

Title:

Ink and Toner Cartridges: How Do I Start an Online Business From Home on a Low Budget? Part 1

Word Count:

1600

Summary:

The start of a series of articles on how to get a business online and promote it effectively. Although based on a business in Australia many of the principles can be applied in other countries

Keywords:

original, non original, remanufactured, compatibles, printer, cartridges, toner, ink, laser, consumables

Article Body:

About a year ago I took over an existing online business from a friend of mine selling ink, toner and other printing consumables and decided that there was a lot of potential for promoting the website more aggressively over the internet. I started with maybe a hundred dollars or so and a handful of customers carrying over from the previous owner. One benefit was inheriting his website as that gave me a good benchmark on what I wanted and didn't want when I got my own going.

Now a year later I have around ten times as many customers, a respectable page ranking in Google (more about this later), first page search engine rankings (SERP's) in MSN with respectable SERP's in Yahoo and Google still needs some work.

Although I still have a long way to go (in truth I will always have a list of more stuff to do) I've made a good start and by all accounts done quite well considering my limited resources. I have found that there are a great deal of free or very cheap resources you can utilise for building and promoting a business online and this is what I shall be passing on through this series.

Although the following guide talks about starting an online business selling printing consumables in Australia you can apply much of it to other business types and I would imagine in other countries.

Why do you want to be in business & does having an online business suit you ?:-

Often people go into business with intention to get filthy rich overnight and then find themselves trapped with a crumbling edifice that consumes their lives but they have no passion for. So the question is why do you want to be in business to begin with? If your answer is something like 'to make tons of money' at some point you will need to rethink this as it won't be enough anymore. Of course I want to make more money than I currently do but it's the lifestyle I will have when I have more money that creates my goals for next year, five years etc.

Personally my desire was to create a place on the internet people could go and shop with peace of mind knowing that they would be getting great service, great prices etc. My focus is always on developing good relationships with my customers and I believe this psychology actually affects my attitude to how I run my business as I am constantly looking for ways to better serve my customers needs rather than trying to figure out how to make more profit. I can honestly tell you that I rarely think about building my business in terms of profits, rather I try to identify ways to improve products and services to give current customers more bang for their buck and attract new clients.

As to whether what you wish to do would be suited to having your business online this is a trick question really because I can honestly say that it doesn't matter what you do, you should definitely have a website for it ! If you have any doubts about whether it's worth spending time and money getting your business online you can go to <http://www.nichebot.com/> type a word into the box that represents a likely keyword for your business and look at what's in the count column to see how many people have used that word or words in the last 60 days. Then it's up to you as to whether you would like these people coming to your site as an additional source of revenue or whether you're happy to let them go to your competition.

Anyway it's about time I got into the good stuff so here goes.....

Registering your business & domain name:-

Your business name and domain name - You obviously need to decide on a business name and may have already done so but what may not be so obvious is taking into consideration your website's domain name BEFORE you choose a name for your business. Basically a domain name is what you call your website so for example the domain name for my website is "cartridgespecialists.com.au" and generally speaking you would have your domain name ending with either .com.au or .net.au and this makes you subject to the laws of Australian domain name registration as explained below.

If you are going to register a website ending in either .com.au or .net.au there

are some rules you need to know about. Australian rules of domain name registration state "The domain name you order should have either be an exact match, acronym or abbreviation of the supplied business registration, or it should bear a close and substantial connection to the domain name", so before you rush out and register that really cool business name you've just thought of its worth your while checking first to see if the domain name has been taken or not.

You don't have to register your domain name ending as above, you can choose to register an international domain name such as .com or even use the name or a place or person instead of an Australian domain or in addition to. In fact this can be a smart thing to do if you're looking for as many ways as possible to protect the name of your business or something you're selling.

Choosing & registering a domain name - To choose a domain name you need to go to somewhere like Netregistry to see what's available and as I mentioned above you'll want to do this at the same time if not before registering the name for your business. There are quite a few places you can go to for checking whether the domain name you've chosen is available or not. The one I used is the one mentioned above but you don't have to use them there are plenty of others. Its worth shopping around though as the prices vary quite a bit and it makes no difference at all who you register your domain name through as they all have to access their data from the same place meaning as soon as you register your domain no one else can get it even if they go to a different site to the one you used.

Using your top keywords in your domain name - If possible you should have the main keyword/s for your business in your domain name as it helps quite a bit with promoting your website online and getting lots of people to come to it. Keywords are something we'll be covering later in much more depth but they are the words people use when they search for information on the internet using the search engines (you've heard of Google right ?). Whatever business you're in start thinking about the likely words people are going to use to find you on the internet. For example for my business 'ink, toner & cartridges' are the 3 top keywords people use in my industry when doing searches in google, yahoo etc.

Register for more than 1 year - When you register your domain name you should do so for at least 2 years as it will help you promote your website to the search engines and it's not expensive at all really.

Sole trader, partnership or company? - This is very straightforward and is simply a matter of going to the government dept in your state that handles the registration of business names and companies. I'm not an accountant so I'm not

going to go too much into which type you should use except to say that you should not choose one of these on the basis of wanting to protect your business name, logo or something the business sells that you've invented. Trademark and patents are designed for this and there are lawyers you should consult who specialise in setting them up.

Expired domains - I'll go into this more later on but thought I'd give you a little taste of it now. Now that you know a little about domain name what do you imagine happens to the ones that people decide not to reregister each year or 2 years ? Well they go back into the pool and become available for the next person to grab but until someone else registers that domain again what about all the people (otherwise know as 'traffic') who are still trying to find that site ? That's right expired domains can be a great way to get traffic to your new site immediately for a very low cost and you can replicate this as many times as you want even if you only register an expired domain for a year it can be a very worthwhile exercise !! More about this later....

Well that's for the first article in the series there's a checklist below to help you keep on track. Hope you enjoyed it and stay tuned for the rest.....

What do I have to do checklist.....

For the sake of keeping it simple I'll assume that you've chosen to register as a sole trader (this is where most of us start out anyway) in Victoria. Of course these figures vary from state to state for the business name and how much you pay for your domain depends on where you get it from so shop around!

1. Part 1

- a) Register a business name (\$100.00)
- b) Register a domain name (\$45.00)