

# e-Wealth Secrets

By

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**Lesson Seven**

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## Make Money From .... Selling Information on the Net

### Information...the Virtual Product with a Real Future

Another word for the computer business is IT – or *information technology*. And when it comes to making cash in cyberspace selling *information* itself is one of the simplest and most lucrative ways to do so.

When you think of profitable products you probably think of things like clothes, food or cars. True, these are massive markets, worth many millions of pounds. But some of the most profitable products in the world today are not real products like clothes, food or cars – they are virtual products like *information*. Products that we read and use to keep us informed, entertained, educated or improve our lives.

Every time you use a telephone directory, buy a newspaper or read a book you are a customer of the lucrative information industry.

Information is a very valuable product indeed. Other people will pay – and pay highly – to learn what you know. Information is something you can sell extremely profitably. UK consumers spend over £2,000,000,000 on books alone each year, and books are just a small part of the information business!

Although printed information products are still a major way of selling information the Internet has transformed the way information is produced, sold and distributed. The very latest information products are *virtual information products*, produced electronically. And there's every reason to believe that they will become one of the biggest and most lucrative products of the 21st Century.

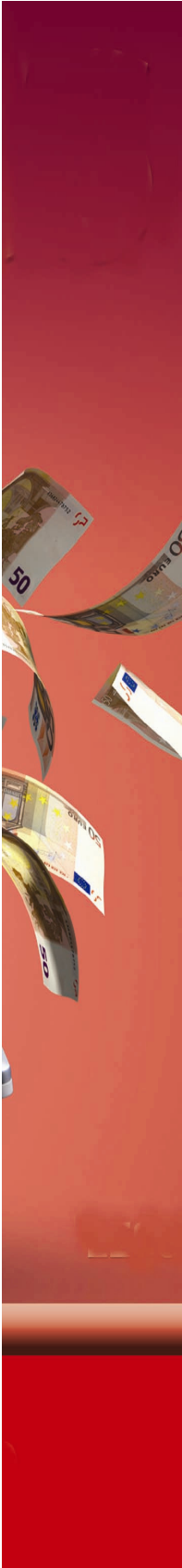
The good news is that electronic information products are easy to make, market, sell and distribute – much easier than printed ones. If you have ever wanted to publish a book, publish your own magazine or sell your own software – but been put off by the time, expense and commitment it involves – you'll find it's relatively easy to sell information online, just working part time from your own PC at home!

In this Lesson we will look at a variety of information products you can publish and sell for profit on the Internet – specifically *e-books*, *e-zines*, *blogs* and *software* (shareware).

### Four Tips for Successful Internet Publishing

One: Only sell the very best quality information online. Poor quality won't sell, no matter how good the technology. Remember that there's a lot of information available on the Internet for free (some of which isn't very good), so if you are to sell it successfully it *must* be top quality.

Two: Choose the best subject areas. Internet publishing is great for subjects



that are fast-moving, current, need regular updating and which appeal to an international market – and information which would be difficult or expensive to publish and sell worldwide in a conventional paper format.

Three: Always test as you go. When you are selling information online it is very easy to market a product that is still in the course of preparation and see what interest it creates – before actually going ahead and producing the product. You can also change your sales literature, prices etc., at the touch of a button and find the best way to sell it too.

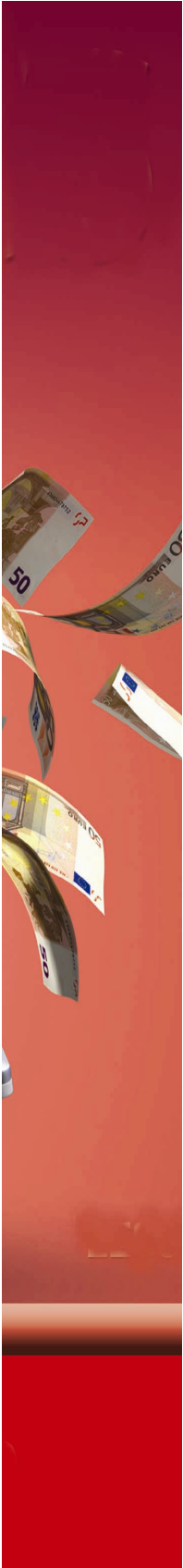
Four: Write it out first! Most online information products start out in exactly the same way as paper products ...with a good idea, an outline and a written manuscript. This manuscript then becomes the basis of your dynamic online product.

## **How To Create the Perfect Information Product**

At the beginning of this section, we compared virtual information products to real, physical products like clothes, food and cars. Despite the many differences this is a good comparison to make when creating your own products to sell on the Internet. Think of it this way: Just as a physical product like a washing machine has key features – for example, keen price, easy to use, washes clothes effectively, and is reliable – so every good information product should have key features too. The reason is simple: It is these key features which make customers want to buy it!

When planning and creating your information product you need to make sure it has as many strong key features as possible. These strong key features are as follows, and you could use this section as a *checklist* when creating your own products:

- It Should Inform: Does your product tell your customer something they don't know? This really is the acid test of any information product. Base your product on lots of facts and pack it with 'I didn't know that!' appeal.
- It Should Enable: Knowing a particular piece of information is one thing, but what is the purpose of knowing that information? The best information products enable their users to do something with that information – such as to maintain, change or enhance their lives using knowledge.
- It Should Educate: The very best information products develop the pool of knowledge and understanding on a given subject – in other words they educate. And a good product should do it in a way that is interesting and practical.

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- It Should Entertain: Information products aren't (or shouldn't be) like the dull textbooks you might have used at school. They should be well organised and presented, written in an interesting, attractive and digestible way and incorporate value-adding techniques such as photographs, illustrations and examples where possible. This is easy to do with online publishing.
  - It Should Be Exclusive: If possible, your information shouldn't be easily available elsewhere. If it is, your information should be more comprehensive or of better quality.
  - It Should Offer Real Benefits: This, at the end of the day, is the most important feature of any good and truly successful product – especially an information product. It should offer the customer actual, tangible benefits – preferably ones that they can attribute directly to your product. When creating your product, build-in and develop as many strong customer benefits as possible.

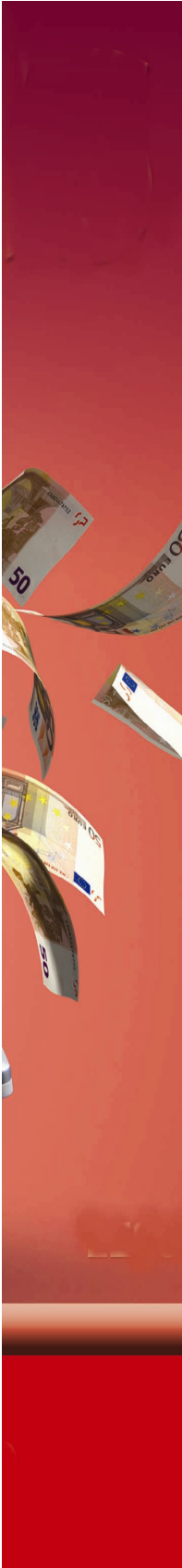
Here are some examples of real benefits:

- Saves the customer money.
- Saves the customer time.
- Saves the customer effort.
- Makes the customer's life easier.
- Makes them more attractive or desirable.
- Makes them healthier.
- Helps make the customer money.
- Helps the customer's job/career/life be more successful.
- Solves their difficult or unpleasant problems.
- Makes hard tasks simpler.
- Offers them real enjoyment or pleasure.

## **Great Ideas for Information You Can Sell Profitably Online**

Here are some good subject areas for information you can sell online. This list isn't and cannot be exhaustive. You may well be able to create a successful product of your own based on a totally different subject area. To see exactly what is available, and for even more ideas, search the Internet.

Business Opportunity & Make Money Products: These products offer a very



strong benefit – to make the reader more money, revealing and explaining to the customer ways to increase their income or even get rich. Products in this area include newsletters, e-zines and e-books offering moneymaking tips and strategies, homework ideas, ideas for casual employment and even business plans.

Self Improvement & Personal Development Products: These products offer the customer information on personal, social and even spiritual development. The benefits they offer include social success, enhanced status, confidence and peace of mind rather than purely financial advancement. (In the USA, around 80,000 new self-improvement/personal development products comprising mainly books, manuals and courses were published last year, many of them available online.)

Career, Vocational & Educational Products: These products give customers the information they need to change or develop their career or learn a new work-related skill. Products cover a wide range of mainly non-academic subjects, such as accountancy, computer skills, design, yoga, astrology, fitness, creative writing, proof reading, beauty therapy etc. Many courses lead to a qualification.

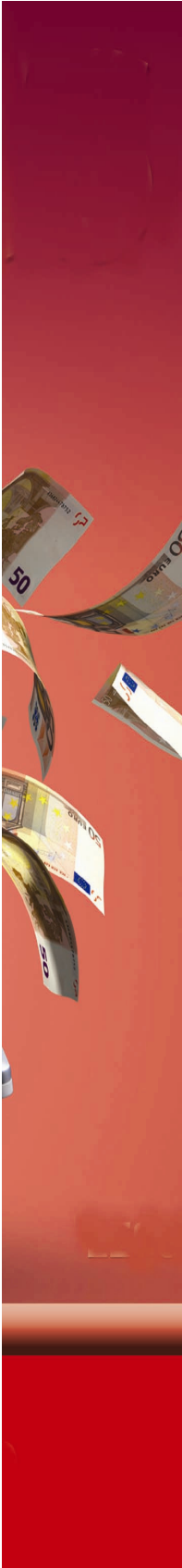
Health Products: Health information products are usually e-books, occasionally also newsletters or e-zines. They offer advice on health improvement and cover such subjects as diet and weight loss, nutrition, organic lifestyles, allergy, fitness, stress, smoking, drug dependency and advice for avoiding or living with major diseases such as cancer or heart disease.

Tax, Financial & Investment Products: Tax, financial and investment products offer customers information on tax saving, legal tax avoidance, managing their finances and investing in the stock market and other financial opportunities. They are mainly newsletters, but there are also some e-books and e-zines.

Gambling Products: Gambling products offer customers information on how to be more successful at gambling and range from general advice to specific plans or even tipping services. They principally cover horse race betting, but also other forms of betting e.g. football, casino, financial betting and lotteries.

Trade, Business & Professional Products: Trade, business and professional products are aimed specifically at business owners and managers. Some of the subjects you can cover include business management, finance, law, taxation, employment issues, health and safety, marketing, negotiating, foreign trade and business development.

Entertainment & Hobby Products: Entertainment and hobby products are a relatively small part of the published information business, but they cover a wide range of interests. Examples of successful entertainment and hobby publications include newsletters for stamp collectors or coin collectors, newsletters for new



mothers, and newsletters for fans of any one of the thousands of pop bands or sports teams, magic tricks and illusions.

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In the rest of this Lesson we will look at some specific information products which you can create, publish and sell on the Internet. These are *e-books*, *e-zines* and *newsletters*, *blogs* and *shareware*.

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## **How To Publish and Sell E-Books**

The term e-book is short for *electronic book*. An e-book is like a conventional book – sometimes with images, sometimes not – that can be delivered and read electronically. Generally, the delivery method is by downloading over the Internet although it can be delivered by disk too. E-books can be read on a computer screen, the screen of a PDA (Blackberry, iPhone, or similar device), some mobile phones, or on a dedicated e-book reader. E-book readers are becoming more and more sophisticated.

After a slow start, e-books are now growing in popularity. Exactly how many are sold is impossible to tell. While there are statistics on how many e-books retailers and bigger online publishers sell (and they show amazing growth), none of them take into account the ever increasing number of e-books sold by small businesses working from home.

Publishing and selling your own e-book is a relatively easy way of selling information online. It's just like publishing an ordinary book, except that it's much easier, cheaper and faster ...and the sales potential is global!

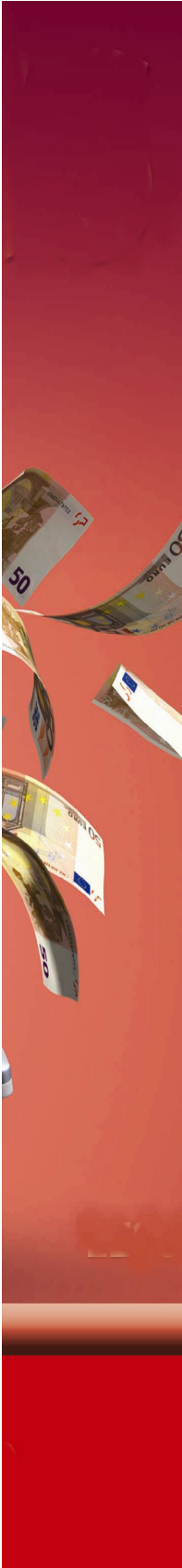
### **The Advantages of E-Books**

The benefits of publishing your own e-book are numerous. E-books are easy to distribute compared with paper books. E-books don't need to be shipped in trucks and placed on shelves in bookstores. They can go straight from the writer's computer to the reader's computer. In many cases this takes just minutes. Try to beat that for easy distribution!

E-books are very cheap to make. E-books don't need to be printed onto paper and bound which can be an extremely expensive process. (If the buyer wants to do this *they* pay the cost of it!) In most cases you don't even need a CD or disk. All you're actually making is electronic files and these cost nothing to make and send.

Very importantly, the e-book revolution has put the writer in control of their own writing, and given them the chance to make most of the profit from it. Because you don't need an agent, publisher or distributor, more of the cover price goes into your own pocket. Better still, the 'cover' price of e-books is very often





higher than printed books!

*You can sell almost anything as an e-book!* Bookshops will only stock certain types of books – often only mainstream subjects they are sure there is a market for. If your book is unusual, or very specialised, or even controversial in some way – then you might find it impossible to sell it to the bookshops. On the Internet, however, things are different. You are free to publish virtually anything you like. Even if it's very specialised, you can still sell it in large quantities as your marketplace is global.

### **Getting Ideas for Profitable E-Books**

The first question to ask yourself when looking for great e-book ideas is this: Why do I want to produce an e-book? Decide this straight away, because if you're not sure of your intentions you'll end up with a weak e-book. Are you writing because you have a personal story you want to tell? Do you have a message to preach or a warning to pass on? Are you filling a gap in the market? Are you writing simply because you think you know something that people will be willing to pay good money to discover? Do you want to write an e-book mainly to get publicity for yourself or another business (which can be a very good reason for producing a book)?

Passion is a very good way to get inspiration for writing a book. If you're creating an e-book about your own interests, or to help others learn about a particular subject, you're doing it for passion. Write it as if you don't expect to make any money, but it would be a nice bonus! Since you're writing the e-book for fun, it needs to remain fun. Don't bog yourself down with details. If you're passionate about something let your experiences tell their own story and you're sure to end up with an excellent book.

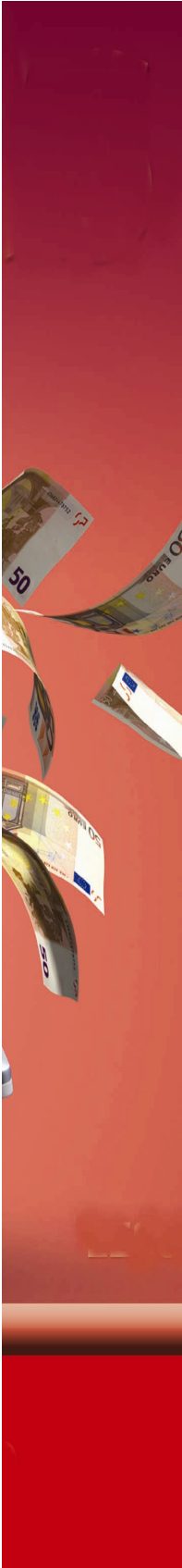
Many publishers create e-books to generate exposure for another business or to remind people of their business. (These books are often given away rather than sold.) For example, some companies create helpful e-books covering subjects such as 'How to Keep Your Garden Pest Free!' which may act as a plug for a gardening centre or a new type of pesticide. If you're planning on developing this type of e-book be sure to offer enough usefulness and value without too much advertising. After all, you want people to enjoy it, read it, use it and remember it as a book and not an ad.

Don't start on your e-book, until you've got a clear idea of what it is going to be about. If you do, you can't expect people to read it, let alone buy it. If you're still stuck looking for inspiration try looking through the category listings at Amazon.com.

### **How To Create Your E-Book**

If you've got an idea for your e-book, well done! The initial idea can be the hardest part. However, a good idea in itself often isn't enough. You need to





organise it into a logical plan. And be sure you define your core message ....and stick to it.

For example, let's say that you want to write a book based around a popular hobby like gardening. That's all well and good, but what are you going to cover? 'Gardening' alone isn't enough ....actually, it's far too much. If you're not careful you will end up with an e-book that covers everything badly and nothing well!

Decide what result you are hoping your book will achieve? Particularly, what *benefits* it will offer. Use the checklists we provided earlier. What do you have to say to get that result? That is your *core message*. Also, it's usually the case that if you are producing a book from research, rather than your own knowledge, you will need to define your core message even further.

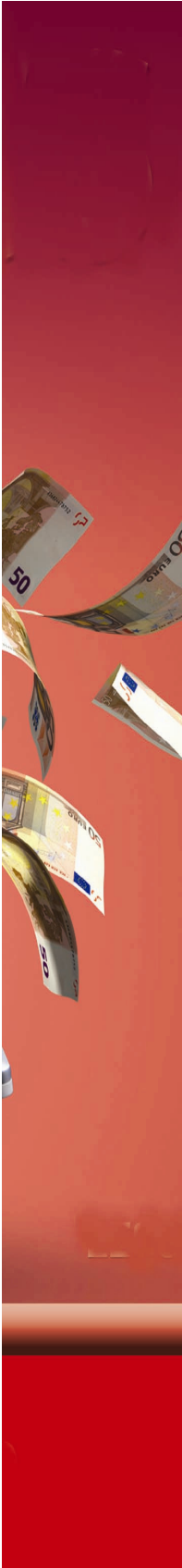
Try to divide your choice of subject into several different areas, which you could devote a chapter each to. Ten is a good number to aim for in an e-book. For example, in a gardening book you might have chapters on: 'An Introduction to Gardening', 'Soil and Why It's Important', 'Seeds and How to Plant Them', 'Feeding and Weeding', 'Popular Plants and How To Care For Them', 'Pest Control' and 'Taking Cuttings'.

Whatever you decide on, make sure you have a broad outline for the book prepared before you start writing. However, one very attractive feature of e-books is that you can update and edit them at will. Correcting mistakes, adding information and issuing new editions is easy. So, don't miss the opportunity to update and improve your product as you go along.

E-books can be exactly as long or as short as they need to be. E-books range from a few pages to full length books of 500 pages or more (e-books are always organised into pages like conventional books). But there's no need to worry about paper sizes, binding, page pairings and the other issues that determine the size and length of traditional books.

Another profitable possibility, if you have enough material, is to publish your book as a *part-work or course*. Instead of just one instalment your customer receives their material in 6, 10 or 12 (or more) instalments; weekly/monthly or when they wish to download each part. The main advantage of this is that the selling price can be much higher. However, since fulfilment can be handled automatically with modern mailing list management software, it need not involve you in any extra work.

With an e-book you can also include images (photos), either downloaded from the Internet or taken with your own digital camera, and colour graphics that would be expensive to print on paper. Remember, however, that the quality of reproduction will only be as good as the reader's screen, so the simpler they are,



the less likely you are to disappoint customers who don't have the latest technology.

Finally, before you start producing your e-book, think about the way in which it is going to be distributed and delivered – this will be discussed later. There are a few formatting do's, don'ts and restrictions that apply to e-books (and other types of electronic publishing) and which might impact on your content.

### **How To Publish Your E-Book Easily and Simply**

Almost all e-books start out as an ordinary wordprocessor document – such as MS Word – so you need no special skills to actually write and originate them. However, once your e-book is written you need a way to deliver it online. Few professional e-books are delivered as wordprocessor files. Instead you will need to convert your e-book into one or more widely acceptable *e-book formats* that can be downloaded, opened and read by the purchaser.

Currently, there are five basic ways readers can read e-books:

- On their computer screen.
- Printing from their computer and reading the paper copy.
- Reading from handheld PC's, also known as PDA's (Personal Digital Assistants) and Pocket PC's.
- Using some mobile phones.
- Using a dedicated e-book reader.

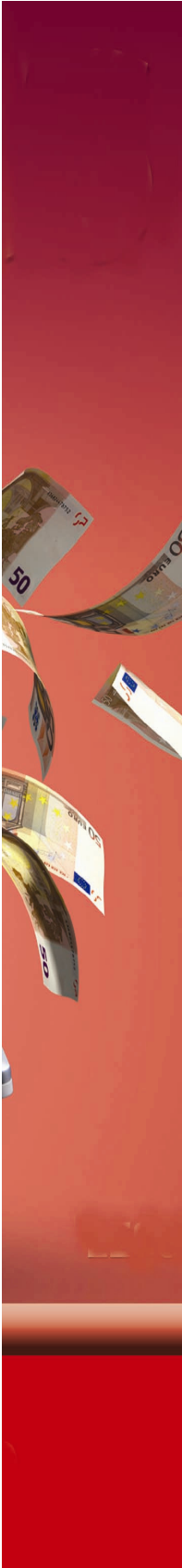
As the concept of e-books is relatively new, there are currently lots of different e-book formats and no single universal standard. So, you may need to publish your e-books in several different formats to widen the market as much as possible. This can be a little time consuming, but using modern technology isn't particularly difficult or expensive.

Publishing your e-book in *HTML* and *PDF* will allow you to reach the majority of readers. Both HTML and PDF are also quite flexible from a writing and production point of view.

Converting to PDF: PDF is a file extension meaning *portable document format*. Developed by Adobe Systems, customers need Adobe Acrobat Reader to read the file, which can be downloaded free from the Adobe website. PDF is probably the closest thing to a standard in the e-book industry at the moment.

If your e-book is in PDF format, you're usually assured that it will look the same on your screen as it does on the viewer's screen. An important feature has been the introduction of protected PDF files, which are secure and can't be copied.

You can convert your e-book to PDF format using the Adobe Acrobat



program itself. This is quite expensive to buy (about £200) but you can convert a limited number of documents free by going to the Adobe website. You can also buy ‘second hand’ software from sources such as eBay. There are also other ‘unofficial’ PDF conversion programs available for purchase. Search on Google for a PDF creation program and you’ll have lots to choose from.

Converting to HTML: HTML is an abbreviation for *hypertext markup language*. This is also the coding that’s used on websites to create web pages. There are several ways of producing e-books in this format but Microsoft has made both a Reader and a Converter available free at their website. Microsoft Reader is an attractive application for online publishing because it’s so simple, but primarily due to the Microsoft ‘ClearType’ technology. ClearType technology effectively triples the horizontal resolution of your screen to smooth out on-screen typography making it far easier to read. The display attempts to be as book-like as possible. On a desktop it takes up around a quarter of the display, but it’s legible enough.

Once you have Microsoft Reader you can convert Word documents easily. You can add a custom cover or use one of the default covers. A table of contents links to the proper page in your e-book and if you include any links to websites in your copy these will also work.

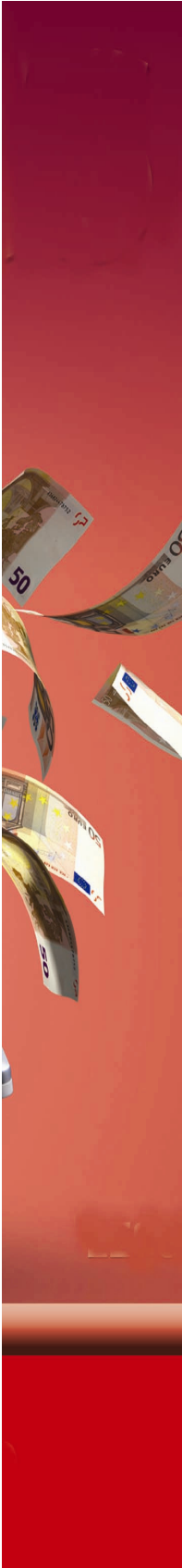
When preparing e-books for Microsoft Reader or Adobe PDF (or indeed most other formats), there are also applications that will ‘package’ your files together into a single EXE file along with the appropriate reader or viewer. Your reader can then just download the whole package, run it, and read your e-book even if they do not already have the necessary software.

The last stage of the e-publishing process is to upload your converted e-book to some web storage space, from where customers can download it. You can store your e-books on your own storage space if you have some – if you have a website it can usually be stored on the same server. Alternatively, you can use an e-book delivery service. (A web search will provide you with details of companies who can do this.) Uploading your e-book is done by using an FTP program and your website host or delivery service will provide the instructions on how to do this.

### **Selling and Marketing Your E-Book**

Once you have written and formatted your e-book all that remains is to sell it! There are several options here. You can either sell your e-book *yourself* or you can sell it through an *e-publisher or library site*. You can also sell your e-books on eBay and other auction sites.

To sell your e-book yourself you will need to set up your own website and to create sales literature to describe and sell your e-book to your visitors. You can accept payment using your own secure server facility or a payment provider such as PayPal. When you receive a customer’s order and payment, all you need to do



is e-mail the customer with an access password which they can use to download the e-book from your web storage space. This can be handled by an autoresponder system if you wish.

The second, easier option is to have your book listed by an e-publisher or library site. They will list your book in their catalogue, collect and process orders and payment for it and allow customers to download it directly from their site. You won't need your own website with this option. In return for providing this service, the site will charge a monthly listing fee and a commission on each sale.

Using an e-publisher or library site is quicker and cheaper in the short term. However, in the long term, having your own site is more profitable and allows you to experiment with pricing and other marketing tactics.

### **Other Important Considerations When Selling E-Books and Online Information Products**

If you can't or don't want to write your own e-book (or any other online information product for that matter) then *hire an author or writer to write it for you*. Then all you need to do is publish and sell it. Pay the writer either a flat fee or a royalty for every time the product is downloaded and sold online.

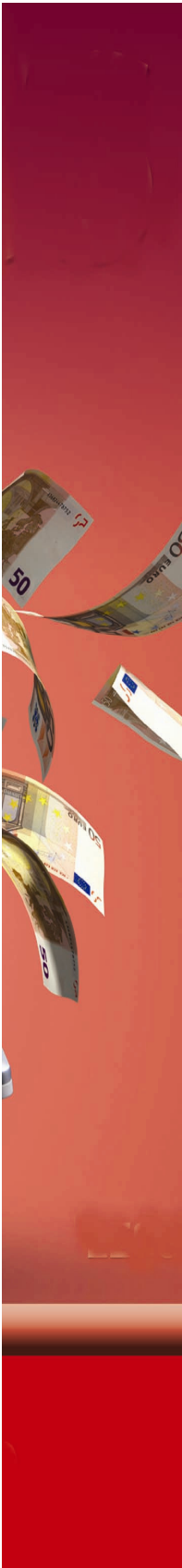
Another opportunity worth considering is to *buy the rights to publish an existing product* online. Most book, magazine, newsletter and software publishers are preoccupied with selling their product on paper (or on a disk/CD in the case of software). They don't have the time or know-how to sell the product on the Internet. However, they might be willing to sell the electronic rights to their product. Approach conventional publishers and ask them. Offer them either a flat fee for the electronic rights or a royalty per copy sold.

One attractive option is to develop a paper information product which is *already a proven seller* into an electronic product. This way you will know that there is a demand for the product even before you begin to sell it!

One important issue to consider when publishing online is that of *copyright*. Electronic information products are automatically the copyright of the person who creates them (i.e. the writer), or the publisher who buys the rights from them, just like a conventional printed product. However, when publishing information online, you should be aware that it is very easy for other people to copy them either electronically, or by printing out unlimited copies. Currently it is technically difficult to prevent others from copying your copyright work, although Adobe's PDF format offers a degree of security.

### **How To Publish and Sell E-Mail Newsletters and E-Zines**

Magazine and newsletter publishing is one of the most profitable parts of the printed publishing business, with over 3,000 magazine titles published at least



monthly in the UK. Now the Internet makes it easy for you to publish and sell your own regular e-mail newsletters and e-zines. You can publish a newsletter or e-zine either to sell in its own right or use it to promote another product or service.

E-zines and newsletters are very similar products. However, an e-mail newsletter is essentially just one long e-mail. It is very easy and simple to compile and is often in text form only, without illustrations. An e-zine, however, is a *formatted* electronic publication, often with multiple pages. Each topic is usually given its own specific page or pages, just like in a printed magazine, and you can also include attractive layout, typography, images and illustrations. Since e-zines are a more sophisticated format they take more time to compile than a newsletter. E-zines, however, have much more customer appeal and value than newsletters.

One important feature of a newsletter or e-zine is that it is a regular publication, unlike a book. This enables you to keep in contact with your subscribers and build a solid relationship with them – to persuade them to keep reading, subscribing and, hopefully, purchasing the products which you promote or advertise.

If you aren't already familiar with Internet newsletters and e-zines, subscribing to existing publications in your field of interest is a good way to become familiar with how things work, and what sort of material to include.

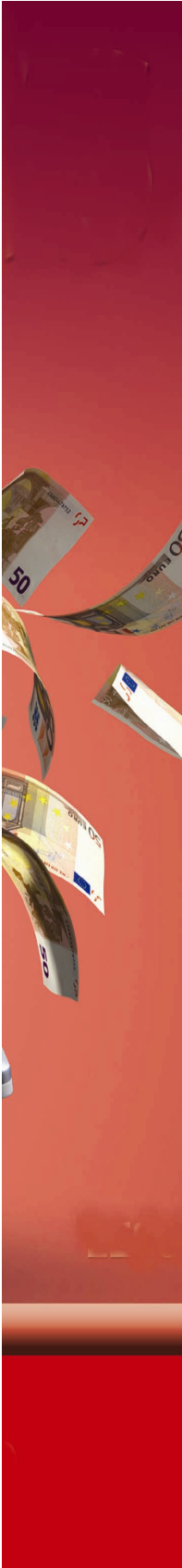
### **How To Create Your Own Newsletter Or E-Zine**

You can publish a newsletter or e-zine on virtually any subject you wish, including most of the ideas we outlined earlier. Popular subjects for these products include current affairs, finance, investment and personal development areas. Newsletters and e-zines aimed at business readers are also popular.

Before finalising an idea it is important to establish that you have enough material for the publishing frequency you envisage. You can send newsletters and e-zines on a regular weekly or even daily basis if you have enough benefit-rich news, tips and offers to include something new every day/week. Another interesting possibility that electronic publishing permits, which paper publishing does not, is to send your publication out on an 'as and when' basis – as soon as you've some current, worthwhile information to share.

E-zines and newsletters should always be content driven. Some might disagree, thinking that a newsletter in particular should only promote another product or service. However, although promotion can be an essential part of these publications, it should not be the sole component otherwise people will not read it! If you promote only selectively, your subscribers will be much more ready to buy when you recommend something. A good e-zine or newsletter should interest, inform, educate and entertain.





An e-zine or newsletter can include some or all of the following: An editorial, news, a news digest, articles, features, product/service reviews, investigations, offers, freebies, surveys, resources and further contact information. You should also add your personality to your publication – this is what makes it special. Fun and motivational elements are good in most newsletters and e-zines. Create an editorial in your own distinctive style so your readers can get to know you and can interact with you. Guest writers also help to develop a strong identity for your publication.

The great thing with an e-zine is that you can experiment with new and unconventional ideas, and quickly see what the response is!

### **Tips for Writing Newsletters and E-Zines**

- Start with a strong subject line. Make each customer want to read your bulletin immediately. For example, put ‘Property Hotspots Breaking News ....Just Released’. The words ‘Breaking News’ and ‘Just Released’ all create urgency.
- Give strong reasons for reading on, in the introduction or editorial. Hook your customer by bullet-pointing the topics you’re covering at the start of the publication. And make these topics sound so fascinating, exciting or downright intriguing that they’ve just got to read on. Remember, uninteresting e-mails are very easy to delete.
- Mix up the various elements you include in an interesting way – some short, some long pieces, some newsy snippets, some article style.
- Use a structured format for articles. Start each topic with a benefit-driven headline in bold letters. Follow this with the key details and the ‘how to’ of receiving the benefit. End each topic by encouraging your reader to take that ‘how to’ action now, whilst you’ve got their full attention and enthusiasm.
- Remember, successful newsletters or e-zines are a long term project for both publishers and readers. If you go for non-stop, hard-sell topics one after the other your customer may delete your bulletins straightaway. By using ‘soft sell’ the customer will really feel you’re giving them something worthwhile and valuable, and that puts them in a positive mood towards you.
- End with a warm and friendly sign-off. The most effective writing builds that one-to-one relationship between ‘you’ (the customer) and ‘I’ (the writer).
- Add a benefit-driven ‘PS’. These publications should close on a high note, leaving your subscriber wanting to discover more, order those special

offer goods, or just feel good about having read them! Including a PS that gives them just one more, extra-special benefit, will help to do this.

## **Selling and Marketing Your E-Zine**

There are two choices when you produce an e-mail newsletter or e-zine. Firstly, you can *sell it* on subscription. Secondly, you can *give it away free*. If you give your publication away, you can finance it either by using it to promote goods or services which you are selling (for example, an e-book or software), or you can sell advertising space within it – more about this later. You can also include affiliate links, where other companies selling products on the Internet pay you for every click-through, or a commission on anything your subscribers buy from their site.

As you might expect, it is much easier to build up a subscriber list for an e-zine which you give away. However, although it may attract a large subscription base because it is free, not all of the subscribers might be serious buyers for the products being sold. Charged-for publications are harder to sell initially but your subscribers are likely to be more serious, value them much more and keep subscribing long term.

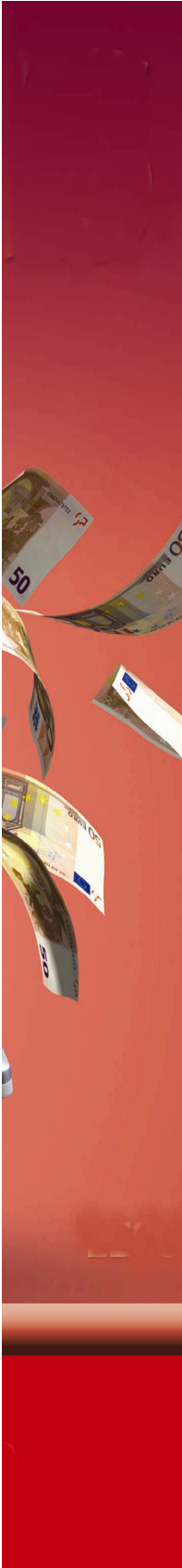
As well as using conventional paid-for advertising you can build a list of subscribers for free by advertising and promoting your e-zine in the following ways:

- Announcement Lists: Run by organisations such as Smartgroups and Yahoo. Follow their guidelines for posting and get some free exposure.
- Writing Articles: Offer free articles to printed newspapers and magazines as long as they promote your e-zine in the copy.
- Ad. Swaps: Running ads for other e-zines in your own e-zine and on your website (if you have one), in exchange for them running yours, is a great way to get a lot of free advertising. Also use pop-ups and banners.
- Signature Tags: Always add a ‘sigtag’ and an attention grabbing headline about your e-zine to your e-mail –including a link to a site where people can subscribe.
- Discussion Lists: Similar to announcement lists on Yahoo and other services. Get involved in the discussions as often as possible.
- Message Boards: Similar to discussion groups. Establish yourself as an expert who is there to help, mentioning your e-zine whenever appropriate.

## **Managing Your E-Zine Subscriptions**

An e-zine or newsletter should always be an *opt-in* (or permission based)





information product. Opt-in means that these subscribers have signed up for or requested to receive your e-zine. Don't send it out to anyone and everyone, even by way of a 'freebie' to promote subscriptions. This will not only devalue the information you are providing but could result in 'spam' complaints.

If you are promoting or selling your publication on a website locate a 'subscribe now' button for it in a prominent part of your home page, where it is virtually impossible to miss. Pop-up boxes also work well for subscriptions, especially free ones.

When customers subscribe to your publication always send them a confirmatory e-mail. In the e-mail, tell the new subscriber how frequently you will be e-mailing them so that they come to look forward to your mailing – and also how they can unsubscribe. Don't be offended if someone unsubscribes, especially from a free product. It actually improves the quality of your subscription list!

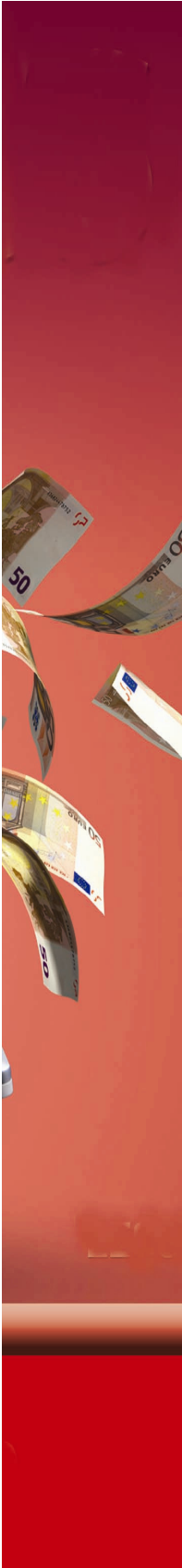
If possible *automate* your subscribe and unsubscribe processes. Automating your subscriber process will make your site more professional and will also save you time, instead of having to manually add and remove subscribers. There are several ways you can mail out your newsletter or e-zine easily:

- Your Own E-Mail Server: When you first start out, using your e-mail server is an easy and inexpensive way to mail out your newsletter.
- Autoresponder Systems: This is a system that automatically sends out your product in response to a subscription request from new readers. An option that is easy and free for smaller start-up publications is to use the autoresponder that comes with many Internet access or e-mail packages, or to subscribe to a free autoresponder service such as SendFree or FreeAutoBot.
- Mailing List Management Software: Services like Yahoo and Topica etc. offer free mailing list management. These are a good way to get started on a tight budget, but lack advanced control functions and may result in your subscribers being sent unsolicited advertising.

Once your list grows, it is best to purchase an easy and effective mailing list management package. You can find these using a simple Internet search, and some possibilities are listed in the Appendix.

### **How To Make Money Selling E-Zine Adverts.**

The sale of advertising space can be used to finance a free newsletter or e-zine, and make extra profits from a charged-for one. Advertisers find e-mail publications very attractive, not only because rates are low compared to other media, but also because, by choosing the right ones, they can target their chosen



market. Most marketers consider e-zine advertising to be more effective than placing ads on websites. Ideally, you need at least one thousand subscribers to an e-zine or newsletter to make it attractive as an advertising medium. If advertising is selected carefully your readers can see ads not as an intrusion, but as a service.

How much money you can make by selling ads in your newsletter depends on several things. Of course, the number of subscribers you have is an important factor. (Publishers often think in terms of cost per thousand. This refers to the rate charged for an ad for every thousand subscribers.) Another important factor is the nature of your readership. Some e-zines have general appeal and are read by all kinds of people. Others are aimed at a very specific profession or trade, people in a certain age or income group, or who are interested in a special subject, residents of a specific region, men or women only etc.

Usually, if your newsletter caters to a specific niche market, you will be able to command higher rates from advertisers aiming at that market. It follows that the more information you have about your readership profile, the stronger your position in attracting advertisers. If you run a sports e-zine, for example, you can assume your readers enjoy sports, but through surveys or contests you can collect information about which sports, and what products and services they buy, in order to attract the right potential advertisers.

You can also consider *sponsorship*. Sponsorship is often just advertising that appears right at the top of the issue, or unique 'mentions' in relevant articles. However, it commands higher than usual advertising rates.

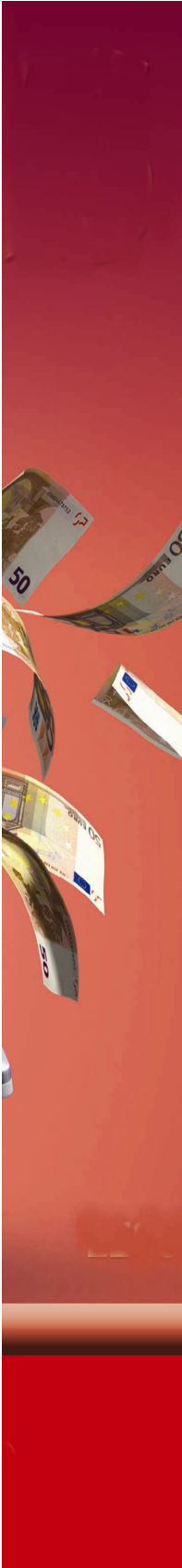
To decide on the right rates to charge in your particular case, usually requires a certain amount of trial and error. Study what similar publications charge for what type of ads to determine the supply and demand and what the market will bear. Also consider what percentage of the ad space they seem to be actually selling. Many publishers charge a high price for ads, but they sell very few ads at such high fees.

Once you have decided on prices, what type of ads you will carry and where, put together a media pack for advertisers. Also include in your media pack your USP or mission statement, your current subscriber numbers and whatever demographic information you have about them. Send the pack out either by e-mail or conventional mail to likely potential advertisers.

If you prefer, you can outsource the sale of all or part of your advertising. Several companies on the Internet offer to sell advertising on your behalf, thus saving you the work of soliciting and processing orders and collecting payments.

## **How To Publish and Profit From Web Logs**

Web logs (or *blogs* for short) are dismissed by some people as self-indulgent and often pointless ramblings. But some canny entrepreneurs are now starting to



turn them into lucrative part-time business projects! Thanks to the Internet, blogs are one of the simplest, easiest methods of self-publishing you can find.

Blogs vary greatly in content and quality, but essentially they are *online diaries or journals*. Some are devoted to single topics, such as pets, poetry or politics. Others are stream-of-consciousness musings on anything and everything. Most blogs are updated daily. Often they are (sometimes idiosyncratic) collections of thoughts, short essays, dialogues, personal trivia and links to favourite websites. Many are started as hobbies and abandoned after one or two postings. Those that last, however, can build up a very devoted following.

No one knows exactly how many blogs there are. Technorati, a San Francisco research company, claims that there are now about 2.5 million blogs worldwide, with 10,000 new ones being created each day. The Pew Research Centre estimates that between 2%-7% of adult Internet users write a blog, and 11% visit blogs.

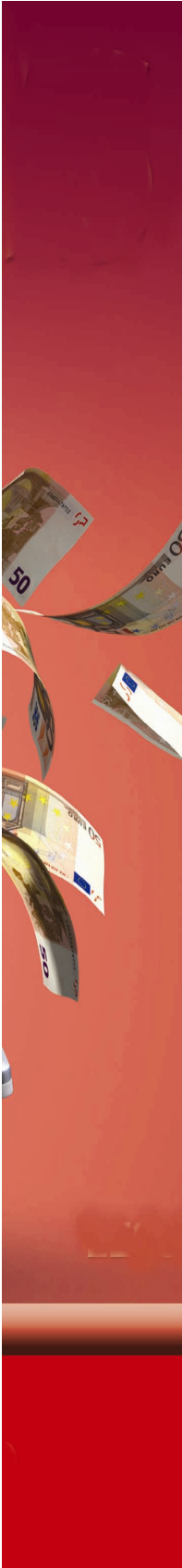
Although blogs have been around for about five years, it is only in the last year or two that they have started becoming a moneymaking opportunity. And that is in the USA, where they tend to be ahead of the UK in Internet matters. Over the next few years moneymaking blogs are likely to boom in the UK too – and boom big. The availability of easy-to-use blogging software has increased their popularity and made it much easier for almost anybody to get started.

### **Getting Ideas for Profitable Blogs**

Bloggers who ramble on about anything and everything, and whose readership consists of a few dozen friends and family, are not likely to make much money. To pull in a commercial readership, a site should be about a specific subject (or product). The information should be unique, useful, valuable and interesting. Search the Internet for existing successful blogs to get ideas, or help spot gaps in the market.

Depending on whether you're keeping a *personal* or *business* blog, there are different types of content that you can include.

Personal blogs, as the term suggests, often include blog entries that are of personal interest to the blogger. These may be diary-like entries about the blog author's experiences, feelings, thoughts and relationships. Some personal blogs may just focus on a particular theme. For example, a blogger who loves to write may just blog anything and everything about writing (eg. books, authors, quotations about writing, freelance work, publishing, etc.). Other themes that various individuals may blog about are: Art, photography, culture, pregnancy, children, health, weight loss, cars, pets, computers, music, poetry, food, politics and sports. Other types of blog content that personal bloggers include in their blogs are 'fun' content like quizzes, brain teasers, and games.



Business blogs, on the other hand, tend to include content that is more focussed and direct. Although they are often designed to promote and market products and services, successful business blogs must contain more than just press releases and advertisements. Good business blogs have genuinely useful content that may come in the form of relevant news and events. For example, a business blog about computer gadgets may share news about upcoming developments, or little known fixes or ‘get it to work better’ tips. Other blog content that will be welcomed in business blogs are: Product and media reviews, letters and testimonials from customers, short articles, tutorials, tips, and photo essays.

### **How To Create Your Blog**

You can create your own blog using any basic website software, perhaps using the free web space offered by your ISP. However, there are now many specialised blog hosts, applications and software systems available to people who wish to start their own blogs. Do an Internet search to find some and check out the features of each.

Depending on your requirements, here are some points that you need to consider when choosing where and how to blog:

Purpose: What are you planning to use your blog for? If it’s for personal use, you may not require a lot of functionality and features. On the other hand, if you wish to set up a group blog, you should look for a blog host/system that has administrative functions that will allow you to add authors/bloggers and moderate posts.

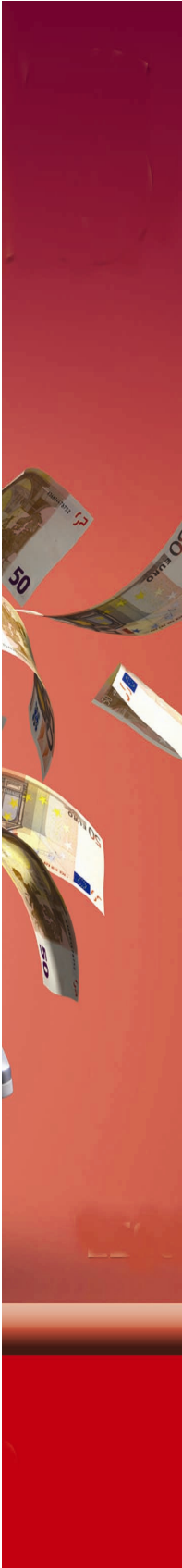
Technical Knowledge: How good are you with a computer and the Internet? If you don’t want to get involved with programming and design then you should choose a blog host/system that requires the least possible technical know-how to set up and operate.

Value: Many blog hosts/systems are available for free, but may deliver unsolicited advertising to your readers. A paid-for version will allow you to take control of your own advertising and may offer upgraded features/functions. (You can always try a free version first before paying for any upgrades.)

### **How To Turn Blogs Into £££s**

Some top bloggers are able to make hundreds or, in a few cases, thousands of pounds a month from a blog that takes them just 20 minutes a day to write. However, even a modest blog could make £50-£100 a month if exploited properly.

An essential principle of blogs is that you *never* charge a subscription fee. A blog is not an e-mail newsletter or e-zine or a news or subscription website. Part of the attraction of it is that it is a literally *free* representation of free speech and



free thought. Instead you need to use more subtle methods to persuade readers to pay you for the information and ideas you are providing them with.

There are basically three ways to generate money from your blogs once they are up and running. You can use one or more of them for each blog you create:

### **One: Accept Advertising**

The percentage of blogs that have ads. is still quite low, but it is likely to grow quickly now that a number of services are being developed to make it easy for bloggers and advertisers to connect. However, some people fear advertising will corrupt blogging and encourage bloggers to write for money, not passion. So it's important that your advertising is more carefully selected and placed than if you were selling advertising in an e-zine for example.

There are several ways to attract advertising. First, you can contact suitable advertisers and ask them if they would like to pay to advertise on your blog. They should also be reputable, ethical companies so as not to compromise your blog. The products or services they sell and the way they are presented should be carefully selected so that your advertising seems more like a service, or a 'don't miss this' recommendation, than an ad.

You can also include an 'Advertise Here' appeal within your blog. The logic of this is that people owning or working for companies who would be suitable advertisers on your blog are quite likely to read your blog anyway!

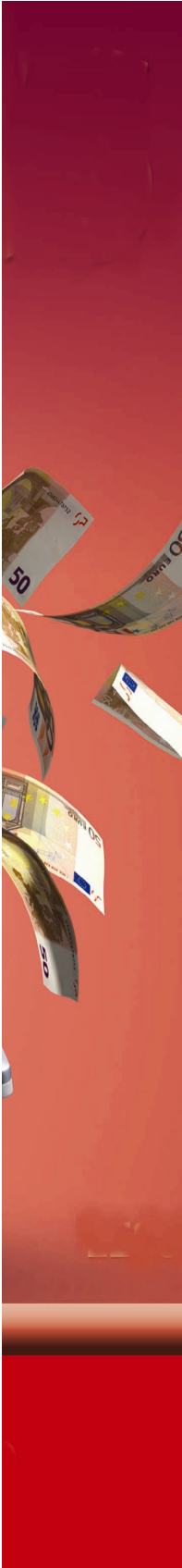
Lastly, there are now a number of blog advertising agencies which will find advertising for you, or connect blogs and advertisers, in return for a small fee. You can find these using an Internet search, or check in the Appendix. For example, Blogads is a US service which will find advertisers for blogs in return for 20% of the advertising revenue.

### **Two: Ask For Donations**

One of the easiest ways to generate a profit from your blog is simply to ask your readers to make donations towards the cost of running your site. This works on an honour basis. Only readers who are willing to pay do so and the amount is up to them. Those who choose not to pay can still read the blog. Simply add a box stating something like 'Please Donate To Help Keep This Site Free', and occasionally make appeals for donations in your blog copy.

Although this might seem an unlikely way to make a good income the experience of many bloggers proves that it can be quite lucrative. They have found that a sizable minority of readers will donate, and on a regular basis, either because they highly value your blog – or simply because they feel a little guilty about getting something for nothing. Successful bloggers report lots of £5 and £10 donations, and sometimes get donations of hundreds of pounds! Others report that total donations exceed the amount that they could hope to make by





selling a similar product on subscription.

You can collect donations easily using a service such as PayPal. Another method is to use Amazon's 'Honor System' programme. This allows a given blog's readers to click through and make donations to the blogger using Amazon's own secure payment system.

### **Three: Exploit Revenue-Generating Links**

Linking to other sites that generate revenue is a more subtle way of making money from your blog than accepting paid advertising. There are several different ways of doing this, of which these are just two examples:

Google AdSense: Instead of selling ads on specific sites, Google AdSense sells ads. linked to certain words that appear in the content of sites. Bloggers say they like this approach because it provides relatively unobtrusive ads their readers might actually want to see. You can join Google AdSense quite easily by inserting the HTML code they will supply on your blog.

AdSense cleverly matches up the blog with suitable advertising. For example, a site that covers gardening and includes a lot of gardening-related words will attract garden-related advertising. So, when visitors go there they might see an ad for ordering bulbs and seeds online.

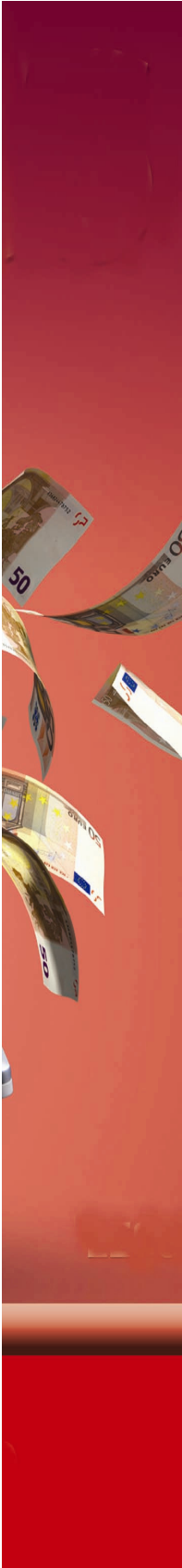
Advertisers pay Google each time a user clicks on their ads. Google gives a portion of this revenue to the site where the ad appears. Some blogs make £200-£500 a month just from this source.

Amazon Associates: While technically not advertising, Amazon.com has offered bloggers and other Web sites a way to make money since 1996 through its Associates programme. Blogs that join the programme link content on their site to books, consumer electronics and other products sold on Amazon. If a visitor clicks on the link and buys the product, the blog site gets a percentage of the revenue. This commission can be up to 10.5% depending on the product and the number and value of sales.

With Amazon Associates no ads show up on your site, but if visitors click on a book or DVD, for example, which you write about they will be linked to Amazon.com. It's important not to comprise what you write by mentioning too many linked products of course, although it's up to the reader whether they want to use the link. Many blogs earn £100 a month from this method.

## **How To Successfully Sell Software Online**

Software is, in its own way, information – just a very sophisticated package of information to enable you to use your computer more effectively. You might think that since Microsoft and other large companies dominate the software business, no one else can make money by selling software. But that's not true. A



minor revolution is taking place in the software industry, because of *shareware*.

Shareware is basically just the same as commercial brand-name software, except that the way it is sold is different. The basic principle is simple: Shareware is offered for free and for nothing in the first instance which makes it very easy to distribute and attractive to computer users. You then make money from it by encouraging the user to buy an upgrade, pay for a missing element, pay to keep using it long term, or simply make a donation.

If you have a little computing experience and either know or are willing to learn a programming language – or know a knowledgeable computer buff who does – you could create and sell shareware profitably on the Internet. It's not necessarily the easiest way to sell information online, but if you promote and market shareware cleverly, you can make a comfortable living from it.

### **Why Is Shareware Lucrative?**

Firstly, why do many computer users prefer to download and buy shareware instead of commercial software? Here's why:

Value: Commercial software can cost ten times as much as a comparable piece of shareware. The extra money for commercial products goes into the manual, CD, box, advertising, delivery, wholesale and/or retail mark up. None of these costs is involved with shareware.

Speed: Large commercial software firms spend months developing their products so that they are sometimes almost obsolete as soon as they are released. But a shareware author will often release new software within weeks or even days.

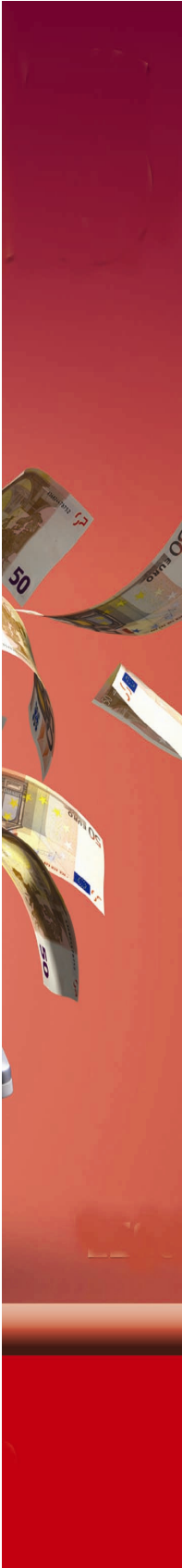
Support: Obtaining technical support for commercial software often takes a long time and can be expensive. But most shareware authors offer unlimited e-mail based technical support. The customer can expect to receive an informative reply directly from the people who know how the software works.

### **Writing Your Own Shareware Programs**

The first thing you need to do is create a piece of software. Here's what you need:

An Idea: It's good if you've got a completely original one, otherwise it should be a new way of approaching an old problem, or something quite specialised. Try and avoid competing head-on in a field which is already well catered for by the big companies – you will spend all your time trying to keep up with the competition instead of innovating. For example, you might have an idea for a new mailing list management program or appointment-management program, which are purpose-designed for a particular industry.





A Computer: Most of the time you will be editing text and most Macs or PCs can do this easily, even if they are not the fastest.

A Development Tool: For example, Metrowerks CodeWarrior, Apple Xcode or Windows C/C++ development tools available from Borland, Symantec or Microsoft.

Tutorials: For Macs, the CodeWarrior development system comes with some excellent sample online books. For Windows, try 'Programming Windows'. For general programming guidelines, check out 'Writing Solid Code' and 'Code Complete'. You can find more information using an Internet search.

### **How To Create a Shareware Product**

Once you've written a program, you need to turn it into something that can sell, i.e. a product.

First of all, test. Test every aspect of your software as you write it. Don't wait until the end to see if it actually works. Once you can't find any more bugs, find some beta testers by advertising on newsgroups or mailing lists. Software should be tested under all platforms for which you claim compatibility, even if their market share is small. Many bugs only appear under particular versions of the operating system and with 'real world' use.

Next, you will need clear, comprehensive documentation, in the relevant formats for Mac or Windows. You might also want to produce a tutorial or FAQ's (frequently asked questions). These can all be published cheaply online.

You will also need a way to collect payment. How are you going to encourage people to pay for the software? What are they going to get when they do pay? The answer can range from pure shareware (where payment is based on trust), through crippleware (important features missing), demoware (save and print disabled), expireware (time limited version) and many other variations. Consider the decision carefully – it will largely determine your level of income.

### **Selling and Marketing Your Shareware**

Once your product is available you need to ensure you maximise its earning potential. This is done with good marketing. Be patient. Don't expect to make money overnight. It can take time for your program to get disseminated through the Internet, talked about, recommended and purchased.

You'll need to do some publicity. Think about all the ways in which you heard about the software that you use. The most valuable publicity machine is word-of-mouth, so make sure your product is reliable and you treat your customers well. You can use paid-for advertising if you wish, but budget ways of gaining publicity include sending your program to magazines for reviews, sending press releases to relevant websites and mentioning your software on



bulletin boards and forums.

You should also try to get your product listed or mentioned on dedicated shareware sites or other places that likely users will notice it. For both Macs and Windows, use Download.com, Tucows and VersionTracker. Other good Mac places are Info-Mac, AMUG and MacUpdate. For Windows, look at SimTel.Net and WinSite. (You can find these and many more places with an Internet search.)

Every serious shareware operation needs a website, where users can download your shareware and which will also act as a form of advertising. You can begin with a free site, perhaps one that comes free from your ISP. But, once you are up and running you should invest in a properly-hosted domain name. Make paying or donating easy. More people will pay for continued use of your shareware, or upgrades, if they can do so online using a credit card rather than having to mail a cheque. You can use PayPal or a similar service to do this.

With shareware, a good overall strategy is to be persistent and think of your product as a long term project. If you stop promoting and/or upgrading your product, your income will eventually dry up. So you should listen carefully to user suggestions, implement the best ones and introduce new versions periodically, as well as creating more shareware programs which will appeal to the same user. This is the best way of getting your customers to keep paying for your shareware, and of recommending your products to others.

## Appendix of Websites: Lesson 7

### Useful Internet and Electronic Publishing Websites

Here is a selection of some websites you will find useful when selling information on the Internet. This list is for information only and these sites are not endorsed in any way.

Activ E-Book Compiler

[www.ebookcompiler.com](http://www.ebookcompiler.com)

One of the most well known programs for distributing HTML e-books. Inexpensive and also offers a free trial version.

Adobe

[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

Adobe Acrobat software and free reader.

Amazon

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Amazon associates program.

Association of Shareware Professionals

[www.asp-shareware.org](http://www.asp-shareware.org)

Shareware site.

BERSoft WebPacker

[www.bersoft.com](http://www.bersoft.com)

E-book publishing software to compress and encrypt HTML files.

Blogads

[www.blogads.com](http://www.blogads.com)

Blog advertising agency.

Booklocker

[www.booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

Publishing/library site for e-books.

Corey Rudl's Monthly Newsletter

[www.marketingtips.com](http://www.marketingtips.com)

From one of the legends of Internet marketing. Every month you get insider tips, tricks, and secrets from an expert in information publishing.

E-zine Director

[www.ezinedirector.com](http://www.ezinedirector.com)

One of the best ways to set up an affordable newsletter or E-zine. They charge a nominal monthly fee for their service, which is easy to set up, and which then



makes it easy to manage your e-mail list.

#### Google

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

Google Adsense linked advertising.

#### Listbuilder

[www.listbuilder.com](http://www.listbuilder.com)

Microsoft mailing list management software.

#### Mail Loop

[www.emarketingman.com](http://www.emarketingman.com)

Offers database management, bulk e-mailing functions, newsletter templates, and other useful features.

#### Microsoft HTML Reader/

[www.microsoft.com/reader/](http://www.microsoft.com/reader/)

Converter and directory of e-books.

#### Newsletter & Electronic Publishers

[www.newsletters.org](http://www.newsletters.org)

Association (NEPA)

The Newsletter & Electronic Publishers Association is an international trade association for newsletter publishers and those selling information on the Internet. It offers many benefits to NEPA members and also sells books and reports to non-members.

#### Nitro Knowledge

[www.nitroknowledge.com](http://www.nitroknowledge.com)

A useful newsletter that comes out weekly, and features articles by a variety of Internet marketing experts.

#### Publishing News

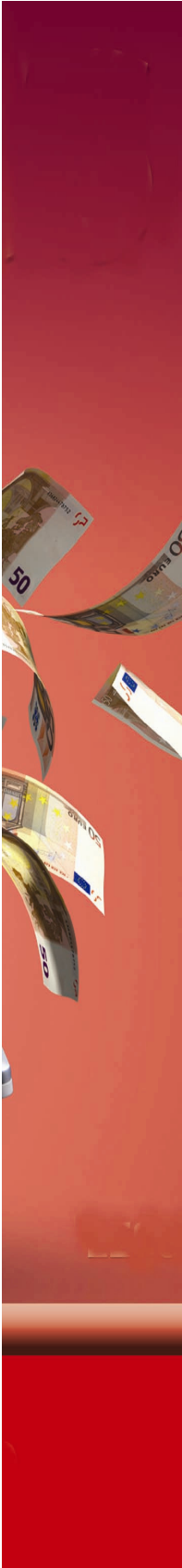
[www.publishingnews.co.uk](http://www.publishingnews.co.uk)

Useful trade journal.

#### Smartgroups

[www.smartgroups.com/groups/ListPOP](http://www.smartgroups.com/groups/ListPOP)

Announcement list good for promoting products.



The Periodical Publishers

[www.ppa.co.uk](http://www.ppa.co.uk)

Association (PPA)

The PPA is the organisation of magazines and business-to-business (B2B) media in the UK. Their website contains much useful information, facts, figures and contacts relating to publishing.

The Publishers Association

[www.publishers.org.uk](http://www.publishers.org.uk)

The leading trade organisation for book, journal and electronic publishers in the UK. Much useful information on books and the book and journal industry.

Topica

[www.topica.com](http://www.topica.com)

Free mailing list management.

WebCompiler

<http://www.x2net.com/webcompiler/>

E-book publishing software to compress HTML and images into a single EXE.

Yahoo

[groups.yahoo.com/group/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/)

Announcement list good for promoting products.

Please Note: Websites included in this appendix, or elsewhere within the course, are all operational at the time of writing and I do aim to check and update these listings on a regular basis. However, due to the nature of the Internet and the way in which websites can appear and disappear without notice it is always possible you may find some sites which have been renamed, moved or removed.