

**KNOCK
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Seth Godin's
Incomplete Guide
to Building
a Web Site that Works

[advertisement]

HOW

do you tell a story that people want to hear?

I try to answer this question in *All Marketers Are Liars*.

[Click here to find the blog and the book.](#)

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Big Picture: What a Web Site Does

Big Picture #1:

A Web site must do at least one of two things, but probably both:

- Turn a stranger into a friend, and a friend into a customer.
- Talk in a tone of voice that persuades people to believe the story you're telling.

Big Picture #2:

A Web site can cause only four things to happen in the moments after someone sees it:

- She clicks and goes somewhere else you want her to go.
- She clicks and gives you permission to follow up by email or phone.
- She clicks and buys something.
- She tells a friend, either by clicking or by blogging or phoning or talking.

That's it.

If your site is attempting to do more than this, you're wasting time and money and, more important, focus.

In this guide, we'll start with Big Picture #1, because it's first.



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Why Bother?

Guy goes on a sales call. After a while, the purchasing agent says, “Are you trying to sell me something?”

The salesman hesitates, then stammers, “Well, no, of course not... I’m just trying to talk with you....”

Understandably, the purchasing agent is incensed. “If you’re not here to sell me something, get out and stop wasting my time.”

Sometimes it’s hard to embrace the fact that, yes, you are trying to sell something. It might be a product or a service or just an idea. You might be trying to raise money for your university or help a battered woman find the nearest shelter. But you are trying to do something with your Web site. If you’re not, get out.

So what are you trying to do? Have you got real clarity among the people on your team?

A Web page isn’t a place the way Starbucks is a place. A Web page is a step in a process. The steps on the stoop in front of your house understand (if steps understand anything) that they exist in order to get you up or down. If you asked the architect what any particular step is for, she wouldn’t hesitate. The answer is obvious. The purpose of this step is to get you to the next step. That’s it.



So what's *that* Web page for? What about *this* one?

It seems really simple, doesn't it? It's not. It's not simple because many Web pages are compromises, designed to do three or six or a hundred different things. HTML is a powerful tool, constantly misused by people who believe that just because they can do something, they should.

So bear with me for a moment, and pretend you have a Web page that does just one thing.

And that it leads to another page that does just one thing.

And soon (as soon as possible), your Web pages lead people to do the thing you wanted them to do all along, the reason you built your Web site in the first place.



 about everything you think you know about Web sites is wrong. What the establishment has taught you about Web design and strategy is largely self-serving, expensive, time-consuming, and completely ineffective.

This booklet is designed to change all that.

How's that for a promise?

If you don't have a Web-site problem or you're not interested in solving it, this booklet will be a complete waste of time. On the other hand, if you're trying to figure out how to use Google AdWords or other advertising techniques to connect with your prospects, customers, donors, students, or users, then I'm betting you'll find some useful information inside.

This is part of the Incomplete series of ebooks that tries to identify just a few important (and overlooked) ideas and sell you hard on putting them to work for you. I believe that your problem (if you have a problem) isn't that you don't have enough data. You have too much data! You don't need a longer book or more time with a talented consultant. What you need is the certainty of knowing that you ought to do something (one thing); then you need the will to do it.

No wasted words. Let's go.



[advertisement]

WHO

are the visitors that make your page viral?

I talk about sneezers in *Unleashing the Ideavirus*

Click here to find the site, where you can purchase the book or even
get a copy of it for free.



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Step 1 *Buy Traffic*

Even two-year-olds know how knock-knock jokes work. You always start with the same line. You always get a response. You respond with a structured, predictable response. And then there's a punch line.

It's a step-by-step progression that makes it quite easy to build new knock-knock jokes. Some of the same step-by-step thinking goes into building a process that gets you what you want. (Notice that I didn't say "building a Web site." That's because the process takes place outside of your Web site at times.)

Sponsored Links

[Australian fine Merino](#)
wool fabrics, garments, socks
Adults, children and baby wear
www.oetextiles.com

[Base Layer Clothing](#)
Rab Merino, Millet, Odlo, Thaw
30% off Marmot products
www.botheringsheep.com

[Merino Wool Yarn](#)
100% Pure Virgin fiber in colors
Patons Classic quality pure merino
BeehiveWool.com

[Buy Norsewear Online](#)
Norsewear Merino Clothing
Free Shipping anywhere in the world
www.norseshop.com

If these were really ads, you could click on them.

Creating a knock-knock joke is very straightforward. First, you announce the joke. The jokee then chooses to ignore you or to engage. The exchange that follows is simple. And sometimes the jokee gets the joke and smiles.

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For this part of the guide, I want to assume that you're buying the traffic that comes to your site. I'm starting here because any fool with money can buy traffic. And if you like the results you get from that traffic, you can buy more traffic. If the boss wants you to double traffic, you can double traffic. Buying traffic is predictable and scalable and makes you look smart.

So, you buy traffic. Let's get into a little detail about the smart way to do that.

Everyone's heard of Google, but a surprisingly small number of people understand how Google makes billions of dollars a year. They do it with those little boxes that show up next to the search results.

Google calls this their AdWords program. Other sites offer similar programs, but since AdWords is the biggest, we'll use it as an example. The deal is pretty elegant:

- Pick a word or a phrase that describes your product. (You can even select words that you don't want used as keywords.)
- Write a short headline followed by a sentence that makes a promise.
- Figure out how much you're willing to pay to get one person to click on that ad one time (and visit whatever page you'd like them to visit).
- Figure out how many people you want at that price.

That's it. Go to <https://adwords.google.com> and put in your info.



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So, for example, you can buy “Florida Retirement Home” and bid \$1.20 per click. Tell Google you’re willing to take up to 1,000 people a day. You might get fewer (see below), but you won’t get more.

Here’s why you might get fewer people than you asked for:

- There isn’t enough Google traffic. (The only people who see your ad are people who typed in the phrase you’re looking for, and as big as Google is, some stuff is still obscure.)
- You’re not bidding high enough to be listed up top (where more people click).
- People hate your ad and don’t click on it. If your ad is really bad, Google will send you a note and fire you. Imagine that—a media company firing an advertiser for running ineffective ads.

There’s an art to writing an effective AdWords ad, but that isn’t nearly as important as the math behind it. Okay, it’s easier than math. It’s arithmetic.

Let’s say you tell Google you’re willing to pay \$1 per click.

Of the people who get to the page you send them to, figure that 20% read what you have to say and decide to click on to the next step in the process. And 20% against \$1 equals \$5. (If that bit didn’t make sense, make a picture and you’ll see what I’m getting at. If one out of five people get to the second page, you had to buy five clicks to get one live one, which means that she cost you \$5.)

You just spent \$5 to get someone to that next step.

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In the next step, you ask for some information, maybe even a credit-card number. Only 5% of the people who are confronted with this step actually go ahead and do what you need them to, so now your cost is 5% against \$5, which equals (gasp) \$100.

You ended up paying \$100 for each desired outcome. \$100 per sale.

The good news is that some of those people will tell their friends (and you get additional customers for no additional costs, because that traffic is free). Say that the average word-of-mouth value is 2 (each customer brings two friends, which means that when you buy a new customer, you're really buying three). Your cost per outcome is now \$33.33.

So, our arithmetic makes it clear what your online marketing and Web strategy is accomplishing—new customers for about \$33 each.

What if you could make that first page more efficient?

What if, instead of passing through 20% of the people who saw it,
that first page got 50%?

And what if, instead of converting 5% of the people who saw the second step,
you got 10%?

And finally, what if your tell-a-friend tools got people to convert
three friends instead of two?



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Now the arithmetic looks like this:

50% times \$1 equals \$2

10% times \$2 equals \$20

A word-of-mouth value of 3 means you get four customers for the price of one, which means a total cost of \$5 each.

Wow.

You've just turned a project that lost money (at \$33 a customer, you're *losing*—I'm making this up—\$3 a sale) into one that mints money (at \$5 a customer, you're *making* \$25 in profit).

If you're losing \$3 on each new customer, then marketing is an expense and you won't grow. If you're making \$25 on each new customer, you have an infinite amount of money to spend "buying" customers at that price—and marketing is now an investment.

Congratulations, you're a hero.

Once you've got the process part of the steps down, you can start sharpening your pencil when it comes to acquisition. You can buy pay-per-click ads on sites like Yahoo! You can use the various ad networks to run your ads on other sites. You can buy ads on blogs or even on the sides of buses. As long as you can measure the cost per click, and as long as the clicks cost less than they deliver in profit, you win.



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[Important note for anyone who isn't selling something! Just because this analysis uses dollars doesn't mean it doesn't apply to you. Let's say you design the Web site for a college, and you determine that the site's function is to enable students to read the course catalog online instead of having to use a printed version. The same math applies.

No, the students aren't giving you cash, but yes, the idea of increasing the percentage of people who follow each step is still clear. If you put up some interesting but irrelevant links, and people follow those and lose their way, that's costing you. It costs you in terms of the efficiency of what you set out to do. A good Web site gets the largest percentage of people to do what you set out to have them do in the first place.]

Here's a real-life example from a high-profile company that just doesn't get it.

First, they ran the following high-profile AdWord:

A screenshot of an AdWords advertisement. The text reads: "Blog Report" in purple, "www.forrester.com" in green, and "How Businesses Should Use Blogs. Read Forrester's Latest Research." in black.

Blog Report
www.forrester.com How Businesses Should Use Blogs. Read Forrester's Latest Research.

If you clicked on the ad, it would take you to the page that follows...

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FORRESTER Helping Business Thrive On Technology Change [Contact Us](#) | [Shop](#)

[My Forrester](#) [Find Research](#) [Events & ForrTels™](#) [Products & Services](#) [About Forrester](#)

BEST PRACTICES

 November 5, 2004
Blogging: Bubble Or Big Deal?
When And How Businesses Should Use Blogs
by [Charlene Li](#)
with [Josh Bernoff](#), Tenley McHarg

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although Weblogs (blogs) are currently used by only a small number of online consumers, they've garnered a great deal of cor...

They paid thousands of dollars to buy AdWords with keywords like “Blogging report.” And the clicks from those ads took people to this page—a page that says in bold black letters, “We’re sorry, but you do not have access to this document.”



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What percentage of those who clicked over would read the fine print to discover that getting access is pretty easy?

What would have happened to the company's cost per delivered report if they fixed this page?

Here's our first big rule:

View your site as a series of steps, steps that go from a stranger clicking on an ad, all the way to a satisfied customer telling ten friends. Figure out which step is least efficient, and focus all your energy on making it more efficient. Measure everything!

There's plenty more to talk about on this topic, but let's get the lay of the land. On to Step #2, Persuasion.

Step 2 *Tell a Story*

All Web sites are not the same. There are two examples on the next page:



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US Home & Loans.com

Year fixed ARM @ 1.25%
Year fixed ARM @ 1.95% Get approved in 30 Hours!
No pre-closed credits, pay off your old loans, remodel, Fast Credit, Problems OK.

US Home & Loans Purchase Form

Please fill in all fields marked with a *

1	* Will this be your	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Primary Home <input type="radio"/> Second Home <input type="radio"/> Investment Property
2	* What type of property are you purchasing	Single Family House
3	* Have you found a house or are you still looking	<input checked="" type="radio"/> I have found a house <input type="radio"/> I am still looking
4	* First Name	
5	* Last Name	
6	* Are you applying individually or jointly	<input checked="" type="radio"/> I am applying Individually <input type="radio"/> I am applying Jointly
7	* Home Number	

Mortgage Rates

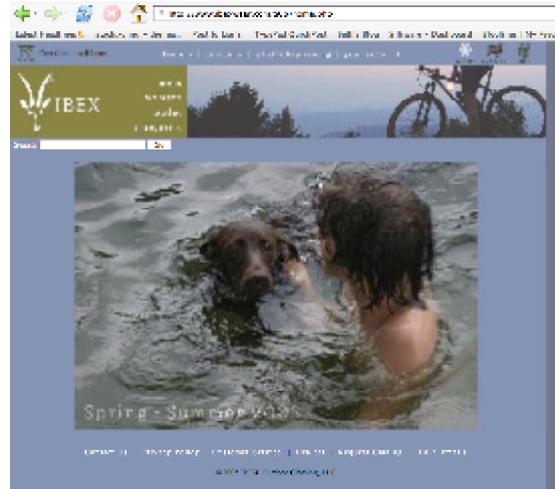
30 Yr Fix	5.125%
5.548%APR	
20 Yr Fix	5.0%
5.475%APR	
7/1 ARM	5.250%
5.484%APR	
5/1 ARM	4.875%
5.107%APR	

Call for more programs

Loans

Address: 200 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94111
415.774.1000

Home Mortgage Plan



Obviously, they're selling different things. One site wants you to refinance your most valuable possession (your house) and go hundreds of thousands of dollars into debt. The other site wants to sell you a \$90 sweater.

Once you realize that the purpose of a Web page is to start a conversation, it helps to anthropomorphize a little bit. If the first page were a person, how would it dress? Would you talk to him if he met you in a bar? In a bank?

What about the second page? Does it have a personality?

All Web pages are created equal: 72 dots per inch, a fixed choice of colors, the same size. It costs just as much to put up the pixels on the first page as it does on the second. Yet they tell very different stories.



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All of the cues people rely on to make decisions are muted online. There's no smell or touch or location. There's very little sound. So we obsess about subtle cues of typeface or color or photography. It's hard to overestimate just how much these things matter.

So, for all those years when the guys in the tech department were trying to shame you into adding all sorts of cool Web features, I have to admit that they were right. A little. They were a little right because those features send a signal to some people. If I'm looking for a cool firm, a firm that gets technology, a firm that wants to signal to me how much they care about technology, then a Flash intro is a fine way to tell that story.

But it's only a tiny part of what I'm trying to sell you on. The same story doesn't work for everyone. There's no way you'd want to find a mortgage at Ibex. They tell an effective story—for a clothing company. That's very different from the story you ought to be telling, isn't it?

So, here's another general principle:

Like it or not, every page on your site has a tone of voice. That tone must match the expectations of the visitors or they will misunderstand who you are (or worse, flee). Choose a tone that matches or exceeds the tone of your successful competitors.



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Here's another example: This is the Web site for an open-source RSS reader. The goal is to attract techies and early adopters and media folks. The problem is that it looks like a different kind of site. It looks like a small business-to-business company that's struggling to find its voice.

Compare that site to this one: Same number of dots, totally different tone of voice.

The challenging thing here, of course, is that one person's appropriate vernacular is another person's trite over-design. There's no way to predict what the visitor's worldview is going to be... no way to know that a given person is going to get it.

Which leads to another general principle:



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You have to choose.

You are never going to please everyone, so you shouldn't try. If you do, you'll fail at pleasing anyone. Instead, imagine who your very best audience is and go straight for the heart of that group—and ignore everyone else.

Your best audience? Your best audience has three components:

1. It's large.
2. It's likely to click on your AdWords or find you in some other way.
3. It's likely to respond to your message.

If it's not #3, the other two don't matter. If it's not #2 and #3, then #1 doesn't matter. But if all three work—if you can find a large enough audience that's interested enough to click and focused enough to respond to the story in the vernacular you use to tell it—then that's the audience you want.

Step 3

Treat Different People Differently

A first-time visitor to your site is a completely different challenge from a repeat visitor. Someone who is returning to your site already knows who you are and what you offer. She trusts you, and she's back to look for something specific.

A new visitor, on the other hand, is busy getting a first impression.



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So why would you show both of them the same information?

Why make them the same offers? Why use the same vernacular?

The good news is this: It's technically trivial to set a cookie and show repeat visitors something different.

Armed with that knowledge, you're now free to talk differently to different people.

Don't let technical myths change your marketing. Yes, you can easily show different pages to returning visitors. And yes, you should do just that.

THOUGHT: No Such Thing as a Web Site

As a marketer, you've got a bunch of Web pages. You can call this collection your "Web site" if you want to, but it's really a bunch of connected Web pages.

This is a critical distinction if you want your Web site (okay, sorry, couldn't help it) to deliver more profit and efficiency.

When you send someone to your Web site, don't send them to your home page. Hey, don't even have a home page!



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[advertisement]

HOW

do you make a product or site worth talking about?

It's possible you'll find the answer in *Purple Cow*

Click here to find the blog. You're either remarkable...

or invisible.



You can have as many entrances to your site as you want. I call these pages “landing pages.”

A landing page is the place you link your ads to. If you’ve got a music store and your ad says, “The Complete Carole King Catalog On Sale,” you shouldn’t link to your home page. Instead, you ought to link to a special page you built that matches your ad.

Of course!

Once you look at it this way, it makes perfect sense. You wouldn’t tell a knock-knock joke that started one way but ended with a different punch line. That wouldn’t work. Same thing is true of the connection between your ads, your marketing, and your landing pages.

We’ve been trained by the engineers to see a Web site as a pyramid, with a home page at the top and an ever-increasing range of choices as the user digs deeper.

Instead, I’d like you to see a Web site as a series of processes, as different from each other as each customer is different.

A return customer ought to see one page, preferably one based on her past behavior.

A customer who clicked on an AdWords ad for “Garage Door Openers” ought to see an offer for a garage door, not your standard home page



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that requires her to restate why she came in the first place.

What do you want me to do?

If you don't know the answer, how can you expect the prospect to know?

At every step along the way, you need to stake out a position. It must say (without saying it), "The smart thing to do is click here. The best way to solve your problem is to click here." The ABC (American Bowling Congress) will invalidate a 300 score in bowling if they find that the alley has been waxed to encourage the ball to go down the center of the alley. A waxed lane isn't fair to other bowlers.

But a waxed Web site is fair to you and to your users. You want to create a grooved path, a simple, easy-to-follow series of steps that get people from here to there. Will every person follow it? Of course not. But more people will follow the waxed lane than will click through if you don't bother to create that path for them.

ASIDE: What about Search Engine Optimization?

There are dozens (okay, thousands) of companies that will happily work with you and your team to do SEO. SEO is the art of making your site attractive to the automated spiders that Google and other search engines send around the Web. By changing your site (and helping you get the right inbound and



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outbound links), a talented SEO firm can change your ranking—sometimes quite a bit.

Why does this matter?

We know that about 15% of the people doing a Google search look over at the AdWords ads. We also know that more than 70% ignore the ads and rarely bother to look at the second or third page of search results. This means that someone types in, say, “Florida retirement home” and chooses from one of the top five or six returned entries; then they’re gone.

If you’re number 8 out of the 1,590,000 matches, you lose.

In the past, I’ve been hard on SEO, mostly because of the way clients misuse it. They build static, boring, selfish Web sites and then try to make them work by ranking high in Google. What a waste! It’s like waving your hand to get called on in second grade—but not knowing the answer when you do.

If you’ve done the right kind of optimization—the optimization of first click to sale, the optimization of first click to satisfied customer—then (and only then) will your SEO investment pay off.

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Step 4

Test and Measure

People hate this one. Sorry.

You need to change your pages all the time. Daily, even.

You need to change the offers you make and the way you make them. Then you need to see what happens. Sometimes your results will get better. That's good; keep doing whatever you just did. Sometimes, though, your results will get worse. That's good; you just discovered what doesn't work.

If you change your site all the time, you'll demolish any competitor who assumes she got it right the first time and is stuck.

Why do people hate this step? Because it feels like a lot of work. Actually, failing is a lot of work. Updating your site all the time is sort of fun.

Whenever you can set up an evolutionary system, you win.

Evolution is a simple idea: lots of semi-random mixing followed by an abrupt battle for supremacy. The fit ones win and replicate; the ones that lost, disappear.

Web pages can work the same way. Challenge your staff or your freelancers to create a page that can beat your current standard. Put up completely different landing pages, and see which offers and which stories and which typefaces and which colors and which prices win.



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Three Other Things I'd Like to Say

Choice is a bad thing. Time and again, studies have demonstrated that when faced with too many choices, people flee. They get unhappy. They regret their decision.

Nothing is easier than giving people too many choices on your Web site. In a broadband world, the cost of a click to the user is much smaller than it used to be. Break down your choices and play it like twenty questions. Instead of saying, “Here are the 25 things we offer,” offer me three or four broad categories. Then, when I click, focus on the four or five narrower categories that are totally relevant to my last choice. This is the way it works in retail (“Are you looking for men’s or women’s clothing?”).

Contact is a good thing. If you have a Web site, it’s probably because you want to interact with your customers. So give me a phone number and an email address. A real one, one that goes to a person, and quickly! Put it on every page.

No dead ends, no error pages. If you have a search box on your site, it better give me a result even if it doesn’t find a match. Instead of saying “sorry” and giving me nothing in exchange for my hard work, give me a discount, or a secret item, or at least a joke.

You can’t make me, but you can make it easy. No, I won’t recommend your site to all my friends. But if I did want to do that, is there an easy way for me to do so? Too often, marketers build totally selfish recommendation tools into their sites. People skip them because, after all, why would they want to do that? Every once

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in a while, though, there is something worth recommending. If you can make it easy, it's more likely to happen.

Case Study #1, Ripping My Disks

This is a classic study in how people buy online using Google, AdWords and web pages. There's a lot of trust, risk and money on the table, and there's essentially zero off-line component.

If you've got a big CD collection and you're moving over to the iPod/Sonos world, you've got to figure out how to get those CDs onto a hard drive. For ten or twenty or even a hundred disks, you'll do it yourself--it's a fun way to spend a weekend. But what if you have more than a thousand?

It turns out that there are a bunch of firms that have figured out how to efficiently rip your disks onto high-capacity DVD drives, so you can turn 150 CDs into 7 or 8 DVDs. They charge about a buck a disk.

Go to Google and search for "Rip MP3 CD collection" or similar and you'll find plenty of AdWord ads. Here's one that I found right on top of my search results:

[CD Conversion Service](#)

www.ripdigital.com

Let us convert your CDs into MP3s We do the work for you. About \$1/CD



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Click on the ad and you'll get to this landing page:

RipDigital Home Go Digital How to Order About F.A.Q.

Get Ripped.

RipDigital converts your CD collection into a digital music library.

"If the thought of ripping 10 years of your favorite tunes is overwhelming, RipDigital is a **godsend**."

PARADE

100 CDs	150 CDs	200 CDs	250 CDs	More...
\$129	\$179	\$199	\$249	300\$299
MP3 conversion service	MP3 conversion service	MP3 conversion service	MP3 conversion service	350\$349
turns 100 CDs into a digital music library.	turns 150 CDs into a digital music library.	turns 200 CDs into a digital music library.	turns 250 CDs into a digital music library.	400\$399
BUY NOW	BUY NOW	BUY NOW	BUY NOW	450\$449
				500\$499
				Over 500

I love this page. I instantly trusted the tone of voice. It reminded me of Apple and Firefox and other pages I respond to. The blurb from Parade magazine is soon replaced by another reputable magazine. It's pretty clear that these



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guys are the real deal. The page isn't trying to do everything to everybody. It's just trying to sell me some disk ripping.

Compare that page to this one:



Compared to most sites on the web, this is a thing of beauty. But compared to Ripdigital? It's got tacky fonts, the graphics aren't balanced, and I'm not sure I'm lazy. I'd prefer to think of myself as busy. So, the service is the pretty much the same, the pricing is pretty similar, but Moondog doesn't convert as many people as



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[advertisement]

WHAT

asset does a web page build? Only one.

I try to answer this question in *Permission Marketing*

[Click here to find a third of the book for free.](#)



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Rip, so they can't spend as much on their ads, which means that Rip gets higher placement, and more clicks, which is a vicious cycle.

I ended up hiring Moondog because of the higher resolution ripping service that they offered, but I only discovered this because I was digging deep so I could write this up.

Here's another page for a very different product: Summer camp.

You're just not going to sell a summer camp from a web page. Can't be done. Not to ordinary parents, anyway. Ordinary parents aren't going to say, "Hey, nice page. Take my kid for a month. Make it two."

So what's the point of the page? Only two possibilities:

- a. tell a friend
- b. raise your hand and let us send you a video or, even better, come visit you.

The people who sell Endless Pools have precisely the same situation, so before I show you the camp page, let me show you their page.

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Endless Pools 

Swim without Limits

Call 800.233.0741

Swim at Home in Your Own Endless Pool

Welcome to Endless Pools, where limited space can be easily converted into limitless possibilities. Measuring just 8' x 15', the Endless Pool, often referred to as a swimmer's treadmill, provides all the benefits of a full-size swimming pool in a fraction of the space.

- The Endless Pool's adjustable current caters to swimmers of all skill levels.
- All Endless Pool components can fit through a standard doorway making installation possible in almost any area of your home.
- Ideal for swimming, exercise, therapy and fun.
- Our swimming pools are simple to maintain, economical to run, and easy to install inside or out.

[Click here to receive more information
and our Free DVD!](#)



**Request a
Free DVD
or Video** 



Finally a
pool that
makes
sense!

The guys at Endless have figured out that the one thing that they want you to do is ask for a DVD. No DVD, no sale. No sale, no happy customers (or happy shareholders). So the page is rigged up to make that event very likely.

**KNOCK
KNOCK**

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The mistake the folks at Rockbrook Camp for Girls are making is that they're trying to make a page that accurately represents the camp. That's impossible! They've only got three seconds, and they must meet the needs of the person who clicked over from an ad or brochure or recommendation. And that person is looking for more information on camps that meet her family's needs. So offer that information. And do it with a vernacular and a tone of voice that matches expectations.

Rockbrook forgets the Endless Pools lesson. They are trying to sell the camp. Instead, they should sell the video.

I can't state this strongly enough. The #1 complaint that businesses with



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websites bring to me is always the same. They can't make their website pay off. They're desperate. They've bought AdWords and SEO and banners and even a hot air balloon but even though they can buy a spike in traffic, they can't convert that traffic into anything worthwhile.

They can't convert because they have a website that was designed by an engineer or a true believer, not a marketer.

Good marketers understand that a web page isn't some special window on the truth. It's not literature. It's just another marketing device.

As a device, your page is there to get the viewer from here to there. From stranger to friend. One or two clicks, in, then out. Knock, knock.

Here are the three questions you must answer about every single page you build:

1. Who's here?
2. What do you want them to do?
3. How can you instantly tell a persuasive story to get them to do #2?

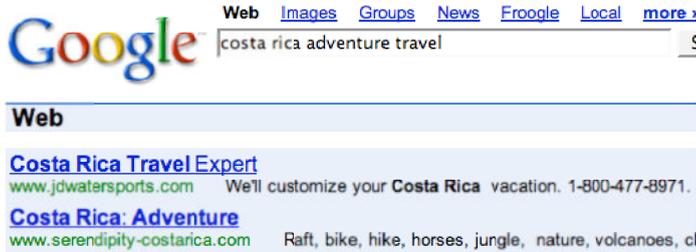
If you can't pull off #3, then don't bother building a page. Small steps. Make promises, keep them. Test and measure.



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Case Study #2, Climbing the Bat-Infested Tree

If you'd like to take your family on vacation to Costa Rica, it's entirely possible you'd do a Google search that looks like this one:



As you can imagine, there are plenty of choices. There's also a huge amount of competition to be listed as the first search result—which is great if you can get it, but 100 people can't. So, you could run an AdWord ad, as Serendipity Adventures did (they are the

second one... which is probably a lot better than the one above it. Even the URL is probably better. I say better, because without conversion numbers, you don't know.)

Anyway, if you click on the ad, you'll go to the page I show you on the next page...

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Let me start with what's good about this page. The best thing is that it's authentic. It appears homemade and it largely is. It talks with an honest voice and it makes it clear that you are dealing with people, not a corporation. For this service, sold to this audience, this is a huge breakthrough. Someone booking an expensive tour in a faraway land might want to know it's with a Fortune 500 company--but that isn't the sort of person that's going to sign up for a trip

where you are asked to climb the inside of a bat-infested tree.

The bad news is that this page doesn't convert nearly as well as it should. There are a few reasons, in my opinion, but none of them is true until we test.

The first reason is that there is way too much text. People don't read online (if you're reading page 35 of this ebook, my guess is that you printed it out.) They scan, they spend three or four seconds, and then they click or they leave. Instead of one page, this should be six or seven pages.

The second reason is that the colors and layout and typeface, while authentic, aren't professional compared to what many web surfers are used to. We



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only take a moment to decide if we trust a company online, and if the look and feel doesn't match something we're familiar with, we flee.

The third and biggest challenge is that the page doesn't make an offer. It doesn't say, "if you do this, we'll do that." They could offer me a free consult by phone or a free DVD or a list of testimonials. They could offer me a slide show. This is the biggest challenge most sites face. It takes guts to say, "here is one thing I want you to do." It's much easier to just list every choice. Alas, every choice is no choice.

What if the Serendipity landing page looked like this instead? A simple picture and then just two choices: click here to find out more about us, and click here to find out more about our competition.

The page tells a story. It's simple. It begs for action.

The click on the left could lead to...

OUTRAGEOUS EXPEDITIONS!



[CLICK HERE to find out about Serendipity Adventures in Costa Rica \(that's us, buddy\)](#)

[CLICK HERE to find out about ordinary, inexpensive group travel to Costa Rica \(that's the other guys\)](#)

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KNOCK
KNOCK

this page. Which feels a lot more traditional than the last page (which is good, because you can freak people out if you change the vernacular on them too much).

This page tells a story about Tucker, the founder of the company. It waxes the alley, makes it clear that they want you to call them. Call Us! Along the way, you can read testimonials, see pictures, sell yourself on the idea of traveling with them.



- Read my blog
- Meet the staff
- See the pictures
- Read the testimonials
- Call us!
- Read more
- Compare
- About Us

MY NAME IS TUCKER! I invented a (patented) device that made hot air balloons more efficient and is used all over the world. I have a world-class barrel-racing horse.

I discovered a strangler fig tree that's 100 feet high and filled with bats (we climb up the inside and rappel back outside. Did I mention that I'm FAA certified to fly balloons and that nobody goes home unhappy?)

More important than all that is the fact that I've hired one dozen of the nicest, best-trained, safest, craziest and charismatic guides in the world. We take our clients down rivers, up volcanoes, into the surf and on journeys where no one else goes. We can show you all three kinds of Costa Rican monkeys on one trip--and then stop into a hot spring so obscure that it doesn't even have a sign.

Along the way, you can wave at the tour buses.

I don't know if this alternative is going to work. I do know that it costs almost nothing to test it.

Knock, knock. Who's there?



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[advertisement]

DO

people buy what they want or what they need?

I think it's a no-brainer. Find out in *Free Prize Inside*

[Click here to find the book.](#)



The Sequel Challenge!

Apparently, this ebook has only scratched the surface of what needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of websites.

You may be a consultant, an SEO expert, a web designer or even a webmaster. If you fill any of those roles, it's certain that you have come to the conclusion that there are lots of great ideas that I forgot about.

So here's my challenge: write the sequel!

Post it on your blog or email it to me (sethgodin@yahoo.com). I'll put up links to my favorite sequels. You can give your sequel away, charge for it, whatever you like. Just tell me where to point and if I think my readers will enjoy it, I'll promote it for you.

Start writing.

Who's there?



click on the logo for goodies on the web...