

Database Dynamite

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Terry Telford



I'm an international business consultant with experience both online and offline. I specialize in developing results oriented marketing strategies for small and medium sized business owners. My clients own businesses in several industries including internet marketing, education, publishing, and property management.

I own 73 active websites in 19 markets. I'm a professional copywriter and avid internet marketer.

My recently published book, Guerrilla Marketing Breakthrough Strategies, is a joint venture project with Jay Conrad Levinson and focuses on...joint ventures. The book is a step-by-step plan for business owners to triple their sales and quadruple their business in 90 days. The book is currently available in larger bookstores, on my website or at Amazon.com

I wish you all the success you deserve now and in the future.

Terry Telford ☺

<http://www.TerryTelford.com>

PS. I also offer several free business and marketing resources on my website

Terry:

Welcome to the list building training session. Today we're going to hear from Ian Herculson, who is the guy that owns and runs TheGuruMarketer.com, and he's a master list builder. Ian is going to share with us his expertise and show us exactly how to build your own, targeted, opt-in list. I'm going to be your host for this session, and my name is Terry Telford, from TheBusinessProfessional.com. I want to start out by saying thank you very much for being here today with us, Ian.

Ian:

Thank you for having me.

Terry:

Thank you. Let's take a look at you from a personal aspect first. What's your background?

Ian:

In Internet marketing, my background is that I really just stumbled into it when I was about 20 years old. I bought my first computer and I was going to university at the time. When I started getting on the Internet, I realized that probably a lot of people were going to make money from it. I did a search on one of the search engines for "make money" and so many links came up that I was pretty much involved in it right away. It took about three or four years until I made any income. It's been a pretty long road.

Terry:

Right. What happened in the four years there that it took you to make money? What kind of steps happened for you?

Ian:

Mostly it's just conquering the big learning curve. A lot of people know that when they first get on the Internet, there's a ton of information and everybody knows that when you search for one thing you end up finding something completely different. Conquering that learning curve was probably the hardest thing I had to do. Also, staying focused on what it was that I wanted to do.

I started out by joining pay per click programs where I advertised other people's banners on my website, and every time someone clicked on the banner I'd make a penny or three pennies or whatever. My grand idea was that I was going to get a website that had a million visitors a day and all those pennies would add up and make me rich.

In reality, the biggest check I ever got was just over a dollar and it was probably from me clicking on my own banners, so it didn't work out.

I moved on to selling virtual hosting for a company. That was a steep learning curve as well. I just slowly started learning about the process of selling on the Internet and advertising and getting my name out there and even more advanced strategies like tracking my ads and stuff like that. It really took a long, long time. After about two years of not really making money, I had learned basic principles, and I wrote out my own manual of the basics on how to start an Internet marketing business. I sold it for myself for \$19.95. That was my first big success, because I sold about 1,000 copies over a year. That's how I started Guru Marketers; I started the newsletter when I started that book. It's just been a lot better. Since I learned how to sell my own stuff, it made selling other people's stuff a lot easier.

Terry:

Excellent. How do you go about selling that book?

Ian:

Actually, that book, the way I first started selling it, I used instant messaging software, the one I was using at the time was ICQ, and I had a whole list of people that I was in contact with from all the business I was trying to do. I actually made pretty good friends with quite a few of them because we stayed in contact and share information. When I first released my product, they were the first people I went to. I told everybody on my ICQ list that I had a new manual that I was releasing for \$20 and that they should go buy it. I also used ClickBank in their very early stages to sell my book and start an affiliate program.

Once I had my first people in, I told them, "If you tell your people about my manual, I'll pay you half for it." I started my own little affiliate program that way and it really took off really fast for me. Partially, it was a little bit of luck, that the people I had on my list were good marketers themselves. I actually made quite a bit of money that way with a little bit of luck and a little bit of work.

Terry:

So somewhat building of relationships as well?

Ian:

Definitely. That was a huge part of it, that a lot of the people I got involved with, I did a lot of relationship building with them like sharing information, sharing tips that worked and what not. That really helped because when I started the program they were the first I turned to. They knew me and I knew them, and we had a good relationship so they didn't mind going out to advertise my stuff for me. It was kind of a free form of advertising for myself.

Terry:

Excellent. Is this a book that's still available?

Ian:

No, it's long gone now. It was actually a membership site called CETC. It's been taken down and replaced; it's sort of evolved actually into The Guru Marketer Newsletter, which is the website that I run now.

Terry:

Cool. So, after you had the success with the eBook, what was the next step?

Ian:

Rebuilding my business. When I made my big check from ClickBank of about \$5,000, I actually took off to Mexico for vacation with my friend. That was at the peak of my business; sales were coming in like mad. All of the support e-mails that were coming in while I was gone were piling up and ClickBank was making policy changes all the time since they were still new and they made a pretty big policy change about the advertising I was doing while I was gone. Basically, they shut me down while I was gone, so that pretty much destroyed my business.

To recover, basically what I did was I turned to affiliate marketing selling other people's products and using the small list that I had of about 3,000 or 4,000. Then I started running my own ezine, and sold advertising space and starting to sell affiliate products. Ever since then... there's never been one type of business that I was doing; it's always been an evolvement of what I learned the last time. You can say that's where I started learning about how to build an opt-in list and selling products or advertising space and profiting from the list.

Terry:

Excellent. So what other difficulties, other than ClickBank shutting you down, what other difficulties have you experienced?

Ian:

All kinds all the time; there's always something. A big one that a lot of people have probably heard about, was when I had The Guru Marketing list was built up to over 18,000 single opt-in subscribers. I lost my list. The host that I was on had some sort of server crash problem. They took the websites down and they had to take the physical server to a data recovery specialist to see if they could get any information off of the computer. They weren't able to do that. I myself didn't have a back up which was a stupid, stupid mistake on my own part. I lost all 18,000 subscribers, so I was basically back to ground zero at that point.

That was probably the biggest setback in my business. Along the road, there have always been setback and problems, but you just have to learn how to recover from them.

Terry:

Roll with the punches.

Ian:

Yea.

Terry:

Well, that's perfect. How did you develop a new list then? You had to start from the beginning... where did you start?

Ian:

Well, luckily, a lot of people on my list were happy with the information and items I was selling them. So, when people found out that my list was gone, they started e-mailing me saying, "What happened?" and came back to find me. I had a website at the time, that I still have, called TheBigEzineDirectory.com and it's just a list of all the ezines on the Internet. I was selling memberships into that, and I figured that my list was more important to me than selling memberships into The Big Ezine Directory.

So, I started advertising to everybody and I gave away a year of free membership into The Big Ezine Directory if people would sign on to my Guru Marketer list. I told the story about how I lost my list, I went into a few forums and posted the offer that I had, and I also told publishers that if they wanted to give their subscribers one free year into my ezine directory, all they had to do was send people over to my sign up page.

That just exploded. People were taking me up on my offer like crazy and I built my list to 2,000 subscribers back in the first month. That offer still runs today because it ran so well. Now I have my list back to over 18,000, but that's the step where I learned the power of free giveaways.

Terry:

Excellent. So, is this your sole source of income then, from the Guru Marketer?

Ian:

Pretty much. The biggest chunk is from the Guru Marketer. I have a program that's pretty brand new called Smart Subscriber that runs with the Guru Marketer. Those two in combination probably make me 80% to 90% of my income. That's where I do all of my advertising for my affiliate programs as well. So yea, it's pretty much the base of where I make my income.

Terry:

You mentioned Smart Subscriber. What's that?

Ian:

It's a new twist. I, as a publisher, run my ezine and I make a good chunk of change at it. I'm always trying to help people make their own money on the Internet, and I thought about how I work my ezine and I was thinking of a way that I could have people use my ezine to make money. I came up with, if I advertise other peoples' affiliate links to people they refer to my ezine, that they would make the income I was making. So, if they referred 18,000 people, their income level, realistically, should be the exact same as mine because I'm using all of their affiliate links.

So, I created Smart Subscriber, which is basically the paid version of the Guru Marketing newsletter. What happens when you become a paid member is you can go into the member's area and you can put all of the affiliate programs that I advertise in your affiliate ID. When the newsletter goes out to the people you referred, it has your affiliate links in it so you make the commissions instead of me.

Terry:

Wow. So it's building your list while making sales for other people as well.

Ian:

Yea. That's the one drawback to it, is that it doesn't build your list; it builds mine. What you're doing as a member of Smart Subscribers is you're leveraging my success, my name, my ezine, my writing skills, and everything like that. So, it's more for people who are starting out in Internet marketing than people who know what they're doing because most people who know what they're doing would rather be building their own list since it makes more sense to build your own list.

But, it does give people that are just starting out a really good shot at making a steady income by leveraging all of the things that I've already learned and leverage the work I already do.

Terry:

It's really a hands-free paycheck.

Ian:

Pretty much. I'm doing everything for you; I'm writing the ezine, writing all the new issues, going out to find all the new things to write about, and I have relationships with bigger marketers out there that have great products. They're always sending me a heads up right before they send out their new products. I tell people ahead of time, "I'm going to be selling this product. Go and join the affiliate program and give me your affiliate link. When I send it out, your referrals are going to be the first people to hear about it so you get an early chance at that early paycheck." So, all that's really required as work for the Smart Subscribers is just to join up for affiliate programs and watch out for new ones that are coming out. Also refer people, and I give them tools to do that.

Terry:

What a great idea. So what kind of an income are you generating with this?

Ian:

This is another funny story. At first, when I first released Smart Subscriber, I was using PaySystems.com, and I don't know if you know about the crash that happened with them.

Terry:

Yup.

Ian:

It pretty much yanked my credit card processing capabilities. But I was making probably \$8,000 a month with Smart Subscriber. When I lost my pay systems credit card processing, it put my down to ground zero because I had to reprogram my whole site to run with a different processor and stuff. So, in the past three months I've probably built it back up to \$1,000 a month.

Terry:

Right. So who do you have as a payment subscriber now?

Ian:

I learned my lesson with Pay Systems to not just have one, so now I have three available options. I use a checkout for credit cards, I use PayPal as well because a lot of people are involved with PayPal, and I also use StormPay because PayPal doesn't accept certain countries that StormPay does. So, I'm trying to cover as much as I can using those three payment methods.

Terry:

Excellent. So, if you include Smart Subscriber plus The Guru Marketer and the other affiliate programs that you're running, what would your income be on a monthly basis?

Ian:

It fluctuates quite a bit because sometimes I have promotions and sometimes I don't. But, my lowest month of income is around \$3,000 a month and my highest... I had a month where I made \$20,000. It really fluctuates, but I'd say on average it's about \$3,000 or \$4,000.

Terry:

That's not a bad chunk of change.

Ian:

Nope. And I don't do this full-time; I don't get up at 8 AM and work and work and work. I do the Internet marketing thing because it gives me the time and money to do the things that I really, really love. I'm really into sports; I curl competitively, and I've done that bike trip that a lot people know about, and I'm in a band. I'm sure I could make more money if I wanted to, but I really want to have my time and freedom, which is more important to me.

Terry:

Excellent. How many hours a day would you say that you work on average?

Ian:

Once again, it does fluctuate, and it depends if I'm doing a project or not, but typically one to two hours a day. I don't really work that much; I do a lot of answering support e-mails and stuff like that during the day. If I start a new project or I'm researching things or putting together, I'll probably up it. I will work up to six or seven hours a day on those occasions, but normally it's one to two hours a day. Then I go out and I do everything; I do fill my life with many other activities other than work.

Terry:

That's great; it sounds like a wonderful lifestyle.

Ian:

It's great; I really enjoy it. It's something that I feel very lucky to be doing and that I came around at a time where the Internet was just growing and it is still growing. Luckily, I caught a wave and I'm still riding it and I'm going to for as long as possible.

Terry:

That's great. If we get back to the list building side of things, what are some different ways we can go about building a list?

Ian:

There are probably a whole bunch of different ways and a whole bunch of people who will teach a bunch of ways, but what works best for me that I found is to trade something of value for an e-mail address. For instance, I'll give you this eBook, or eCourse, if you subscribe to my newsletter. I gave away one-month membership to the ezine directory too. But, what I found in doing that, and many people do use that free giveaway method, a lot of people are giving away the same things that are being given away elsewhere, or they're giving away cheap eBooks or whatever.

I find for myself, the better quality thing that you give away, the happier people are with you, the longer they stay on your list, and the more receptive they are. It's just a better thing, and it doesn't cost me anything more to give away a million copies of a great report than it does to give away a million copies of a crappy report. So why not just give them something of value right off the bat and start the

relationship off on the right foot. I find that the free giveaway method works really well. Everyone wants something for free.

So, right now I give away one-year ezine directory for free or I have a new eCourse that I wrote called "Affiliate Marketing 101," which is an eight-part course that teaches how I do affiliate marketing and how it works in general. It's very basic and more targeted to beginners. But, it is a really great course. I wrote a book called The Opt-In Strategy, which is a free 52-page eBook that talks about how I lost my The Guru Marketer list and how I recovered 2,000 subscribers in the first month and how I was able to still manage to make \$1,500 profit.

So, I'd really try to give away high quality, good information products in exchange for free. That's how I built my list.

Terry:

If I have everything together, I have a good free product to give away, I have a place for people to sign up, how do I get people to my website?

Ian:

Advertising is the most difficult part, I find, in Internet marketing. You can join any affiliate program or you can have all of these pay plans and read about everything, but the hardest part is driving traffic to your website. There are a bunch of different ways to do that: there's Google AdWords where you can pay per click and get traffic. The old thing that I did, if you're more into free methods of getting traffic, you can place classified ads, or you can build relationships with people over chat rooms or forums.

If you want to spend money building traffic you can buy good traffic. If you want to do it for free, it's going to be a little slower, but it's still available as a way to build traffic, cheap ezine ads, cheap classified ads, and things like that. I'm not much of an expert on advertising myself. I got lucky by doing everything affiliate based. Once you have an opt-in list, you don't really have to advertise anymore because you have those basic clients that you can advertise to and have them advertise for you.

Advertising is a tough thing to do; it's possible, but you have to read up on it and find people that know what they're doing and listen to them. I'm not the person to talk to about how to advertise things properly.

Terry:

Okay. Do you have any places that you found, when you did advertise, were successful for you?

Ian:

Yea, Solo Ad Advertising. It was kind of a boom that happened with one or two years ago that it was doing really well, and you could purchase an exclusive advertisement that went out to an ezine list of however many people, and it was the only thing that went out. I always had pretty good success with that after I found out which ezines were good to advertise in, because there are some duds out there. I'd pay my money, run the ad, and it would fail. A really good way to start is Solo Ads. You can start cheap and pay \$20 to run an ad to 5,000 people and start learning slowly. So, Solo Ads worked out great for me.

Terry:

Excellent. Do you have any ezines that are still working now that you know of?

Ian:

Yea. I actually have a list of my top 14 places to advertise. If you join Smart Subscriber, I give that list out as well for people who don't know how/where to advertise. It's the top 14 places, the circulation of the ezine meaning how many people are on the list, and the price it costs to run an ad with them.

Terry:

Excellent. So where would we go to subscribe to Smart Subscriber?

Ian:

You can just go right to TheGuruMarketer.com, and it will pop up in the background. If you want to directly access that webpage, you can type in Smart.TheGuruMarketer.com and it will take you right there.

Terry:

Excellent. How many lists are you running right now?

Ian:

I'm actively running two ezine lists; TheGuruMarketer.com which is my main list, and the other list is called TheOptInStrategy.com, which I mentioned earlier is the eBook that I give away for free telling my story about how I lost my ezine list and how I built it back and was able to make money doing it. So, I run two lists actively. I also have

another list that I haven't even mailed the thing to yet; it's a Christmas joint venture proposal called 117ChristmasGifts.com. That's another list that I built in 14 days over Christmas. I haven't advertised or even sent anything to that list yet because I'm waiting. In about three months I'm going to do another joint venture, so I'm just waiting for that to send a notice about that.

Terry:

How many people are in there?

Ian:

There are 26,000 people on that list.

Terry:

Wow.

Ian:

Yea. It was a hugely successful promotion.

Terry:

That's fantastic.

Ian:

Yea. It was really good.

Terry:

That's really good. So have you ever purchased leads?

Ian:

Yea. This is a funny subject because there are so many different types of leads that you can purchase. You can purchase leads and upload them into your autoresponder, and I've done that. I think that's the worst way to go, no matter who you purchase from. The reason I think it's the worst way to go is because when you purchase a lead, they didn't ask to be on your website. You don't know where that lead came from and you basically don't know anything about that lead and chances are they don't know anything about you. So, when you go to send them something, you have to break down all kinds of walls. They have their guard up against spam and other things they receive. It's a lot of work to get any sort of relationship built with those e-mail leads. So, I have bought leads, but I had nothing but trouble with it and wasted a lot of money.

There are subscription services where you can pay to have leads sign up to your newsletter. Once again, there are things to look out for there. The way that that works is you give the lead company a little blurb about what you want people to sign up for. For instance, "Affiliate marketing 101 eCourse. Free eight-part eCourse to teach affiliate marketing." And they'll host that on a bunch of different pages, and someone will visit one of the pages, sign up with their name and e-mail address, but a lot of companies will already have your ezine checked off, so in order not to subscribe to your ezine, you have to uncheck the box. A lot of companies will sell leads like that. It's basically the same problem as purchasing the leads. They didn't want it; they just didn't uncheck the box, so it's a lower quality lead.

The last type is the type that I've had success with. It's LeadFactory.com. There are three people running it, and what they do is they take the same principle of advertising whatever short, little, blurb you want about the course you're giving away, and people actually have to check the box to say that they want your ezine. So, in a way, they are opting-in. They know what they're getting into, and they're asking to be subscribed to your list, and they know it's your list. So when they get e-mails from you, they know that they were supposed to and they asked for it. Those have been the best leads that I bought, and the only way I would purchase leads in the future is through them in that method. So, I highly recommend LeadFactory.com; it's good.

Terry:

What would be the cost of something like that?

Ian:

They go pretty cheap actually. They can do leads as cheap as 20 cents per lead, depending on how you buy them and how many you make an order for. They range in price; I think 50 cents per lead is the most expensive. I think they go down to 20 cents per lead if you order more.

Terry:

So that would be 20 cents each lead for example.

Ian:

Yea.

Terry:

Are you able to track them and see how they pan out? Are those people actually buying products from you?

Ian:

No, but that's a great idea. I haven't been able to track on what they're buying. I can't think of a way that I could track that right now, but it's something that I would look into. Thanks for the tip.

Terry:

I was just curious to see if they panned out to being leads that actually purchase things or just people who like to read a lot.

Ian:

I can't say I'm 100% certain, but I'm able to track if they're getting all the way through my course. It's an eight-part eCourse, so I can see if they only get through the first couple of pages or if they're finishing the whole eCourse. It seems that most leads that sign up for the course are taking the whole course. The course is set up to sell Smart Subscriber, and I am noticing a huge increase in the number of people taking a free trial for Smart Subscriber, because I have it set up so that each person who joins gets a free month before they have to pay. I am noticing an increase in free trials and subscribers. So, I would probably have to attribute that from people who are buying leads from Lead Factory and putting them into my affiliate marketing course.

Terry:

Excellent. So what about all of the spam filters and everything that's out right now? How do you know that your e-mails are getting through to the people on your list?

Ian:

Well, I cover things from a couple ends. When people subscribe to my ezine, I only use double opt-in first of all. When someone first subscribes to anything on my list, the next page they're taken to is a page that gives out a little bit of information about spam filters and e-mails going lost and being misplaced and whatnot. So, it tells them to check their spam folders... like in Yahoo! and Hotmail, there are a lot of spam folders and things. It tells them to check their spam folders, to white list TheGuruMarketer.com, which is the domain name that I send my e-mails from. It just basically gives them information on how to make sure that they receive my e-mail. Once they do receive it, they click on the confirmation to double confirm. From that end, that's how I cover it.

From my own end, I've been trying out a new service from AWeber called DeliveryMonitor.com, and what they do is give you 116 e-mail addresses that you can upload into your autoresponder and then start sending out e-mails. They monitor from the 16 major ISPs if those e-mails are getting delivered or not. If they're not getting delivered, they tell you why. Maybe it's being reported as spam, or it just didn't arrive, it tells you and gives you an overall percentage of what e-mails are being delivered. I'm running at about 80% delivered right now. It tells me all of the reasons that some aren't being delivered so I can fix them, like if I have a high spam count with my messages or that I have some triggers that are setting it off. I can find out why they're not being delivered and try to fix the problem.

Terry:

That's excellent. Is it a service you get through AWeber or is it totally separate?

Ian:

I was looking at the AWeber website to look at their autoresponder because I heard that they get a really good delivery rate because they maintain really good relationships with Yahoo! and Hotmail; they really work on maintaining their good relationships. I found, during reading their sales page, how they do it. And they had a link to DeliveryMonitor.com, so I followed the link and read what it does. I just kind of stumbled onto it but I'm glad I did because it's a great service.

Terry:

Sounds really good. So, are you building other lists as well, not just Internet lists, but postal lists and that type of thing?

Ian:

No, not really. I think how easy and smooth the Internet is, I like sticking with that. I don't build postal mail lists; I don't even really have any knowledge about that. I really stick to e-mail lists and the Internet.

Terry:

What would it cost now, realistically, to build the list you have for The Guru Marketer, just if I was going to start building today to want a list like yours at 16,000 people. What would I expect the cost to be?

Ian:

If you're starting out right from scratch, you don't have anything, you just got a computer and want to go on the Internet to make money, there are certain tools that you should have. Those include a host and a website, which can cost anywhere from \$5 to \$25 a month. I'd recommend getting a good website. I use Third Sphere Hosting for all of my websites. I love what they do. Some people would say that \$25 a month for a website is expensive, but for the peace of mind that it gives me with the daily backups that they have plus all of the other features. It's a really good investment, so that's \$25 for that.

An autoresponder is a really good thing because when you get a list of 1,000 or 2,000 or 10,000 people, you're not going to want to e-mail them one-by-one because that's ridiculous and takes up too much time. So an autoresponder will allow you to e-mail that many people in a short period of time. They range in price too; you can get monthly services. If you're going to get one online and have it hosted on someone else's site, then AWeber is probably the best. They're about \$20 a month.

I use AutoResponse Plus and the autoresponder is hosted on my own website. They were just bought out, so their price is a little higher, it's about \$250 for three months. It's a little more expensive, but there are more benefits from running your autoresponder off of your own website. It's a lot more business savvy and it looks a lot better.

So once you have the basic tools set up, you can get really good software for cheap. After that, the only other cost that you would have is if you were going to pay for advertising cost or pay for Lead Factory to generate leads. All in all, if you had a budget of \$100 a month, and you could start out with \$500, by the end of the year you should be swimming in leads and in very good profits if you make the right decision. It's not expensive at all; it's not like starting a real business in the real world where you have to spend on all kinds of things like the building and the rent. It's not expensive at all, and the ability to make profit is absolutely huge.

Terry:

And the key is building your list and mailing that list.

Ian:

Yea, once you got the list started you have to treat them right and give them good information. Once you maintain good relationships with your customers, you can start selling or offering them things or

telling them about other programs or eBooks that you've used/read and enjoyed and learned stuff from. Then, you should start making profit. It shouldn't take that long. Within the first month you could be making money off your list very realistically.

Terry:

So should you be sending them sales letters then? Or newsletters? What would you send them?

Ian:

It's your choice. I've done a lot of things. I've sent out regular issues of newsletters, I've send out a lot of advertisements before, and now I'm more towards sending out personal messages of what works for me and trying to relate to them on more of a personal level. At the start, when you get your newsletter list, the thing that you should be sending them is the information that you know. Build a relationship with your list and let them e-mail you back, answer their question, send them information about what you're learning, try and show them that you want to help them and not just sell to them. That comes through very clearly if you're just trying to sell to them because you're sending them ads and ads and ads. All they're going to do is leave your list because they're not getting any content or value. So, try to send them a lot of content, value, your opinion about things or anything like that.

Terry:

Just to build the relationship upfront.

Ian:

Yea, build the relationship. Really, really get to know your people and really make sure they know that you're not just talking to them, and you're not just trying to sell, but that you're actually interested in learning and helping and teaching them. Once you've built that relationship with your list, it's amazing how much more responsive your list becomes.

Terry:

Once you've got that relationship developed, how often do you send an e-mail to them?

Ian:

Once again, you can track and test and see what the responses to your e-mail are like. I want to stay in their e-mail inbox so that they recognize me and never forget that I'm around. I try to e-mail about

once a week. But say a new affiliate report comes out or I come out with a new eBook, or anything like that, then I'll e-mail them on top of that. But I think once a week is pretty good. You're not over sending to them, but you're also staying in their inbox so they can recognize you and not delete you.

Terry:

Right, yea. What kind of things are they responding to the best? Is it better when you send them offers for eBooks or business opportunities or... what kinds of things are the best?

Ian:

By far, the best response I get from my e-mail is when I ask them a question or try to really get them involved. If I try to tell them about a product, that works as well, if I say, "I read this new eBook and I think it's great. Here's the link; go check it out." That does get a response, but it's a more standard response. I realized that when I e-mail my list and ask them a question, "What do you want to learn about?" or, "How have you been doing in the past week?" or anything like that, and get them really involved in the process, that quadruples the response.

Terry:

Excellent. So, if you ask them for a response then, how do you turn that into a sale?

Ian:

Say I ask them, "What do you want to learn about?" and they reply back to me and say, "I want to learn about advertising my business online." What I'll do is create a conversation with them and ask them what they do and tell them to show me their website. Once I have a good idea about how they're working on the Internet, then I can recommend products or eBooks or services that I know or think will work for them. Usually I find when I do that that it's building a sale more than going for a sale. That works really well, and they trust me more that way and they realize that I'm trying to learn about them so I can really help them. I'm not just giving them a copy and paste answer.

Terry:

Exactly. Are you doing this on a one-on-one basis? Or is it as a group?

Ian:

It's on a one-on-one basis. I try to answer my e-mails. As I said I work about one or two hours a day and most of that is answering e-mails. I send out my newsletter issues to GuruMarketer.com from my e-mail address. So, at anytime I send out an e-mail to my list, anyone can just hit that reply button and it goes right to my inbox. Then, we can start a conversation and try to help each other out.

Terry:

So what kind of response do you get when you send out an ezine to 16,000 people asking for a response of "what kind of information do you want?"

Ian:

Lots. I usually get 50 or 100 people that e-mail back and start up a conversation that way. A whole bunch more, if I include a link to click, I can get 40%, 50%, 60% of the people clicking.

Terry:

Wow. That's incredible.

Ian:

Yea.

Terry:

So what kind of people are we looking at? Webmasters? Entrepreneurs?

Ian:

Everybody. I would probably guess that a lot of people on my list are more beginners, just because the type of giveaways that I offer are more targeted to people who are basic information seekers and tool seekers. I also have people who have heard who I am and subscribe out of curiosity like webmasters and eBook authors. Mainly I have a lot of people who want to learn about Internet marketing as a beginner. I have a lot of different people on my list.

Terry:

Excellent. So, in your opinion, what do you think the future holds for e-mail marketing?

Ian:

That's getting tough to say, because there are so many issues with spam and all of the laws. Now, even people are starting to sue people.

There's so much trouble with e-mail that it's hard to say. As it evolves, there are new things coming out like blogging is becoming really big. Desktop delivery also, where you have to download software and every time you have a message there's an icon on your desktop that says, "New Message." It's really evolving. I don't think that this means of communication will ever die because it's too effective to talk to people or a group of people really quickly. It's just something that you kind of evolve with it or die.

Terry:

Super. Just ride the wave.

Ian:

Yea, that's what works for me. I'm kind of trying to keep up with the times and learn from the people that I see are doing well, and I try to emulate whatever they're trying to do. Or, I'll come up with my own unique idea. I'm just trying to keep up with the way that information technology works. It's not easy all the time, but it's worth it for me.

Terry:

Excellent. Well, Ian, when I told my list that I was going to be talking to you, they got a little bit excited and sent in a whole bunch of questions for you. Some of the people know who you are and are probably subscribers to The Guru Marketer as well. So, I have a list of questions for you from my list of people. The first one is from a person named Amir. Amir would like to know, "How do you build a large targeted list of paying customers?"

Ian:

Not overnight. Once again, there are a bunch of different ways to start building your list. I like the free giveaway method. If you want to get right into it and pay for your subscribers you can do that as well. But, if you want to get a large list, it's just going to take time. You have to nurture your list. If you want them to become paying customers, that won't happen overnight. You have to build a good relationship with the people on your list, you have to offer them something of value, and it has to be something that only you can offer. If they can get it from a bunch of different people, chances are they'll probably get it from someone else before they get it from you if they find them first. So, building the list is something that takes time, and turning them into paying customers is something that you do through treating them right. It's something that basically takes time.

Terry:

So instead of looking at them as a lead, look at them as another human being that you'd sit across the table and have a conversation with.

Ian:

Yea. There is a person behind that e-mail address. That's just their digital signature to who they really are. You have to understand that it's a real person. They want to learn, and if you can teach them, they'll be very happy with you.

Terry:

Back to the relationships again.

Ian:

Yea. What really works for me is building good relationships with people.

Terry:

It's really key. The next question is from Jeannie. She asks, "Everyone talks about growing your list but no one really suggests how to do it from scratch. How do you do that?"

Ian:

You have to decide what type of list you want to build. I don't know what her hobbies are or what she likes to do, but if Jeannie wants to build an Internet marketing list, she has to target her advertising for her list to Internet marketing. Maybe if she likes gardening, then she has to target it to the gardening community. Once again, to get people on your list, it's the matter of, do you want to pay for it or try to go about it for free? You have to make that decision. Once you made that decision, if you want to go at it for free, in my experience, you have to create a good free report or weekly newsletter. If you want to pay for it, go to LeadFactory.com, give them your credit card number, and they'll build a list for you. But, once again, you're going to have to treat those people right to turn that list into a profit for yourself. Building it from scratch is something that takes time.

Terry:

With LeadFactory.com, are you able to build lists there other than Internet marketing lists.

Ian:

I think you are. How it works is, when you sign up to pay for your leads, you give them a classified ad type of thing that they advertise for you. So, if you want to build a list of gardeners, you'd write a classified ad that said something like, "Get weekly gardening tips on how to grow the brightest, red tomatoes wherever you live," and you can target your list that way.

Terry:

Okay. That sounds like a good option. This next question is from David and he said, "I'm starting an ezine. My autoresponder is only days old and I haven't gotten one subscriber yet. What is the best way to get qualified subscribers?"

We know about Lead Factory. Maybe if he used some low cost advertising or something like that.

Ian:

You have to target the type of list that you're trying to build. Another way you can do it is buy classified advertisements in other ezines that are kind of along the same target as the list he's trying to build. That's a really cost effective way of doing things. You can pay five or ten dollars to have that classified ad put in another ezine, and you can track it to see how effective your ad is. It's a low cost, highly trackable way of building your ezine list.

Another thing you can do, if you want to do it completely free, is go to a search engine and type in "classified advertising online" or something like that. There are tons of websites out there that you can place free classified ads at. If you want to do it that way, it's tedious work; you should submit ten ads a day for a period of 20 days so you have 200 ads running and put a tracking code on them so you can see if your ads are getting clicked on. You'll learn which ads you're running are getting the most clicks. You'll also learn which places you're placing the ads are getting the most clicks. It's a free method, but it's a lot more work and it's tedious work. You have to choose which way you want to do things.

Terry:

A tradeoff is going to be time or money.

Ian:

Yea.

Terry:

Do you find that classified ads still work?

Ian:

I think they do. There's still a lot of traffic going to classified ads sites. I don't use it, so I can't say for sure, but a lot of people are going into the pay per click advertising, and even Lead Factory... they're all based on classified ads. They're all based on little classified ads that people click on. So, if you think about the principle about how it works... why wouldn't someone who is on a classified ads site click on the classified ad listed there. So, I think that it still works. I'm not saying go out and do it but if you're curious and want to try it, it's not going to cost you an arm and a leg to test a classified ad at a few different places. It's a method that I think could work very, very well.

Terry:

Excellent. David's next question is, "Should I use single opt-in or double opt-in during the sign up process?"

Ian:

That's a great question. It's all preference. Some people tell you that by using single opt-in you'll capture more subscribers, and build your list quicker and bigger. That might be true, but the other thing that could happen is that you could have false e-mails subscribe to your list that creates lower response rates. If you have a list of 1,000 people, and 200 are either fake or misspelled, you're of course going to have a lower response rate for your overall ezine size.

Some people say it's worth it because you do get to capture all of the e-mail addresses and the bad e-mail addresses, and it's not going to hurt you sending out 1,000 e-mails instead of only 800. As your list grows and grows, it's going to be eating up bandwidth and you're going to need a bigger hosting service to be able to send that many e-mails. So, I find that double opt-in does a couple of things for me. First of all, it shows you who are serious. The people who get on this list really want to be there because they had to go through the sign-up process. It eliminates all of the fake e-mail addresses or the ones where someone signed up with their friend's e-mail address just to tick them off or something. People do weird things out there, I don't know.

There are no bad e-mail addresses; building a double opt-in list basically means that 100% of the people on your list did the work to get there, and that creates more response and more seriousness in the

list. Although, some people are going to miss their messages and not find their confirmation e-mails or whatever. There are going to be a few people that sign up initially who don't finish the process, and I don't mind losing those people, because if they really want the information, they'll take the two seconds that it takes to click on the link.

Terry:

How does that work? Can you just walk us through the double opt-in process? You sign up for TheGuruMarketer.com, then what happens?

Ian:

Okay, so you sign up, and it takes you to the page and it says, "Go to your e-mail. If you don't see an e-mail from The Guru Marketer, check your spam folders, or check wherever you have to check, just in case it goes there. Once you find the e-mail from TheGuruMarketer.com, it will say, 'Thank you for subscribing. Just to make sure that you do want to be on my list, click here.'" That link does two things; it double confirms their e-mail address, and it give them the eBook as well. It's just a way of sending them an e-mail with the e-mail address that they subscribed with. They have to click on the link to confirm that the e-mail got to the correct e-mail address. So, once they get that, they click on it, and they get sent to whatever page they were supposed to go to. I get the double confirmed with the subscriber and they get whatever they're after.

Terry:

Where does this link come from? Is it generated from your autoresponder?

Ian:

Yea. I use Auto Response Plus. You can select whatever URL you want to send them to when they click on the link to double confirm. There's an unlimited amount of options you can set up there. You can send them to a paid site, you can send them to download an e-book, or to a thank-you page to say, "Thank you. You'll receive your first issue of this newsletter on this date," or whatever you'd like; you can really do whatever you want.

Terry:

Excellent. The next question then is do the free co-registration sites pull in subscribers?

Ian:

I have no experience with that. I would just choose not to answer that one because I don't know.

Terry:

Sure. No problems. The next question is does it cost a lot of money to get subscribers?

Ian:

Yes and no. If you want to pay for them, you can. Or, you can do all the work that it takes to go out and submit all the classified ads or try those new advertising methods that will get you subscribers. Really, it just depends on how you want to do things. With the Internet, it's great because you can choose how you want to do things the whole way. You can create and build your empire for free or pay for it to be built.

Terry:

Six of one, half dozen of the other. Next question – David has a lot of questions here – “I noticed the big names in Internet marketing don't even include content in their opt-in subscribers' newsletters; they just include offers. Is it because their lists are so big and they get so many new subscribers and make so many sales from their list that the normal rules don't apply anymore?”

Ian:

I don't really know, but that definitely sounds like a possibility. If you're getting 200 new subscribers a day like some people do, and all you're doing is sending them offers, then some people are going to bite and take the offers and maybe that's what they're doing. All the big name marketer's lists that I'm on, I don't find it that way; I find that they do give good information. I have a folder in my inbox that says “Work Associates” and the names of all the people I'm subscribed to are in that folder. All of these people send offers, but I get a lot of content with it as well. Maybe he's subscribing to the wrong lists.

Terry:

Next question: does offering freebies to entice people to opt-in to your list help you or hurt you in the long run?

Ian:

It could do both. If you're offering a bunch of crappy freebies, I don't think you're going to go anywhere with it. I think you'll just have a bunch of freebee seekers on your list that all their looking for is

freebees. But, that is the main method that I use to get subscribers. I could sell these products, though. I've been told that I could take my Opt-In Strategy eBook and sell it for \$47 or \$67 or \$97 and make a profit that way. I found that there is a more long-term profit out of building a list and giving a high-quality product like that. If you do it right, it can really help you. I think it's a really quick and effective way of building an opt-in list. But, if you're just trying to build a list quick and giving away a crappy freebee, people are going to know about it and get off your list as fast as they got on it.

Terry:

So, when you're giving away these freebees, do you include a value then, so people can see that they're getting an eBook worth \$97 dollars etc...?

Ian:

No, I try not to. I don't want to inflate or hype up what I'm giving away. I'll let them reading the content determine the value. I've just been told what I could be selling these for, so I try not to include a value. Unless it's something like The Big Ezine Directory where I do sell it for a certain price. When I give away a one-year subscription, I know that it costs \$97 so I will include the value in that instance. For things like The Opt-In Strategy or The Affiliate Marketing course that I give away, I don't include a price. You determine a price when you read it.

Terry:

Excellent. The next thing is... do the free MLM opt-in services work? He's talking about things like Storm and Subscription Rocket for example.

Ian:

No. I think the person that they work for is the person that starts them. I've seen tons of them. The reason that they don't work is because, when you build your down line that you're allowed to e-mail, you're also sending those e-mails to ten other people who are either above or below you. What a lot of people will do with those when they sign up is, they know what's going to happen... they sign up and start receiving tons and tons of e-mails so they will sign up with a fake e-mail address or sign up with something and then get off the list right away. I don't find that those work very well because it's a system where they advertise the benefit of having an opt-in list. What they don't tell you is that it's just a big advertising frenzy where everybody advertises everything to everybody else and nobody really ever gets

anywhere with it. So, I don't find that those work. I stay completely away.

Terry:

It almost sounds like a safelist.

Ian:

In effect it is a safelist that's just built and marketed very cleverly.

Terry:

This is probably my favorite question of David's: if tomorrow I forget everything you said today, and I can only remember one thing, what's the one piece of advice that I absolutely must remember, besides building your own opt-in list?

Ian:

That is a good question. I would probably have to say remember that it's the relationships that you're building with people. If you build relationships with people that really, really like you, you could screw it up and send them a bunch of ads and they'll still like you because of what you did upfront. So, if you forget everything about how to build a list and this and that, go on the Internet and start building relationships with people. Go on the message boards or use MSN messenger or ICQ or whatever chatting software you use and just build relationships with people. Say, "Hey, how are you doing? What did you do today? What did you learn about in Internet marketing today? What can I help you with? What can you help me with?" Build those relationships. Slowly, over time, you'll have a big network of people that, no matter what you do, you can tell them about what you're doing. A lot of them will probably help you.

Terry:

So if it's not the opt-in list, it's the relationships.

Ian:

Yep.

Terry:

Or a combination of both.

Ian:

I think through building relationships you can build an opt-in list. You can just tell people, "If you want to stay in contact with me, get on my

list.” They’ll probably do it. If they like you, they’ll probably go subscribe without even knowing what they’re subscribing to.

Terry:

That’s super. I have one last question. It’s a very simple one. Do you have any last advice or wisdom that you want to share with everybody?

Ian:

Yea. The Internet is a huge, huge place. Like I said earlier, you can go search for an opt-in list, and somehow you’re going to get to a gaining site. It’s just... you can get very sidetracked very fast because of all the information that’s out there. I would say, try and stay focused on what you’re trying to do, and be patient. I know a lot of Internet products make very big and bold claims. Don’t think that you’re going to go on the Internet and replace your job income or that you’re going to be able to pay off your credit cards in the first month. It’s very rare that people will come onto the Internet and make it very fast.

I’m not saying it’s not possible, but it’s very rare. You have to be patient. It’s like anything else. You have to learn what you’re doing over time to get good at it and make money at it. Keep that in mind. Stay positive and keep working at it. As with anything else, the longer you work at it, the better you’ll get. You’ll see a profit eventually.

Terry:

That’s beautiful advice. How can people get in contact with you, Ian?

Ian:

I would love to say go subscribe to my list, but I won’t. If you want to e-mail me, you can do so at Ian@thegurumarketer.com. That is direct e-mail right to me. Write to me and I’ll answer your questions as soon as possible.

Terry:

I would actually recommend that people do subscribe to your list. I’ve been on it, and I think it’s absolutely fantastic. Where can they go do that if they want to subscribe to your list right away?

Ian:

They can go to www.thegurumarketer.com and subscribe to my list. The first thing they’ll receive is a 12-part mini course that tells the story of how I lost my opt-in list and tells them step-by-step how to

build one for themselves using the same kind of methods that I use. I even give them a couple of tools as well to do it with.

Terry:

That's fantastic; absolutely excellent. I just want to thank you for your time, Ian.

Ian:

Thank you for doing an interview with me.

Terry:

Thank you; it's been my pleasure. You've been listening to Ian Herculson from TheGuruMarketer.com and myself, Terry Telford, from TheBusinessProfessional.com. Thank you very much for your time.

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