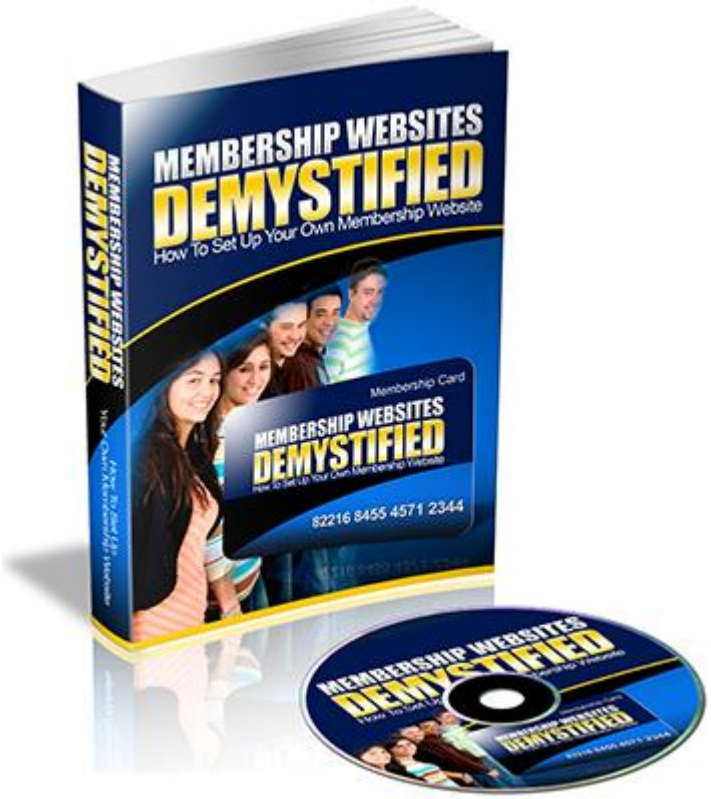
Membership Websites Demystified

How To Set Up Your Own Membership Website



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Terry Telford

Welcome to the how to set up a membership website information session. We are going to be hearing from Darryl Graham who is the president of ISO register. I will be your host; my name is Terry Telford from thebusinessprofessional.com. I would like to first start off by saying thanks for being here Darryl.

Darryl Graham

Thank you very much; I'm glad you had me here.

Terry

I really appreciate it. Let's just set the stage by talking about your background before you set up ISO register?

Darryl

I started out in corporate marketing and was there for about twenty years. I love marketing, love the sales, love advertising; I just got tired of the travel. I was making a lot of money, but the last month I was there I was home three days out of the month and that wears you down pretty quickly. So taking my marketing expertise and bringing it on line was a good fit. Which was where we started developing ISO register, about five and a half years ago back in 1999, and we've continued to develop it to where it is now.

Terry

Fantastic. So you've been on line since 1999?

Darryl

No. The summer of 1999 was when we actually launched ISO register. It's gone through several transitions since we launched it. As we've grown over the years we've continued adding websites so we are up to nine individual websites built into the ISO websites currently.

Terry

Could you walk me through those?

Darryl

Sure. ISO register we call the engine of the system, the backbone. Within ISO register we have a site called ISOtrainer.com, which is our on line training business discount resource center. ISO resources that we have where our members have access to e-books, software, downloads they can give away, resell, whatever they want to do. Ad-adalyzer.com is our on line ad tracking service tool. Anybody who is doing any type of advertising on line, it's essential that they track their ads, their links, their hits, and adylyzer gives you that opportunity. Looktogain is our on line searchable data base for members to post their affiliate and mln opportunities, where only members can post, but everyone on line can search. So it's a database driven search engine for mln and affiliate programs. ISO rotator is our URL rotator service for people who want to help their downlines, co-ops, and so forth, as well as promote multiple programs. ISO responder is our full service ad free auto responder service built into the ISO register system. Our newest site that we are launching is called jobdiscover.com which will be similar to a monster career builder, but with several twists to help people find jobs and to help companies post jobs.

All of these sites are built into the ISO system and they all work as one unit to give people a full on line, or off line, marketing system to promote whatever products and services they want.

Terry

So how many members do you have now with ISO register?

Darryl

Currently we have a little over eighteen hundred paying members.

Terry

Fantastic and what does a paid membership run?

Darryl

The fee for the entire ISO register system is $27.97 a month. Each of the sites can also be purchased individually and they range from $18.97 a month to $5.97 a month.

Terry

The best deal then would be to go with ISO register and get the whole whack of them.

Darryl

Hands down. People get so much with ISO register. They get their own webpage, they get a conference system that we launched about two months ago that's built into the site, so they get the full system, plus they get the additional advantage of being able to resell the entire system at forty percent and ten percent commissions if they purchase ISO register.

Terry

Beautiful. That's a fairly successful site if you have almost eighteen hundred members paying almost thirty bucks a pop. What was the biggest factor to your success?

Darryl

I'm one of those people who doesn't quit. If someone tells me I can't do something I'm going to go out and do it just to prove them wrong. I think it just goes back to my traditional business background. The internet as we've discussed is really no different than off line marketing, it's just a different medium. Building a business is the same on line as it is off line, it takes time, it takes money, and it takes patience. You have to have that never say die attitude, that never quit attitude and that is one of the gifts, or curses, that I was blessed with when I was born I guess. It's an imperative aspect of being a business owner you have to continually move ahead, take the setbacks and learn from them and create and move forward. As long as you're moving forward then you're going to do fine, but you have to have that patience to build. There are too many people who come on line and think they can build a business over night and it just doesn't happen that way.

Terry

That's a good point. I was just going to ask you about that. How long did it take before you actually hit a critical mass, you didn't suddenly get eighteen hundred members in your first year I'm sure.

Darryl

Actually, just to give you a little background, when we first started selling we were selling memberships at six dollars a year. Obviously we didn't have the auto responder or the adalyzer we've grown from the stand point of ISO register, which was the only site we had to the entire system that we have right now. So I don't want to make everyone think we have eighteen hundred people paying $27.97 a month, the majority of our members are paying anywhere from $14.97 to $27.97, because what we've done is different than pretty much any other company on line. The companies that joined up at six

dollars a year are still paying six dollars a year. We don't have many of those left, but we still have a few people that have that membership fee. When they join they get a price lock in. We increase the price as we add services and new sites to the system.

Terry

They kind of fall into the grandfather clause.

Darryl

They are all grandfathered in, right wrong or indifferent. I feel good for the people that are paying six dollars a year, I feel bad for me and for the company, but we don't up sell. I don't believe in up selling, I believe if you can find a good system and a good product, you should grow as the company grows, which is where we made our focus. So the people that stay with us do very well.

Terry

Yes they sure do.

Darryl

I've had people that started out at six dollars a month, have quit, and now they are back paying twenty seven a month.

Terry

They are smart people.

Darryl

Well, they all e-mail and say they wished they stayed, but again that goes back to that mentality where people want that instant success and they are not willing to grow and build themselves.

Terry

True, very true. I'm just going to take a step back for a minute Darryl, where did the actual name come from, the ISO register name?

Darryl

It actually came from the initial business of the site, ISO register. Back when I was in corporate, a few of my last jobs involved something called ISO 9000.

Which is an international quality systems standard. Big companies, Ford, Chrysler, dell computers, HP, AT&T, all these companies are registered to ISO 9000. They spend tens and sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars to acquire that certification, but they were not promoting the act that they were registered. So I started building ISO register as a site to help these companies promote the fact that they were registered to this standard, and what it meant to their products, services and to their clients. The downside was the people in charge of ISO 9000 were generally quality managers and I couldn't get those people to learn how to spell marketing much less realise its important. So I beat my head against the wall for a couple of years. We did fine an were profitable working that venue, but I also realised that the current growth of the internet and the strength that I had was to go out and help small companies better utilize the internet in an efficient and affordable manner. That was when we changed and started devoting our attention to general business and people that want to start companies. I kept the name because it had already been branded and we just built on the ISO system.

Terry

What attracted you to turning it into a membership site as opposed to creating a single product site?

Darryl

This was back in 1999 right about the time the internet bubble burst and as I looked at all these sites that were popping up it was obvious to me that their business models were flawed. You cannot maintain a business based on banner ads because of the multitude of websites out there. It works fine for radios and TV stations, but it can't support millions of websites. We were actually a membership site when a membership site wasn't cool. That's the way we wanted it. Our structure is, when people come to ISO register and use the services, all the sites are one hundred percent banner and ad free sites. We want people who want to come and want to use the services to understand that they are paying for the services but they are paying for it for a reason, because they are getting no banner ads, pop up ads, and not being up sold. Including everything in there, your original question was single product type thing. Single products are fine, but it's not something you can create a long term income with, in my opinion, because you always have to create something new. Where as we do that, but it is built into the system so it goes back to building relationships with our clients, which I'm big on, I like building relationships. I want people to pick up the phone and call and say "Darryl, this is a problem I have, or this is what I want to do can you tell me about this", or they can contact Jeremy or whoever they need to within the ISO structure.

Terry

Excellent. Does it take a lot of time then to build relationships and running the site? Is there a lot of time involved each day?

Darryl

There is a lot of time involved because of the way we set things up. We've kept things, and again going back to my corporate days, when I was building my relationships, and I had a lot of big clients, The US Air force, Lockheed, Ford Motor Company, which are still some of my clients, I had to pick up the phone and either get on an airplane or get in my car to go and see my clients. Obviously with the internet being the World Wide Web I can't always do that, but we can communicate via e-mail and we do have our toll free numbers. The time constraints for building these relationships is big, but it's an investment now for the future of the company, because we are going to be the site that people can contact. Our goal has always been to give the best support on the internet which is an extremely huge goal, however when you look at most websites you can't find the phone number, the contact name or a physical address. If you send an e-mail you are lucky to even get a response.

Terry

So how much time in a day are you actually working on the website and on support and that side of things?

Darryl

Generally, twelve to fifteen hours a day on my end. My partner Jeremy who is in Japan, which works out beautifully because Japan is thirteen hours ahead of us, he is on line another fifteen to eighteen hours really. We have pretty much twenty four hour coverage; one of us is always available to deal with any issue that comes up within the ISO system.

Terry

Fantastic. What do you have to do each day as far as maintaining the site and keeping things running?

Darryl

I send an e-mail to my programmers and say "fix this"! That brings up a point. I'm not a tech person. I can't spell HTML, I don't know how to do programming and I don't know how to do it for a reason. I believe very strongly in choosing your battles and that's one battle I chose not to fight. My background and expertise is marketing, advertising and creating. You can't do everything and do it very well. We have programmers called FK technologies who in my opinion are the best I've ever found. They handle all of our sites maintenance and any issues that come up from a site standpoint. Generally we have very few problems. The site has been customized from the ground up. We own all the sites; we own all the programming of the sites. So the fact they create

these from the ground up means everything can work together and keeps the problems to a minimum.

Terry

When you first started the site did you contact FK technologies first and describe what you wanted?

Darryl

Actually I didn't start through FK I found FK through some affiliates of mine. I started with two friends that I was working with and they created the initial site. However they were part of the corporate downsizing so they had to move across country and we kind of lost touch, but they initially created the site based on what I wanted. I laid everything out for them and they made it happen. The same thing for FK. The amazing thing with FK is I sent them what I called my butchered layout. I will make something up in word for a part of the site where we want to make it happen, and they take that and turn it into a beautiful work of art. I think that is very important for people who want to create a website. You have to have a good relationship with your programmers and build the trust so they can almost anticipate what you're thinking and what you are trying to say when you're telling them.

Terry

Great. As far as doing a layout, when you first started with ISO you put it on paper and then went to programming guys, they put it together, it went back to you and you uploaded it on line?

Daryl

No, they do all that stuff.

Terry

They do that as well, okay. So you have your finger on the button and the overview of everything?

Darryl

True. I know what I want and I know that with the internet there has not been one thing that I wanted to do that my guys have not been able to figure out how to do it. To give you an example the auto responder was a big undertaking. We launched the auto responder in May of 2004. We went to our current members and told them we were going to include an auto responder in the system because it's something they were saying they wanted. We asked

the members what they wanted an auto responder to do and we had about twenty five pages of requests from our members. Jeremy and I went through these things and created a customized outline, took it to FK, and then they built the auto responder based on what our members wanted. That's how the entire ISO system works. It's not just us now creating websites; we get input from our members and put something together to get a functional product. Then FK creates the backend of the site so everything works together.

Terry

It sounds like it runs really smooth now, but did you hit any stumbling blocks as you were going along?

Darryl

Daily, there are always issues that pop up, and even today, it's smooth, but similar to the analogy of a duck in water, on the surface everything is nice and smooth, but his little feet are paddling like hell under the water. There are always things that pop up, there are always issues, always someone new that comes along that doesn't know what they are doing and we will need to correct it. Going back to my initial company, ISO 9000, is a system, it's a process, and you put a process in place where there is a reason and a way to do everything, and part of that was instilled in me from working with that system for so long, but since we built everything from the ground up everything flows together and works together in one cohesive unit. The problems are minimized both from our standpoint and our members.

Terry

So is there core software that you use or has FK technologies developed software right from the ground up for you?

Darryl

Everything has been customized from the ground up, built specifically to our specifications, which again helps to minimize problems that we have with anything going wrong. We could have purchased a script for the auto responder, the problem was getting that script to do what we wanted it to do was going to cause problems down the road. So building the script from the first dash to where it is, gave us the flexibility to change on the fly and do whatever we want it to. It's like you when you write a book, you know where everything is, but if I was to edit that book I would have to go through the entire book flipping through pages looking for what you're talking about, before I can figure out what the problem is or where there is a misspelled word. So yes everything is ground up.

Terry

That's beautiful. I don't think there are too many websites out there that do that.

Darryl

There are very few websites that do that. There is probably a reason. It is very costly to do it that way, but your cost, we're in this for the long term, so we know three to five years down the road we can amortize the cost, we are going to recoup that investment many times over. That's really what we want to do. We've built an awesome website an awesome system now and we know that sometime in the future we will become profitable with that website.

Terry

So what are we looking at as far as costs to develop something like ISO register, taking it from the ground five years ago to now, what kind of costs have been involved for that?

Darryl

My personal investment has been over a quarter of a million dollars.

Terry

Okay so this isn't for someone trying to build a company on a shoestring budget.

Darryl

No they shouldn't do that; you can't do it on a shoestring budget. We invested the money, and going back to my corporate upbringing you have to spend money to make money. You don't have to spend a quarter of a million dollars on line to make a nice website. You can make a nice website for a few hundred dollars, but all of our sites are data base driven, they all work in conjunction with each other. This has been over five years so investing fifty thousand dollars a year in your business is nothing, it's an insignificant drop in the grand scheme of things. That's the way we look at things.

Terry

Back to the detail side of things, what payment processors are you using?

Darryl

We have pay pal and we have our own merchant account which gives us the opportunity to use Visa, MasterCard, and American Express, it will accept those. So with the merchant account they can pay by credit card or by pay pal.

Terry

Is that all tied in with the software, if somebody cancels their membership will it automatically get cancelled in the system or do you have to do that manually?

Darryl

It is all done automatically, but we do a manual override, a check up just to make sure. If someone wants to cancel a credit card we do verify that the cancellation actually took place. If they want out we want them out, but we don't want someone two months down the road to be telling us we've been charging their credit card for two months when they have cancelled, so we verify that the cancellation took place.

Terry

You have over eighteen hundred members, can you give me an example of their success stories, and how they've used the ISO responder in their business, or promoting ISO responder, and generated some good success?

Darryl

I think the biggest success story I can tell you about is Jeremy. Jeremy started as an affiliate of ISO register. He joined February 2003 I believe. The main reason he joined was for the adylizer the ad tracking program. He is a very good on line marketer and he was bringing in sales. Any time I see people bringing in sales or see people doing things using the site, I always like to get to know those people because they are your key players in your company. Even though Jeremy was in Japan we struck up a conversation through e-mail and MSN and got to know each other. Jeremy within six months had become pretty much my right hand person in the company, and he continued to grow with the company. He is one of those people who don't wait for someone to tell him what to do; he goes out and moves forward, he spent a lot of time offering suggestions and help, working with me on support issues. He went above and beyond what any other affiliate with ISO register has done. We've had a lot of affiliates that have joined and got all excited and want to be part of the growth, but they soon fizzle out and fall off the wayside because that's just what affiliates do. Jeremy on the other hand, thought this is going to be my company one day; I'm going to take it and run with it. He actually became a partner of mine in January 2004, and he is actually the

creator of ISO trainer, as well as the ISOforum.com, he was instrumental in the building and creation of the auto responder, so that's the biggest success story we've had. I know there are other members who joined way back when our price was x number of dollars and they are still using the system today, and I am still sending those people commissions on a weekly basis.

Terry

So what are some of, I mean you got enough members now that I'm sure you've seen some failures, people who haven't made it. Can you give some examples of things that haven't worked?

Darryl

Unfortunately you see too many failures. Based on the experience that I've had with affiliate programs that is the nature of the beast. One of the problems with the people that have failed with ISO register is there are too many people that look at ISO register as an income opportunity as opposed to the system that it is for. We go to great lengths to educate people that they are not going to get rich reselling ISO register. You can't get rich reselling tools, but you can get rich by using tools. The analogy I give people now before they even sign up is "if you are a carpenter and you are selling tools, you're not going to get rich selling hammers and nails, but if you take those things and build houses, then resell those houses you can become very rich." That's the intent of ISO register. We give people the tools, the products and the services to promote whatever tools, products or services they want to promote and we have this nice little affiliate program built in so you can essentially get your membership paid for, make a few dollars on the side by selling these tools to other people who need them. So that's kind of where we go. As far as the failures, without mentioning names, I will give you an example and use the name Susan. She joined and a week later called up to cancel. I asked her why she was cancelling. She said she just didn't know what all the things did. I asked her what she was trying to accomplish and she said she wanted to become a marketing expert on line and help people make money. It is such an opposite approach. She didn't know what an auto responder did, or an ad tracker. She didn't know anything about an affiliate plan, but she was trying to build a business to help other people promote themselves on line.

Terry

The blind leading the blind.

Darryl

Yes. That's the kind of backward mentality that too many people have. They think they can do something without taking the time to learn and educate

themselves. Now Susan had already paid for the month so I told her to stay and if at the end of the month she wasn't satisfied we would cancel her, but to at least try to learn how to use an auto responder. The end of the month came and I had to cancel her she had never logged in again since the day we talked. That's the sad reality. People get all jazzed up and excited then don't do anything with the tools they have. I hate to see that from people.

Terry

That's almost a common area of what is really happening on line right now I think.

Darryl

No doubt.

Terry

You've kind of hit the nail on the head. People think that doing business on line is different than off line and there is some kind of magic pill and you sign up and make money. I think that is the big misconception that makes people look at the internet differently, but then the reality sets in that it doesn't work any differently than it does off line.

Darryl

Exactly. That's the thing people need to understand when they are coming on line, like you said, it is no different building a business on line then off line. Bill Gates didn't become a billionaire overnight. He is a very smart man, but he doesn't have anything that anybody else doesn't have with the exception that he has foresight and the drive to know what he wants to build and how he will go about it. People that come on line need to have that same drive and that same tenacity and desire to succeed. They cannot fall for hype and they have to stop falling for all these emails that come up saying "we do all the work; you just have to cash the cheques." I don't know about you Terry, but if I had a product and I didn't have to work, all I had to do was cash cheques, I wouldn't be telling anybody about it I would keep it to myself. I have people calling me all the time wanting to know how to make a thousand dollars in a week. What I want to say to these people is practise this line "do you want fries with that burger?" That's really where you need to take your focus. Go out to a fast food restaurant and get a job because that is the only way you're going to make money. If you don't have that ability and that desire and drive you're not going to make it on line. I'm not trying to dissuade anybody you can make it on line. You've made it on line Terry, and I've made it on line, but we've made it through a lot of sweat, tears and equity.

Terry

That's for sure. So what is it Darryl that makes your membership site successful?

Darryl

I think it's a combination of things. I don't think there is any one thing that's made it successful. It's my belief in helping people, Jeremy has been a huge help to me as far as direction and focus. One person can't do it all. I've had a lot of members that have helped out over the years and still do. We have what we call our business advisors, who are people who started out with ISO register and we've struck up friendships over the years. They give us input and advice as well as help us answer questions. I'm a big believer in delegating and asking others for help as opposed to dictating. The structure of the system is unique so that when people get in they are not up sold. The tools are there, everything is ad free and banner free. I think it's a multitude of things that have come together to make ISO successful. It's not the amount of money I've invested, I probably could have gotten by with a lot less money, but I don't believe in doing things on the cheap. We pay over twelve hundred dollars a month for hosting alone because I want to know that my websites are up 24/7. I can hold my breath for the amount of time my websites have been down over the last four years.

Terry

Fantastic. What does that cover? Twelve hundred dollars is extremely expensive to get hosting, how come it is so expensive?

Darryl

That is for two dedicated high speed servers, the auto responder is on its own dedicated server and the rest of the system is on its own dedicated server. Again, since I don't know much about programming all I could do is spit out numbers that wouldn't mean anything to me or a lot of other people. When you go to get a car you could get a pinto from the old days or you could get a Cadillac or BMW, both are going to get you from A to B, but one will always get you from A to B, the other may not. Our hosting in my opinion, we pay extra for them but I have a very personal relationship with the president of the company. If I have any problems I can pick up the phone and talk to Brad and he can pick up the phone and talk to me, so I don't mind paying for a good service as long as it will provide the service that we need and they provide that service for us. This way our sites are always there when you want them. The last thing you want to do is log into your auto responder and find the site is down and you can't do what you need to do.

Terry

What company are the servers?

Daryl

They are called edgeweb.posting.net. They are based in Maryland in the United States.

Terry

I just want to back up then. Do you have a website address for FK technologies?

Darryl

Yes it's called FKtechno.com, and you can get to any of their websites through direct links on ISO register. Anybody who wants to work with an outstanding, very affordable, very agreeable partner type development and programming company, they are the one you want.

Terry

That sounds like a commercial.

Darryl

Yes it does, doesn't it? Maybe I should show them that and charge them for it?

Terry

So take me on a tour of your life. What happens in a day of your life?

Darryl

I wake up and hit office. Right now I have a separate office than the house. We are actually enlarging our house so I can have a home office. I have a twenty two month old boy and I want to spend as many minutes in a day with him as I can. So right now I get to the office around nine or ten because I am generally at the office until two or three in the morning. I hit the computer and take care of any e-mails, take care of the processors any issues that have come up that Jeremy, because that is about the time he is heading off line, has not dealt with. I work at the office until about five, head home for about four hours, then back to the office until about two or three in the morning. That is when I can get the most work done because in the day I'm answering phones,

responding to e-mails, and on line conference training, we run one of those per day. That's generally it. Anything that has to be rewritten or reprogrammed I put in a report to FK and they usually have things sorted out within twelve to twenty four hours.

Terry

So you are quite a workaholic then.

Darryl

Yes and no. You know the old saying "if you like what you do you will never work a day in your life"? I like what I do, I love what I do. I like the freedom, I like the flexibility and I like the fact that I can leave for few hours and go spend some time with my son. I also realize that it is a seven day twenty four a day job, because if somebody has a problem I have a toll free number right at the house where members can call me. Which is okay because I want them to know we are there for them. They don't abuse the privilege, but they have that number if they have any problems.

Terry

So what have you done, I'm just going to step back again, you went from the blue print overview of the company that you wanted to have and how you wanted it to run, sent that to the programming guys at FK technologies, once everything was built and uploaded on the internet, what did you do for marketing? How did you get the ball rolling?

Darryl

I did a lot. Up until 2003 I was the marketing person. Back then I used strictly solo ads. I spent a lot of money in solo advertising. I would write articles and build relationships. It's kind of funny because back then we were still a small company, I would call companies to try to partner with them and they would not want to deal with me because I was just a little ant in the grand scheme of things. It's ironic now because most of those companies want to partner with me now because we have surpassed what they have done, which is kind of a nice feeling. As far as the advertising that is one of the areas I've kind of gotten out of over the last two years because there is so much support and training that goes into the site with the number of members that we have. We really rely on the affiliates for generating sales, but we still write articles, do e-books and continue to run a few ads here and there, but the main thing is supporting our affiliates and our members, so that's where our focus is.

Terry

Do you have any last words of advice you can pass on to anyone who is thinking of starting up a membership website?

Darryl

I think the best advice that I can give somebody is to understand it has to be a long term venture. Don't go into any business, whether it's your own or your an affiliate, on a whim thinking that you're going to be rich tomorrow it's not going to happen. You have to build something, you have to have something unique, you have to have something that is going to function, you have to invest money, you have to invest time and you have to invest the effort to make the dream a reality. If you do that and you stay it, the chances are still against you, unfortunately, that you are going to succeed, but the odds are against you in a lot of things. You just have to have that courage to keep going forward, and if people can understand that, using the right tools, the right services, don't fall for the scams they will build a nice business and a sell out business.

Terry

Excellent. Now how can people contact you?

Darryl

They can contact me if they are any place in North America by toll free phone, 888-541-5006 . They can also contact me on the support forms on any of the websites or send an e-mail to my personal e-mail address which is dgraham@isoregister.com, and if they have a specific question I am more than happy to answer any questions. I ask them to put the word purple in the subject line. Purple is my spam block, I have a spam block on my e-mails, so I know if I have the word purple on my e-mails it will get opened.

Terry

Excellent. I want to thank you very much Darryl for taking the time to explain about membership websites and how to go about setting them up and how you developed over the five years with ISO register. So thank you again for taking the time and I appreciate everything you've done for us.

Darryl

Terry, it's been my pleasure and I appreciate it sir.

Terry

Thank you very much. You've been listening to Darryl Graham the president of ISOregister.com and Me Terry Telford from thebusinessprofessional.com. Thanks very much for your time.