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The Five Essential Internet Tools For Experts

by Gihan Perera

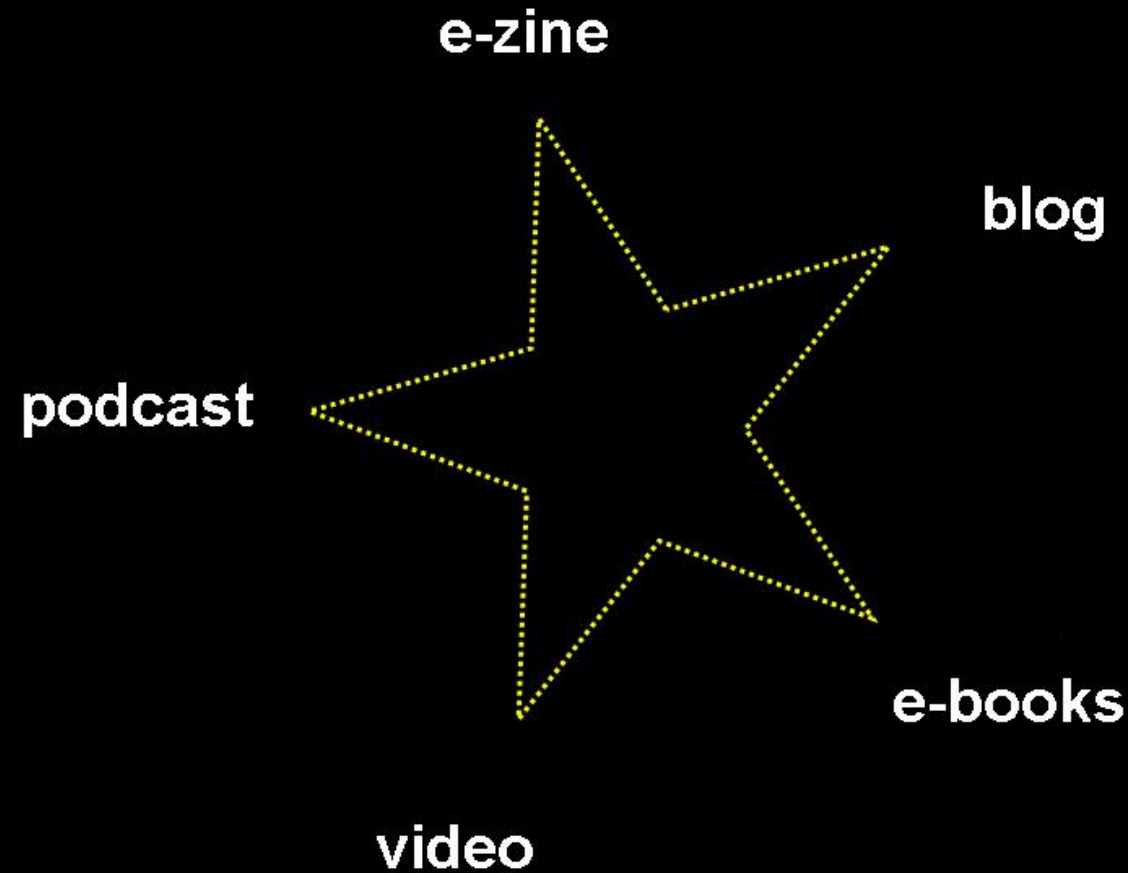


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Introduction

This book is for you if you're an "information expert" – that is, a speaker, trainer, coach, consultant, author, facilitator, or anybody else for whom information is their stock in trade. The Internet is, of course, one of the best ways to disseminate your information and build credibility for your business.

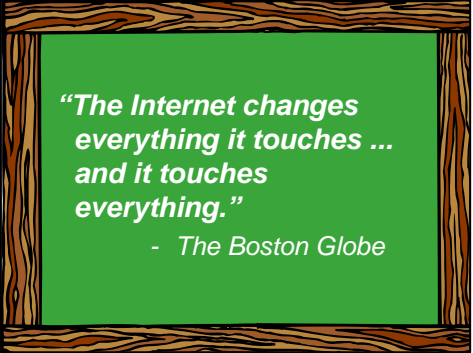
But it's changed recently. In this book, I'll be talking about some of the Internet tools, trends and technologies of the 21st century. These are the things you must use to build your business, keep it growing and keep up to date with Internet trends.

I read something in *The Boston Globe*:

"The Internet changes everything it touches and it touches everything."

But that's not a recent quote – I read it over 10 years ago! And in the last few years, the Internet has changed everything *again*.

I've been using the Internet since 1987 – longer than many people even know it existed! The changes that have taken place recently are new, but they are also turning back time. Some of the capabilities now are exactly the things that used to be available to Internet users 20 years ago. Although the profile of the average Internet user has changed (it used to be only for techies and academics), and the technology has vastly improved, some of the principles are still the same.



*"The Internet changes
everything it touches ...
and it touches
everything."*

- The Boston Globe

More than a Web site

I'm the CEO of a Web design company (www.firststep.com.au). But in this book, I'm not going to talk about Web sites. You do require a Web site, but that's taken for granted now. Ten years ago, when I asked audiences whether they had e-mail, few people in a room would put up their hands. Now it's just taken for granted that you have an e-mail address – and if you're in business, you're expected to have a Web site as well. Those are just the price of entry. In this book, I'm going to talk about other tools you require.

I've been in business since 1997. I spent the first 5 years urging speakers and experts to build a Web site. I then spent the next 5 teaching them how to make their Web sites profitable. I'm going to be spending the next 5 teaching you what else you must have in addition to your Web site.

Web sites are still important - don't get me wrong! But there are other tools you should be using as well. At the end of this book, I think you're going to be excited about all these tools even if right now you don't think they're important to you.

How The World Has Changed

Let me share a few examples to show you how the world has changed.



eBay

eBay www.ebay.com is the world's biggest online auction site. In 2005, EBay was also the biggest used car sales dealership in the world, with US\$15 *billion* worth of business. So if you're working with salespeople – especially in the automotive industry – just realize that they're not only competing with other salespeople any more!



Skype

Skype www.skype.com is a free software package for making free phone calls over the Internet. When I first joined Skype a few years ago, every time I logged on there were a few thousand people connected. But now it's not surprising that when you connect to Skype, you find over a million people using it at that time!



Wikipedia

Wikipedia www.wikipedia.org is the world's biggest encyclopedia. It's an on-line encyclopedia with about 2 million entries, and it's updated daily. Unlike printed equivalents with editorial panels, nobody controls the information that goes into

Wikipedia. It's built by the Internet community. Unlike printed encyclopedias such as the Encyclopedia Britannica, it's not published by one publisher. Research shows that it's not 100% accurate, but also that it's no less accurate than, say, Britannica.



myspace

Myspace www.myspace.com, the first really big social networking site, was bought by Rupert Murdoch for \$700 million recently. It's a place where people (mostly young people) create a personal Web page. They have their own presence on the Internet and – more importantly – connect with other people. It was the precursor to sites like Facebook www.Facebook.com, which is a more sophisticated version of Myspace.



Google

Then there's Google. Google wasn't one of the first search engines, it didn't have a lot of money behind it, but it rapidly became the most popular search engine in the world – I'll tell you why a little bit later.

So What Does This Mean For You?

So the world has changed. Big deal – you knew that already, right? I assume what you'd really like to know is **what that means for you**.

Three things have changed recently in the world of information marketing, and they all affect the way your business will work (or not work!) in the next few years:

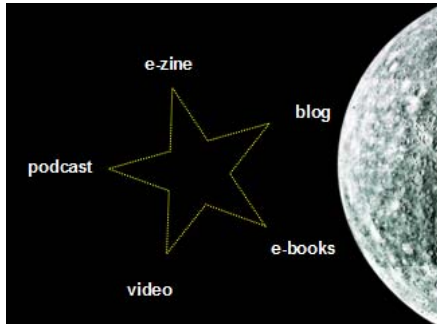
1. **Competition:** The Internet has opened up your target market for new types of competition.
2. **Community:** The Internet landscape has shifted from authority (that is, experts creating Web sites) to community (that is, anybody creating Internet content).
3. **Content:** Internet users still thrive on valuable content, but it's now available to them in a different way.

These three factors – competition, community and content – will significantly affect you and your business. There's good news and bad news:

- ⇒ The good news is that as an expert yourself, you're perfectly positioned to take advantage of these factors.
- ⇒ The bad news is that if you **don't** shift, change and adapt your business, you will fall behind others who do take advantage of them.

In the next three sections, we'll look at these in turn.

The Five Essential Internet Tools



There are five key Internet tools that will help you create and distribute your content beyond your Web site.

In summary – and order of importance – they are:

- ⇒ An **e-zine** or e-mail newsletter, for maintaining a **relationship** with your network.
- ⇒ A **blog**, or on-line journal, for demonstrating on-going **authority** in your field of expertise.
- ⇒ A **podcast**, which is an audio newsletter, for creating a more personal **connection**.
- ⇒ **E-books**, for creating wide **distribution** of your ideas.
- ⇒ On-line **video**, for giving your market an **experience** of what you do.

The other thing you require, of course, is a Web site but I'm assuming you already have one.

Now let's go through each of these five things in detail.

E-Mail Newsletter

The first essential tool is an e-mail newsletter – also known as an e-zine. An e-mail newsletter is like a printed newsletter, except it's delivered by e-mail.

The core reason for building an e-mail newsletter and publishing it regularly is **relationship**. You build a relationship with your community, and not only with your clients and customers, but also with prospects, colleagues and anybody else interested in your area of expertise.

If you're a client of mine or you've been in my community you're probably sick of me talking about the importance of having an e-mail newsletter! And yet, it's still one of the most important marketing tools in your business.

Key principles

Here are three key principles for an effective newsletter.

1. Make it free.

Some people have a subscription (paid) newsletter. That's fine, but make sure you have a free version as well. Your free newsletter is your way of reaching out to your community.

2. Publish it regularly.

Various clients and I have tested newsletter frequency, and the best frequency is every two weeks. Once a week is fine if you've got excellent content. And once a month is about the furthest distance you can afford (otherwise you're wasting opportunities).

3. Give value.

This is what I call the 80/20 rule: Provide at least 80% value in every newsletter, and at most 20% advertising.

If you're going to promote a product, service or an event, don't send just a promotional e-mail. Make sure you include some value as well – for example, an article on a related topic, which then leads to the promotion.

People get so much e-mail these days that it's very tempting to unsubscribe from newsletters that they don't value. If you deliver value every time, then they'll be thinking automatically that they should be reading it.

Getting started

Follow these three steps to get started with your e-zine:



1. Collect subscribers.

Even if you're not already publishing a newsletter, start collecting subscribers anyway. Collect names and e-mail addresses of people (with their permission) to put on your newsletter list once you start publishing.

2. Just do it!

It amazes me how many people put off publishing a newsletter, and eventually when they do, so many of them come back to me and say, "I just wish I had done that earlier." So get into the practice of regularly publishing a newsletter.

3. Keep doing it.

It might take a while to build up momentum, especially to build your list of subscribers. But it's one of the most powerful marketing tools you have. Don't give up on it before you've given it the chance to start working.

Welcome to the Journey



So we've come to the end of this book – but it's only the beginning of your journey.

Remember the three key changes to the Internet landscape:

1. **Competition:** The Internet has opened up your target market for new types of competition.
2. **Community:** The Internet landscape has shifted from authority (that is, experts creating Web sites) to community (that is, anybody creating Internet content).
3. **Content:** Internet users still thrive on valuable content, but it's now available to them in a different way.

As an expert, you're in a perfect position to take advantage of these changes – but you **must** do so.

The bad news is that if you **don't** shift, change and adapt your business, you will fall behind others who do take advantage of them.

I'll end with two stories.



Will you catch the wave?

Australia – where I live – is going through a huge mining boom, largely driven by the mining industry. Many people in my home town of Perth are wealthier than ever, before because many of them are taking advantage of the boom.

However, I often see letters to the editor in our daily newspaper complaining about the fact that the boom is just passing them by. I think there's a curious flaw in their thinking, because they assume they will **automatically** benefit from the boom.

But I don't think booms create wealth; rather, they create **opportunities** for wealth. Those who take advantage of those opportunities will succeed in a big way.

In 2006, I lived in Coolangatta, on the beautiful Gold Coast of Australia. From my apartment looking out over Coolangatta Beach, I saw surfers out on the water every day. Of course, the surfers already in the water, paddling away prepared for the waves are the one who will catch the biggest waves. Those who stand on the shore will miss out. I think we're all standing within touching distance of huge opportunities. It's up to you to take advantage of them.

There'll never be a better moment

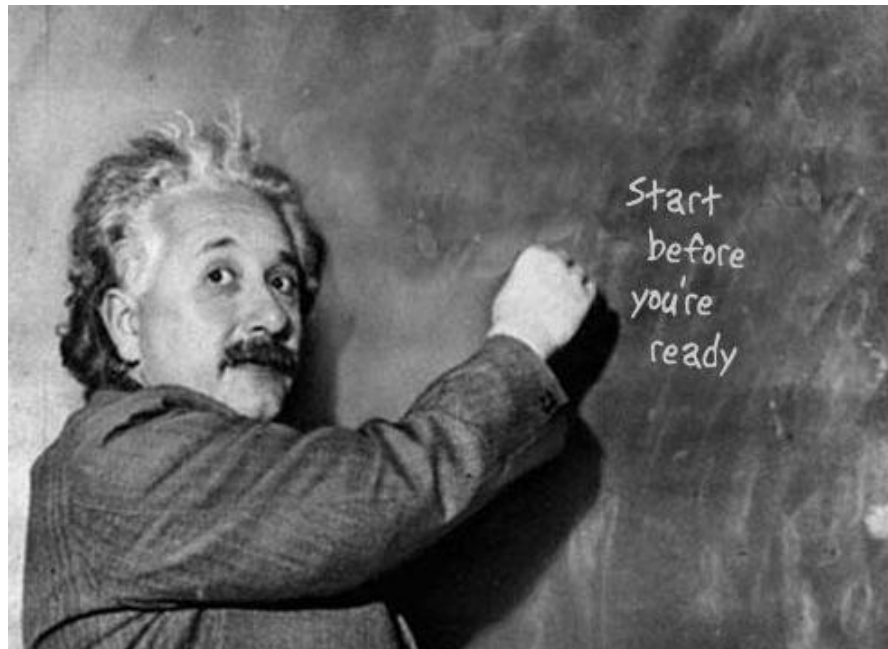
When I was in high school, I read an article in *Newsweek* about a rocket that was heading to Saturn. But it didn't have the technology to reach Saturn! So how does that work, you might ask?



Well, NASA had launched the rocket without the technology to reach its destination but they had the foresight to give it the ability to upload new technology as it became available. It's a good thing that NASA didn't wait until it had the perfect technology before launching the rocket; otherwise it would never have left Earth.

I'm no rocket scientist, but the message is clear to me: **Start before you're ready**. If you're waiting for the perfect moment you'll be waiting a long time. The perfect moment is now. So start a blog, publish a newsletter, build a podcast, create some online videos and write some e-books!

Welcome to the journey. We've only just begun.



Now it's up to you!

I hope you've learned something from this book. But more importantly, I'd like it to spur you into action – because, of course, what matters is not knowledge itself, but **applied knowledge**. If you read this and do nothing, that's just as bad as not reading it at all. In fact, it's **worse**, because you've wasted your time!

So please **take action**, and start **now**.

Find out more

Find out more about these five essential Internet tools at www.GihanPerera.com.



About Gihan Perera

Gihan Perera is a business consultant, speaker, author and entrepreneur – with clients throughout Australia, and in New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, the U.K. and Canada. He works with professional speakers and trainers, consultants, business owners, CEOs and strategic leadership teams to improve their marketing, sales and persuasion skills in one-on-one meetings, group presentations and on the Internet.

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