
15 CRUCIAL ACTIONS TO TAKE YOUR PRODUCTS ONLINE



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Taking action

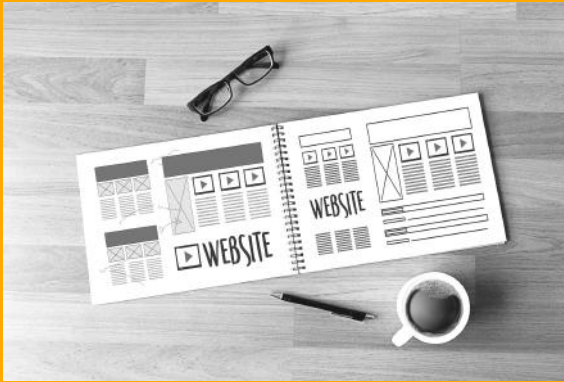
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Want to know more?



Hey there, excited new online entrepreneur

We're **Web Squadron**, founders of an amazing Website Training Site and **Business Analytics & Technology Solutions (BATS) Web Design Agency** (in case you want to check out our creds).



If you have taken the time to download and read this e-book then you probably fall into one of two categories:

- Someone thinking of setting up a new online business selling a product of some description;
- Someone who already operates a small business with sales currently driven by either social media or e-bay and looking to expand.

Either way you are looking to sell your products online and ultimately increase your sales through the use of online tools, right? This e-book is going to take you through 15 crucial steps to successfully take your products online.

According to many sources, more than 90% (Ninety percent) of all Internet business start-ups end in failure within the first 120 (one hundred twenty) days. And that number is all too accurate: NINETY PERCENT!

One of the main reasons internet business start-ups fail is down a lack of research and planning before jumping in head first so the very fact that you are reading this e-book is a great first step to success (research).

Now I am not going to sugar coat it...

"Starting a business ... any business ... has no guarantee of success and is bloody hard work".

Success happens because people learn about internet marketing and how it works. They do not expect to get rich quick or be able to make a killing overnight and retire to a tropical island. They understand that they will have to pour in hours of work and will probably make numerous mistakes along the way.

This e-book will not solve all of these problems but it will share some of the insights and learnings from other small businesses who have successfully navigated the challenging early stages of a new start-up.




What will make you successful?



No one thing will ensure your business is a success, it is a number of smaller actions and behaviours that will keep you afloat in the early days and form the foundations of success in the longer-term. Your initial research, planning and investment (both time and money) will dictate if your business is one of the 90% that fail or one of the 10% that succeed.

The crucial actions that we believe you should take during the early stages of the business are outlined below:

1. Have the correct mindset
2. Know your product and do your research
3. Identify your customers
4. Decide on a business name
5. Align your branding to your vision and your customers
6. Develop a marketing strategy and budget
7. Don't ignore the hidden costs
8. Remember the purpose of your website
9. Activate Facebook and Instagram
10. Consider other social media platforms
11. The Facebook pixel
12. Paid adverts and retargeting
13. Ensure your tools are scalable
14. Don't forget your aftercare
15. Analyse, Review and Learn

A top-down view of various personal accessories arranged on a light-colored surface. In the upper left, there is a gold-toned watch with a white dial and a mesh bracelet. To its right are three gold-toned rings of different designs. In the center, a pair of sunglasses with dark frames and light-colored lenses is placed. Below the sunglasses is a black leather folder or notebook. A white card with a marble pattern and the word 'STILL.' printed on it is tucked into the folder. A red fabric strap is visible at the bottom left corner.

15 Crucial Actions

1. HAVE THE CORRECT MINDSET

Why?

Making a business plan BEFORE starting your online business is essential. To remind you one of the things I said at the beginning: “If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail.” A plan for success is a requirement. Have the steps listed in great detail including reasonable cost estimates for completing each step. Expect to work hard to achieve your goals. Never expect things to be easy. Most of the time things are not as easy as they appear. Each successive step will require its own work, time and patience. Sometimes things don’t go right on the first try. Be willing to keep going again and again until you succeed.

Actions

- Approach your business journey with the correct mindset
- Create a business plan detailing the step required for success, the cost estimates and success measures



2. KNOW YOUR PRODUCT AND DO YOUR RESEARCH

Why?

You are not just selling a product, you are also selling your knowledge and expertise about the product. Ensure you are an expert before launching your business.

Have a complete understanding of your product pricing model as well as understanding your competitors pricing. Ensure that you understand the market place in which you will operate and that the returns (profit) you are expecting are realistic and aligned to your business plan.

Do your research on your online competitors using tools like SpyFu. You should also consider their product pricing, delivery times, stock availability and any offers.

Actions

- Complete additional research into your products. If required meet with suppliers, ensure you understand delivery times, purchase costs and expected sale prices.
- Complete market research and competitor analysis for your sector and product range



- Complete an FAQ to add to your website based on customer and product research. This will become a living document and will save you repeating yourself later.

3. IDENTIFY YOUR CUSTOMERS

Why?

It is essential that you understand the people that will be buying your product (your customers). Everything that you do from here on in should be geared towards what they want, solving their problems and your sales material should lean on their emotional behaviours to create sales.

"Entrepreneurs don't just sell things, they SOLVE things".

Actions

- Identify your ideal customer - what is their single biggest problem? What is the crisis your product can solve for them right away?
- Write down what makes you different from your competitors and why customers should buy from you.



4

DECIDE ON A BUSINESS NAME

Why?

You may have already done this but if you haven't then this is the point at which you need to settle on a business name. Ideally it should have some reference to what your business is going to do or sell.

While you are not stuck with your business name forever it is harder to change after this point so think carefully and ensure that it is that reflects your vision for the business and allows you to show your passion.

If you intend to register as a Limited Company then check that your business name is available before you do too much work on branding.

Actions

- Pick a name for your business
- Register it! (if applicable)



5.

DEVELOP A MARKETING STRATEGY AND BUDGET

Why?

Without a marketing strategy there is a significant risk that you fail to maximise the potential sales from your customer base. This is one of the areas where most small online businesses fail.

This is without doubt the most important part of selling products online and while the financial investments in advertising do not need to be substantial it is highly unlikely you will succeed with free marketing alone.

Actions

- Consider how you will reach your customers and grow your audience. What tools and platforms will you use?
- Decide if you will use paid adverts and if so consider how will you get best value for money. Do the research if necessary.
- Set clear objectives for engagement, site visits, conversation and total sales - these will allow you to track success.



6. ALIGN YOUR BRANDING TO YOUR VISION AND YOUR CUSTOMERS

Why?

Your branding will become synonymous with your business so investing some time in developing things like your logo and colour scheme are important.

Whatever colour scheme you select will need to work across all aspects of your business and your logo will need to be versatile enough to present well across all platforms.

You need to love your branding and ensure that it will remain appropriate as you grow into new areas and scale your business.

Unfortunately, this is often done with minimal thought, no advice and for free. This is unlikely to be beneficial in the long run unless you have a strong graphic design and marketing background.

Actions

- Choose your branding colour scheme
- Select a logo that appeals to you and your customers
- Get professional support and guidance if you do not work in the creative sector



7. DON'T IGNORE THE HIDDEN COSTS

Why?

There are a number of obvious costs associated with selling your products online (e.g. product purchase costs, shipping and delivery costs, website building costs, advertising costs, etc) but there are also a number of hidden costs that you may not be aware of. Again, you should do thorough research to ensure you fully understand the costs associated with your marketing strategy and sales tools.

Some examples of hidden costs could be:

- Domain name purchase
- Website hosting fees
- Merchant banking fees
- Sales transaction charges

Actions

- Do your research and set-up a spreadsheet with all of your costs recorded so you always have a full picture of your expected outgoings. This should form part of your business plan in action 1.



8. REMEMBER THE PURPOSE OF YOUR WEBSITE



Why?

Your website serves one purpose... to convert site visits into sales! That is it.

You can have all the fancy functionality and beautiful images and videos in the world but if it doesn't allow the customer to quickly navigate to what they are looking for and make a purchase then it is not fulfilling its purpose. The number of clicks from entry to sale should be as seamless and as few as possible.

You also need to ensure it is secure (SSL) and mobile friendly.

Don't get me wrong the functionality and integration can add significant value, improve the customer experience, help make the business more efficient and increase sales but it should not be the primary focus.

Whatever type of website you choose ensure it is scalable and easy to adapt to fit with your long term goals.

In this particular area you often get what you pay for so do your research and choose carefully. Do not be drawn in by self-build solutions despite the ultra low costs.

Actions

- Do your research into the best platform for your business
- Explore a number of products and go with someone you trust as this is likely to be a long-term relationship
- Ensure you align your website back to your marketing plan and integrate all appropriate tools

9. ACTIVATE FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM

Why?

Facebook and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms in the world with Facebook alone having 2.38 billion monthly active users and Instagram with over 1 billion monthly active users. The reach of these two platforms is unparalleled.

The algorithm used by Facebook to determine what posts and adverts appear on a users news feed is constantly changing but if it is understood it can be used very successfully to reach your target audience. Facebook Ads can be a low cost and very powerful tool in sharing your products with the digital world, especially when combined with the Facebook pixel.



Actions

- Create a Facebook business account
- Add the Facebook pixel to your website (more about this in point 11)
- Explore the advertising opportunities of Facebook Ads and align this to your marketing strategy and budget from point 5

10. CONSIDER OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Why?

Social media will play a key role in spreading the word about your products across the digital world. Once you identify the platforms where your ideal customers hang out be sure sure to exploit them.

There is no right or wrong answer to which social media platforms to use for your business but we would recommend utilising Facebook and Instagram plus no more then two other platforms.

Maintaining multiple social media platforms can be time consuming and we recommend free tools like Buffer to help share your content to multiple platforms simultaneously.

Always monitor the success of each social media platform through the analytics and insight functionality available within the tool and in the early part of your journey don't waste time with platforms that are not driving conversions.

Actions

- Establish where your customers hang out (which platform)
- Select the most appropriate social media platforms for your customers
- Explore tools that can support you to manage and schedule your social media content
- Investigate the analytic and/or insight capability of your chosen platform to confirm that you can measure your success



11. THE FACEBOOK PIXEL

Why?

The Facebook pixel is the online business marketer's best friend. It is a small bit of code that can be quickly and easily embedded into your website and tracks your business traffic through Facebook, Instagram and your website. It has significant analytical capabilities and if used correctly can help you understand your customers and how effective your social media and website are at turning visits into sales.

It is also an essential tool if you are utilising Facebook Ads. It plays a key role in targeted advertising campaigns at potential customers who have visited your website but not yet made a purchase.

If you are not already utilising the Facebook pixel we would urge you to get this installed on your website as your first priority. This is not because it will make a difference to your business immediately but because it will start gathering customer data from the moment you set it up and will provide a wealth of insight into your website performance and customer behaviour. Oh and the best bit... it's FREE!

Actions

- Create a Facebook business account as outlined in point 9
- Install the Facebook pixel on your website
- Review the Facebook pixel insights
- Let it do its thing while you work on getting all of the other actions in this e-book completed.



12. PAID ADVERTS AND RETARGETING

Why?

Historically you could increase reach and engagement naturally and free of charge through Facebook by posting regularly and providing useful content but since the recent Facebook algorithm changes this is becoming increasingly challenging.

Your marketing strategy may include some elements of paid adverts at various points along your journey. Facebook, Instagram, Google, etc all offer paid advertising services. The costs vary significantly and there are benefits and drawbacks to each. The key things to remember when looking at paid adverts are:

- Do your research - ensure you know how the adverts work and who they will target
- Confirm the costs - some will be a fixed cost per advert, others will be a maximum cost depending on user engagement
- Always review conversions - always track and analyse the conversion rates from an advertising campaign. This allows you to assess whether it has offered value for money.
- Facebook retargeting is the cheapest paid solution to start advertising once your website is up and running.

Actions

- Research the different types of paid adverts that are available
- Understand the costs associated with any advertising campaign
- Monitor conversion rates of your advertising campaigns
- Consider Facebook retargeting as a first, reasonably priced step



13. ENSURE YOUR TOOLS ARE SCALABLE

Why?

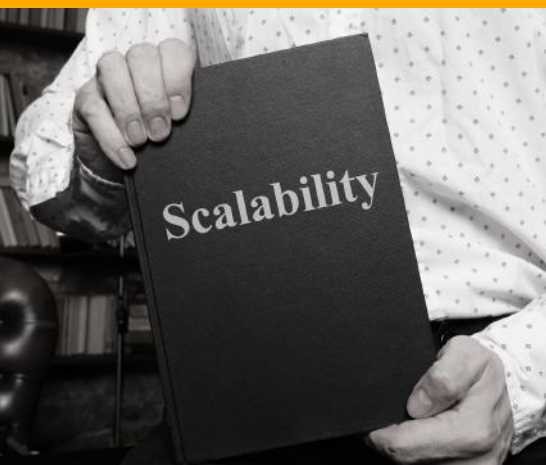
Think about your long-term goal. Why are you doing this?

In most cases we all want our businesses to grow, whether it be slow and steady or big bang the end goal is the same... we want our business to be bigger and more profitable than it is currently.

We need to have this in mind when we are selecting the tools we are going to use to help us on our journey. Some examples of these tools might include:

- Website
- Social media content manager
- Email marketing tool

From experience I can safely say that switching tools a few months into your journey can be stressful. If the tool can no longer handle your customer volume and your business is growing at 100mph it really is the last thing you want to be thinking about.



Actions

- Research your business support tools before jumping in
- Ensure that they will be flexible enough to meet both your short and longer-term business needs

14.

DON'T FORGET THE AFTER CARE

Why?

The most successful brands recognise that aftercare is as important as generating new sales. Successful businesses are often built on brand loyalty and this relies heavily on product quality and, equally as importantly, aftercare.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) can be a useful tool in managing the resource burden of aftercare. It is ideal if you can include a returns policy.

You won't go far wrong if you treat every customer as if it were their first purchase.

Actions

- Don't allow the relationship you have built with a customer to die after they purchase from you.
- Be clear on your aftercare support offer.
- Consider automation of your aftercare where possible



15.

ANALYSE, REVIEW AND LEARN

Why?

Creating a business is an incredible journey made up of both success and failures, and entrepreneurs who are fortunate enough to watch their venture grow from a simple idea to an established business will understand that it involves constant change and management.

With this in mind business becomes a constant improvement cycle and analyse, review and amend are the key components to success.

"What gets measured gets improved"

Robin Sharma

Analyse EVERYTHING. If you don't want to do this yourself or don't have time then pay someone else to do it for you. This is the only way to continuously improve, to understand your customers and to continue on an upward growth curve.

Actions

- Ensure you have an analytics tool attached to your website
- Regularly review the analytics across all platforms (social media, website, etc)
- Keep the things that are working well, change the things that are working less well.
- Never stand still



Taking action after reading this.



Step One - Build the Foundation

If now isn't the time then when is?

You should now understand all of the crucial steps to taking your products online - strike while the iron is hot - TAKE ACTION.

However, don't get overwhelmed because there is a lot to do.

Step one is to complete actions 1-4 (all of which are free). These will ensure you are well help you build a solid foundation and will prepare you to embark on your journey before investing any of your hard earned savings into this venture.

"Know your customer and know your product"

Nathan Jamail

Taking action after reading this.



Step Two - Planning

Once you have completed actions 1-4 you will have a solid foundation and understanding of your products and customers. The next set of actions (5-7) will support you in the planning phase of your business and will take you right up to the point of adding in the technology solutions of your choice.

The more robust and well researched your plans are the greater the chance of success.

Branding, marketing and budgeting three essential components in planning and launching your business. If any of these three components are not properly executed you can waste dozens of man hours or £000's trying to rectify them later.

“If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail.”
Benjamin Franklin

Taking action after reading this.



Step Three - Technology

You are launching your business into a digital world and so much of the success of your business will be driven by the technology and systems that you choose to underpin your business. Actions 8-13 take you through the key technology components that you should consider. There is no one size fits all so ensure you do your research and make informed decisions rather than heading in blindly or following the trend.

“Our future success is directly proportional to our ability to understand, adopt and integrate new technology into our work”

Sukant Ratnakar



Taking action after reading this.



Step Four - Aftercare and Analytics

Fantastic news... you have started to make sales!

Now you need to focus on continuing this upward trend, sustaining the relationships you have already built while building some more.

Actions 14 & 15 are where you ensure that you keep your existing customers but more importantly learn from them how you can entice more. The aftercare ensures that your new customers remain engaged and will return again in future. While the analytics allows to you learn what is working well and where you can improve, both valuable insights into acquiring more in future.

“It is not your customers job to remember you. It is your obligation and responsibility to make sure they don't have the chance to forget you ”

Patricia Fripp

READY FOR MORE GREAT CONTENT?

Our primary aim is to help small businesses get online. We offer a range of technology based services but also have a desire to build long-term partnerships with businesses across the e-commerce sector. We have successfully supported dozens of small businesses on this journey and are keen to share what we have learnt along the way.

We will happily give you advice for free and through our Facebook Group. Why not get on board?

JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP





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