subhub

Jumpstart Guide

Getting Started

Introduction

This guide will help you plan your online business. It should be useful to anyone who owns or creates content including publishers, authors, musicians, artists, journalists, and bloggers. In this guide we will run through:

- Choosing a subject (if you don't have one)
- Choosing a domain name
- Researching competitors
- How to make money
- Planning your online business

There are five further guides in this jumpstart series which are downloadable for free from www.subhub.com. The other titles are:

- How to design, build and launch your website
- How to create compelling content
- How to make money online
- How to drive free traffic to your website

The 12 Steps to Choosing the Perfect Subject

If you already know the subject of your website you can jump this step. If you don't know the subject this is the most important decision that you will make. This will determine both the pleasure that you get from running your site and the money that you'll make.

There are twelve guidelines I use to help people select a topic that suits them:

Guideline #1 - Be passionate about the subject

Pick a topic that you enjoy so much that you would be happy to cover it even if you weren't getting paid to do so. You'll spend most of your waking hours thinking about it and speaking with people who share your interest.

Guideline #2 – Know your audience

Do you know who your potential audience are and how to reach them in a cost effective way? This is one of the most important points to research when choosing a subject.

Guideline #3 – Unique and exclusive content

Can you create unique and exclusive content that would be difficult or impossible for your visitors to find elsewhere? Where will you get your content from? Could your sources be cut off in the future?

Guideline #4 – Do you have credibility?

The most successful blogs and content websites are run by people with credibility and authority in their subject. Do you have credibility or can you build it?

Guideline #5 – Sufficient material for regular updates

Content websites depend on regularly updated content to keep visitors continually coming back. Does your subject have sufficient fresh news and content to be updated daily?

Guideline #6 – Member interaction

One of the greatest benefits of creating an online publication is that visitors can interact with the publishers and with each other. The more interaction, the stronger the sense of community, resulting in greater loyalty

Guideline #7 – No natural end date

Try to avoid a subject that has a natural end date. For example, a website about how to arrange a wedding would keep members for the six to twelve months before the wedding and then they will leave. This type of subject means you will continually have to chase new members as old ones leave.

Guideline #8 – Potential members are internet users

Make sure that your target audience has access to a computer and the internet! This may sound obvious, but there are still sections of society and parts of the world that don't have internet access.

Guideline #9 – Reduce pain or increase gain

Your content should have a measurable benefit or value to your members. Does it save the time or money? Improve their health or wealth? Make them happier or more successful?

Guideline #10 – Can you beat the competition?

Study the online and offline competition to your proposed website. What price do they charge? What are their strengths and weaknesses? How can you compete with them? Do you believe you can compete and win?

Guideline #11 – Make sure your market is big enough for you to make money

The size of the market you address will depend on how you want to make money. If you are planning on making most of your money from advertising you will need to attract several thousand visitors a day. If you are planning creating a paid membership site you may only need 1,000 paying subscribers to make a good living.

Guideline #12 – Think niche!

Niche websites do best on the internet. It may seem contrary to the last point, but it isn't! . It is better to create a site about "How to buy a house in Spain" than "How to buy a house in Europe". In fact, it maybe better to narrow it down even further to "How to Buy a House in the Costa Blanca". It is better to create a site about "Running a Successful Food Franchise in London" than "How to Run a Franchise".

A subject can be niche but still have a large potential audience. For example, a site targeted at Toyota Prius owners is niche but has a potential global audience of over three million.

12 Tips for Finding the Perfect Domain Name

Choosing a great domain name is important; it is the first thing your customers will see; it is your brand; it will become your most valuable online asset.

These tips should help you select a great name, even in a market where all of the best names have already been registered.

Tip #1 - A Name is for Life, Not Just for Launch

Once you have built your website around a particular domain it is very hard to change the name. If you do change it, all the valuable links from other websites will be broken and your marketing activity to build your brand will have been wasted. So when choosing a domain name try to think about all the ways your website could evolve. Choose a name which will still make as much sense in the future as it does today.

Tip #2 - Is a '.com' Domain the Best Choice?

A .com domain name is usually the best option if you can register one that is suitable, but they are becoming scarce or expensive. The alternatives and exceptions are:

- **.com** - is definitely the most popular domain extension. It is truly international and it is the name that is most frequently searched for. If you can find one for your site, it has real benefits and advantages
- .net - is a good second best choice. Like .com, it has no geographic bias, so can be used for sites with global appeal

- **.org** - is suitable for charities, associations, clubs etc, but is not suitable for commercial niche sites
- **.tv** - is becoming more popular and is a good choice particularly if you plan on having multimedia content (audio and video) on your site
- **.co.uk, .fr, .nz,** etc. - national domain extensions are only suitable for sites which just cover national subjects e.g. Manchester United Football fan site, or a local market. It you site could be expanded to reach a global audience avoid a national domain name

Tip #3 - Brainstorm Keywords

When choosing a domain name, the first thing you should do is brainstorm all the words that describe your subject. Here are some places you can find inspiration:

- write down all the words that come into your head about your subject. These are usually the best words
- search Google for some of these words and browse through the sites that are listed in the results for ideas
- look up the words in a thesaurus (www.thesaurus.com) to add to the list
- browse through your books and literature for words and ideas
- ask your friends, family and colleague for ideas

Tip #4 - Clever Word Combinations

Clever word combinations can be successful, but choose carefully and test your ideas on as many people as possible before adopting. A good example is Revenews - www.revenews.com - a news site website about making money online.

Tip #5 - Add Simple Words In Front of a Keyword

There are some simple words that can precede a keyword, to make a good domain name, for example:

- 'my' e.g. mycaravan.com
- 'your' e.g. yourcareerchange
- 'i' e.g. iTravel.com
- 'e' e.g. eBusiness.com
- 'pro' e.g. proBlogger.com
- 'best' e.g. bestCruises.com

Top #6 - Add Simple Words After a Keyword

There are many descriptive words you can add after your keywords. Examples include:

- **Gazette** – e.g. FlyFishingGazette.com
- **Times** – e.g. HornbyTimes.com
- **Post** – e.g. AuctionLoversPost.com
- **Spotlight** e.g. PetOwnersSpotlight.com
- **Update** e.g. VegetarianUpdate.com
- **Outlook** e.g. EducationOutlook.com
- **Briefing** e.g. LandlordBriefing.com
- **Bulletin** e.g. IPOBulletin.com
- **Advisor** e.g. PersonalFinanceAdvisor.com
- **Flash** e.g. CelebrityNewsflash.com
- **Report** e.g. BusinessIdeasReport.com
- **Journal** e.g. BeeKeepingJournal.com
- **News** e.g. CanoeingNews.com
- **Forum** e.g. TravelItalyforum.com
- **Chronicle** e.g. WritersChronicle.com
- **Link** e.g. TrainLink.com
- **Insider** e.g. PublishingInsider.com
- **Net** e.g. NurseryNet.com
- **Online** e.g. DatingOnline.com
- **Central** e.g. VellyDancingCentral.com
- **Finder** e.g. ClassicCarFinder.com
- **World** e.g. CatWorld.com
- **Site** e.g. BuildingSite.com
- **Beat** e.g. VentureBeat.com

Tip #7 - Repeat a Word

Some short words can be repeated in a domain name, to create something brandable, unique and easy to remember, for example:

- **DoshDosh** - www.doshdosh.com - a successful website about making money
- **ShinyShiny** - www.shinyshiny.com - a girls guide to gadgets
- **WiiWii** - www.wiiwii.com - a site about the Nintendo Wii

Tip #8 - Slang and "In Jokes"

If your website is aimed at a niche audience who will be aware of unique slang words or phrases, these can be used within the name. For example:

- **Tie The Knot** - www.tietheknot.com - a site about weddings and getting married

- **Who Ate All The Pies** - www.whoateallthepies.com - a site about soccer/football ("Who ate all the pies" is a well known chant)
- **LifeHacker** - www.lifehacker.com - a site about making life easier using technology and other shortcuts

Tip #9 - PhraseFinder

PhraseFinder is a website you have to pay for, but it may be worth the investment if you are struggling to find a name you are happy with. On the PhraseFinder website you type in a word and it comes up with dozens of phrases related to that subject. These phrases can make very good domain names. For example, if I wanted a website about personal finance, I could type in the keyword 'money'. Some of the phrases that come up include:

- another day another dollar
- good as gold
- cash cow
- buck naked
- even money
- hard cash
- rags to riches
- in the money
- stealth wealth

Any of these would make good domain names and are the sort of phrases that may not immediately come to mind.

Tip #10 - Websites That Can Help You

There are some good tools on the internet for generating names, whilst also reducing the time you have to spend seeing if the domains names are available. My favorite tool is:

- **DomainsBot** - You can type in multiple keywords and the tool will suggest lots of combinations and similiar phrases. It will also tell you what domains are available. A real time saver!
- **DomainSuggestions** - http://domain-suggestions.domaintools.com
- NameTumbler – www.nametumbler.com

Tip #11 - Names to Avoid

Try to avoid:

- misspelling common words e.g. OnlineBizness.com
- hyphens e.g. start-a-food-franchise.com

- registered trademarks e.g. ebay-world.com
- numbers replacing words e.g. fun4kids.com
- names that could be misread e.g. Pen Island, penisland.com

Tip #12 - Buy a Name

If after all this work you still haven't found a domain you are happy with, then you can look into buying one. This can be expensive, but your domain name will be your online business' most valuable asset, so it could be worth the investment.

There are four ways I would recommend looking for a domain to buy.

- Type a domain you like into your browser. If the website that comes up has not been updated for a long time and looks unloved, there is a fair chance that the owner will be happy to sell it. If you can't find the contact details of the owner on the site, try typing the URL into Whois.net.
- Use Domainsbot.com to find domains that are for sale
- Try the Domain Name After Market at www.tdnam.com
- Try some of the bigger webmaster forums where people buy and sell domains. The ones I use are Sitepoint , DigitalPoint, DNForum and WebmasterWorld

Competitor Analysis

Competitor analysis on the internet is very simple thanks to Google. Simply build a list of the top ten words or phrases that best describe your subject. Type them, one at a time into Google and see what sites come up. List the top sites that repeatedly appear and use traffic ranking services such as **Compete** (www.compete.com) and **Alexa** (www.alexa.com) to assess how successful they are.

Finally, ask yourself if you can build a better site than the best three sites that you have identified? If you think you can, go for it!

If you are worried that the competition is too strong, reconsider the niche you have chosen. It can be the same subject area just a different niche. For example, if you are planning on building a site for restaurateurs but find this is a very competitive niche you could consider starting a site about how to market a restaurant or how to create profitable menus and wine lists.

How Are You Going To Make Money?

If you are planning to make money from your website you should think through how you are going to do this before you launch. However – and this is very important – once you launch you should be creative and flexible about where your revenue ACTUALLY comes from. It is common for a website's revenue to end up coming from an activity that the entrepreneur had never considered when originally planning their site. For example, one site that reviews villas and hotels in the Caribbean now makes most of its income from selling sales leads from people looking for offshore banking services to banks, lawyers and accountants.

There are five broad categories of online revenue and under each category there are many sub-categories. Here is a list to help you consider different money making options:

- **Advertising**
  - Contextual advertising (e.g. Google Adsense)
  - Display ads
  - Paid directory listings
  - Classified Ads
  - Sponsorship

- **Affiliate marketing** – receive a commission for generating sales or leads for third party companies
  - Promote products
  - Promote services
  - Generate leads
  - Get paid for customers completing a task (e.g. filling in a questionnaire, signing up for a trial, etc)

- **Ecommerce** – selling products or services from your site
  - Sell digital products that can be downloaded
  - Sell physical products
  - Sell virtual products (e.g. tips or clues to complete a game)
  - Sell products that are drop shipped

- **Membership/Subscription** – charge a regular fee for access to a premium service
  - Paid access to premium content
  - Paid access to course material
  - Paid access to database
  - Club membership
  - Association fees

- **Live events** – promotion and sale of live events
  - Webinars

- Seminars/workshops
- Conference
- Franchise/licensing

Planning Your Online Business

With a little bit of planning you can greatly increase the chance that your online business will be a success.

But don't do too much planning. There is no substitute for getting started, talking with your target audience and continually testing ideas until you discover what works.

I recommend a simple three step planning process.

Step 1 – Where are you today?

Think through and list your ideas, skills and resources you have today, which will help you build your website and business.

- What is your website/business idea?
- What skills and knowledge do you have?
- What are you going to provide to your customers (news & information, downloads, video, etc.)? What is unique about this product or service?
- Where are you going to source the information, downloads, products, etc?
- What technology and services do you need to deliver the website?
- Who is your target market?
- How are you going to reach them?
- How are you going to make money? How much are you going to charge?
- What skills and contacts do you have to achieve these goals?
- What resources do you have? (Computer, telephone, broadband, etc)

Step 2 - "Where do you want to be in 12, 24 and 36 months time?"

Now look ahead to the future and describe where you want your website and business to be in 12, 24 and 36 months time? You should try and visualize what it looks like and write down what you see. The more detail the better.

- **Business Goals.** For the business think about:
    - What your website looks like?
    - What products or services do you offer? Where are you sourcing them?
    - Where you are working? From home, in an office, on your yacht
    - How many staff do you have?
    - Who are your customers? How many do you have?
    - Why do people pay you? What do they love about your service?
    - How many sales are you making? How much profit?

- **Lifestyle goals**. You must never lose sight of the fact that one reason for setting up your business is to give yourself the lifestyle you have always dreamed of. Write down your lifestyle goals and try to stick to them.
    - How many hours do you want to work each day to achieve these results?
    - How much money do you want to earn?
    - How much holiday do you want to take?
    - How much time do you want to spend with your family?
    - Where do you want to live?
    - What other activities do you want to pursue? When do you want to do this?

Once you answer these questions you can move onto consider the steps that you will need to take to get there.

Step 3 - "What do I Need to Do to Get There?"

The final step is to list all the steps you need to take to get from where you are now to where you want to be in 12 months time. Beyond 12 months you should list the bigger steps, but not get into too much detail.

As the Chinese proverb goes:

"If you want to eat an elephant you must do it one mouthful at a time"

When you look at the list of things that you have to do, it can look as daunting as eating an elephant. But if you break your plan down into bite size chunks you

will be amazed at how quickly you can move the business forward. It takes discipline and hard work, but it will be worth it.

Making Sure The Numbers Add Up

When looking at the numbers there are essentially two things you have to consider, revenues – the money you make - and costs - the money you spend to run your website and business. Once you have listed revenues and costs for each month in the first 12 months the three questions you need to answer are:

- When will you be making enough money to cover your costs (breakeven point)?
- How much money will you have to spend to get to breakeven?
- Do you have enough money to reach breakeven?

Once you have thought through all these steps you will have a much clearer idea of what your business will look like…and most important whether you think it is worth proceeding.

Getting Started With SubHub

The SubHub service has been designed to make it easy for beginners to get started, but has the flexibility and sophistication to grow with your business. You can build a basic site in a few minutes, but add your own customized design when you are ready. You can start with basic functionality, but integrate any functionality you need when you need it. Best of all SubHub takes care of all the monotonous and difficult bits – security, bandwidth, hosting, maintenance and upgrades - so you can get on with running your site.

Start your free site now at www.subhub.com

End.