

Setting Up Your Own Online Storefront

The e-book marketplaces and online retailers will try to say that you don't need your own storefront, because they already have one. They'll say that all you need to do is upload your products into *their* storefronts. But the e-book marketplaces and online retailers are playing a very different game—a game where *they* own the customer relationship and not *you*.

As an infopreneur, you need your own online storefront. Your own storefront allows you to establish that direct relationship with your prospects and customers, a relationship that's critical for maximizing your potential in this business. It also provides you a platform for enhancing your credibility and authority around the topic or niche you've selected.

And finally, with your own storefront, you control your own destiny. You're not at the mercy of some merchandizing guy who only sees you as a product in a catalog, and your potential audience isn't limited to only those people who might frequent a particular store.

But for most people, the idea of creating an online storefront seems pretty out-of-reach. You're an expert in your topic or niche, and you're online and connected, but you're probably not an expert in building websites. HTML, CSS, SSL, web hosting, and all that techie stuff is a foreign language to most people.

Over the years, however, as more and more non-technical people have come online, everything on the internet has become much less technical and far more user-friendly. Today, you really don't need to know any of that technical stuff to create your own online storefront.

You just need to have a clear picture of what you ultimately need to create and how everything needs to work. From there, the solutions are readily available and pretty easy to pull together. As for knowing what you ultimately need to build, of course it's best to start with a good blueprint, so you know what makes an effective storefront before you even begin.

ClickBank can certainly help you out on that front.

Identifying an Effective Site Specification

We took a look at the thousands of successful infopreneurs on the ClickBank platform---studying their storefronts, de-constructing them, figuring out what things they had in common, which elements were fundamental to their success, and which elements were just nice-to-haves in the whole equation.

In doing this, we were able to zero-in on a relatively simple, yet very effective, site specification or a basic blueprint for what makes an effective infopreneurial website or storefront. This site specification covers the key pages and content you'll want to include, as well as the essential capabilities and tools to make everything about your storefront work.

The specification doesn't cover every possible combination of things you *could* do. After all, when it comes to building a website, there are literally thousands of different paths you *could* take. But this specification does cover the essentials---the basic things you need to have in-place in order to achieve 80-90% of your potential.

It's like building a house. The biggest benefits come from a handful of fundamentals like having walls, a roof, plumbing, electricity, and so on. Those are the essentials that get you 80-90% there. Things like granite counter tops and whether or not your fixtures are nickel plated? Those are enhancements, certainly, but they're not really what makes a house "work" at the end of the day.

Site Spec: Key Content and Pages

There are six main site sections---web pages or collections of web pages---that are important to understand. You might think of these as being the "tabs" you can click on across the top of a website, and they each play a role:

- The HOME page is essentially the front door. It's on this page that many people will decide whether or not they should go further and peruse more of your site. The HOME page is a great place to prominently feature your lead-capture offer.
- The ABOUT page lets prospective customers learn more about you and your business. This is an important page not because you're tooting your own horn, but because you're letting prospects know that there's a real, authentic, and passionate person behind this business.
- The ARTICLES section---which could also be called a BLOG section---is simply a collection of free, bite-sized content that allows you demonstrate your expertise and provides prospects with another way to "sample" you.
- The PRODUCTS section is where the sales pages, or pitch-pages, for your front-end and back-end products will reside.

- The CONTACT page may have your business address and phone number on it; or it may be a form that prospects fill-out to send you an email. This is important because it gives prospects comfort knowing that they're dealing with a real entity that's accessible.
- And the MEMBERS area is where customers will access the products they've purchased---the downloadable goods, the videos or audios, the continuity or members-only program content, and so on.

In addition to the main site sections, there are a few secondary pages that are also needed. Rather than being tabs at the top of the site, you might think of these as just being text links at the bottom of the site as they're important, but not primary:

- The PRIVACY POLICY page is where you let people know how you'll be handling their personal contact information. Privacy and spam are a big deal these days, so letting people know that you're watching out for them and protecting them will help your sign-up rates a lot.
- TERM & CONDITIONS. This is the legalese you'll want to have to make your policies around site usage and product sales clear to people.
- And the AFFILIATE PROGRAM PAGE. We'll be talking a lot more about this in the next module on Promotion, but basically, once you have a front-end product for sale, this page is about providing tools and guidance to others who may want to promote your products.

Those are the main content areas of your storefront. Six main site sections and three secondary pages. Of course, there may be some additional things you'll want to add along the way, but these are the foundational elements and they'll get you pretty far.

Site Spec: Essential Functionality and Tools

We now know what content we need, but how do we make everything actually work? What are the mechanics we need to have in place? In the specification, there are seven functional elements you'll need to understand.

- DOMAIN. The first element you'll need is your own domain (www.your_site.com). Essentially, this is the address of your storefront. For example, Jill the caterer's site is located at www.JillKnowsCatering.com. It's memorable and speaks to what her site is all about. You'll want a domain that does that too.
- WEBSITE. Of course, you'll also need the website itself---the webpages, hosted somewhere online. Here you'll want to look for a solution where you just point-and-click to add pages and text and so on. There are lots of these "easy site builders" out there these days, so you don't have to mess any HTML or CSS code.

- **EMAIL MANAGEMENT.** Next, you'll need email handling and contact management. You'll have people signing-up for your lead capture, you'll be sending cultivation messages, and you'll have email lists of prospects and customers, and so on. You'll need an easy-to-use solution that takes care of all that, while also keeping you compliant on SPAM and privacy issues.
- **SECURE PRODUCT DELIVERY.** When you're selling digital products, you'll of course want to protect yourself by delivering those products or downloads in a secure way. And if you're offering any sort of controlled access content---like a members-only program or something of that nature---you'll need a way to manage subscribers and who has access to which content.
- **PAYMENT PROCESSING.** To sell anything online, you'll need to be able to process payments---take credit cards, validate them, make sure they're not fraudulent, settle the funds, and so on. Don't let this scare you. Ten or fifteen years ago, taking payments online was a really big deal, but today, it's a relatively simple process.
- **AFFILIATE TRACKING & PAYOUT.** And finally, once you're ready to start promoting your products, you'll need affiliate tracking and commission payment. again, we'll be talking a lot more about this in the next module, so don't worry if these terms don't make a lot of sense to you right now.

That's the basic site specification---9 key content areas and 7 functional capabilities.



If we take a look at our example, Jill the Caterer, she's got all of the basic elements of the site spec. Her storefront isn't complicated. It doesn't have hundreds or thousands of pages. But it's elegant in its simplicity. It doesn't have a lot of bells and whistles, but it has everything it needs to be a very effective online storefront for an infopreneurial business.

Implementing the Spec in Sequence

When it comes to actually implementing the basic site specification---setting-up the functional elements and creating the key content areas and pages---you don't have to do it all once. You can do it in sequence.

Just as you're sequencing your product development efforts, you can use the infopreneurial blueprint to break the site specification down and implement only what you need at each stage.



At the lead capture stage, you'll need just three of the seven functional elements we discussed: 1) your own domain, 2) the website builder solution, and 3) email handling and contact management.

As for the key pages and content you'll need at this stage, you'll need the HOME page, certainly. And you'll want to have the ABOUT and CONTACT primary pages, as well as the PRIVACY POLICY and TERMS & CONDITIONS secondary pages.

At this stage, you'll also want to populate the primary ARTICLES section with 3 or 4 articles or posts that demonstrate your expertise in the subject matter. These articles should be 300-400 words each---bite-size nuggets of wisdom or knowledge that give prospects comfort that you know what you're talking about.

You can think of these articles and posts as a step *before* your lead-capture offering. While your lead-capture might be free from a financial perspective, prospects still have to provide their contact information to get it. These articles are a *completely* free way for prospects to sample you. And by providing this completely free information, you'll ultimately get more people signing-up for your lead-capture offering. After reading your articles, you'll be more credible and they'll want the information in your lead-capture offering even more.

At the front-end offering stage, you'll likely need three more of functional elements. You'll have a product for-sale, so of course you'll want secure product delivery and payment processing. And you'll want to start promoting that product, so that's where the affiliate tracking element comes into play.

As for key pages and content, you'll obviously want to have the PRODUCT section for your front-end product's sales-page or pitch-page. And the AFFILIATE PROGRAM secondary page will also be a good thing to have at this stage.

SIDEBAR: All the elements related to affiliates---the affiliate tracking functionality and the affiliate program page---will make a lot more sense to you after you've gone through the next module on promotion. Yes, it seems a little out-of-context at the moment. But since we're talking about setting up

your storefront, it needs to be highlighted here. Come back to this module later, and the affiliate elements will all become clear.

At the back-end stage, the functional elements you'll need will depend on the type of back-end offerings you've developed. If you're offering some kind of continuity program where people need to come back again and again to get more content on your site, you'll need the controlled access functionality and the MEMBERS content area. On the other hand, if your back-end offering is a deeper or more detailed training manual or some other one-time-purchase product, you'll just need an additional pitch-page or sales-page under the PRODUCTS section.

Avoiding Common Mistakes

As you go about building your online storefront, if you're doing it yourself, you'll want to avoid some of the common mistakes we see new infopreneurs making.

For a budding infopreneur, it's really easy to get all wrapped-up in the color scheme, the imagery, all the bells-and-whistles of a particular tool or technology they've implemented, and so on. This can eat up a lot of time---time that's better spent on the content. This is an information business. What your site *says* matters a whole lot more than how it looks or what technologies or tools it uses.

Another mistake we see is trying to reinvent the wheel. Just because a website *can* be structured in all sorts of unique and creative ways, that doesn't mean it *should* be. The site spec is based on the trial-and-error that thousands of other people have already gone through. It may not be particularly unique or creative, but it works. And besides, as an infopreneur your "uniqueness" and credibility should be demonstrated through your *content* and not the structure of your website.

Finally, a lot of people think they have to have it all, and it all has to be absolutely perfect, before they can even get started. As we just discussed, you don't have to have it all---you can implement the spec in sequence, as you need it.

In this business, it's not even possible for things to be "perfect". You're always going to have room for improvement. And some of these opportunities for improvement won't even be apparent until you get things in-front of your audience and you get some market feedback. So get started and get things out there. Understand that it's never going to be perfect and commit to making improvements over time.

ClickBank "Out of the Box"

Up to this point, the infopreneurial site specification has been discussed in relatively generic terms. If you're a DIY or do-it-yourself-type person, the specification gives you a really solid blueprint for what you need to build and what functionality you need to pull together. But it's important to remember that even if you're doing it yourself, working with ClickBank can make things a whole lot easier. After all, when you work with us---even at the most basic, do-it-yourself level---you get:

- Payment processing and fraud control
- Affiliate tracking and commission payout
- End-customer support for order processing questions, refund requests, etc.

And, for some of the other functionality a do-it-yourselfer might be looking to pull together, we've partnered with the best solution providers and negotiated special deals for ClickBank clients.

So as you go about establishing your own online storefront---if you plan to do it yourself---remember that ClickBank offers a number of the functional elements in the specification right "out-of-the-box" so to speak. And also remember to check-out our partner program---it can save you a bunch of time trying to find the best solutions at the best prices.

Considering a Pre-Packaged Solution

Again, everything we've covered so far has been somewhat geared toward the do-it-yourselfer---someone who has enough technical proficiency and patience to pull all this stuff together. And while it's true that everything about doing this yourself is far easier than it was ten years ago, for most of the people reading this guide, the site specification and the functional requirements probably still seem very daunting.

In fact, you might be feeling overwhelmed and maybe even a little discouraged at this point---like maybe you're not going to be able to do this after all, because setting up a storefront yourself just seems like too much. The fact is that we covered the site specification and functional requirements because you need to know about them---you need to know what makes an effective storefront for an infopreneur.

But you don't have to pull all this stuff together yourself. If you're not a do-it-yourselfer, or even if you are and you just don't want to mess with it and you'd rather focus on your products, there is an answer---it's called a pre-packaged solution.

A pre-packaged solution has all the various elements and components you'll need, but they're pre-assembled into one integrated solution. For someone just getting started as an infopreneur, a pre-packaged solution makes a lot of sense for a number of reasons.

First of all, it's just a whole lot easier to deal with one, comprehensive solution rather than trying to cobble together a hodgepodge of single-function solutions. And those single function solutions can sometimes just not work very well together. So a pre-packaged solution where everything is *already* working together can often produce a much better and more consistent result.

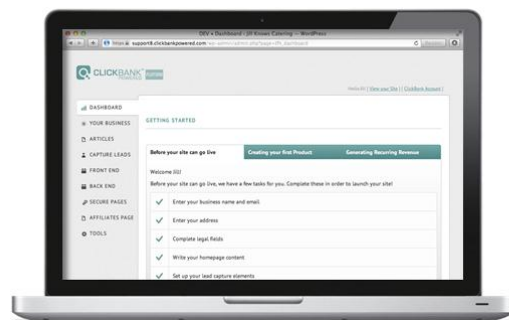
And it can provide those results much faster. It takes time to secure all the individual elements and get them working together---often weeks, or even months. But with a pre-packaged solution, you can have your storefront up-and-running in just a matter of days.

Many people think they're going to save money by putting a bunch of different solutions together themselves. But all these individual solutions, and the profit each provider needs to make on them, can really add-up. With a pre-packaged solution, you're effectively getting a bundled deal where the cost of the integrated solution is far less than the sum of the individual components.

Long story short, you'll generally save money opting for a comprehensive, pre-packaged solution---while making your life a whole lot easier and getting your business off the ground a whole lot faster.

Introducing the ClickBank Powered Platform

The ClickBank Powered platform is the only pre-packaged solution specifically-designed to help budding infopreneurs start and grow their businesses. While other pre-packaged solutions can certainly be used for this purpose, they aren't *designed* for it from the ground up---and that makes a big difference when you're just getting started.



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

You see, the ClickBank Powered solution has been built to incorporate all of the specifications, blueprints, and best-practices we've been discussing throughout this training program. The site specification we covered in this module? It's in there. All the key pages and content areas we talked about, all the capabilities and tools, there're all there---built right in. There's no guesswork and no cobbling together of multiple solutions.

The infopreneurial blueprint we covered in the product planning module? Lead-capture, front-end, and back-end? Those concepts and principles that are so fundamental to becoming a successful infopreneur are the basis upon which the entire ClickBank Powered platform has been designed and built!

This isn't just a website builder---this is an *information business builder*.

In putting this solution together, we recognized that although budding infopreneurs might be experts in their subject matter, they're probably not experts in website development. So the ClickBank Powered

solution is designed to be easy-to-use for people who aren't all that technically proficient. If you can browse web pages and use a word processor, that's all the technical know-how you're going to need. If you can point, click, and type, you're all set.

And the whole platform is infused with the expertise and accumulated knowledge of ClickBank. There's on-screen guidance and in-context help at every step of the way. There are built-in analytics and performance reporting. And based on our 14 years of experience helping thousands of infopreneurs, we've generated a robust, searchable knowledgebase full of helpful articles, best-practice guides, and useful tips and techniques.

Using the ClickBank Powered platform, new infopreneurs can get their own online storefront up-and-running faster and with fewer headaches. It has everything you need to get started, for a low monthly subscription. And using the platform is simple, straightforward, and very intuitive.

So if the do-it-yourself approach just doesn't sound like something you want to tackle, consider going with a pre-packaged solution. And you'll be hard-pressed to find a more effective option for the money than the ClickBank Powered platform. So check it out and decide for yourself.

It's Easier Than You Might Think

As an infopreneur, it's crucial to have your own online storefront. It's what allows this really powerful business model to actually work. But for most people, the idea of creating an online storefront is a show-stopper---it just seems too complicated, too difficult, or just too frustrating.

But it doesn't have to be that way. The solutions involved have all gotten a lot simpler and much easier-to-use over the years. Following the proven site specification we've outlined here, you can either choose to do-it-yourself if you're so inclined, or you can opt for a pre-packaged solution like ClickBank Powered.



Infopreneurial Site/Storefront Specification

<p>Primary Content Sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> HOME<input type="checkbox"/> ABOUT<input type="checkbox"/> ARTICLES<input type="checkbox"/> PRODUCTS<input type="checkbox"/> CONTACT<input type="checkbox"/> MEMBERS <p>Secondary Pages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> PRIVACY POLICY<input type="checkbox"/> TERMS & CONDITIONS<input type="checkbox"/> AFFILIATE PROGRAM	<p>Functionality and Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> YOUR OWN DOMAIN NAME<input type="checkbox"/> WEBSITE & HOSTING<input type="checkbox"/> E-MAIL MANAGEMENT<input type="checkbox"/> SECURE PRODUCT DELIVERY<input type="checkbox"/> CONTROLLED-ACCESS PAGES<input type="checkbox"/> PAYMENT PROCESSING<input type="checkbox"/> AFFILIATE TRACKING & PAYOUT
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