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In business, there's always so many things to do and I'm sure you know it well. In order to help you achieve your goals, you'll also need the right tools. The following are what I consider must have tools in your business tech toolbox. They help you increase your traffic, income and work less too. Ready? Let's dive into it.

## Auto Responder

If you do not already have this, it is the first thing you should invest in. The auto Responder I'm talking about is not the simple send and reply type that you get with your web host but what is called a sequential auto responder that is actually smart. It can help you schedule your newsletters, create email courses that send out on alternate days and also send regular newsletters as well.

Auto responders are a **huge time saver** because it helps you follow up on your prospects without actually sitting there trying to figure out how many days it was since this person contacted you and if it's time to contact them again. The scheduling of newsletters itself will save you from feeling like it is crunch time every week.

Here are some examples what you can do with an auto responder:

- **Schedule your newsletter.** When, you have more time and more news to share with your newsletter readers, you can prepare and schedule your newsletters during these productive times. Doing this will reduce the stress during those weeks when you find you have little to share and still have to produce the newsletter to keep the rhythm. Unless it's time sensitive material, your newsletter readers will not know you prepared that email two weeks ahead of time. They're still receiving a quality mailing since you're not emailing them just so you can say the newsletter is published. And they get the newsletter consistently too, especially when there are weeks you just don't feel up to it.
- **Create a 10 day email course.** Email courses are a great giveaway to get people to signup for your newsletter or create a paid email course.
- **Follow up with your leads.** Are you networking offline? You could offer people you meet a giveaway, free consult or whatever if they would request it online or subscribe to your newsletter. Then create an autoresponder sequence to follow up with them every week or every month.

If you're ready to start using an auto responder, you could use a script (software installed on your own website) or you could subscribe to a hosted service. Each has its own strengths but personally, I've chosen a hosted solution even though I am more than capable of setting up and maintaining my own scripts. Because of a bad experience with a script where my host literally deleted my website overnight, I've decided there's just too much riding on my list. And the last thing I want is someone hacking the script and exposing my entire subscriber's information which I've promised to keep safe.

For hosted monthly auto responders, I recommend [Aweber](#) and [Wahmcart](#). If you have the resources to handle a script that installs on your web server, go with [ListMailPro](#)

## RSS Feeds

Many people have RSS as an alternative to email subscription but RSS can do much more than that. It can help you bring in traffic, especially if you offer your RSS feeds to be used on other people's website. By doing so, you are syndicating your content. If you're unsure what that means, think of it this way.

If you're already publishing articles to distribute to others, syndicating your feeds work much like that only better because the webmaster only needs to add your code once and each time you update your content, the webmaster's site will also be updated.

The nice thing is, **once a webmaster puts your code up, every article you publish will be displayed on their page**. You don't have to hope that people will pick up the article and you don't have to submit your articles (huge time saver there). This is of course just the **tip of the iceberg** about RSS but often neglected use.

There's much more it can do for you and not enough space as the RSS topic alone is enough to fill up a book. I highly encourage you to have an RSS feed for your website. If you do not know what RSS is or have trouble understanding how exactly it fits into your business, download [RSS Basics](#).

## Blog

Business today is all about relationship. Especially online. When people can't see or hear you, they can't read your body language. Although video and audio is popular, they are usually 'one off' contacts. You need some other way to consistently build that relationship and earn customer's trust. Email is so far the leading method of building relationship but with all the problems with deliverability, spam, phishing and viruses, it can be a pain.

Blogs have really grown up in the last two years. They are a great supplemental tool that will help you reach people who will otherwise never give you their emails or at least will not give it to you until they feel comfortable with you. Many of my own newsletter subscribers start off as blog readers. Blogs can also further establish your expert status by allowing you an outlet to share your ideas and thoughts about your niche market. On top of that, blogs are also a good traffic generator. Mine is a major traffic generator for my site.

Unfortunately, because blogs can be a powerful tool it's also been exploited. At other times, they don't do it right. The biggest mistake I see, are people creating blogs from peer pressure. Everybody has one so they've got to have one. They get somewhat addicted to blogging because it's so easy and fun, after a while they run out of steam and become disillusioned because they don't quite see how their blogs fit into their business.

Like any website, blogs should be carefully thought out and compliment your website if you already have one. If you're feeling overwhelmed over this, the [Blogging Starter Pack](#) It will help you learn how to fit your blog into your business. Even if you don't know what a blog is, I'll hold your hand step by step all the way from the very beginning.

## **Survey and Questionnaire System**

Many businesses make the mistake of assuming they know what their customers want, how they feel about something and what they think. Sadly, our assumptions often fall short. This makes our customers unhappy. An unhappy customer today can be even more problematic than before because many of them have blogs where they will openly express their feelings.

Assuming is also very expensive. We launch products that customers don't want or make updates that people don't care for. By then, it's too late as you've spent a lot of time and money building these product.

For this reason, many marketing experts tell you to get to know your customers. One of the best ways to do that is to flat out ask them. Create quick polls and questionnaires regularly to quickly find out what is at the top of their minds. Find out what is important to them. This gives them a share of voice in your organization and they'll love you for it.

Take [Easy Internet Survey](#) for a spin. You can quickly set up surveys for your blog or website without knowledge. If you're in a hurry, the survey is even hosted for you so all you do is send people a link. All responses are stored into a database that you can extract for further analysis later or save on your hard drive.

## **Link Tracking Software**

Do you know how much traffic the last advertising brought you? Do you know which ad performed better and which bombed? Do you know which newsletter gave you better response and which gave you better click-throughs? If you answer no to even one of them, you are throwing your advertising money away.

The great advertising guru David Ogilvy once said, "I know one half of my advertising is working, I just don't know which half". Pretty sad huh. When Ogilvy said that it was before the Internet we know today. Online, tracking and testing is so much faster, accurate and easy. Nowhere, not newspapers, TV or radio can give you the information online tracking does. Many tracking software are also copy and paste easy.

**Success is about repeating what works and dumping what doesn't work.** So find out what works by using a link tracker. Here are some of the things a link tracker will help you do:

- Count the number of click-throughs you received from an ad in a newsletter, Google Adwords or website
- Calculate your conversion. How many of those people who clicked through actually took up your offer either by signing up for a newsletter or buying from you.
- Split test. Find out which of your sales letter is producing better sales or which ad copy is performing better. You'll be surprised at what the figures show you. The sites that bring you the most traffic might actually be the least profitable ones.

If you're seriously looking to expand your business this year, start tracking right now. I recommend Dynatracker, a script that installs on your web server. If all that tech talk scares you, [Dynatracker Ad Tracking Script](#) offers free install so you don't ever have to go there.

## Podcasts

Podcasts are fueled by a technology trend - the trend of mini sized portable MP3 players (not just iPods). People have these players with huge amounts of disk space and nothing to fill them up with. **You've basically got a hungry market eagerly reaching out for audio content.**

To take advantage of the podcasting revolution, there are two ways to go about it. Create a podcast yourself, or appear as a guest on a podcast. Creating your own podcast is technically easy but requires a fair amount of time to upkeep. Unless you can **consistently deliver audio content** e.g. weekly, bi-weekly, monthly I'd suggest not getting into it immediately.

The other way to leverage podcasts require **less commitment and still help build your expert status** plus is a great way to dip your toes into the market, is to be a guest on a podcast. Some guests have reported **phenomenal response and traffic after appearing only on one show**. The key is to find a podcast with a good following and one that is within your niche or at least related to it. Ready to jump right in and start your own podcast? Then it's important you don't go it alone. Get help from those who have done learned things the hard way. [Podcasting Intensive](#) is a 4 week boot camp that will help you get started without the heartache.

## Affiliate System

If you're selling your own products but don't have any affiliates, you're potentially losing a lot of money. Affiliates are like your virtual sales people. They put links up for you - think one way inbound links. They also drive traffic to your website on your behalf. With a little support and the right encouragement, affiliates can help you make much more than you can all by yourself. And, you don't have to pay them unless they produce results.

Setting up an affiliate program is also pretty easy; much easier than you would imagine. Depending on the system you choose, it can be just a matter of pasting a code into your thank you page.

There are two ways you can set up your own affiliate program. Before we discuss them, I think you should first think through **how much time would you like to spend managing affiliates or what part about the affiliate system you'd like to hand over and what you'd like to manage**. If you haven't done anything like this before, think of it this way. Affiliates are like your virtual sales force. They do need some TLC (tender loving care) and like any sales force the more you support them with marketing materials and events, the better they will work for you. Now that alone is a big job but managing your own affiliates is more than that there are technical issues ranging from simple can't login to their account to payout.

Some people I've talked to don't mind managing the marketing side but would rather leave the technical issues and accounting to someone else. In that case, your options are:

- [Clickbank](#) - for digital goods
- [Shareasale](#) - allows both digital and physical goods

Notice, I have yet to mention two of the biggest networks that is Commission Junction and Linkshare because in my eyes, the fees they charge are beyond many home and small businesses. I'm talking in the thousands of dollars for startup and a big monthly fee. But, if you can afford the fees they charge, then they are certainly two of the best in the industry.

What if you want a completely in house solution? This usually means installing a script or using some form of affordable third party solution that only tracks your affiliates but accounting and all that is handled by you. If you're looking for something like that, your options are:

- [iDevAffiliate](#)

For third party systems, you could use:

- [Wahmcart](#) - This is a complete all in one shopping cart, affiliate system, autoresponder, ad link tracker. Getting this one tool alone will help you cover several areas we talk about in this report.

## Membership System

Subscriptions are one of today's best business models; especially on the Internet. Just look around you. How many subscriptions do you pay a month? Take note of companies like Gevalia, Proactiv, Bare Escentuals, Silkies hosiery and book clubs. They all sell **physical products on a subscription basis** they ship and charge you for 30, 60 or 90 days supply and at the end of that cycle you will automatically receive another shipment and another bill 😊

Subscriptions work because they **promote continuity and a more predictable, stable sales pattern**. They also work for consumers. For example, gourmet coffee lovers will eventually run out of coffee and who wants to battle traffic or stand in line at the grocery store? By shipping them a carefully timed shipment, they get what they want without a lot of hassle and the seller is actually **making life easy for their consumers**.

Most subscription sites today are soft products and by that I mean information based, coaching services or newsletters and that is good because nothing is as great a fit to subscriptions than soft products but if you are selling a physical product, don't overlook subscriptions. Look at all these companies. They've been doing it for years! Why? Because it works! They wouldn't continue doing so if they were losing money.

You too can have your own subscription product in addition to your regular one time purchase store. Here are some ideas how you can implement subscriptions in your business:

- Candle Seller: Quarterly subscriptions where customers automatically receive a bundle of your products based on the season of the year
- Book Seller: Create your own book club
- Coffee Store: Three different types of coffee sent to subscribers every month
- Greeting card designer: Send a bundle collection of birthday cards, seasonal cards, cards for common life events to subscribers every month

It is possible and not as difficult as you think. You just need creativity to figure out what to offer and the **right software**. I've tried many different membership systems out there and the best hands down is still [aMember](#). If the cost seems a little high to you, remember this. For one price, you will be enjoying recurring sales every month - forever. Ok, maybe not forever but for as long as you want. Divide that over the potential sales and you'll see the cost is really very low.

It can be an overwhelming task, planning and launching your membership site. If you some direction, join us at [Membership Site Intensive](#). We'll walk you through each aspect of creating your own recurring membership product.

## Conclusion

No matter where you are, you don't have to do all of them. Even implementing one will go a long way. The key is to start leveraging the technology.

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P/S: If you're not the DIY type, contact me. We offer a variety of technical services from WordPress customization to managed membership sites. So you can concentrate on what you do best.