

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

Table of Contents

1) Why establish a Business on the Internet?	2
2) What does it take to be successful?	6
3) Case Studies – ESL/EFL Websites	16
4) Success Patterns	21
5) Who is English-test.net?	25
6) What's in a name?	27
7) Give me Your Webaddress!	29
8) Be creative with Your Domain Name!	30
9) Business Ideas	33
10) Building Your Website	35
11) A Word on «Timing»	37
12) Ask Your Users!	38
13) Make Your Website Interactive	40
14) Do it In-House	42
15) Isn't it all about Google or «How to make People find Your Site»	49
16) SEO — How to get listed at Search Engines and Directories	51

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

1) Why establish a Business on the Internet?

Fact versus Opinion

When it comes to business, most people confuse their personal opinions with facts. They believe in fact that they know something when in reality they don't have all the data to support their beliefs.

In this document section you will find factual information that is based on our experiences, on techniques we have practised. We will be sharing with you the methods we have used to establish our own internet business rather than harping on about theories. You will be reading a real success story written by real people. Everything you will find here can be verified and put into practice by you.

There is no denying that the internet has brought about a revolution. Never before have people been able to interact in such a cost effective and comfortable way. The Internet with its multiple communication channels also changes the world of business. Now it is possible for you to establish your own company with a very small financial investment or in some cases even without any start-up capital at all. The majority of people in any country in the world do not really like their regular jobs. Nevertheless they get up early every morning to go to work and when they return home tired and frustrated they switch on the TV to forget all about their problems. They often dream about a life that gives them the freedom to do what they really like with people who are friendly, intelligent, understanding and supportive. Now with the internet available

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

in almost every household in any developed country, it is possible to achieve the type of lifestyle you have always dreamed about. The following facts will show why you really should consider establishing your own internet company:

Downsizing

Let's face it — a computer is more productive than a human in business areas such as accounting, administration, data management, calculating, statistics and many more activities. Whatever industry you name — new technologies increase productivity which, in turn, often leads to fewer jobs. To be sure new technologies also create new jobs but these require a much higher level of qualification and knowledge. A person who has been working in the same sort of job for several years is often not capable of acquiring all the skills and qualifications needed for a job in a new workplace.

Globalization

The world is becoming more and more interconnected. Even, or maybe especially after September 11, international travel activities have been increasing and this pattern will continue into the future. The number of companies that operate on a multinational scale is constantly rising because they need new market places. In Europe nations have agreed on a uniform single currency — the EURO, enabling the European Community to develop into a strong economic entity. The same sort of thing is taking place in Asia with China, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan forming a powerful economic alliance.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

Information

More than 500 million people worldwide are using the internet on a regular basis, with email and search engines as the most popular services. Information is power. People are able to influence, direct, convince, educate and manipulate others through one single tool: The distribution of information. Email and discussion forums allow people to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences with other people from all corners of the world. Within a relatively short period of time the Internet and its communication channels will be part of our daily lives as are running water and electricity.

Cost Effectiveness

The internet is by far the most cost effective communication tool. If you want to send a letter via conventional or so-called snail mail it will cost at least around \$1 (assuming you restrict yourself to two single sheets of paper). Sending the same amount of information via email will be up to 100 times cheaper with immediate delivery. In addition to this, email has a number of advantages over the snail mail system and we will examine the details in further chapters of this book.

The Advantages of the Internet

So, let's recap. Never have the chances for setting up and running your own successful business been easier than they are today:

- While traditional industries like manufacturing are shrinking, new industries are growing — especially the «information industries».
- You can use the internet to find your customers and business partners worldwide.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

- Your customers and partners can find you on the internet.
- You can use the internet to build a strong relationship with your customers especially via email.
- You can use the internet to market your products and services.
- You can use the internet to acquire all the information, training and qualifications you need for your business.
- You can set up a business with a very small marketing budget, something almost impossible in the «real world».

You can certainly list even more reasons why it is possible for anybody with a computer and access to the Internet to establish their own business. At the same time the reality is that only a very small percentage of people who do have a computer and access to the Internet, establish and run their own business. Why is this? The answer is very simple. Most people anywhere in the world, spend too much time thinking about things they do not want, instead of thinking about things they do want. As a result there are only a few people who have their own company and they usually earn more money than somebody with a regular job.

Owners of companies usually have more personal and financial freedom than people with regular jobs. But what exactly do you need in order to own a company? Money? A University degree? The «right» friends? Well, maybe some of these things can help you with your business but then they are not essential and are no guarantee of success. We have analyzed a number of successful online business people and here is a list of important characteristics all of them possessed.

We know that the following qualities are essential for success as a businessperson so you should take the time to go through them and check

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

whether or not you have them. All the information about how to set up a website, how to run an email newsletter, how to get a high ranking at Google, how to generate huge traffic to your website etc. will be worth nothing if you don't have most of the following skills and qualities.

2) What does it take to be successful?

Self-Motivation

Most people wait until someone else tells them what to do. That's the way our society is organized. You go to school and the teacher tells you what to do. You study at university and the professors tell you what to do. Your parents tell you what is right and wrong. You get a job and there you will have a boss and colleagues who tell you what to do. Now, we all have to learn from others clearly but we do have a choice about where we get advice. If you want to know how to establish your own business, would you ask your colleague who has been working in a regular 9 —5 job for 15 years or so? Think about your teachers at school or your University professors. Do you think they know how to set up a business and become an entrepreneur? If you examine truly successful people you will find that they have a high level of self-motivation. This applies to any calling in life.

A person who speaks several languages learned those languages using their initiative. Someone who masters a sport and excels in it, does so through their motivation and determination. We can only achieve success if we like what we do and if we do it using self-motivation and commitment.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

Consistency, the ability to follow through

Many people who do have self-motivation, quickly get enthused and inspired by a new idea. Getting excited or even thrilled by an idea might be great for the moment. A business, however, requires constant activity. If you want to establish and develop a company you need a high level of consistency also known as «stickability». Once you have made the decision to set up your business, you must follow through this decision with consistency. Think about your life — can you come up with an example where you have proved your consistency, your «stickability»? Did you ever want to learn to play an instrument or a sport or a learn a foreign language? How long did you stick to your plan? How much time did you spend on your project and what have you accomplished? Chances are that you started a lot of projects and half way through the course you quit because things got tough and you lacked stickability. If this is the case — fear not. You are not alone. The truth is that most people quit as soon as things get more difficult. Making a long-term commitment is not easy for most people. This applies to personal relationships too. Take a look at the divorce rate in your country and you'll understand what I mean. So, before you take on the task of establishing your business, check whether you are able to make a long-term commitment, whether you possess consistency and stickability.

Self-Discipline

Are you the sort of person who tends to raise your voice when something doesn't go your way? Or do you even have A tendency to shout at your spouse, children or colleagues when you are under pressure? How often

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

do you say: «I'm sorry I shouted at you — I was just stressed»? Are you a person who tends to use swear words every now and then? If so you should spend some time developing your self-discipline before you read on, because whatever you read, the information won't get you anywhere if you cannot control your emotions especially when under pressure. Whenever you start shouting, swearing or using negative language you are wasting your energy — energy better put to use on your business venture. Swearing and grumbling kills your creativity and blocks your mind. You must be strong enough to withstand any tendency to get angry or upset or else you will never succeed in your business.

Courage

It takes great courage to make decisions and set goals because this means you have to prove to yourself that you can follow your own words through to a conclusion. Look at your friends, family and colleagues. How often do you hear somebody make a promise like «I'll call you next week.» or «I'll look this information up for you.» or «Sure I'll help you when you move house, just let me know when you need me.» Those are statements, offers, promises all based on words. Yet, how often are they followed by deeds? Do you make New Year's Resolutions such as «Next year I'll quit smoking», «Next year I'll start this business course at night school», and «Next year I'll go on a trip to Paris or Egypt with you»? How many of those resolutions and promises have you kept? How many of them did you simply forget two weeks into the New Year? It takes courage to make a real decision, as you will have to make a sacrifice to follow it through. Also, when you start up a business you will be alone, at least to begin with. There will be no-one to tell you what to do, nobody at first to

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townsend and Slava Gromov

motivate and support you. You will have to take responsibility for yourself and to a certain degree, for any possible partners and you can only lead others if you have your own fears under control and are willing to take risks. Many people do not set themselves goals because they are afraid of failing — of admitting defeat and they think the best way to avoid defeat is to simply not set goals.

Willingness to learn and the ability to change habits

When you decide to start your own Internet business you are also deciding to go back to school again. Not in a real physical sense but mentally. You will have to trawl for every single bit of information that will get you closer to your goal. To learn means you'll need to change your habits and habits are established patterns of behaviour and thinking that everyone acquires throughout their lives. However, most people are not aware of the fact that they have to learn something new every day and that in order to learn, in order to obtain new knowledge and new skills they have to change some of these habits. If you want to learn a foreign language you have to change your daily routine. For example the habit of listening to your favourite music on the radio. Instead you could be listening to audio recordings in the language you want to learn. We all have a tendency to get used to things that are not only comfortable but also do not require much activity on our part. We get used to watching TV in the evening and eating convenience food at the same time because this is comfortable and doesn't require any mental activity. IF you want to establish your business, you won't have much time to watch TV for entertainment. You have to change your habit of absorbing information passively into one of actively searching for information in order to analyze, filter and reorganize it.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

Creativity

Establishing a business means creating a product, service or system that solves a specific problem or enhances a person's life in one way or another. You can achieve this purpose when you create something new. This doesn't mean that you have to re-invent the wheel though. Examine any new product development that enters the market and you will see that this «new» creation is not entirely new but has been made up by combining existing elements in a novel way. This action of rethinking existing elements is the formula of creativity. So, in order to create something new you have first to analyze an existing product to find out how it can be improved, developed or enhanced in any way so it will do a better job. Take Google — its founders examined and analyzed existing search portals, in particular Yahoo and MSN. Based on their exhaustive studies they came up with an indexing and searching system that provides a higher search term relevancy. Study people's behaviour — identify their latent needs and desires and you will tap into a never-ending supply of product ideas. Just remember this: One satisfied need can produce new needs. For example: When the automobile was invented it catered for people's desire for freedom and mobility. But the invention and production of cars generated a myriad of new needs and desires: such as an endless network of roads and motorways, petrol and service stations, safety and accident insurances, road maps, travel agencies, motels, driving schools, traffic light and road sign systems, car dealerships... the list is endless. And now the Internet adds a new dimension to the creativity of the savvy businessperson.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

Vision

Vision is the ability to see things not as they are right now, but what they will be like in the future. Most people are so stuck in the moment, so preoccupied with their personal daily problems that they don't have the time or energy to think about how a particular market can develop in the future. Look at any successful business venture and you will find that its founder was able to project into the future, to estimate how people's behaviour will change. Your success in business is directly related to your «vision capacity» and your vision capacity is determined by two factors: How far ahead are you able to see into the future and how precise are your predictions? When Larry Page and Sergey Brin founded Google in 1998, they could see well beyond the year 2003, in which they yielded A revenue of almost \$ 1 billion. By 1998 Yahoo and MSN were operating worldwide known search services and no one would have thought that two students could take the lead in the industry within 5 years. Yet, Brin and Page had become excellent analysts of the web search market and they collected and recorded the necessary data to recognize a pattern in human behaviour. Based on their observations they then drew conclusions and made a prognosis. If you want to build your own business, you must be able to see into the future. You can develop «vision capability» just like you can develop any other skill. Your first step is to study and analyze human behaviour. Ask yourself this question: What are people looking for when they use the Internet? How has the way people are using the Internet changed over the past 5 years? How are people going to be using the Internet within the near future? You don't have to project 10 or 15 years ahead — it'll be sufficient just to get an edge over others. Be the first to detect a future development and act upon your observation promptly.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

Looking into the future you must though keep a sense of balance . Don't make the mistake of spending too much time thinking about the future. Get a major purpose in life, work out a plan for its achievement and follow through. If you stick to this principle, the timing for your business will be ideal.

The Human Factor

People, that's what should be the focus of your study when you want to create a business regardless of your favourite industry, marketing strategy or distribution methods. All your activities have one aim: to influence people in such a way that they want to give you their time, trust, and eventually their money in return for a product that they need. Before you can offer such a product, you have to listen to your prospective customers to find out what they think and how they feel. Sometimes your potential customers will give you clues, hints as to what is missing in the market place and what they would really like. You cannot expect them to tell you precisely what the new product or service should be, as they don't yet know this themselves. It is your job to find out what exactly your customers think is missing and that if you fill the niche in the market and satisfy these hidden needs, you will be rewarded appropriately. The most common mistake in business, as well as in any other form of human relationship, is to think only about your self. If the sole purpose of your company is to make a lot of money for yourself you will never really succeed. People appreciate attention and they will give you their custom only when you listen to them and make them feel important.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

A word on Success

So, what's your opinion now? Would you have imagined that it could be that hard to become a success? Or maybe you possess the above mentioned qualities already? In that case you can achieve all your goals. For those of you who still need more training in one or two of the success factors — don't worry. You should remember that nobody is born with all these qualities, they have to be developed over the years and even the most successful entrepreneurs have their weaknesses. Remember too, that you can pick just one quality out of the above list and start working on it instead of trying to improve your entire personality. Set realistic goals for yourself. All these qualities are interconnected so by increasing your self-discipline for example, you will be able to unleash more of your creative potential which will then result in more people recognizing and admiring you. This will boost your self-esteem and give you more energy to work on your project. Improving one particular character quality can create a cycle that enhances your overall performance and enables you to accomplish what you want. You don't have to wait until you are the «perfect personality» — you are already moving ahead using your own initiative. Reading this book is a good first step on the right track. Many people confuse success with material riches — an expensive car, a big house, jewellery and lots of other things. Real success however, is not just only the result of an activity but the activity itself. Success is the progressive realization of a goal so you can be successful right now by absorbing valuable information and acting on it.

You are probably starting this business not only for yourself but for your family or if you are in a relationship with someone — your spouse for example. It is therefore vital that you involve your partner in your

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

endeavours. Building your own internet company means taking on more responsibility and changing some of your habits. You will have to spend time working on your project and this of course will affect your partner's life too. Relationships constantly grow and develop through different stages in life and starting your own business can be a challenge that can strengthen and foster them.

However, it is important that you prepare for the moment when you deliver the news. Establishing your own business is a serious decision which you should make together. How would you react if your partner came home one night announcing «Hey, we're going to open our own company.» It's much better to involve your partner right from the start, that is even in the decision-making process. Instead of confronting your partner with your decisions, it is better to talk to them about the future and as you explain your plans, ask for their ideas and proposals.

Take it step by step, talk about this issue often and listen very carefully to their opinion. Remember that you can only start a business if you have their full support. After all, personal relationships are more important than your company or business plans. So, take it slowly, give them all the time they need to absorb the new information you are presenting and let them adapt to the new situation. Do not rush things by expecting or demanding immediate acceptance. Also, it's probably good if you first draw up a business plan and collect enough information to back up your proposals. This will help any decision making processes, be ready with answers to any questions or even objections. . Introduce small bits of information — do not try to show how smart you are. Your partner will be a very good listener if you give them the chance to follow your ideas and digest the information.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

To sum it up:

- Make sure you understand your partner's goals, ideas and dreams.
- Involve your partner in your decisions right from the start but do it in a subtle way using the step-by-step method rather than overwhelming them with all the information at once — wait for their reaction before you move on to next step.
- Listen to your partner's opinion on your suggestions and take them into account.
- Remember that your partner and your relationship should be more important than your business plans.
- Make sure you design a business plan that provides room for personal development for both of you so your enterprise can foster and strengthen your relationship rather than weaken it.

3) Case Studies – ESL/EFL Websites

OK; now that you are aware of what makes a successful internet entrepreneur we can take the next step:

Find a business idea — examine people

This appears more difficult than it actually is. Everyday people demand new needs and services and commodities which have to be satisfied — go out and observe those people and you are bound to pick up your perfect business idea.

Case study www.english-test.net

Our project caters to the EFL/ESL market (English as a Foreign

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

Language/English as a Second Language) and we made our first attempt to establish ourselves in 1998. Although the internet was still more or less in its infancy there were already millions of people online most of whom were learning English as a second language. So, we thought it might be a good idea to build an interactive website for English language learners and registered the domain www.english-online.de

We had very little knowledge about internet marketing and the costs for top level domains were many times higher than today. That's why we didn't even check whether english-online.com or english-online.net or englishonline.com etc. were still available. Looking back we realize now our lack of vision prevented us from making a couple of thousand of dollars today: A domain like english-online.net or english-online.com is worth a fortune today. But we not only failed in regard to the domain name but also in our business approach: We used the «suck it and see method». That means we took one step and waited to see if the project would move and when it did, we would take the next step. This type of strategy won't get you anywhere because once you have made the decision to establish a company you have to move ahead regardless of the current situation. However, in order to move you must know where you are going, that is, you have to identify something people need and offer them a solution. Often you will discover a niche when you are looking for a certain product or service which doesn't yet exist. Let's take a look at english-test.net again: Back in 1998 there were already a number of websites available that offered free interactive English language materials. One of the pioneers of this industry is Dave Sperling who started his famous Internet Cafe in 1995 as a hobby and now is well-known worldwide. Another example of a successful internet business is Josef Essberger's EnglishClub. This website has been online since early 1997

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

and today is one of the most prosperous companies in the industry.

We could add hundreds of examples to this list — all websites belonging to the same industry, the EFL/ESL online market. Yet, in addition to catering to the same clientele you will find one common denominator: Although all these websites focus on one particular area of interest, they all have at least one feature that sets them apart from the rest. In order to succeed, we too had to find our niche within the huge English language teaching business and it took us 5 years to determine what this niche would be: Free Interactive English language tests. We had observed, studied and scrutinized our market for a long time and finally we could see into the future. With more and more people getting online it became obvious that the demand for English language exam preparation was growing too — the internet is the ideal medium to train and prepare for multiple-choice tests. Another important factor for our success is the increasing popularity of one standardized English language test — the TOEIC test which will soon be implemented as part of the state school education program in countries of the EU. In Asian countries, especially in Japan which could be called the birthplace of the TOEIC test this examination has been the most widely used English test for decades. It is estimated that by 2025 there will be more speakers of English as a second language than speakers of English as a first language. This means there must be a standardized world-wide recognized and used test to exactly gauge and certify a person's command of the English language. The TOEIC test which is issued and administered under the auspice ETS — Educational Testing Service, the world's largest private educational testing and measurement organization. When we became aware of the tremendous potential this development carries, we set ourselves the goal to become the world's

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townsend and Slava Gromov

leading free internet based preparation center for the TOEIC as well as the TOEFL test. The latter is also run by ETS and caters more for academic purposes whereas the TOEIC test focuses on work and business issues.

Case Study: Quitsmoking.com

Let's focus on the following vital question:

How to locate a market niche, how to find a starting point on which you can build your business plan and marketing strategy?

Finding a niche in the market

As we stated in the introduction to our book, we'll present you only with factual information based on real businesses. If you want to be successful you need to analyze successful people and their companies in order to discover what those people and companies have in common. Next, list all the common denominators. You will be amazed by the results of this process: Patterns emerge which make up a success formula, a blueprint for you to follow with your own enterprise.

OK, are you ready for the next real success story?

September 1995 a man by the name of Fred Kelly takes a step that will change his entire life. He registers the domain www.quit-smoking.com Back then Fred was an assistant in a law firm and his job didn't provide him with what he wanted out of life. So, he was constantly thinking of ways to achieve his goals and he started examining his colleagues, friends, family and acquaintances. He noticed that a growing number of people had one serious problem: They were addicted to smoking cigarettes and when smoking became prohibited in many public places in the US, these smokers were forced to quit the habit if they didn't want to put their jobs and careers in jeopardy.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

Offices, businesses, banks, restaurants, literally any place where people work are public places after all. Most people don't analyze their environment and project in terms of the future — not even a few weeks ahead. Fred Kelly, however, sat down at his desk with a pencil in his hand and did some calculations. The result was astonishing: He found out that tobacco kills more than 430,000 U.S. citizens each year — more than alcohol, cocaine, heroin, homicide, suicide, car accidents, fire, and AIDS combined. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. You see, Fred didn't take the risk of building his business, building his own future on assumptions, opinions and theories. He studied the facts and among his findings were these: Research in Tobacco Control showed that smokers cost the US military over \$130 million a year, almost 1 per cent of the total annual training budget, shows. Smoking was the single biggest predictor of premature discharge from duty. The research team tracked around 29,000 recruits in the US Air Force over 12 months. This section of the military has the lowest prevalence of smoking among its ranks at 28.5 per cent, as opposed to the Marines where the prevalence is almost 45 per cent.

Fred studied and analyzed more statistics. He found out that the market for anti-smoking products in the US and Canada was worth billions of dollars and it was just at the growing phase in its life cycle. He learned that there were thousands of established companies in the US offering a wide range of products and services for people wanting to quit the habit. So, founding another anti-smoking company was not the answer but Fred realized that another enormous market that was in its infancy: the internet. He knew that very soon millions of smokers would be looking for information and ordering products on the internet.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

Working in a company he knew all too well that the bigger a company the slower the decision making process. These well established companies didn't see the internet as a new distribution channel but just as another fancy new toy. Fred could see clearly a strategy to get his slice of the enormous anti-smoking pie: register the domains www.quitsmoking.com and www.quit-smoking.com and build a portal, a market place for the «quitsmoking» community.

4) Success Patterns

When it comes to establishing success patterns one company stands out: Google — The story of Sergey Brin and Larry Page's media giant can be taken as a role model and example for any budding internet entrepreneur because you will find all the essential ingredients for your own internet success. You don't need to reach the same level of popularity, exposure and size like Google. There will be enough room for your internet business to thrive and prosper. We'll give an introduction to Google because the more thoroughly you study their methods, the higher are your chances of success. Therefore we will refer to Google often in this book especially in the chapters «Search Engine Optimazation» and «Generating Revenue through Adsense».

«The Two Search Giants from California»

Google's concentrates on its users following the principle «value over profit». Interestingly enough Sergey Brin and Larry Page were inspired and encouraged by two other successful entrepreneurs:

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townsend and Slava Gromov

Jerry Yang and David Filo — both co-founders of Yahoo! Inc. All four of them are graduates of Stanford University, California the place where they met and became acquainted. Today however, Yahoo! and Google are competitors in the web search industry with Google having the edge over Yahoo! in a number of disciplines. When Yahoo! was already well established as the most widely used web search directory Google developed a system that produced better search results:

You probably remember the time when you typed in a search word or string and the results that Yahoo! returned were often not exactly what you had expected. You had to sift through a long list of webpages that didn't always contain the information you were looking for and you got frustrated because you were wasting your valuable time. Yahoo! used to employ human editors who analyzed and indexed webpages according to their relevance. While this approach is user oriented and turned out to be very successful in the beginning, their system soon reached a point where they simply couldn't keep up with the rapid growth of the number of webpages available on the web. When you submitted your website to the Yahoo! editors for evaluation and indexing it would take up to half a year until your pages got listed.

Google's Cutting-edge Technology

Brin and Page analyzed the shortcomings of their counterparts' directory Yahoo! and created their own web search service now known as Google: They developed a unique system that not only indexes and organizes webpages but in addition evaluates a webpage's relevance and importance. Google's technology is based on hypertext-matching analysis, this means unlike conventional search engines Google's algorithm analyzes all the content on each web page and factors in fonts,

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townsend and Slava Gromov

subdivisions, and the precise positions of all terms on the page. In addition it analyzes the content of neighbouring web pages. We will elaborate on Google's technology in the SEO chapter of this book.

Branding

Google has created a series of brands — unique products that are very distinctive and therefore have a great recognition factor. Take the company's name: At first glance the word doesn't seem to make any sense and you might think it was the result of the founders' fantasy. If you take a closer look, however, you will find that there is the word «googol» which had been coined by Milton Sirota, nephew of the American mathematician Edward Kasner. «Googol» is pronounced in much the same way as «Google» and it constitutes the figure 1 followed by 100 zeroes equal to 10^{100} . So, Google's founders chose the name for a reason — it reflects their goal to become the world's largest search engine. They had to change the word Googol slightly in order to register it as a trademark and promote it as their own brand name. Brand name and trademark issues get more important as your company's popularity increases. Google is constantly adding brands to their portfolio as does any company of this size. There are more aspects to the branding question as well as the selection of the proper name for your website and company and we'll go into them in greater detail in «Domain Name Registration» section.

International Approach

As you can reach people of any nationality with your website you should design a strategy reflecting this. Again, you don't have to take it to the extent Google does but it's very useful to learn from them. Here are the 7

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

most widely used languages to access Google: (in descending order) English, German, Japanese, Spanish, French, Chinese, Italian. In addition, Google is available in almost every language that is spoken by a significant number of internet users.

You can emulate Google's international approach especially when you are providing valuable content — interesting and fresh information on the subject you know best. You don't have to run a multiple-language site to cater for an international audience. Especially at the developing stage of your venture it's sufficient to stick to one language. English is probably the best choice as it is used in almost every country in the world. You will find details on how to incorporate cultural diversity further on in our book.

Summary

Any company is the result of one person's idea. This person has identified a specific need that has not yet been detected and consequently is not yet being satisfied. In order to satisfy this specific need you must create an appropriate product (this can be any item, system or information that caters for exactly this need). In addition you have to identify another development that is taking place and link both — the unsatisfied need or problem and the ongoing development together and combine them in such a way that something new emerges. In the case of Fred Kelly's company the unsatisfied need was one single market place where the many different quit-smoking products were arranged together with information for the growing quit-smoking community. The second development was the growing popularity and usability of the internet. If you go back and read the section about Google again you will be able to detect their two main ingredients of success.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

5) Who is English-test.net?

Let's get back to the english-test.net story again to see what the next steps to your own internet success are. 1998 Alan Townend and Torsten Daerr met on the internet when the latter was looking for a partner to work on english-online.de We have already mentioned that we tried to build a website featuring interactive English exercises but for a number of reasons we didn't really succeed. We didn't know how exactly our website would stand out before the many others that had already been around for a while attracting more and more users. Alan is from the UK whereas Torsten is from Germany and both have met only once in person so far — in the summer of 1999. After that meeting there was a rather long silence between the two of them which ended when Alan contacted Torsten in November 2002 saying that he was still determined to work on a joint online project. By this time Torsten had met Slava Gromov, a very talented and energetic internet programmer and web designer. Slava had already designed a number of interactive websites and he was looking for a new project. In the beginning of 2003 Slava completed a website for a TOEIC test centre in Leipzig — www.sprachzertifikate.de Torsten suggested that it would be a good idea to create interactive tests aiming at preparing the user for the TOEIC test. These tests could be offered on the internet for free to attract prospective clients who would then sign up for the TOEIC exam. One of the major steps was to search for appropriate domain names to host this new project. This will be a vital task in your plan too: As soon as you have decided what area you want to establish your internet business in you have to create a domain name portfolio. As with our English tests we have registered an entire line of domains to promote our site. In the beginning we thought we should focus

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townsend and Slava Gromov

on Germany as our target market because our TOEIC test centre is located in Leipzig and we initially had planned the English Tests to serve as a sales vehicle for the TOEIC exams at our TOEIC test centre. We soon realized that there was a much greater potential for the English Tests project. In the beginning, however, we registered only German domains:

www.englisch-test.de

www.english-test.de

www.english-test.de

www.english-tests.de

www.englishtests.de

When you type in these names into your browser you will be taken to our website www.english-test.net

6) What's in a name?

It is very important that you select a number of «good» domain names because it will make your marketing campaign much easier and less costly. Maybe, you can even make a profit only by securing «the right» domain name. Here is why: every day thousands of people are starting to use the internet. The vast majority of those newbies don't have any training as to how to set up a browser or an email account. Why should they? People like Bill Gates, Larry Page and Sergey Brin have created amazing tools that enable almost any person with an internet connection to access a webpage. When you purchase a new PC today it comes with everything you need to use the internet. Within minutes after set up you click on «World Wide Web» and up comes Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townsend and Slava Gromov

(Yes, I know there are lots of other browsers available such as Opera but Microsoft is holding the Lion's share with more than 90% of all «netcitizens» using a version of the MS Internet Explorer family. In 2005 a new version of Microsoft's Windows is hitting the market and it will come with an integrated web browser so it will be even easier to open a web page. You don't need any training to know what a webaddress, also known as URL — «Uniform Resource Locator» — looks like.

Nowadays webaddresses are everywhere: On TV in the news and advertisements, on any piece of stationary, especially on business cards, on company trucks and cars, in stadiums, on billboards, in magazines, on T-shirts, on pens — well, the list is ever growing. People don't even think of the syntax of a URL — it's just the name of the company, product, service, organization or whatever they happened to be looking for plus «dot com» (.com) or .net

So, when you are looking for information on how to quit smoking, what would be the first address you typed into your browser? A «good» domain name is therefore a name that doesn't need much additional promotion. Just because it's what people are looking for when they access the internet. These domain names are called «generic» as they describe a general category, a general need or topic of great interest or popularity. Such domain names can have great value, especially in the years to come as it is getting more and more difficult to register them.

The most spectacular and most expensive domain name transfer that has taken place so far is business.com which was purchased by the Californian firm group «E-companies». Initially the domain had been registered by an individual and E-companies paid \$7.5 million to acquire it. Now, the name is Business.com Inc., a subsidiary of E-companies.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

7) Give me Your Webaddress!

So, what exactly is a good domain name? There are a number of factors that determine the value of a domain. Any word that describes a certain topic of general interest is potentially a good domain name because there is the likelihood that people type the address into their browser when they are looking for information on this subject. Maybe, we should point out here that any webaddress contains first the name itself and the so called «Top Level Domain», (TDL). The TDL is that part of a webaddress that follows the dot. In case of english-test.net the TDL is «net». You should be aware of the fact that «com» is by far the most popular top level domain — the vast majority of all international webaddresses are «com» domains. It follows that a lot of generic terms and word combinations have been already registered. The same holds true for the second most popular top level domain — «net». You should do some brainstorming in order to find and register the domain(s) you can host your internet business on. In our case it took us some time to realize that the website we were developing is catering to people from any corner of this world — people who want to prepare for the TOEIC or TOEFL test or simply practise their English and make new friends. We started looking for an appropriate domain name. Naturally, «www.englishtest.com» «www.english-test.com» and «www.english-test.com» had already been taken. However, we were pleasantly surprised to see that «www.english-test.net» and «www.english-tests.net» were still free.

Personally, I like «www.english-test.net» more than «www.english-test.com» because «net» implies the website hosts a network rather than just a commercial company. Secondly, «net» are three letters also

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

contained in «english-test» so it looks as if the «net» is part of the name «english-test». Now, when you are checking for your domain — you should consider various versions of the word or word combination you have in mind. For example: If you want to create a site for individualized book reviews you should try various domain name combinations such as «www.book-review.com» and «www.book-review.com» (these two are already taken), «www.bookreview.com» and «www.bookreview.net» (these have been registered too), «www.book-reviews.com» and «www.book-reviews.net» (no luck here either), «www.bookreviews.com» and «www.bookreviews.net» (registered), «www.book-reviewing.com» and «www.book-reviewing.net» (they are still free as of now) «www.bookreviewing.com» (taken) and «www.bookreviewing.net» (free as of now) «www.book-reviewer.com» (registered) and «www.book-reviewer.net» (free as of now), «www.bookreviewer.com» (registered) and «www.bookreviewer.net» (free as of now).

8) Be creative with Your Domain Name!

In addition you should also consider registering an .info domain — a TDL that has been available since 2002 as an alternative to a .com or .net domain. Especially when you want to build a website which major purpose is to provide information rather than interactivity an «.info» - domain can be the right choice. Apart from the three most popular international top level domains (com, net, info) there is also «biz», a rather new TDL. As of now «biz» doesn't play any significant role in the world wide domain market which means you should consider this domain an option only if you have set your heart upon a specific name, word or phrase which is no

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

longer available with «.com» or «net».

Choosing and registering the right internet domain is an important step that determines the success of your further marketing campaign for two major reasons:

1. Your domain can dramatically increase your website's ranking at Google (you'll read details in the SEO chapter).
2. Your domain will be both — the address as well as the name of your internet business. (at least that's the ideal situation)

Therefore, we have put together the following checklist for your optimal domain name (you can go to this address to see whether your domain is still available: www.domaincheck.com)

- Is your domain a «com» or «net» (or even both)?
- If «com» or «net» are already taken it might be an idea to register an «info» domain.
- Does your domain explain the topic of your website (For example, it's pretty obvious what «www.english-test.net» is about, isn't it?)
- Call some of your friends or acquaintances on the phone and have them write down your new domain name. If your friends have no trouble getting the URL (webaddress) right without asking back and forth, you have chosen a good domain name.
- Ideally your domain consists only of one short word or abbreviation or acronym. For example: «www.icq.com» This acronym reads as «I seek you» and is made up of only three letters.
- Instead of an acronym you can use a generic term. However, you will have to search to see if such a term still available.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

- When you use word combinations, you ideally should register both versions — with and without the dash («www.bookreviewing.net» and «www.book-reviewing.net»)
- Try variations of your chosen word/word combination. For example, instead of «www.book-reviews.net» you can register «www.book-reviewing.net» and «www.book-reviewing.com» (as we mentioned before, both domains are still available as of now).
- An alternative to one short word can be a word combination or even a phrase such as «www.mybookreview.net» or «www.reviewmybook.net» (as mentioned before you should also try to register «www.my-book-review.net» and «www.my-book-review.com» etc.)
- Do you remember our definition of «creativity»? Yes, this principle applies to your domain name too. Let's assume you want to start a website providing interactive book reviews. As we've established, many domains made up of the two keywords «book» and «review» and «reviews» have already been registered. So, why not use «savvybooks» and «savvy-books» instead?
- You can check the popularity of the keywords you want to use in your domain with Google: Simply type in the words or word combinations and see how many results Google will return. (for example, when you type in «english test», Google lists more about 10 million entries, so the popularity of this term is very high.)
- In addition to the number of entries returned on a Google search there are other criteria determining the value of your domain. For example, when you search for «books», Google lists more than 100

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

million pages. A person who is looking for «savvy books» is much more likely to be interested in your book review site than someone who is looking just for «books» in general.

As you can see, there are quite a number of aspects to selecting your domains and the more information you collect the better the results. If you have a specific domain name question you can contact us on our Forum and choose the appropriate category.

9) Business Ideas

Selecting the right domains of course is closely connected to selecting a topic, a purpose for your business. As we mentioned before, there is plenty of room for internet start-ups because this medium is still in its growing phase. You haven't found the right business idea yet? Here is another proposal to inspire you:

A Restaurant and Pub Guide

So what, you might say, there are already so many of them, why should I start yet another? Well, you will hardly find any product or service that doesn't already exist. As you remember — creativity is the combination of existing elements in a new way. If you take a closer look at the restaurant and pub guides on the market you will see that most of them are published and updated once a year. Now, do you know how often a restaurant and even more so a pub alters its outlook or the food and drinks they offer? In this industry there is probably more change than in any other. That's why traditional restaurant guides that come out in the

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

printed form cannot keep up with current trends. Also, a printed version of a restaurant and pub guide is very limited as to the type of information it can provide.

Usually it's just the address, the name and type of food. So, here is what you can do: Collect insider information on the various restaurants, pubs, diners, bars, cafés and fast food joints in your area and arrange it in such a way that it is useful for somebody looking for the right place to go to.

Now, where would you find this type of information? Well, you are your best source of course. You could make it a habit visiting restaurants and pubs and writing down what you think about the atmosphere, the service, the music, the interior and of course the food and drinks. By writing the first few of reviews you will develop an awareness of the things to focus on and every time you enter a new place. The next step is to talk about your experiences with your friends and family and engage them in an active participation in your project. Give them your reviews to read and some of your friends will want to write down what they have experienced.

As soon as you have collected the first reviews you can arrange them into categories (for example: restaurants, pubs, bars, fast food outlets) and add some information such as what kind of cultural and sporting events are taking place in your city or area, what sights are worth visiting and so on. Once you have written down your initial ideas, you will get new impulses and very soon your project is starting to take shape. It is vital at this point that you find as many resources for input as possible. Make a list of things you want to add to your guide. Take a notebook with you whenever you are in town and jot down every bit of information you consider useful. Before you can go online you need sufficient materials to

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

feed your website with. The more ideas, the better. You can always select, re-arrange, edit and change the information as long as you have a sufficient supply of it.

10) Building Your Website

When you feel you have collected enough information to arrange it online it's time to give thought to your website. Subsequently, you have to decide who will be building and administering your web business. We recommend you team up with a professional web developer. In the late 90's it was possible for one person with some basic HTML skills and a decent level of computer literacy to create and manage a website and even generate revenue with it. Time hasn't stood still though. Nowadays a successful internet business needs to implement the latest technologies to get the edge over its competitors. We mentioned Dave Sperling's ESL café as one of the pioneers in the EFL online market. When Dave created his website in 1995 in simple HTML it was quite sufficient. His website was one of the first featuring free English language materials and so thousands of people linked their website to Dave's and he didn't have to bother about getting listed in search engines, offering a newsletter and updating his website with valuable, fresh content. There was not much competition if any. Today the situation has dramatically changed. Internet users have become far more demanding. A website like Dave's would be having a very hard time even to get looked at today because it doesn't meet the requirements of a user friendly website.

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

Teaming Up — How Slava and I became friends

Before we go into these requirements I'd like to share another piece of the English-test.net Story with you. As soon as you start your own business you will realize that a company is all about people and the way they interact with each other. Especially on the internet it is vital to forge a strong relationship with people who have the same purposes in order to achieve your goals together with them. In December 1999 I was teaching Business English to a group of Java Programmers. That's how I got to meet Slava and Maria Gromov, two young engineers of Russian origin who moved to Germany in 1998. I have been learning Russian since I was 7 and I always refer to parallels between the English and the Russian language in my classes as many of the students either learned Russian at school or speak Russian as their mother tongue. At the end of our Business English course I exchanged phone numbers and addresses with the Gromovs and in February 2003 we started working on a joint project — English-test.net

You see, it took more than two years until our relationship finally reached a level of trust and understanding that would allow us to take responsibility for each other's purposes. When I first contacted Slava in the summer of 2000 asking him to design a website for me he said he didn't have enough time to commit himself fully to such projects because he was busy job hunting. Back then in the late 90's the prospects for a highly qualified Java programmer and webdesigner were rather good with the IT industry demanding new specialists. However, the situation changed dramatically after the IT bubble burst and although Slava had successfully completed three one-year training courses in

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townsend and Slava Gromov

HTML/Webdesign, Java-Programming and SQL he could not find a job. He sent out more than 200 job applications to various companies throughout Germany and after more than two years of intensive job search and a series of so called «praktika» (working for companies for free while receiving social welfare) he finally decided that the only option for him was to establish his own company.

11) A Word on «Timing»

As you can see the timing for your business is crucial and there are a number of factors that determine the «perfect» moment for your success. However, regardless of how long it takes for you to meet a person who will work together with you on your joint project — you always meet them at the right time. Your subconscious mind plays a big role in this process — it works like a magnet and a radio station at the same time: When you have set a goal for yourself and started acting towards achieving that goal you will attract people who think like you to join forces with them. Please remember that the vast majority wait for someone else to take the first step and tell them what to do. Therefore you should move ahead not bothering about finding the right business partners — they'll find you instead. You see, if you wait until you find someone to design your website for example you are not yet the kind of person who could create and run a business.

12) Ask Your Users!

As we mentioned before we highly recommend that you have a professional create and run your website in order to keep up with the latest technologies. You still are the initiator of your project and therefore

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

you must know what makes a website valuable. A professional internet programmer is not necessarily a good website designer. Now what do you think is important here? Yes, you are right — **Your Website's Users.**

Whatever you do you should always ask yourself this question: «How does the user of my website benefit?»

Most of the products in our modern world have one purpose: to make our lives simpler. This principle should be applied to web design too. Take a look at our website and you'll see what we mean. English-test.net is both — interactive as well as text based. That's why it was important for us to create a system that combines both features and apparently we have done a good job.

All the information is arranged on the start page in a very simple easy to understand format. With just one single click our visitors can see within seconds what our website is all about — English language tests, currently exactly 199 of them. Furthermore there are «stories», «articles», a «newsletter», «downloads» as well as a «forum» and information «about» our company and our partners. As you can see we use a simple yet effective system to structure all the information on our website:

First we have created categories and given them names — tests, articles etc. We have selected short descriptive names for each category. Each category is lined up horizontally on the top of our start page in the above mentioned order. With the exception of the tests themselves we have then created a subcategory for each main category. When you click on a main category a new page opens with the following structure:

On the left hand side there is a vertical list with all the story or article titles. Again, we have placed the more general information on the left as we assume this is where our visitors start their reading. You will find that the index list covers about one fourth of the entire page with the

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

remaining part of the page on the right hand side displaying the text body (stories, articles, business, product descriptions and so on.) Another important feature:

Whatever page you open on our site — it just takes one single click to get back to the start page as well as any other of the main categories because the main menu (the horizontal line) always stays on the top and at the bottom of any of our pages.

By the way you might have noticed the name «start» as opposed to «home». To us the word «home» conjures up the image of a cosy place where you relax and get entertained. «Start» indicates that there is action, a competition, a training course to be taken. This is much more appropriate to the purpose of our website than «home».

Before we elaborate on the structure and design of our website we'd better give you a rundown of the main points so you and your webdesigner can use them as a checklist. A user friendly website should meet the following requirements.

As we mentioned before we highly recommend that you have a professional create and run your website in order to keep up with the latest technologies. You still are the initiator of your project and therefore you must know what makes a website valuable. A professional internet programmer is not necessarily a good website designer. Now what do you think is important here? Yes, you are right — Your Users. Whatever you do you should always ask yourself this question: «How does the user of my website benefit?»

13) Make Your Website Interactive

Why is the internet a revolutionary medium? Because among many it has

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

one big advantage over any other modern mass medium: it is interactive which means it allows you to engage in a dialogue with your customers and visitors. One of the success factors of english-test.net is its interactivity: As we have illustrated before our website is a web based preparation and training centre for the TOEIC and TOEFL test. Like in the real exam all our tests created by Alan are multiple-choice, this means you are to choose the correct answer out of four or three given options. Instead of using paper based tests which you have to check afterwards by yourself, you can go to our website and select the answers to each test question by clicking on one of the four given choices. This is much faster than using a pencil because you get the result instantly and in addition this method is more reliable because the computer checks your answers against the correct results.

The second most interactive feature on our website is the subscription form for our newsletter which Alan writes on a regular basis. In further sections of this manual you will read more on the importance of email based newsletters. We have been receiving various electronic publications via email ever since we went online first in 1995 and so we know that you can only run a newsletter successfully if it meets at least these technical requirements of our english-test.net newsletter:

- Easy automated subscription (via implemented online form on our startpage as well as on the archive page).
- Personalized subject line (the recipient's first name appears in the subject line automatically (for example: «Dear Frank — Here are Head Expressions for You»).
- Personalized newsletter (each message starts with the first name of

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

each individual reader and depending on the context it also appears up to several times throughout the letter).

- Automated archive (every time an issue of a newsletter is sent to the readers a copy automatically goes into the electronic archive on our website).
- Easy to unsubscribe (this is as important as the subscription function — it takes just one single click to leave our newsletter).
- The newsletter is sent from our own server so that «www.english-test.net» appears as the sender.

14) Do it In-House

Slava has programmed all these features himself so we that we can send, administer and track all vital data of our newsletter. You might already guess why this is so important.

In addition to the interactive tests we also provide a forum on our website. This is a place where students can ask questions about the tests and share their experiences and ideas with other students. It's also the ideal medium for us to get in direct contact with our visitors, students and partners to collect feedback on our website. And of course it's also a good opportunity to simply engage in a conversation with another person or initiate a discussion on specific topics. A very effective tool to collect information as to what our visitors think, what they like and dislike, what they know and don't know etc. is the implemented poll function. For instance if we want to know what type of internet connection our users have we can create a poll question such as «How do you access the internet» and give the appropriate options (for example: dial-up

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

connection (modem), ISDN, DSL/broadband, other).

Sure, you can only start a forum if your website is reaching a fair amount of traffic — otherwise there won't be any activity.

In the beginning stage of your website it will be sufficient to offer a contact form — an interactive spreadsheet that allows users to enter and submit their name, email address and a message (these are the most appropriate lines). We recommend you to use a contact form rather than your email address for these reasons:

- When someone enters your website from a public server (internet café or town library) they often are not able to use an email client.
- Using a contact form you don't have to reveal your email address —
- this is the best method to avoid «spam» (unsolicited email).
- a contact form is easier to use than an external email application (remember that there are millions of «newbies»).

Make your Site fast loading

People surfing the internet are rather impatient. Therefore your website shouldn't take longer than 15 seconds to load assuming that many people still rely on dial-up internet connections. Slava has spent a great deal of time to minimize the size of our start page. Especially the graphics on our site are very small.

Speaking of graphics: Almost 40% of our users have their graphics turned off because they want to save money and time. Webpages load much faster without graphics. That's why you should use the «ALT attribute» — a text equivalent to your graphics.

A text equivalent brings the following benefits to your web site and its visitors in the following common situations:

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

- Nowadays, web browsers are available in a very wide variety of platforms with very different capacities; some cannot display images at all or only a restricted set of type of images; some can be configured not to load images.
- If your code has the alt attribute set in its images most of these browsers will display the description you gave instead of the images.
- Some of your visitors cannot see images, be they blind, color-blind, short-sighted; the alt attribute is of great help for those people that can rely on it to have a good idea of what's on your page.
- Search engine bots (servers that index webpages following a specific algorithm) belong to the above two categories: If you want your website to be indexed as well as it deserves, the «ALT attribute» make sure that they won't miss important sections of your pages.

Offer Easy Navigation and Good Structure

As outlined above it is vital that you break the contents of your entire website into categories and subcategories if necessary. Give each category a short yet descriptive name and arrange them in a logical order. You can show the structure of your website to your friends and acquaintances and ask them to test it. Just allow them to look at your start page for 15 seconds and see afterwards how much of the information they have absorbed. They should be able to name at least most of the categories/links. Then you can have them take a second, closer look at your website to check how many questions they have about the information presented.

Make sure your user can return to the main menu (your start page) from

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

any subpage with one single click. For a number of reasons we recommend you not to use a website with frames. Here is why:

- There are still many people with browsers that cannot handle frames properly.
- Frames usually break your screen into sections that are divided by scroll bars which reduce the space you can use for information.
- If it is possible to avoid scroll bars in a frame window then you probably can do without frames altogether.
- Many search engines still cannot handle websites with frames which means your webpages won't get indexed properly.

Use a modern font, good contrast and resolution

Your website contains information — some graphics and a lot of text. People are used to reading text in black fonts on a white background. Why change this on a website? Have you ever bought a book or newspaper with a dark background and coloured fonts? Please bear in mind that when it comes to text the most pleasant combination for the human eye is black on white especially for people with bad vision. Imagine the book you are reading right now had been written in some sort of green font on a dark background. The chances are you would have thrown it away after the first paragraph. As mentioned earlier in this chapter we recommend you use a modern typeface (font) such as «Verdana». This text for example is written in «Verdana» and you will see that it is much easier to read than old-fashioned ones such as «Times New Roman». *Here is a sentence in «Times New Roman» that will show you what we mean.* Also, you should design your website so that it can be viewed on a 15 inch monitor with a smaller resolution without too much scrolling. It is true that many people already

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

have larger monitors with higher resolutions but you want to reach as many of your visitors as possible. Someone with a more capable monitor can always enjoy a website that has been designed for a smaller monitor. Yet this is doesn't work vice versa.

Test your site in various browsers

As you know most people access the world wide web with one browser — «Microsoft Internet Explorer». Yet, you have to make sure your website looks good and works well when viewed through different browsers. (there are more than two thousand different browser versions in use worldwide). By different browsers we mean all versions such as the following browsers:

- «Microsoft Internet Explorer» (most popular)
- «Netscape Navigator»
- «Opera» (gaining popularity)
- «Apple Safari» (web browser from Apple Computer optimized for Mac OS X)
- «Konqueror» (Unix-based Web browser)
- «iCab» (web browser for Macintosh)

It is vital for you to check and test your website with as many different browsers as possible because people using makes other than «MS Internet Explorer» or «Netscape Navigator» will appreciate even more your efforts and skills and promote your site accordingly.

As your site grows you can always add new interactive features. The next one on our list for example is a text based search function because with

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

our site containing more and more information it might become unwieldy. Also, it depends on what your site is all about. Provided you follow the idea I gave you above and you create a pub and restaurant guide for the area you live in — it goes without saying that it should be an interactive database offering various search features.

Quite a good example for such a database can be found at www.goodguides.co.uk

This website is well organized and navigation quite easy. It comes with a searchable database which is a must for this type of site. By now you should have teamed up with a web programmer who is capable of setting up and administering SQL data bases.

Update Your Site regularly

This sounds blindingly obvious, doesn't it? Well, it's not. It's frequently an often over-looked fact: Of all the domains registered only 50% or so are really used, that means they host a website. And at least 50% of those websites are built once and then never updated again. You see, the biggest challenge for a website owner is not to create and publish it. You can accomplish this within a rather short period of time. Sure, there are many companies which use their website just as an electronic business card — some type of modern stationary. Yet, you want to create and establish an internet based business. So, you must update your website on a regular basis — at least once a week or even better: *Every Day*. We officially launched english-test.net on July 1st of 2003 and ever since that date we have updated our site every single day. Slava created a number of tools that allow Alan and me to publish new contents without any specific skills. We have some basic HTML knowledge which wouldn't be

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

sufficient to edit our site as often as we do know. Alan writes several new tests each week using Microsoft Word. He then sends the file to me via email and I use the program Slava has created specifically for us to put Alan's tests online. The program is very simple for me to use yet Slava made a major effort to set it up. This is exactly what tools are all about: Once you have created them they increase your productivity immensely allowing you to save time and organize your work.

Another important feature that keeps our site up to date and makes it grow on a daily bases is the NetLog, an electronic diary. Slava has set up an SQL database that I can administer myself while he concentrates on other tasks. Here are the stages on which the NetLog is run:

- Several times a week I write a short text covering the events of the day.
- I send the text to Alan via email and he amends and edits it.
- I convert the text into HTML using a program called EditPlus.
- I access our online database and create a new entry.

After every four entries have been made the system automatically creates a new page which is indexed by Google thus stabilizing our search engine position. Actually our system even generates two pages because each page has also a print version. More on this in the SEO chapters.

Note: When you add new interactive features to your website you always have to ask yourself this question: «Is our site easy to use for our visitors?» Most of the new technologies are designed for one single purpose: To make our lives simpler. Please, keep also in mind people have

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

a tendency to stick to their habits. So, when you introduce a new function on your website, make sure to give sufficient explanations and support. Don't assume that everybody has the same technical understanding as you. We have visitors who up until lately didn't know how a hyperlink works and this was not because they had a low level of education but they had started to use the internet only a couple of weeks before.

15) Isn't it all about Google or «How to make People find Your Site»

Yes, the internet is a great medium and your site can attract thousands of people every day. However, many website owners think that internet marketing and promotion work entirely differently from traditional channels. That's wrong. Although the internet can be a very effectivemarketing tool it doesn't change one important fact: All your activities in your internet business should be aimed at people — not search engines, directories, websites and blogs. After all, it's people who decide whether or not you deserve to earn a reward for your efforts. That's why there is only one single marketing and promotion vehicle that works in the long run: Your *website users*.

It is they who will determine the success of your internet business so you should make sure you know what they want. Online Marketing is a bit a like a sandglass: When your site is new and nobody knows about it you need such traffic resources like search engines, web directories, link partners, newsletter marketing, offline promotion and other elements. As your website's popularity grows those marketing tools will diminish in their

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

importance because people who know and like your website and will return to it on a regular basis and they will spread the word and tell their friends about your site.

They will use various means of communication such as email. Yet, the most powerful promotion your website can get is when users mention your business to friends in personal conversations. Think about websites like Google, Amazon, CNN, eBay, AOL, Yahoo, Microsoft or ICQ. People promote these addresses through word of mouth much more effectively than any search engine ever could. This latter type of promotion is often referred to as «viral marketing» — the most powerful tool to increase exposure. But back to our sandglass. We are still at the beginning of our marketing campaign and therefore must focus on these strategies:

- Search Engines and Directories
- Newsletter Promotion
- Linking Partners
- Forum Participation

16) SEO — How to get listed at Search Engines and Directories

When you start promoting your site search engines and web directories are probably the most important element. As the web search market is constantly changing we will focus on the following search engines and directories as they have proved to be effective to us:

- Google.com
- About.com
- DMOZ.org

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

- MSN.com

Before you submit your new website to any of the search engines or directories you have to take a number of important steps — these steps are called «Search Engine Optimization» (SEO). You can measure the significance of SEO by typing in this term into your favourite search engine — you will get an amazing number of search results.

Optimize Your Site for Google

With currently Google being the major source of new traffic to our website our SEO section will mainly feature this search engine. As of now we are ranking within the top Google search results for the following search strings:

- «free english test»
- «free english test»
- «english test download»
- «english tests download»
- «toefl download»
- «english test online»
- «english tests online»
- «interactive english test»
- «interactive english tests»
- «printable english tests»
- «toeic online»
- «passive voice»

HOW TO CREATE AND RUN A PROFITABLE WEBSITE

by Torsten Daerr, Alan Townend and Slava Gromov

- «indirect speech»
- «popular idioms»
- «colour idioms»
- «free english forum»

In addition people find our site through Google using more than 2500 different search strings such as «netlog», «newsreaders on cnn», «english prepositions», «british vs american english» etc. Every time we add a new page to our website Google indexes all relevant keywords and returns those pages of our website on a search.

So, the biggest portions of new users to our site are attracted by our four top search strings — «free english test», «free english tests», «download english test» and «download english tests». Let's take a look at one of the factors that got our site ranked so high on these search strings:

Keywords in the URL

Our URL contains the same two words our main search string is made of: «english» and «test». What's more — both words are separated by a hyphen (or «dash») so that the URL is an exact match of the search string. Instead of «englishtest» most people look for «english test». Google assumes that once a website is hosted on a domain called «english-test» the relevance to the search term «english test» and «english tests» is very high.