

## AdvanceMe's Small Business Tip: August 19, 2008

### Getting Ahead on the Web

Many small business owners are interested in how to find more success on the Internet. However, with a limited budget to explore possibilities, small business owners want to ensure they are getting the best possible returns for any investment made. So what should you know to help your own business get ahead on the web?



To help answer this question, we asked Aaron Wall, well-known SEO expert and owner of the popular website "SEOBook" for his suggestions. Wall states, "Some web marketing investments, like pay-per-click advertising, keep adding cost and operate in a margins basis where your competitors are aggressively improving efficiency. This forces you to improve your own business to stay efficient enough to compete in the marketplace. There is nothing wrong with recurring business expenses, but the business expenses with the best returns (in my experience) have been one-time investments (and investments with low recurring cost) that keep paying for themselves day after day."

Wall suggests that the following are all one-time investments that could help you to maximize your small business web budget. He identifies:

- **The Right Domain.** "A really good domain name might cost \$100, \$1,000, or \$1,000,000 - depending on when you buy it and how good of a deal you get. But after you make the upfront payment, there are only low annual costs to maintain your domain ownership. Plus, all your offline marketing and advertising benefits from a strategic advantage over competitors if you have selected a great domain name."
- **Site Design.** "Site design does not need to be refreshed often if done well," says Wall. "Even if it seems expensive upfront, if you aggregate the cost over many years it is truly a cheap and beneficial investment."
- **Site Structure.** "Some sites have a piecemeal structure, where pages are added but little effort goes into the actual structure of the site. Planning out your site structure in advance (and using your analytics data to guide site structure) helps you maximize exposure of important pages and pages that are doing exceptionally well. This has little cost outside of time, but pays for itself day in and day out."
- **Investing in Creating Software to Offer Customers.** "Software is one of the cheapest investments you can make," says Wall. "It is perhaps one of the only legitimate ways to build quality inbound links for less than \$1 each. If you spend \$500 or \$5,000 creating a tool that 100 people link to, then that link equity flows through your site. And over time rankings and links become self-reinforcing, to where hundreds of links turn into thousands of links." Wall cites his own efforts as an example: "Our [SEO Tools](#) subdomain has around 40,000 backlinks in *Yahoo! Site Explorer*, and I have paid less than \$40,000 to build out all those tools. On some days the tools subdomain ranks on the first page of Google's search results for 'SEO'."

There is no magic formula to follow to create guaranteed Internet success. But Wall's suggestions indicate that a small business owner can look into various fixed-cost (or low recurring cost) solutions, and by taking carefully measured steps forward, these small business owners could discover effective ways to get ahead on the web.

If you would like to learn more about Aaron Wall, visit: <http://www.seobook.com>. He offers a variety of [free SEO tools](#) as well as individualized [SEO training](#).