

Get Started Online – How you can generate leads, customers and more business while leaving your competitors in the dust

By Janna Jungclaus

For businesses who continue with the same marketing and advertising strategies year after year, without truly achieving their desired outcomes, the time has come to examine whether to move online.

If your business is struggling to get new customers and retain existing ones, it is likely that you are being trumped by your competitors who are changing with the times and going online.

Taking your business to the online world may sound intimidating, but the fact remains that you need to advertise and market yourself where the people are. And the people are online.

How can you ensure that you create an online presence that will propel your business towards your goals instead of causing you grief? By simply starting with the end in mind. Looking at your desired outcomes and current business processes before planning your move online can be extremely beneficial in creating a seamless integration of your online presence and the resulting increase of customers in your current business.

This white paper will review the process of taking your business online and examine the benefits of optimising your online presence, rather than simply spending money on a website and hoping for the best.

The Time Has Come

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), in 2007-08 Australian businesses made online sales worth more than \$81 billion, an increase of 20% over the previous year¹. Online income for Australian businesses is expected to rise further, as internet access spreads even wider, and people become more comfortable buying online.

¹ 2009, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Summary of IT Use and Innovation in Australian Business, 2007-08, available online at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/8166.0Main%20Features12007-08?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=8166.0&issue=2007-08&num=&view=>

The same research found that large businesses were more than three times as likely to have a web presence than small businesses – meaning now is an excellent time for any offline business to get an advantage over their competitors and take a cut of the profits.

Time for a change?

If your business continues to get the same results year after year, and you haven't changed your marketing or advertising strategies for a while, it is likely that you are losing business to your competitors who are changing with the times and going online.

Australians are continuing to become more comfortable with online purchases and it is well known that many people simply search the internet to find products and services, rather than fishing out the yellow pages and finding a service or business.

Costly Lead Generation

Every business owner would love to have more leads and potential customers for their business. However, generating leads in the offline world can be a chore. Whether you advertise in the yellow pages or the local paper, whether you hand out pamphlets or rely on word of mouth referrals, most of the time you don't even know how many new customers you get from your advertising and marketing activities.

Most business owners don't even measure the return on investment for their advertising dollar. When was the last time you calculated how much your ad in the yellow pages costs, and how many new customers you get in return? That's right, it's probably been a while.

Another problem many business owners face when placing advertising with traditional media is the difficulty in reaching their target customer. This becomes especially difficult when placing advertisements in traditional (and expensive) media like the radio or the newspaper. The target audience for traditional media is so broad, that your advertisement is unlikely to find your target demographic.

People are unlikely to be looking for your services while they are watching TV, listening to the radio or reading a magazine or paper, that is they are not in a 'buying frame of mind'. If a cosmetic dentist can target his advertisement to a person who, in that exact

moment, is thinking about getting their teeth corrected, will their ad have more impact and a higher conversion rate? You bet.

Many business owners are so busy with running their business, they don't even want to think about the headache a website or e-commerce system could bring. That is understandable, after all you should spend your time where it's best invested – in your business. But there is a misconception that a website, or e-commerce system, is complex and expensive. In fact, the opposite is true. A well thought out online strategy for your business and website can contribute to higher retention rates of existing customers, lead more new customers into your door, and even provide additional income streams online.

The Solution: Bolster your Internet Presence and Let your customers know you're there

The Solution is simple – take the leap and expand your internet presence.

If you already have a website, that's great. Think about the return you get from your investment, how much money did you spend on it and how many new customers does it generate every month? If you think there is some more, untapped potential, you're probably right. The old adage 'When you build it they will come' does not apply on the internet. There are simply too many alternatives on the internet these days.

Benefits of taking your business online

The benefits of bolstering your online presence are enormous. You can find easy and affordable ways to draw new customers to your website when they are in a "buying frame of mind", you can stay in touch with existing customers and make them special offers, and you can easily outperform your competition and last year's performance by dominating your marketplace.

Measure your Returns

One of the major benefits of shifting your advertising and marketing activities online, is that you can measure your return on investment. A simple calculation of what each new customer or email list subscriber is worth to you will tell you how many new customers you need to make a good return on your investment.

Target your Ideal Customer

Most likely your business has an ideal customer demographic and disposable income. Your customers are even likely to look for a similar solution to their problem. Knowing who your ideal customer is, will make your online advertising and marketing efforts razor focussed and not waste any time on people who don't fit your ideal customer profile anyway.

Target your Customer while in a 'buying frame of mind'

Even if your advertising reaches your ideal customer, it doesn't mean they are going to convert into real business. If they don't have a need when they see or hear your advertisement, they are unlikely to buy. When advertising online, you can respond to people's needs when they are most likely to need a solution – your solution. And this increases the conversion rate from lead to actual customer immensely.

Stay in Touch With Existing Customers

Staying in touch with existing customers is crucial for any business. After all, it is widely known that it costs much more to convert a prospect into a customer, than it does to get repeat business from an existing customer. If you're not keeping in touch with existing customers, you're leaving money on the table and risking that they be pinched by your competitor. Keeping in touch through email newsletters (called email marketing) is a low-cost, effective way to make enticing offers to repeat customers, and rewarding them for giving their business to you.

Get the Edge over your Competitors

The online world is a fast-moving medium. As Rupert Murdoch said "It won't be the big who beat the small, it will be the fast beating the slow". If you get online before your competitors do, you will have a clear edge over them in creating new leads, converting more prospects and keeping your existing customers tied to your business.

The opposite is also true, if your competitors are already online and optimising their web presence to create more business, you better follow suit before they put you out of business.

What to Look For When Taking Your Business Online

There are two options to consider when taking your business online. You can either do it yourself, which will take you a lot of time and energy, or you can engage someone to do it for you.

If you decide to take your business online by yourself, here are the main steps you should consider to optimise your online presence²:

- Create a website (if you don't already have one)
- Drive traffic to your website through search engine marketing (SEM)
 - Search engine optimisation
 - Pay Per Click Advertising
- Convert your traffic by making an irresistible offer and getting your leads to take action
- Capture details of new prospects and existing customers to create an email list
 - Offer incentives for them to come back
- Create a community to further tie your customers to your business.

If this sounds way too complicated, and you'd rather spend time with your business and your customers, consider outsourcing this to a professional. Whether you decide to partner with an agency or an individual, here are some key points to consider:

Proven Results

Unfortunately the internet has become infamous for the amount of spam and deceit that is going on. You should therefore place highest importance on partnering with someone who can deliver proven results – increase your website traffic, potential leads, email list or passive income. Whatever your outcome may be. If you're really lucky you might even find someone who can give you a guarantee to work for you until they have delivered results.

Professional

Although the internet is famous for bringing us 15 year old millionaires, that's no excuse for partnering with someone who is not professional. After all, they are working to improve your business, so you deserve to know they will be professional, organized and meet your agreed deadlines.

Long-term relationship

² For a more detailed step-by-step plan how to take your business online, please go to [www....com.au](http://www.getstartedonline.com.au) to claim your free Take Your Business Online Today Blue Print.

Building your online presence won't happen overnight. And when it does happen, it will need to be maintained. Therefore you're well advised to choose an agency or individual you can develop a long-term relationship with. After all, they're working to improve your business, so you'd better get along.

Reasons to partner with Get Started Online

As the director of Get Started Online, I have thorough internet marketing experience. I have consulted to several clients in the past who have received outstanding results – totally dominating their chosen field.

When assessing your business needs and desired outcomes we follow a proven process. Each project includes a thorough review of your current position, a needs assessment, a proposal for changes to your online presence, monitoring the results (including your spend and the leads that are being generated in return) and maintaining your online presence. By asking the right questions up front, we assure your new online presence will achieve your objectives.

We are interested in developing long-term relationships with our clients, but won't keep you on a leash. The simple fact is that a great online presence needs to be maintained. If you want to learn how to do this yourself (or one of your staff members does), we're happy to share our resources with you so you can take matters into your own hands.

We guarantee to deliver results – literally. If we do not deliver the promised improvements within the agreed timeframe we will work until we do.

Visit <http://www.getstartedonline.com.au> now for your free online positioning report specifically for your business (normally valued at \$497!).