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Warning:

We cannot guarantee the information herein will remain accurate due to the fast progress of the internet business. Thus, we will not be reliable for any direct or indirect losses. However, we will update the information as frequently as possible.

Chapter 1: Benefits of starting off an online business

Everyone wants to be their own boss. I believe they have thought of it at least once during their lifetime. So, would you like to be your own boss too? This is no longer a dream, but an achievable target. The reason is simple. We do not need to incur any large expenses to start off an online business. There are no rental, insurance and license fees.

What are the advantages of an online business?

Flexibility

You are neither restricted to work in office nor work from 8am to 5pm. You can work whenever or wherever you want, provided you have a computer or laptop along with internet connection. Therefore, you can work at home, office, coffee shop or even on your bed. It provides flexibility and you have total control over your time.

Growing industry

We are now living in the information age or also known as digital age. People from around the world cannot seem to live without a computer. Therefore, online businesses are expected to continue to grow. They are a booming industry.

Operates on 24/7/365 basis

Your website or online store operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. Customers from around the world can visit your website anytime and anywhere.

Zero start up cost

You can start your business with zero cost. Before thinking about managing the inventory or selling your products or services, you have to setup a website. Then, in order to complete a website, you will need a domain name (example: *www.yourname.com*) and web hosting service, which is a place to host and make your website accessible to the world via World Wide Web (www). The good news is that you can get both of them for **free**.

Domain Name

All you need to do is just search through the internet for free domain name, just type a few simple words like “free domain name” into any of the search engines. Then, you should have a list of results. However, you may normally get a free subdomain (example: *www.abc.yourname.com*) instead of a domain name.

However, I would like to point out the potential weaknesses of using subdomain. By using a subdomain, your business may not seem professional from the customers’ point of view. Your customers may feel that you are less committed to your business. In addition, when your web address becomes longer, it will be more difficult to remember and type. Eventually, customers may have problem to visit or revisit your website. Thus, you should consider getting your own domain name. You will be able to get it for less than USD 10 per annum, so it is still very affordable.

If you are getting your own domain name, then there are a few pieces of advice for you. First, choose a .com domain name instead of .net, .org, .biz and so on. The reason is most web visitors expect a .com. Second, make it easy to remember and type. Third, keep your domain name as short as possible.

After you have registered a domain, your identity will be revealed to the world. Why do I say that? You may try to enter your domain name at (e.g.) www.whois.net and then you will find all your contact information appears. Therefore, in order to hide your contact information (to avoid receiving spam) from “WHOIS lookup”, you should get ID protection (it is optional). Any web hosting service provider can provide this service. The price range is USD 2.00 – USD 10.00 a year.

Web Hosting Service

Again, you perform another search for “free web hosting service” via the search engines. Then, you should receive plenty of results. You may just pick anyone you like and then sign up for the service. However, even free service may come with a ‘cost’.

As we know, all businesses need to generate sales to survive. If a business does not make enough sales, it will collapse. Therefore, should all of us use free hosting services, then how do the companies generate enough incomes to payoff their expenses? We believe “You get what you pay for”. Thus, you may not get the support on time when you encounter problems. Furthermore, you may experience server downtime more frequently as the companies allocate more resources to the paid users. In addition, free plan normally requires you to log into your account every few days, or else the provider will assume your account is inactive and delete it. Thus, you need to pay special attention on this issue.

Therefore, you should also consider the paid service. The cost depends on the specification. The price range is USD 1 – USD 5 per month. 1-dollar-hosting is normally only available for a single domain. If you have more domains, you need to upgrade the plan.

Conclusion:

If you face budget constraint problem, you can still go on with free subdomain and web hosting service. You can buy these services when you have earned your incomes.

Chapter 2: How to choose the right web hosting service provider?

Your website or online store is your source of income, therefore it is very important to choose a right web hosting service provider the first time. If you fail to get it right, you will have to bear the consequences. You are probably going to spend more time, effort and money to fix the situation. The worst-case scenarios are losing all the data and you have to shift to another web hosting service provider.

It does not matter whether you are going to subscribe a free or paid hosting plan, there are a few things you need to know and verify before you sign up any web hosting plan.

Refund

This is the most important thing to consider when deciding whether or not to sign up a plan. If the service provider does not provide any “money back guarantee”, then I will advice you to stay away from the provider (unless it is a free plan, of course). Money back guarantees act as insurance for you. If disaster happens within the coverage period, you will able to escape without loss, or else you will be flushing money down the toilet. Even if money back guarantee is available, you still have to verify 2 issues. First, what is the coverage period? 30 days? 60 days? Refund anytime on prorated basis? Second, whether it is conditional or unconditional money back guarantee? So, make sure you read all the clauses. One of the fastest ways is to ask the sales department and keep a copy of the conversation as proof.

Test the water

Try to contact the sales department via email, phone call or ticketing system. How much time do they need to reply you? Have they answered your questions accurately? Do not be happy if the sales department answers you within minutes as your main focus will be on the support department. Sales department only deals with you in the short term, whereas support department will be dealing with you in a longer term. So, are you satisfied with their services?

Speed of the support

Are they taking a reasonable amount of time to reply you? Generally, paid service will receive faster support response as compared to the free service. However, there are a few exceptional cases. I have both free and paid web hosting plan. To my surprise, I receive support response within 15 minutes from the free plan. On the other hand, the paid plan needs 2 – 4 hours to provide a response. Thus, try to test the speed of the support before you commit to any plan as you do not want to wait for a long time when you need assistance.

24/7/365 helpdesk

Are they operating on 24/7/365 basis? 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year? One should choose a provider that operates 24/7/365 basis. The reason is simple. You will never know when the problem will arise. So, if you encounter any problem, you can report to the provider and get the problem fixed immediately. Please remember that your online store is operating 24 hours a day, thus 24-hour support service is crucial to you.

Attitude and behavior

Is the web hosting service provider friendly? Is the support team willing to help? Some of them may not seem to care (“none of their business” attitude) or answer your questions rudely when situation arises. Of course, this will make you angry and increase your blood pressure! However, some are willing to go the extra mile. They are helping you to install a third party web application, while some may say it is not their responsibility and suggests you to contact the third party for assistance.

Knowledge and experience

Even though you receive a fast support response, but do they actually answer or solve your problem? Sometimes, they say the issue is fixed. However, you find out the problem remains unsolved. So, you will need to report the problem again and wait for further response. So, it is time-consuming if they do not get the issue fixed the first time. Thus, a knowledgeable and experienced support team is important to your web development.

Web server reliability

What is their server status? Is the server going down frequently? How long is the downtime? Your corporate website represents your company, product or service. If your website always goes down, it indirectly implies that your company, product or service is not reliable. As a result, it may turn your customers away. Therefore, choosing a provider that provides 99.9% network uptime guarantee is crucial. It helps to grow your business.

Compliment and complaint

No one can please all the people all the time. So, a good web hosting company will receive few complaints, while a bad web hosting company will receive plenty of complaints! Launch your internet browser and try to find out the feedbacks from different users about the company. You can include keywords like good, bad or scam into the search engine. However, you should be alert. Some of the websites are promoting web hosting services, therefore the comments may not be true. If you need advice, you may visit Web Hosting Talk forum. It is one of the largest web hosting communities. Many people are sharing their views in the forum.

Features

This is normally not an issue as all the features are being displayed on the website before you sign up for a plan. However, you need to know what you need. For example: you are going to install a third party web application, so you have to find out whether the server can support such web application or web hosting provider allows you to do so.

The list above will serve as a guideline when for selecting a web hosting service provider.

Chapter 3: How to choose the right web hosting plan?

After you have selected a web hosting service provider, your next question will be “how to choose a right web hosting plan?”

Although most of the plans are normally the same, there are a few things you should be aware of before signing up a plan.

How much resources do you need?

It depends on how many domains you have or plan to have and how much traffic you will receive for each domain. As you search through the internet, you will discover many web hosting companies provide unlimited disk storage, domain hosting, subdomains, email accounts, bandwidth, add-on domains, parked domains and others.

The plan looks very attractive and should you take up the offer? If you are only having a small business, 1 GB of disk storage and 1 GB of bandwidth are actually more than enough. You do not need unlimited resources. The risks of signing up an ‘unlimited’ plan are:

Oversell

Some web hosting companies may oversell its service. For instance, there are a lot of users sharing the limited disk space. Therefore, offering unlimited resources may not possible unless the web hosting companies add new equipments. On the other hand, ‘unlimited’ plan may open to abuse too. Users may upload and transfer large files. Thus, they are using up all the resources.

Overpay

If you only have a single domain with little web traffic, then paying \$4 - \$6 a month for 'unlimited' plan is waste of money. You are paying something that you are not fully using it. Therefore, you can actually select a smaller plan at the price of \$1 - \$2 per month. Then, you can save some money now and use it to promote your website or renew your domain in future.

However, there are a few exceptional cases where you may subscribe the 'unlimited' plan.

First, you are having more than 5 domain names. Small plan usually does not allow you to host more than 1 or 2 domains. Thus, you have no choice but to choose a larger plan. Second, you want to upload and play a lot of video or audio files on your website. Thus, streaming either video or audio files will definitely consume more resources like disk space and bandwidth. In this case, an 'unlimited' plan should be appropriate to you. However, not all web hosting service companies provide streaming video or audio support. So, you have to verify with them before subscribing the plan. Third, you are selling softwares or other digital products and allowing your customers to **download** them. So, how large are the files? How many digital products you have? The more (or larger) files you have, the more disk storage and bandwidth you will need. Thus, selecting 'unlimited' plan may fit all your needs.

In conclusion, searching for a good web hosting company and plan is important to avoid hassle in future.

Chapter 4: How to build a website within seconds?

You may not understand basic HTML, PHP, MySQL and other programming languages. In addition, you may not have the budget to hire a professional web designer to get the things done. Thus, you are very worried.

The good news is you can get your website fully built within seconds at no cost. Your next question will be “how to do that?”

In the case, you have to be very careful in selecting your web hosting service provider. I would say that most of the providers are providing **free** scripts installer. They may have different names for it, but the scripts are the same. There are lots of free open source content management systems (CMS), such as Drupal, Joomla, Geeklog and others. Thus, you can install these CMS by a single click. After that, your website will be built and you can start to write web content.

If you have anything that you are not sure about, you can always ask the web hosting service provider (even if you are using the free plan).

Chapter 5: What to buy and sell online?

As I have mentioned earlier, most people are thinking of being their own boss at least once during their lifetime. When we ask them, “Would you like to be your own boss”? They will answer, “Yes!”

However, when we ask the second question, “What do you want to sell then?” They just keep silence. This implies that they want to be their own boss, but they probably do not know what to buy and sell or not willing to risk their hard-earned money.

There are a few strategies you can use to make money online without cost. Of course, they are only 2 things you can sell in the world. It is either product or service.

Product:

Tangible product:

You are selling physical products like shirts, shoes, books and others. In order to avoid cost and inventory buildup, you have to invest significant amount of time in conducting research. You will have to access to the internet and look around your neighborhood to find out good sources of cheap products. Please ensure that you can get the products at a cheap price even if you are only buying a single item from each of the suppliers. This gives you an opportunity to sell the products at a higher price (but must be a reasonable price) on your website.

Therefore, you can place your order only when you receive an order from your customers through website. Eventually, you are doing businesses without incurring any cost. In other words, you will receive the payment from customers before you make any payment to buy the products. However, if you decided to choose source products from overseas, then you have to be very careful about the delivery time. You have to be cleared about how much time you need to get the product delivered to your customers. Some of them may not want to wait for a month or months. Thus, choosing domestic sources of products is always a better choice.

Intangible product:

In this case, you will be selling ebook, softwares, graphics, web templates and others. This may be the favorite for most people as there are lots of advantages for selecting them as your products. The most obvious reasons are no inventory buildup, shipments are not required as you can deliver them via email or download and giving you an opportunity to do businesses worldwide.

In order to create your own digital products, you can start writing ebooks or softwares and designing graphics or web templates. However, I believe not everyone has the time, effort or ability to do so. One of the shortest paths is to sell the digital products that come with resell rights. In that case, you can immediately start selling without taking the trouble to create your own products. You have 2 options. Firstly, you can search through the internet to buy a digital product package that includes hundreds or thousands of resell rights products.

On the other hand, if you are not willing to spend any money on it. Then, you simply type “free resell rights” into any search engines and look for the results. After that, download each of them. Eventually, you are getting the digital products for free and you can sell them right away. However, the only disadvantage is that you will need to invest considerable amount of time to gather them.

Once you have your resell right products, you can either sell them individually or group them into single or different packages. Each different grouping will produce a unique package. Therefore, it is non-comparable product package which you can set any price you like.

In addition, you can easily start off different businesses like online ebook store, software and web design company. Eventually, you are generating different sources of income to minimize the risk of putting all eggs in one basket.

Out of all intangible products, ebook is one of the best selling products. The reasons are internet users always go online to look for information and ebook is normally cheaper than a physical book. Therefore, ebook reader market will continue to expand globally.

Chapter 6: How to make profit online through selling services?

Some people are not interested to sell products but prefer to provide services. Although making money online is not difficult, but there is no fast or quick money. It takes time and effort to build up the business. Therefore, one should not expect the business will transform into multi-million dollar enterprise overnight.

Here are a few services you can provide to make money online at no cost.

Services:

Writing:

Are you a good writer? Can you write ebooks, articles or blogs? Can you translate a document into different language? There are a lot of webmasters hiring ghost writers to get the job done. They are probably too busy to write the content of their websites, while web visitors hungry for information. Thus, they need you to write on their behalf. So, you can charge a fee (\$4 – \$5 for 500 words) for all the works that you going to produce.

Designing:

Can you design web templates, shirts, logos and others? In order to increase the conversion rate, you should consider producing good and catchy samples. The old saying goes “a picture is worth a million words”. Customers are not convinced *by your words but your works!*

Mystery shopper:

It is a tool that many companies will use to evaluate their quality of service. You will be asked to perform certain actions such as buy a specific product or service, asking certain questions, lodging a complaint or behave in a certain way. After that, you will need to gather all the information, report your feedbacks to the companies and get paid for the job you have done.

Directory Submission:

It is a process of filing or adding a website to a web directory. This is a great way to increase the popularity of a website. Since submitting websites to the web directories manually is very time-consuming, webmasters will need someone to do the task. Directory submission is a means to build links to the website, having more links may simply mean more web traffic. Thus, it is highly demanded. You may charge \$0.25 - \$0.30 for each directory submission.

Virtual Assistant (VA):

It is also known as virtual office assistant. The works include answering emails, research on particular topics, data entry, phone calling and other administrative supports. Therefore, it requires you to possess certain skills and knowledge before handling a specific job. Customer is most likely to hire VA to save cost as VA is not an employee of the company. As a result, VA will need to pay for their expenses, taxes and equipments.

Commentator:

You will get paid for each comment or feedback you are going to make on the internet forums or blogs. You may need to advertise clients' products and services, while some clients may require you to provide a solution to the problem raised by web user and leave a signature which contains their web address. This is a good way to promote a website or company as there are more and more users turn up to forums and blogs for advice and solution. The reasonable fee is about \$0.20 - \$0.30 per post.

Recruitment agency:

Find the correct people to fill the specific positions or help the unemployed people to get a job. You will need to gather information such as amount of salary offered or requested, part or full-time, home or office-based job and others. The rewards may reach up to \$1,000. You can get the job done through both online and offline.

Chapter 7: Joining affiliate programs

Some may think it is too difficult to manage inventory and sell your own products, while they also have no interest to provide services. So, what can they do to make money online?

One of the simplest ways is to join affiliate programs. First, you have to choose and sign up an affiliate program. Second, you will have to place the advertiser's link or banner on your website. Third, send your visitors (when the web users click on the link or banner) to the advertiser's website to purchase a product, subscribe to services or sign up an account. Fourth, you will get paid after the visitors perform these actions. Affiliate program includes pay-per-click, pay-per-lead and pay-per-sale. Therefore, it is an effective 'word of mouth' marketing tactic.

The advantages of joining an affiliate program are you do not need to close any sales, issue invoices and bills, manage inventory, deliver products and handle customer complaints.

In order to make money with affiliate programs, there are a few techniques that you should know:

Traffic

If there are only a few visitors access to your website, the conversion rate will be very low. It is like a 'number' game. The more visitors you have, the higher the chances of increasing the conversion rate. Therefore, in order to enhance the level of exposure, you can advertise through forums, blogs and social media sites. Traffic is the key to success. So, if you advertise on these well-established websites, you will get a better result.

Relevancy

What you are promoting must be relevant to the content of your website. For instance: your web content is all about computer hardwares and softwares. However, your affiliate service is psychological treatment. Do you think you can promote the service effectively? Obviously, visitors will not be interested to click on the affiliate link or banner to find out more about psychological treatment. Eventually, all your effort is wasted. Therefore, choosing affiliate product or service which is related to your web content is crucial to enhance the conversion rate.

Position and Size

Get a larger size of banner and place it on the middle of your website. This will attract more attention of the audience. Let's imagine that you are displaying a small affiliate link in the sidebar. Will the visitors pay attention to it? Probably, they will not. They may just ignore the affiliate link or simply do not notice its existence.

Diversity

One should consider promoting a few affiliate products from different merchants. We assume you are promoting computer hardwares and softwares. In this case, you can choose at least 2 merchants to lower your risks. Risks are such as the merchants may not pay your commission, selling at an unreasonably high price (even though they pay you a high commission rate), they have a bad business reputation and others. All these factors will decrease the chances of success. Therefore, it is very risky to place all your bets on a single merchant.

Select the right merchants is an important step to build your online business.

Chapter 8: Promote your website without cost (or at low cost)

Search Engine Submission

Your first step will be submitting your website to major search engines, such as Google, Yahoo and Bing. The reason is to get these engines to index and include all your web pages into their search results. This process takes some time. It may be a few weeks or months. Therefore, submit your website as soon as it is built.

Exchange Links and Banners

Find some other website which is relevant to your products and services. Then, exchange link and banner to promote each other's website. For example: you are selling computer hardwares, so you can look for someone who is selling softwares. As a result, both of you can work hand in hand.

Email Marketing

It is one of the most powerful ways to promote your products or services. You can send emails instantly to all your customers at no cost. Therefore, all businesses use email marketing to an extent. However, there is one major drawback. You need a lot of time to build a mailing list. In order to encourage customers to sign up your newsletter, you can provide certain incentive to them. You need to explain what the benefit is. This may include free ebook, voucher, coupon and other. In addition, it is also a good idea to guarantee that you will never share or sell their information.

Even if you wish to get on the fast track, you should not buy any bulk email list. There are two reasons. First, despite the list contains hundreds, thousands or millions of email addresses, most of these email addresses are already outdated or no longer in use. Second, you are actually spamming or harassing other email recipients if you send emails to them without their consent. Eventually, these recipients will complain about you to your web hosting service provider and Internet Service Provider (ISP). As a result, your account will be blacklisted by web hosting service provider and ISP, while you are also inviting CAN-SPAM penalty. Thus, everyone should avoid sending spam emails.

Sending bulk emails

This is a shortcut for you. Instead of building your own mailing list which will take months or years, you can send email instantly to millions of targeted prospects. Therefore, it will save lots of your time. All you need to do is to sign up any bulk email marketing service. However, it comes with a cost. The price range is USD 30 – USD 60, it depends on the number of subscribers the service providers have in their email database. They claim that all their recipients have double-opted in to receive emails, so they are not spamming. Some of them also provide a full refund should you are not satisfied with the result or their service. However, you are strongly advised to read all the clauses to find out whether it is conditional or unconditional money back guarantee.

On the other hand, some webmasters may not want to spend any money to promote their website. In this case, there are also free bulk email marketing services available in the market. However, some restrictions may apply. For instance, you are only allowed to send one email per day or you can only send to one thousand recipients each day. Therefore, it is less effective.

Referral program

It is similar to network marketing. First, you have to sign up a free or paid account. Then, your website will be included into the directory. Second, in order to make your web listing to appear at the top of your selected category, you have to visit other members' website and leave them your feedback. Therefore, you have to be very active to maintain your position. Of course, all other members will do the same, so they will visit each other's website as well. As a result, this will increase web traffic and promote sales.

Online Contest

Let's quote an example. You are in the business of selling Omega 3 and 6 supplements. In order to generate a higher sales volume and respond rate from your customers, you can organize a contest which is related to your product's functions. Since Omega 3 and 6 are important to the development of brain, you may consider holding an IQ contest.

This gives you the opportunity to explain how your products actually help in enhancing brain function. The cost range can be started from zero to a few hundreds or thousands of dollars. Should you make the IQ contest online, you may cut down the cost effectively. Firstly, we must develop a set of IQ questions and then we can choose to send them out via emails to the existing customers.

Later, these contestants will have the choice to participate through the website or they simply just reply our email. Reward the winners with your products, vouchers or others. As a result, this will encourage the customers to spend with the given vouchers.

You can choose to stop here. However, why don't we go one step further?
Please refer to the next point.

Online Voucher

On top of the above, for every new contestant (potential new customer) that the existing customers bring in, they will be rewarded with \$5 or \$10 cash voucher. This will encourage the existing customers to help in promoting your company, brand, product and contest to others. Meanwhile, you may control the usage of cash voucher, such as how many vouchers can be used in a single transaction or what is the expiry date. But, we should avoid imposing too much restriction on them. For example: only 1 voucher can be used in a month and the voucher will be expired in 30 days. Ultimately, this will discourage the customers in searching for new contestants.

People may think that offering cash voucher is a cost to the company. Is that right? Yes, we agree on that to a certain extent. However, if we look it at a different perspective then we will think it differently. What if the customers decide to buy your product because they have the voucher, or else they will not do so? In this case, do you think this voucher produces a higher cost or profit to your company?

As long as we offer the vouchers wisely, they will not cause losses to your company, but help in making profit. Eventually, this marketing strategy aids in promoting your products without incurring any high expenditure. Meanwhile, you also obtain a new high quality of prospects list (new contestants), which you can follow up later.

Some methods which have been mentioned earlier in Chapter 4 can also be used to promote your website:

Writing (pg 15)

Directory Submission (pg 16)

Commentator (pg 16)

Affiliate Program (pg 18)

I wish this list can provide you some ideas in setting up your online business. Believe in yourself and covert your thoughts into action!

Summary:

Domain/Subdomain	\$0
Free web hosting	\$0
Building website	\$0
Business cost	\$0
Web promotion	<u>\$0</u>
Total Cost	<u>\$0</u>

Special Note:

However, you have to bear in mind that there is a trade off between your **time** and **money**. You must be willing to invest sufficient time and effort to build your online business if you choose to avoid cost. Or else, you have to pay someone to do the jobs for you.

Do no give up easily! Be prepared to spend months or even years to build a successful online business.

Contact Us:

We do not promote any specific product or service in this ebook, therefore if you would like to have more advice on web hosting services, affiliate programs, resell right products and others, you are welcome to contact us at

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