per Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	14,450	78,862	446%
Pay Distribution per FTE	43,200	72,810	68%
Error Rate for Travel & Entertainment (T&E) Transactions	7.0%	0.5%	93%
T&E as a Percentage of Revenues	0.06%	0.01%	83%
Process Cost per Expense Report	\$23.00	\$2.02	91%
Payroll Cost as Percentage of Revenues	0.20%	0.01%	95%
Process Cost per Pay Distribution	\$5.75	\$1.77	69%



Table 2. Performance Improvements from IBM's Vendor Payments E-Engineering

Performance Measure	Before	After	% Improvement
Computer Applications Used	12	1	92%
Procurement Error Rate	34%	9%	74%
Procurement Cost as a Percentage of Purchased Cost	1.8%	0.9%	50%
Process Cost per Invoice	\$1.50	\$1.02	32%
Percentage of Suppliers Accounting for 90% of Purchases	11%	9%	18%

So you see, there *are* companies making cost savings using internet technology. The internet is not just about selling stuff to consumers, like Amazon.com, but also about using the technology of the internet to save money, communicate more effectively and improve customer satisfaction.

An approach to financial evaluation

Now that you are considering using internet technology to either reduce costs or increase revenue, here's a seven-step process drawn directly from traditional project management that may be of assistance in conducting a financial analysis of any new technology project (hint: only tackle one project or business process re-engineer at a time!).

- 1. Map the current business process.** In order to assess the financial value of any project, it pays to understand how that project will impact on company cash flow. Mapping each and every interaction and transaction in a business process will help you understand where you currently are;
- 2. Measure the cost and time.** Once you have a 'road map' of the current process involved in your business, add in the time taken and the cost amount for each step. Be sure to include the fully loaded annual cost of each employee involved in each step - this way a more accurate total cost of output can be developed;



3. **Map out the new process.** Even conducting the first two steps will very often allow management to identify areas for improvement, if not actual ideas that can be implemented. By studying cases of successful internet-technology/process re-engineering implementation further ideas on what new processes and how they can be incorporated or introduced into the business can be envisioned;

4. **Estimate the time and cost of the new process.** The general idea of any new technology is to reduce the amount of human interactions that a customer has to go through to accomplish their goals. For example, introducing a web-based technical service desk might well affect how many calls a technician can handle per hour, how many technicians you need, the average time a call takes to resolve and equally importantly have an effect on the customer's overall satisfaction with your business;

5. **Develop a plan for the project.** Call in consultants specific to each phase of the project and work with them to design a timed, fully-costed and payment milestone project plan. That way you know what money you are up for and when;

6. **Calculate a total cost for the project.** Include not only the costs of consultants, but also any additional software, hardware, and telecomms connections. Equally importantly don't forget to account for the fiscal cost of time for those employees diverted to the project;

7. **Prepare an integrated cash-flow analysis of the project.** Then calculate the net-present-value of the project. Depending on the complexity of both the business and the particular project it may be useful to think of each internet-technology project as one of a series of future projects.

“Show me the money”

The well-respected communications consulting and market research organisation, Aberdeen Group, recently released a substantial report into Financial Value Chain Management entitled, “Show Me the Money: How E-Business Will Transform the B-to-B Financial Process”.



In the report they noted that, “Buyer and seller can meet on the Net and transact business in seconds or minutes. But, after the virtual handshake of agreement and signoff, the documentation, financing, and payment aspects of the sale get mired in the back office. ...The ease of consummating transactions on the front-end creates customer expectations that cannot be satisfied on the back-end.”

They also note that deficiencies in managing the Financial Value Chain result in lost business, overly high levels of bad debt expense, high working capital requirements, and negative variances in operational expense. They also note that successful Financial Value Chain Management (FVCM) is highly dependent on the adoption of B-to-B (Business to Business) e-Commerce and its numerous enabling technologies.

There is a large move amongst businesses, including within Australia, to transact relationships online. FVCM solutions that derive the *maximum* value for both business and client will be able to handle both online and offline commerce. With the increased financial imperatives that strong FVCM offers, large buyers in the US are forcing their suppliers to, amongst other online initiatives, deliver their invoices electronically. It can only be a matter of time until the trend catches on and all businesses are required, if they want to do business with each other, to transact electronically, using the technical language of the internet.

Saving money by ‘doing’ your Accounts Payable and Receivable online

Here’s a true-life example: I use MYOB to keep a track of my business. I print off the vast majority of my invoices as pdf files, which I then email out to my clients. On the invoice are my bank details, so that clients can transfer the money directly into my business bank account. Voila! I have just saved:

- Postage costs – no stamp, envelope or paper
- Time for the invoice to get to the client – email is instant
- Time to have access to the money – once they deposit it that money is immediately available, unlike a cheque that I have to wait four working days to access, once I have actually gone to the trouble of filling in a deposit slip and handing it over to my local bank teller. Plus, via a web browser I can see at a moment who has paid and when – the bank keeps those records for me online and I can print them off anytime I want – no charge (unlike the old days where they would charge you a fortune for a printed statement outside of their normal print-run cycles for your account).



Save money by using your website and email process as CRM tools

CRM, or Customer Relationship Management, is the big buzzword in businesses today.

And with good reason.

It's imperative for most (but not all) businesses to know where their customers come from, who invited them, when you have contacted them, when they have contacted you, what they have bought and so on.

OKAY, I guess that ALL businesses could do with this information but the cost of acquiring this information might outweigh the benefit of having it for some small businesses.

The internet can be of HUGE benefit in finding out more about your customers, suppliers and potential clients. It can also save you swages of money.

Here's how it works:

1. You post forms up on your website that capture the email addresses of potential customers (you give them a free report, in exchange for their email address).
2. Later, you follow up by email with them. You ask them what they thought of the report, if they found it of value, what they liked or disliked about the report, and so on. Anything to get a dialogue going with them.
3. You keep a track of this through a simple spreadsheet. You CAN even do it with a simple text file that you create in Notepad, but that's too hard for me; Excel is far simpler to see what is going on, for me, anyway.
4. You personalise your emails to each prospect and subsequent customer by including their name, their purchasing history and any other personal information you can garner about them.
5. You place all of your support material (both sales support and after-sales customer support) up on your website. You also have all of your emails suggest that people visit there first to get their questions answered. MAKE SURE that your website is easy to navigate and that information is easy to find there, otherwise you will REALLY annoy people and lose valuable customers and 'sneezers'.

6. You have responses automatically sent out to those who email your company with questions. This is easy to set up and saves the enquirer valuable time (they don't have to wait for someone to connect with on the phone and can get a reply immediately) and saves you time (you don't have to have dedicated call centre people answering questions from 'tyre kickers').

What do you think the potential cost savings are in a process like this, where you can dramatically reduce the numbers of support staff you need to service your sales and after-sales processes?

Example time:

Corey Rudl operates a marketing operation online. He has just six full-time staff because he has automated his business operation (and most of them are programmers). He makes over US\$6 million a year. With an incredibly high profit margin.

Repeat sales are the 'hidden' profit secret

Everyone knows that repeat sales are much nicer to receive than an initial sale – there's no cost of acquisition, for one thing, and less client education to conduct.

Initial sales have long lead times, cost a lot in effort and perhaps money to woo the prospect, and often take expensive sales people to 'land'. The first sale might even be a 'loss-leader' to try and get your foot in the door – you take a loss on the first sale because you pin your hopes on making a profit on subsequent sales.

But by using an online process you can be much more efficient in how you capture those essential repeat purchases.

You can pay a small fee (around US\$20 per month) for a sequential autoresponder service, allowing you to **automatically** follow up with clients, customers and prospects at pre-determined times -- even a year after they initially contacted you or bought from you.

With this service you can, for example, sell a service or product online, thank them for purchasing, email them every 3-4 weeks letting them know of a feature of the product or service they bought that they might not be aware of, let them know about other products or services they can buy, and gather a user testimonial. **All without you having to lift a finger!**

And it averages out that 34% of your customers will buy again if you follow up with them in this manner! Yet it cost you nothing to capture this repeat business! Imagine the profit potential? Now imagine the profit potential if you were to 'up sell' each time? So that, for example, they moved from a \$100 purchase to a \$300 purchase, then up to an \$800 purchase, then up to...

One service I use for this is GetResponse.com, because it allows me to send out up to 52 pre-written messages automatically, and awebber.com has also many online marketers who swear by it. I chose not to use awebber.com because they only allow a maximum of seven follow-up messages, but you decide.

How you can slash your printing costs on Annual Reports, Chairman's Newsletters, in-house newsletters, Analysts Briefings and other essentials of corporate business life

Imagine how much money you could save if you no longer had to print, in full colour, these expensive items. Imagine how much money you could save if you didn't have to pay expensive stationery and postage costs, especially if your shareholders and investors are located across the globe.

Okay, reality is that you'll never completely eliminate your Annual Report – there will always be someone who prefers to receive their Report in hard copy, including analysts, the ASX and shareholders without access to the internet.

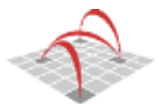
But how much money could you potentially save if you could eliminate 75% of your printing and postage costs?

You can achieve this by allowing those who are interested to download these materials from your website, or send them out via email.

Instantly you have transferred the costs of printing to the recipient – if they are interested, they will print it out themselves. How many trees do you think that will save? No longer will you have to defoliate small rainforests to produce our expensive Annual Report, only for it to immediately end up in the waste bins of the vast majority of your shareholders?



What if you could contact nearly all of those shareholders via email to inform them that the Report is available online, at such-and-such address, for them to download themselves? A neat side effect of which is that you could actually track who downloads your Report, giving you an idea of who IS interested in your company and who just holds shares but no interest. You could target those interested parties with more information later - invite them to functions, etc. get to meet them and improve your relationship with them. A happy investor is more likely to invest both monetarily and psychologically in your business, staying with you for a longer haul and not bailing out at the first sign of trouble.



Summary

The internet allows you to dramatically reduce the cost of doing business.

You can :

- Keep in touch for virtually nothing
- Set up automatic marketing processes and programmes
- Track your marketing to find out what works and what needs improving
- Find out who your 'secret sneezers' are
- Dramatically reduce the cost of customer relationship management
- Dramatically reduce the cost of postage and production of shareholder information
- Reduce head count

Want to know more?

Ask us for more information - www.hopkins-e-strategy.com



Hopkins: About us

It is to meet the needs of internet-aware but not necessarily internet-savvy businesses that **Hopkins Strategic Internet Solutions** was formed in 2001. Backed by more than a decade of international internet technology experience, along with key experiences in business and human relations, this consultancy assists businesses to understand and capitalize on the tremendous opportunities that the internet offers them.

You want to understand the internet.

You want someone to help you introduce the new technology of the internet.

You want someone to enhance your communication strategy.

We can:

- Help you incorporate the internet into your business communication strategies
- Project manage the design and build of value-adding content-rich, dynamic internet and intranet sites
- Project manage the design and build of e-procurement and e-commerce sites
- Work with you to meet your communication needs

Services

We are able to add value to your communication and marketing efforts through:

- Writing business documents
- Designing and/or building you a content-rich internet, intranet or even extranet site, then **marketing it effectively**
- creating some eBusiness tools, such as cd-roms, pdf files and regular newsletters you can email out to prospects, clients and suppliers

How to contact us

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