

What Can You Sell Online?

A Special Report by Dan B. Cauthron



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Introduction

Contrary to what appears a too popular belief, marketing related products and 'how to make money' ebooks **are not** the only things that can be sold on the Internet.

Here are just a few alternate ideas to get the inspirational juices flowing:

- Pet-based products
- Wedding consultant/planner
- Life coaching
- Web design
- Dietary consultant
- Teaching toys
- Specialty teas and coffees
- Education and tutoring services
- Travel planning/home-based travel agency
- Cooking products/books for kids
- Niche exercise equipment or programs
- Specialty gift baskets
- Web community creation
- Virtual real estate sales
- Homemade candles or essential oils
- Home organization planner
- Hand-crafted jewelry
- Freelance writer
- Event planner

- Custom invitations and labels
- Virtual secretary
- Income tax preparation
- Homemade soaps or body lotions

Of course, you can always carve a further niche into one of these ideas to make it your own. But after you've identified your niche and found a need to fill, an even bigger question may rear its head:

What Can You Sell?

There are many types of products and services that lend themselves to Internet marketing.

You should determine what format your product or service will take according to how your information can best be presented.

The majority of Internet marketers use ebooks or e-courses as their primary product set. This is because ebooks automatically work with an online business: like the Internet itself, they don't exist outside a computer hard drive.

But once again 'how to make money' ebooks are just one of your options. I strongly suggest you start thinking outside that box!

Ebooks are the easiest and fastest Internet marketing business to set up and run. There are several web-based tools designed to make ebook production and distribution easy. When you sell ebooks, you

don't have to worry about production and shipping costs; your product can be delivered to customers via e-mail.

With autoresponders, you can set up your website to automatically deliver ebooks as soon as a customer makes a purchase.

One of the benefits of ebooks to customers is the resources they can provide. Ebook text can be linked directly to websites with more information and online tools, and since people read ebooks on their computers, the easy access to resources and bonus features is often a high selling point for ebooks.

Where can you get ebooks? You can write an ebook yourself. You can create an ebook based on a public domain work by updating and revising the content. You can also obtain master resell rights to ebooks on a number of subjects.

If possible, the best idea is to write an ebook yourself (or outsource someone to create an exclusive ebook based on your ideas, an option that will be discussed further in this chapter). Remember, one major factor in the buying decision process is whether your product or service is available elsewhere. When you create an exclusive product, you have the potential to capture more of your target market.

Never written a book before? You may have no idea how to get started. For beginners, the best approach is to break the project into several manageable steps and develop each section one at a time. Here is a simple guide you can follow to help you create your own

original ebook:

- *Step 1: Create an outline.* Working from an outline helps you corral your ideas with a manageable framework. List your main ideas, and then break each one into subsections that relate to the main section. It may be helpful to make your outline overly detailed, and then cut back those sections you find you don't need.
- *Step 2: Research, research, research.* The more you know about a subject, the easier you will find it is to write about it. You can find more than enough information online to supplement your own knowledge. Seek out several resources that relate to each of your subsections and read up on each one before you start writing that section. Remember to bookmark resources as you find them for easy access later on, and also for inclusion as bonus resources in your ebook.
- *Step 3: Treat each subsection as an article.* Writing an article sounds less daunting than an entire book, doesn't it? The subsections of your ebook should each resemble an article, with a beginning, middle and end. When you treat your ebook like a series of articles, working on one section at a time, it becomes easier to reach the finish line. You'll find a more detailed discussion on writing articles in the "Article Marketing" section of this book.
- *Step 4: Incorporate additional information.* Links to other resources, tables of information, case studies, images, and breakout boxes are all great supplemental material for ebooks. As you research your topic, keep a list of information your ebook

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should include and create a separate file for it to incorporate later.

- *Step 5: Edit, revise and clean up.* Once you have all of your subsections written and compiled in one document, read the whole thing from start to finish. Be on the lookout for typos, spelling and grammar errors, and make sure the text flows and makes sense. You may even want to hire a professional editor or proofreader—or at the very least, ask a friend to read the final draft and point out any errors or sections that don't seem right. Professionalism counts!

If you're not convinced of your writing abilities, but you still want to write your own ebook, there are plenty of online resources for writers you can learn from.

Here are some places to start:

[7 Day eBook](#) – write your own ebook in as little as 7 days.

Knowledge Hound:

<http://www.knowledgehound.com/topics/writing.htm>

PoeWar Writer's Resource Center: www.poewar.com

Writers Write: www.writerswrite.com

Write101: www.write101.com

Ebook production: After you've written the text for your ebook and

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gathered all of the resources you want to include, you have to put it all together into a final product. There are several ways to go about creating an ebook for distribution, depending on your skill level and budgetary limits.

Do-it-yourself: You can format an ebook in a word processing program such as Microsoft Word, and then create a PDF from the document that will become your final product. PDFs, or Portable Document Files, are the most common file format for ebooks; they are viewed using the free Adobe reader, and their contents are difficult to tamper with. If you have or plan to buy the full Adobe Acrobat software (which costs around \$300), you can create as many PDFs as you'd like and edit the contents as often as needed.

You can also create a PDF using a free online converter program. If you use a converter, you won't be able to edit the file after creation, so you will have to make sure your document appears exactly the way you want it to in your word processing program. You can find free online PDF conversion programs in several places. Here are just a few:

PDF Online: www.gohtm.com

Cute PDF: www.cutepdf.com

PDF4Free: www.pdfpdf.com/pdf4free.html

Click to Convert: www.clicktoconvert.com

PDF995: www.pdf995.com

Use an ebook creator program: There are several desktop publishing

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programs you can use to automatically format and create your ebook, either in PDF or HTML (web page) format. Most desktop publishing programs and ebook creation software are simple drag-and-drop interfaces (as opposed to HTML programming), and quite easy to use. Some programs are free; many require a minimal investment, but you'll be able to create as many ebooks and new versions as you'd like with them.

Here's a sampling of available desktop publishing and ebook creators:

Easy Ebook Creator: www.easyebookcreator.com

Ebooks Writer: www.ebookswriter.com

Ebook Compiler: www.ebookcompiler.com

Microsoft Publisher: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/FX010857941033.aspx> (note: Microsoft Publisher comes bundled with some version of the Microsoft Office software suite; you may already have this program on your computer!)

Of course, if you choose a reseller program, the ebook is already created for you. You would therefore put more effort into marketing a reseller program because the competition is stiffer.

E-courses: E-courses are another popular Internet marketing product. An e-course is a series of informational and/or interactive articles, usually delivered via e-mail.

If you'd like to market an e-course, it is a good idea to sign up for a few free e-courses (there are many available online) to get a feel for

how they work.

If you've written an ebook or developed a new version of a public domain product, the simplest way to create an e-course is to break the book up into several sections and deliver them to customers one at a time, using an autoresponder program.

For an interactive e-course, consider creating a forum and allowing "students" to enroll. You can post the lessons to your forum and be available to answer questions, give and grade assignments, or schedule class chats.

Audio products: Unless you're an aspiring singer/songwriter, you'll generally be interested in audio products that fall into one of two categories: repackaged public domain material, or audio reseller programs. Creating exclusive audio content is a difficult and expensive process for most people.

Public domain audio products are often compilations of songs, movie soundtracks, or radio plays. There are generally two ways to package audio content: CDs and downloadable files. Individual songs work well as downloads, but larger files are often better as CDs. Many home computers come equipped with CD burners, so you can create CDs yourself. You can also outsource CD production and have bulk orders created for you.

There are also audio reseller programs you can purchase. Most audio reseller programs are in downloadable format and used compressed

files to decrease download time.

Services and Consulting

Is your niche starving for services? You can create a service-based online business using your skills, interests and hobbies. Because you don't have to create a product, service-based online businesses usually let you get started faster. Of course, you must be able to provide the services before you open your website for business.

The Internet: Finding customers around the world

There are many types of service and consulting businesses that lend themselves well to Internet marketing. A few examples include:

- Freelance writing
- Resume writing
- Income tax preparation
- Life coaching or consulting
- Website design
- Telephone answering services
- Virtual office assistants
- Database preparation
- Photo restoration and manipulation

If you plan to start a service-based online business, you don't have to

create a product—but you should make samples of your work available in most cases. Don't have any experience yet? You can still create samples that prove you have the necessary skills to do the job. Be creative: if you're starting a resume-writing service, interview a few friends or family members and create resumes for them. Use your own home photographs to showcase your digital restoration and enhancement skills.

For service businesses, it's important to develop a fee schedule ahead of time that states how much you'll charge for various services you offer. This not only allows customers to know how much they'll be paying you; it also helps you avoid scrambling for a price quote when a customer asks: "How much will it cost if I want so-and-so done?" Take into consideration the amount of time it will take you to complete each service and set yourself a reasonable hourly rate.

Selling Physical Goods and Hard Lumpy Objects

Got a great idea for a gift or gadget? Designing and selling your own products online can be fun and rewarding, especially when you're able to reach a global niche market.

If you plan to sell a physical product, there are several things you must take into consideration during your business planning stage. First, ensure that you have a workspace dedicated to production. Especially for moms with small children at home, leaving your products lying around can spell disaster.

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You must be able to fulfill your orders promptly with quality products, or you risk losing the trust of your customers.

Second, you have to determine how you'll deliver your product to your customers. For example: you can't e-mail homemade fudge, so you will have to invest in packaging that will protect your product through postal mail or UPS delivery. You'll also have to plan a time to make deliveries, so you're not rushing off to the post office four times a day. It's a good idea to keep postal supplies on hand to package your products. You can also arrange for home pickup through the post office, UPS, or Fed-Ex.

Finally, don't forget to factor in the cost of packaging and shipping to your final price. Most Internet businesses charge separately on a per-order basis for shipping, but you should keep in mind that boxes and bubble wrap don't grow on trees. Forgetting to incorporate packaging costs can often mean a loss of profits for your business.

BONUS! Planning on selling an exclusive ebook, audio course, original gift item or public domain based product? Here are two powerful resources that can simplify your product creation and sales process:

Lulu – www.lulu.com: Lulu is a free self-publishing service that allows you to create ebooks, physical books, CDs, DVDs, calendars and more. You upload your files, and Lulu handles the production and distribution for you. You can list your products on Amazon, create your own Lulu storefront, advertise and promote, and edit your products any time.

Café Press – www.cafepress.com: Simply the easiest way to create and sell hundreds of custom products, Café Press allows you to design and sell tee shirts, sweatshirts, hats, coffee mugs, calendars, cards, home décor, buttons, magnets, clocks, bumper stickers, and more. You can create a free Café Press storefront to sell your products from, or link to them from your own website or blog.

Outsourcing and Partnering

Many Internet marketers find they just don't have the time or the skills to do it all themselves. Fortunately, outsourcing and partnering are both common practices in the online business world. You can save time and ensure the quality of your products by giving part of your workload to someone else.

Time Versus Money

How much is your time worth? If you see yourself staring down fourteen-hour workdays in order to develop and run a successful Internet business, you may want to consider outsourcing.

Outsourcing simply means paying someone else to perform certain tasks for you. Of course, the turnoff word here for many people is "paying." You're starting a business with the intent of *making* money, not spending it—right?

In many cases, the money you spend for outsourcing will actually mean greater profits. By hiring an expert to handle those tasks that

would take you longer due to your lack of experience, you save time—time which you can then spend doing those things you *are* experienced with. This translates to more profit with less effort on your part. If you think about it, outsourcing is like giving yourself an hourly raise.

You can outsource just about any task associated with your business. Your cash outlay will vary according to the type of work you want done. When it comes to choosing which tasks you should look for someone else to do for you, a good rule of thumb is “do your best, outsource the rest.” If a task involves skill areas you haven’t developed, hire an expert.

Here are just a few of the tasks you can easily outsource:

- Website content and copy writing
- Website design
- Website maintenance
- Internet research
- Data formatting
- Search engine submissions
- Sales letter writing

When considering outsourcing, a good formula to follow is to weigh the money you’ll spend against the time it would take you to do the task yourself. Estimate how many hours it would take you to complete a project, and then divide what it would cost to hire someone else by that number.

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If you end up with something around three or four dollars an hour, give outsourcing serious consideration. Your time would be best spent on other business-related projects.

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