Must Have Tools To Multiply Your Business In The Next 12 Months

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The onset of a new calendar year (or financial year) is always a good time to review and start planning to grow your business beyond the past year's performance. There are so many things you can do and I'm sure you know it well. In order to help you achieve those goals, you'll also need the right tools. Here are must have tools in your business' tech toolbox for the year ahead that could help you increase your traffic, income and work less too. Ready? Let's dive into it.

Autoresponder

If you do not already have this, it is the first thing you should invest in. The autoresponder I'm talking about is not the simple send and reply type that you get with your web host but what is called a sequential autoresponder that is actually smart. It can help you schedule your newsletters, create email courses that send out on alternate days and also send regular newsletters as well.

Autoresponders are a **huge time saver** because it helps you follow up on your prospects without actually sitting there trying to figure out how many days it was since this person contacted you and if it's time to contact them again. The scheduling of newsletters itself will save you from feeling like it is crunch time every week.

Here are some examples what you can do with an autoresponder:
- ➔ **Schedule your newsletter**. When, you have more time and more news to share with your newsletter readers, you can prepare and schedule your newsletters during these productive times. Doing this will reduce the stress during those weeks when you find you have little to share and still have to produce the newsletter for the sake of keeping the rhythm.

  Unless it's time sensitive material, your newsletter readers will not know you prepared that email two weeks ahead of time. They're still receiving a quality mailing since you're not emailing them just so you can say the newsletter is published. And they get the newsletter consistently too, especially when there are weeks you just don't feel up to it.

- ➔ **Create a 10 day email course**. Email courses are a great giveaway to get people to signup for your newsletter.

- ➔ **Create a paid email course**.

- ➔ **Follow up with your leads.** Are you networking offline, you could offer people you meet a giveaway, free consult or whatever if they would request it online or subscribe to your newsletter. Then create an autoresponder sequence to follow up with them every week or every month.

If you're ready to start using an autoresponder, you could use a script or you could subscribe to a monthly service. Each has its own strengths but personally, I've chosen a hosted solution even though I am more than capable of setting up and maintaining my own scripts. Because of a bad experience with a script where my host literally deleted my website overnight, I've decided there's just too much riding on my list. And the last thing I want is someone hacking the script and exposing my entire subscriber's information which I've promised to keep safe.

For a hosted monthly service, I recommend:
Aweber – http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/aweber.html

And for autoresponder script you install on your web server:
ListMailPro – http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/listmailpro.html

RSS Feed

Many people have RSS as an alternative to email subscription but RSS can do much more than that and can help you bring in traffic, especially if you offer your RSS feeds to be used on other people's website. By doing so, you are syndicating your content. If you're unsure what that means, think of it this way. If you're already publishing articles to distribute to others, syndicating your feeds work much like that only better because the webmaster only needs to add your code once and each time you update your content, the webmaster's site will also be updated.

The nice thing is, **once a webmaster puts your code up, every article you publish will be displayed on their page**. You don't have to hope that people will pick up the article and you don't have to submit your articles (huge time saver there). This is of course just the **tip of the iceberg** about RSS but often neglected use.

There's much more it can do for you and not enough space as the RSS topic alone is enough to fill up a book. I highly encourage you to have an RSS feed for your website. If you do not know what RSS or have trouble understanding how exactly it fits into your business, can get this free easy to read report for beginning RSS users at http://www.TechBasedMarketing.com/

Blog

Business today is all about relationship especially online, when people can't see or hear you, they can't read your body language. You need some other way to build that relationship and earn customer's trust. Email is so far the leading method of building relationship but with all the problems with deliverability, spam, phishing and viruses, it's fast becoming unreliable.

While blogs aren't meant to be a replacement for email (nothing can replace email yet), it is an additional tool to help you reach people who will otherwise never give you their emails or at least will not give it to you until they feel comfortable with you. Blogs can also further establish your expert status by allowing you an outlet to share your ideas and thoughts about your niche market. On top of that, blogs are also a good traffic generator. Mine is a major traffic generator for my site.

Unfortunately, because blogs can be a powerful tool it's also been exploited. At other times, they don't do it right. The biggest mistake I see, are people creating blogs from peer pressure. Everybody has one so they've got to have one. They get somewhat addicted to blogging because it's so easy and fun, after a while they run out of steam and become disillusioned because they don't quite see how their blogs fit into their business.

Blogs like any website should be carefully thought out and should compliment your website if you already have one. If you're feeling overwhelmed over this, check out **Blogging Starter Pack –** http://www.BloggingStarterPack.com It will help you learn how to fit your blog into your business. Even if you don't know what a blog is, I'll hold your hand step by step all the way from the very beginning.

XSitePro

This isn't just any old web site builder. It's one filled with all the right tools to help you make money, create web pages that are attractive to human visitors as well as search engine crawlers. It also saves you a lot of time by allowing you to change your headers, footers and side columns easily.

If you're using SSI and think it's great, you haven't seen nothing yet. As nice as SSI is (hey I used it myself), it still involves certain amount of work. For example, you need to create different pages for all your different sections. You have to manually enter the code on each and every page. **What happens if you decide instead of a left menu column you now want a right menu column and you have 100 pages on your website?** Sounds like a nightmare. But with XSitePro, all you need to do is fill in a few boxes, save and publish. Yes, no kidding it is that easy.

There's just so much more about this software that helps save my time and I know it will for you too. If you think you cannot afford it then I urge you to think again and next time you build your website clock yourself, then multiply that time by how much you're worth per hour. No cheating and no short changing yourself. You'll quickly see the cost of not having this software over time is much more than what it costs you out of pocket to buy it. If you're still not convinced, watch a video of this web site creator software http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/xsitepro.html

Link Tracking Software

Do you know how much traffic the last advertising brought you? Do you know which ad performed better and which bombed? Do you know which newsletter gave you better response and which gave you better click-throughs? **If you answer no to even one of them, you are throwing your advertising money away**.

The great advertising guru David Ogilvy once said, "I know one half of my advertising is working, I just don't know which half". Pretty sad huh. When Ogilvy said that it was before the Internet we know today. Online, tracking and testing is so much faster, accurate and easy. Nowhere, not newspapers, TV or radio can give you the information online tracking does. Many tracking software are also copy and paste easy.

Success is about repeating what works. So find out what works by using a link tracker. Here are some of the things a link tracker will help you do:

➔ Count the number of click-throughs you received from an ad in a newsletter, Google Adwords or website

➔ Calculate your conversion. How many of those people who clicked through actually took up your offer either by signing up for a newsletter or buying from you.

➔ Split test. Find out which of your sales letter is producing better sales or which ad copy is performing better. You'll be surprised at what the figures show you. The sites that bring you the most traffic might actually be the least profitable ones.

If you're seriously looking to expand your business this year, **start tracking right now**. I recommend Dynatracker, a script that installs on your web server. If all that tech talk scares you, Dynatracker offers free install so you don't ever have to go there. Take their demo setup for a spin: http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/dynatracker.html

Podcasts

Podcasts are so hot right now it's almost unimaginable that just a little over a year ago, it was virtually unheard of. Don't just take my word for it – The New Oxford American Dictionary named it word of the year for 2005. That should be an indication how much this industry has grown and become so important.

Podcasts are fueled by a technology trend – the trend of mini sized portable MP3 players (not just iPods). People have these players with huge amounts of disk space and nothing to fill them up with. **You've basically got a hungry market eagerly reaching out for audio content**.

To take advantage of the podcasting revolution, there are two ways to go about it. Create a podcast yourself, or appear as a guest on a podcast. Creating your own podcast is technically easy but requires a fair amount of time to upkeep. Unless you can **consistently deliver audio content** e.g. weekly, bi-weekly, monthly I'd suggest not getting into it immediately. Don't get me wrong, I find podcasts one of the best ways to create stickiness to your website and establish yourself as an expert. **Half of my RSS subscribers are podcast listeners and I only release it twice a month**. You just need to be aware it can quickly grow into a full time job.

The other way to leverage podcasts require **less commitment and still help build your expert status** plus is a great way to dip your toes into the market, is to be a guest on a podcast. Some guests have **reported phenomenal response and traffic after appearing only on one show**. The key is to find a podcast with a good following and one that is within your niche or at least related to it. To learn more about podcast marketing, visit: http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/podcast_marketing.html

Affiliate System

If you're selling your own products but don't have any affiliates, you're potentially losing a lot of money. Affiliates are like your virtual sales people. They put links up for you – think one way inbound links. They also drive traffic to your website on your behalf. With a little support and the right encouragement, affiliates can help you make much more than you can all by yourself. And, you don't have to pay them unless they produce results.

Setting up an affiliate program is also pretty easy; much easier than you would imagine. Depending on the system you choose, it can be just a matter of pasting a code into your thank you page.

There are two ways you can set up your own affiliate program. Before we discuss them, I think you should first think through **how much time would you like to spend managing affiliates or what part about the affiliate system you'd like to hand over and what you'd like to manage**. If you haven't done anything like this before, think of it this way. Affiliates are like your virtual sales force. **They do need some TLC (tender loving care)** and like any sales force the more you support them with marketing materials and events, the better they will work for you. Now that alone is a big job but managing your own affiliates is more than that there are technical issues ranging from simple can't login to their account to payout.

Some people I've talked to don't mind managing the marketing side but would rather leave the technical issues and accounting to someone else. In that case, your options are:

➔ **Clickbank –** http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/clickbank.html for digital goods

➔ **Shareasale –** http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/shareasale.html Allows both digital and physical goods

Notice, I have yet to mention two of the biggest networks that is Commission Junction and Linkshare because in my eyes, the fees they charge are beyond many home and small businesses. I'm talking in the thousands of dollars for startup and a big monthly fee. But, if you can afford the fees they charge, then they are certainly two of the best in the industry.

What if you want a completely in house solution? This usually means installing a script or using some form of affordable third party solution that only tracks your affiliates but accounting and all that is handled by you. If you're looking for something like that, your options are:
iDevAffiliate – http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/idevaffiliate.html

For third party systems, you could use:
➔ **PayDotCom –** http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/paydotcom.html

➔ **1ShoppingCart –** http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/1shoppingcart.html This isn't really a stand alone affiliate system. It is a complete all in one shopping cart, affiliate system, autoresponder, ad link tracker.

Membership System

Subscriptions are one of today's best business models; especially on the Internet. Just look around you. How many subscriptions do you pay a month? Take note of companies like Gevalia, Proactiv, Bare Escentuals, Silkies hosiery and book clubs. They all sell **physical products on a subscription basis** – they ship and charge you for 30, 60 or 90 days supply and at the end of that cycle you will automatically receive another shipment and another bill ☺

Subscriptions work because they **promote continuity and a more predictable, stable sales pattern**. They also work for consumers. For example, gourmet coffee lovers will eventually run out of coffee and who wants to battle traffic or stand in line at the grocery store? By shipping them a carefully timed shipment, they get what they want without a lot of hassle and the seller is actually **making life easy for their consumers**.

Most subscription sites today are soft products and by that I mean information based, coaching services or newsletters and that is good because nothing is as great a fit to subscriptions than soft products but if you are selling a physical product, don't overlook subscriptions. Look at all these companies. They've been **doing it for years**… why? Because it works! **They wouldn't continue doing so if they were losing money**.

You too can have your own subscription product in addition to your regular one time purchase store. Here are some ideas how you can implement subscriptions in your business:

➔ **Candle Seller:** Quarterly subscriptions where customers automatically receive a bundle of your products based on the season of the year

➔ **Book Seller:** Create your own book club

➔ **Coffee Store:** Three different types of coffee sent to subscribers every month

➔ **Gift card designer:** Send a bundle collection of birthday cards, seasonal cards, cards for common life events to subscribers every month

It is possible and not as difficult as you think. You just need creativity to figure out what to offer and **the right software**. I've tried many different membership systems out there and the best hands down is still **aMember –** http://www.techbasedmarketing.com/amember.html . If the cost seems a little high to you, remember this. For one price, you will be enjoying recurring sales every month – forever… ok maybe not forever but for as long as you want. Divide that over the potential sales and you'll see the cost is really very low.

There are a lot of opportunities presented here, all based on proven techniques or current trends (not fads) that will only become more important in 2006 and beyond. Some of them you're already implementing some of them not. No matter where you are, you don't have to do all of them. Even implementing one will go a long way. The key is to start leveraging the technology.

Here's To A Record Breaking Year,

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