

A photograph of two young girls in school uniforms. The girl on the left is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and a dark vest with a floral pattern. She is leaning in and whispering into the ear of the girl on the right, who has long blonde hair and is wearing a blue dress. They are standing in a field of yellow flowers. A yellow rectangular box with a black border and a red inner border is overlaid on the image, containing the word "Sample".

**Sample**

## **Spread the Word**

**Marketing With E-Books and  
Special Reports**

**by Gihan Perera**

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## Introduction

E-books are increasingly popular tools for sharing valuable information. Individuals and businesses searching for assistance, guidance, tips, ideas, etc, can quickly and conveniently find the help they need. E-books offer a number of advantages to the writer *and* to the reader. And besides being informative and useful in their own right, they can also be a great marketing tool by enhancing the credibility of the author in the marketplace.

The publishing industry thinks of e-books as just electronic versions of printed books – and with that perspective, they have limited value and market share. Despite this, many e-book authors are making thousands of dollars – and in some cases, hundreds of thousands of dollars – from writing and marketing e-books.

In this program, you will learn how to use e-books for publishing your ideas quickly, generating new leads, adding value in your business, and creating new revenue streams.

### Who is this for?

Almost anyone can use e-books as a marketing tool, a way to enhance their professional image, a way to profit financially from their expertise – or all of the above.

You may have written newsletter articles, newspaper articles, magazine articles, and are now interested in writing e-books. You may be a professional looking to build your profile and reputation in your industry. You may be a small business seeking different ways to market your products or services. You could simply be looking to build a passive stream of income by offering useful information.

The most important thing to realize about e-books is they're *not* difficult to write and publish – virtually any small business or individual can tremendous value from creating e-book. Whether you're a real estate agent, you sell pet food, you're in a service industry, you're a travel agent, or you're in almost *any* other business, you can benefit from creating an e-book.

E-books are excellent marketing tools, and since so few businesses use them – and use them *effectively* – you can quickly differentiate yourself from your competitors.

I work mostly with infopreneurs – professional speakers, trainers, consultants, coaches, authors and other “information experts”. For this group, e-books are *particularly* powerful – because:

- ⇒ You're probably already writing newsletters, blogs, articles and books – so it's easy to re-use that material in e-books.
- ⇒ After your live presentations, audiences might forget you – and an e-book can keep you alive in their minds.

- ⇒ You don't have time to personally reach everybody who needs your services – and an e-book can be a 24/7 tireless marketing tool.
- ⇒ You might be looking at other sources of income – and e-books can provide that, either by themselves or in product/service bundles.

### Why me?

I've published a lot of e-books myself – at least 50, including some that are now obsolete, outdated or superseded. Even if we exclude these, I have over 30 e-books currently in "print".

Over the time I've been publishing e-books, I've done them in a variety of ways:

- ⇒ I've written some from scratch, starting with a blank document
- ⇒ I've written some by starting from an outline of a live presentation, and then filled in the details
- ⇒ I've had some transcribed from an audio interview, and then edited it
- ⇒ I've commissioned writers to write some for me
- ⇒ I've bought reprint rights from other authors to re-publish *their* e-books
- ⇒ I've compiled e-books from other sources – articles, book chapters, blog posts, and so on
- ⇒ I've invited clients to contribute one article each to create a collective e-book

I've also worked with many infopreneurs, helping them publish *their* e-books and special reports.

So I've had a lot of experience – and now I get to share that experience with you!

### Why now?

When I first started with e-books, few people understood the concept of an “e-book”. Now, it's become far more common – especially in the corporate world. Even people who haven't heard the term “e-book” generally know how to open and read PDF files. So it's now a legitimate way to publish your expertise, not some obscure technology that scares your clients.

E-book publishing is easier – and more cost-effective – than ever before. In the early days, you required the full – and expensive – Adobe Acrobat software to convert your e-book into PDF format. Now there are cheap – and even free – options available.

Most important of all, e-books allow you to distribute your expertise far and wide. On the Internet today, it's become more important than ever to prove you're an expert. This has always been important, but you now face more competition than ever before.

Also, don't expect people to visit your Web site before they know anything else about you. They *used* to do that, but now they just don't have the time to visit every Web site address they see. You now have to prove you're an expert *before* they visit your Web site – and e-books can assist in this area.

## Overview

First, we'll look at the basics of e-books – what they are, how long they should be, what title to use, and so on.

Then we'll talk about a number of benefits of e-books, particularly compared with printed books. We'll also look at some of the benefits of *free* e-books, which can sometimes be more profitable than your paid e-books!

Then I'll take you through the planning phase for your e-book, both for free e-books and paid e-books.

Your e-book will sell – or not – based on its value, so I'll give you a number of methods of writing high-value content.

Then we get to the process of fleshing out the other parts of the e-book, converting it into its final form, and making it available for sale.

Finally, we'll consider some strategies for making more sales.

Enjoy the program!

## What is an E-Book?

In simple terms, an e-book is an electronic document that has value to the people who read it. It usually starts as a Word document, and is then generally converted to PDF – a format we'll discuss later.

An e-book does not require a fancy or complicated layout. While printed books often involve sophisticated typesetting and layout, people buy e-books for the content. In fact, some e-books don't even have headers or footers. E-books are just basic documents, and people buy them because they get value from them.

Let's discuss some of the basic components and elements of an e-book.

### What's in a name?

E-books are sometimes called "special reports" or "white papers". In technical terms, they are all identical; the only difference is in the way you position them in your reader's mind. Broadly:

- ⇒ A "special report" is usually a short document about a single topic
- ⇒ A "white paper" is usually a report about the current state of an industry or topic
- ⇒ An "e-book" is usually some form of educational material

In general, you'll see the term "e-book" used for all three – and that's what we do here.

## Length

E-books can be as long or as short as necessary. Some e-books are even less than 20 pages. Because many people will read them at their computer, they don't want a tremendously long book – they want concise, clear, easy to use information.

If your e-book runs to more than 100 pages, consider whether it makes sense to break it down into useful chunks to create multiple e-books.

## Fonts

Microsoft has developed a special font called Verdana, specifically for easy reading on computer screens. It also looks good in print, so we recommend that as the font of choice for your e-books.

## Title

Traditional publishers often have certain "rules" for book titles. Titles were expected to be short and catchy. For instance, one "rule" is that titles should contain numbers, like *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. You might even hear that odd numbers are better than even numbers.

Word substitution has also been useful in traditional publishing. For instance, if you like the title *The Power of Marketing*, you could substitute for *Marketing* with *The Power of e-books* or *The Power of Sales*.

*With e-books, those rules don't necessarily apply.*

Create a clear, benefit-oriented title for your e-book – even if it's a really *long* title.

One of the very first e-books I bought was called *How to Write an E-book in Seven Days*. A traditional print publisher would probably advise, "Pick a slicker title than that. It's not catchy enough." But because it's an e-book, the title tells the reader exactly what they'll get. They don't want *catchy*; they want to know *benefits*.

So be specific. It doesn't matter if it's more like a headline than a traditional book title.

When you choose your title, think from the reader's perspective:

- ⇒ What do they want?
- ⇒ What do they hope to learn?
- ⇒ What benefits do they hope to receive?
- ⇒ What use can they put your information to?

Then write your title to address the answers to those questions. Your title will be effective, descriptive, and marketable.

## Benefits of E-Books

Many people who are new to e-books see them as simply a faster, cheaper alternative to traditional book publishing. That *is* true, but it's not the only benefit. Let's look at 11 other benefits that e-books offer your business.

### 1. Publish fast

Yes, it's certainly true that e-books are faster to publish than printed books – even if you're self-publishing your printed books. E-books are also faster to publish than some other written material – for example, submitting articles to industry magazines.

### 2. Build credibility

An e-book certainly doesn't give you the same "author" status as a printed book. However, that's not to say it gives you no credibility at all. It proves you've thought through your ideas, it shows you're willing to stake a position, and it demonstrates you're confident enough to commit your ideas to writing.

For example, a simple e-book *"The Seven Fatal Mistakes Most Salespeople Make"* can be a powerful marketing tool for you if you're a sales trainer or coach.

### 3. Take full control

You can have full control over the entire publishing process – from the text itself to the layout, design, formatting and publishing.

It's not a book, so you don't have to negotiate with a publisher.

It doesn't require fancy design, so you don't have to work with a graphic designer or typesetter.

It's electronic, so you don't have to deal with a printer.

You distribute it on the Internet, so you don't have to deal with a distributor.

### 4. Do it yourself

Related to the previous point about *control*, you can also do it all yourself, without necessarily outsourcing any of the components.

### 5. Build loyalty

E-books cost nothing to deliver (there's no printing cost, and there's no postage/shipping cost), so they are ideal loyalty gifts to send to clients, as a way of maintaining your relationship with them. It means they don't only hear from you when you send them a bill!

## 6. Gain a clear competitive edge

Despite the many benefits of e-books, few business owners – and even few infopreneurs – are using them. Even fewer are using them effectively. By following the principles and process here, you'll get a clear competitive edge.

## 7. Test, measure, experiment

E-book publishing is extremely flexible. You don't have to print 1,000 copies and wait until they're gone before printing a second edition. This means you can update your e-book whenever you like, and at no cost. Ask for feedback on the first edition, and incorporate that feedback – instantly – into the next edition. In fact, e-books don't usually have a "first edition", "second edition", etc. – because each "edition" isn't a significant process.

## 8. Distribute your message far and wide

If you write a free e-book containing promotional material, you can encourage readers to distribute it to their friends, colleagues and network. It costs them nothing to do so, so they are more likely to do it. It's much more work for them to pass around a printed book – or even a one-page article – even if you give them permission to do so.

## 9. Make money

Yes, you can make money with e-books! In fact, there are *many* ways to make money from e-books – more than just selling them individually from your Web site. That is probably the first method that comes to mind for most people, but it's not necessarily the best first option for you – and it might not even be the most profitable.

For instance, I've made \$1,000's selling e-books directly on the Internet. However, I've made much *more* in indirect sales through *free* e-books. How? For example, my special report *The Seven Fatal Mistakes That Most Experts Make With Their Web Site* keeps bringing me new clients – each of which pays me much more than dozens of individual e-book sales.

That's why I haven't put this at the top of the list, even though it's probably the first benefit that comes to mind for most people.

## 10. Drive traffic to your Web site

Again, a free e-book or special report can bring more people to your Web site – if that is your intent. If you write it well, and offer high-quality content, readers who are interested in further information will naturally gravitate towards *you* rather than your competitors.

## 11. Create more personal connections

Finally, you can customise an e-book easily to match a particular target market, organisation or even an individual.

For instance, one of the consulting services we offer is to review a client's Web site and write a report. Most of the report is standard text, but we customise the last 20% to make it relevant to them specifically. We then send it to them in PDF format – just like an e-book.

## Make More Sales

In this section, let's look at some ways to improve your sales. This is in fact a much broader topic, because it's really about your overall marketing skills, not just about e-book marketing. However, I'll touch on a few things here in the context of selling more e-books.

### Check the demand

If you write an e-book that nobody wants, it doesn't matter how well you market it, you'll be fighting an up-hill battle.

For example, in 2004 I wrote an e-book about Australia's anti-spam legislation, which was coming into law in April 2004. It was big news in the media, and many people were concerned about what it meant for their email newsletters, and in fact e-mail correspondence in general. So I guessed (wrongly, as it turned out!) that there was enough interest in this topic to write an e-book about it.

Unfortunately, I sold hardly any copies. Even when I bought Google advertising to drive traffic to my Web site, it didn't create many sales. In fact – and this is the point – I discovered at that point that hardly anybody was searching Google for information about the anti-spam legislation. If I had done this research *before* writing the e-book, I would have realised this earlier.

In contrast, one of my clients, Max Hitchins, the Hospitality Doctor – who I’ve mentioned before - (his Web site is [www.HospitalityDoctor.com](http://www.HospitalityDoctor.com)) took the opposite approach. Whenever somebody signed up to his e-mail newsletter, he sent them a message saying, “Thank you for signing up, you’ve just gone into the draw for our monthly prize.” And he listed his five books and asked them to choose their prize.

We soon discovered that one book was consistently asked for more than the others. So when his print run ended, he re-published *that* particular book as an e-book. And the first day that he offered it for sale, he made \$24,000 – all because he had done the market research up front.

### Ask your market

Checking in with your market is not just about whether or not to go ahead with your e-book. It’s also a valuable way to plan the e-book content itself. Ask your market what they’d like to know, and teach that in your e-book. That’s how to make an e-book highly relevant.

So ask your customers what problem you’re solving for them. They already are marketing experts in your business! Then address these problems in your e-book and your promotional material, and you’re more likely to get more sales.

For more on this topic, get our program *Find Your Market*, available here:

[gihanperera.com/find-your-market](http://gihanperera.com/find-your-market)



## Focus on benefits

When promoting your e-book, it's easy to get caught up in *what* is in it, and forget to explain *why* that's important to the reader. The "what" is a feature, the "why" is a benefit. Remember to include both in your promotional material.

Sometimes we get too close to our own product. We think of all its great features, how it's so much better than anything else on the market, how it's new and exciting (to us!), how it's a huge improvement over anything else we've done before, and so on. And we might forget the customer!

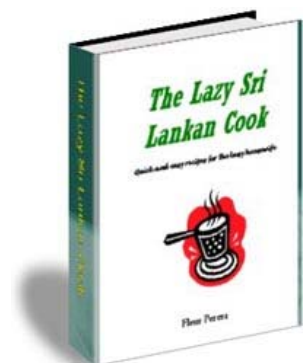
One of the easiest ways to turn a feature into a benefit is to ask "So what?". So start by listing all the features of your e-book content (in other words, list the things that readers will learn from it). Then take each feature in turn, ask the "So what?" question, find an appropriate answer, and add it to the end of the feature with the words "... so that".

For example, if your e-book teaches people to take better travel photographs, that's a feature. Asking "So what?" gives a reason – say, something like this:

Learn to take travel photographs, so that you can relive those memories in the future.

Instead of using the linking phrase "so that", another option is "which means that" or just "so". These all link the feature to the benefit, so that you're not forcing the reader to create the link in their own mind.

### Examples



For example, for my mother's e-book about Sri Lankan cooking, our sales letter included a number of benefits:

Here's a sneak peek at what you'll discover in "*The Lazy Sri Lankan Cook*":

- ◆ What makes Sri Lankan cooking different from Indian cooking, and any other cuisine in the region (*it truly is a unique taste!*)
- ◆ **How to create mouth-watering curries that don't burn your tastebuds!**
- ◆ How even a beginner can get started with Sri Lankan cooking *even if you have never cooked an Asian recipe in your life!*
- ◆ **How to take ordinary rice and create a meal in itself - a feast for the stomach and the eyes.**
- ◆ The simple secret for healthy cooking (*truth is, you can make a wholesome, healthy Sri Lankan meal without losing any of the wonderful flavors*)
- ◆ **How to make cakes, puddings and other desserts that bring your Sri Lankan meal to the perfect conclusion.**

And that's just a fraction of what you'll find out in "*The Lazy Sri Lankan Cook*".

All in all, there are **over 40 easy-to-make recipes**, including curries, vegetable dishes, accompaniments, desserts, rice and flour dishes.

There's even a menu that shows you how to create a full rice and curry meal in just one hour!

We didn't just pick these out of thin air. Rather, we did ask the market first, and then designed the benefit statements based on their questions. For example, one question was, "How is it different from Indian cooking?". So our benefits list included the statement "What makes Sri Lankan cooking different from Indian cooking, ..."

I did something similar in promoting my e-book *Tell The World*, which is about the power of teleseminars. I first asked my newsletter readers to give me their most pressing questions about teleseminars, and then incorporated their responses into the sales letter:



In the **"Tell The World"** program, you will learn how to:

- ◆ Add visual and kinesthetic techniques to an auditory environment, so you can engage your audience fully.
- ◆ Set and control the agenda of your call, so that you remain in control at all times and achieve your objectives.
- ◆ Understand the mechanics of having attendees from around the world in relation to using phone lines and/or VoiP, so the technology becomes easy for everybody on the call.
- ◆ Get people to sign up - both paid and unpaid - so you attract the right audience and make it profitable.
- ◆ Turn attendees into paying customers begging for the full workshop and still give them something of value, so they feel satisfied with your content while still wanting more.
- ◆ Manage large numbers of participants you can't see, so the entire audience gets the full value from the experience.

For instance, somebody asked, “How do you manage large numbers of participants you can’t see?” So one of our benefit statements mentions exactly that point, and using that person’s own words.

### **Make a guarantee**

As a general rule, offer a money-back guarantee on your e-books. It reassures your customers, increases your sales, and can increase the price you set. Your price depends on how well you can convince customers of the value of your e-book. One way to convince them is to offer guarantees.

For example, if you have an e-book that you price at \$97, how do you justify the price? One way is to say:

“The price is \$97 and there is a 12-month guarantee. The guarantee is that within the first 12 months, you’ll make 10 times as much as you paid for it – or you get your money back *and* you can keep the e-book.”

So you offer a 12-month guarantee and your value proposition is “You’ll make \$1,000 from the information in this e-book ... so are you willing to invest \$100 for that?” In other words, *there is no risk* to the reader.

If your material is good, most people won’t ask for their money back.

Be careful about making your guarantee period too short. Despite what you might think, a 30-day guarantee will get *more* returns than a 12-month guarantee, which in turn is less effective than a lifetime guarantee.

Long guarantees make it easier to justify your value. It's easier to say a reader will make \$1,000 in a year rather than in 30 days. Also, at day 29, they may think, "Oh, I haven't hit my target – I'd better ask for my money back...." On the other hand, if you give them time to absorb the content and put it to good use, you can confidently assure them that they will succeed.

## Bundle

Many e-books are sold in bundles with other products. The e-book adds value to the bundle, even if it's not the main product. However, some people will buy a bundle of products purely for the "bonus" products, not the main product itself.

For instance, you might sell access to a membership site, which includes a number of e-books available for free download inside it.

I use exactly this principle when promoting the First Step Member Community, at [www.first-step-community.info](http://www.first-step-community.info). People who join the community get to download – free of charge – all the e-books that non-members have to buy individually at [www.GihanPerera.com](http://www.GihanPerera.com). People aren't necessarily joining the community *for* the e-books, but they do get them as part of the bundle.

## Include testimonials

Just as testimonials from past clients are invaluable to build credibility for getting future bookings for live presentations, testimonials from e-book readers are equally important for getting more e-book sales.

Sometimes you'll get unsolicited testimonials, but they are rare. More commonly, you'll have to write to your e-book readers and ask for a testimonial. Most people have trouble writing testimonials, so give them some examples that they can copy and adapt.

When we published my mother's e-book about Sri Lankan cooking, for a short time we even made it available *free* – in return for some testimonials. Here's the wording we used:

What's the catch? There isn't one. Well, OK, there **is** ... The reason we're offering it free is so that we can get some testimonials from people who try out the recipes. So please feel free to download the e-book with our compliments, then try out the recipes ... **and please tell us what you think.** Just e-mail me at [gihan@srilankancooking.com](mailto:gihan@srilankancooking.com) with your comments, so that we can add some of them on the Web site.

**And yes, please tell your friends about this Web site, too. We would love to give them a free copy as well!**

## Make repeat sales

I've mentioned already that it's easier to market to "friends" (past customers) than "neighbours" or "strangers". Some people take "friends" to mean only those people who've bought other products and services from you. But it applies to your e-book customers as well.

If you have more than one e-book, you can make repeat sales to the same customers. After all, if they get value from one e-book, they are more likely than a stranger to buy another e-book from you. What's more, they are comfortable with the e-book format and they trust you enough to pay you money.

## Ask your market

I mentioned earlier that you should ask your market *before* writing your e-book. You can also do this *after* publishing it.

For example, when we first published my mother's e-book about Sri Lankan cooking, we added a special bit of programming to the sales page so that we displayed a little survey to anybody who *didn't* buy it. We simply asked them to tell us *why* they didn't buy it, and in return we gave them a free copy of the e-book!

This was a win-win situation. We'd already paid money to Google for advertising that brought them to the Web site. So rather than get nothing at all in return, we got some valuable information that allowed us to fine-tune our sales page.

For example, one reader thought postage and shipping would be too high. She didn't realise it was an *electronic* book that didn't have any postage costs. That was obvious to me, but not to her! So we updated the sales page to say this more clearly.

## Lead with value

When promoting your e-book, give the potential customer *value*, not just a marketing spiel. With e-books, the simplest way to do this is to let them download a free sample. I do this at [www.GihanPerera.com](http://www.GihanPerera.com) with most of my e-books – for example:

### E-Book:

You also get immediate access to a detailed e-book after you order, so you can instantly start using the ideas in it.

[Download a sample here.](#)

**This audio/e-book program is \$67.**

[Order here using our secure server.](#)



Make sure you provide high value in the sample. It's tempting to only offer the least valuable sections in the sample and hold back the high-value content for the full version. But that's a waste of time. You want people to see the *best* of you first, and judge the rest of the e-book on that quality.

I also recommend you keep the full Table of Contents in the sample, so they can see an overview of all the material.

## Build scarcity

When you use all the persuasive tools at your disposal, you might have convinced somebody to buy your e-book. But there's still one more thing that could lose the sale: Why should they buy it *now*?

It's tempting for them to put off the sale until later. Even with the best of intentions, many of those people won't come back to buy it. They might forget, they might find some other way to spend their money, they might change their mind, or they might genuinely be interested in buying it at a "later" time that never occurs.

To overcome this problem, you have to build *scarcity* into your promotional material. With a physical product like a book, you can use techniques like "Limited stock" or "Damaged copies" or "Final copies before next print run". This doesn't work for e-books, of course, because there *is* no stock on hand.

However, you can build scarcity by doing things like this:

- ⇒ "Available to you until [date] at [special price], and after that it's being released to the public at [higher price]"
- ⇒ "Available at [special price] if you buy it with this bundle of other products"
- ⇒ "Pre-orders available at [special price], to help me with cash flow during production"
- ⇒ "Christmas special"

## Persist

Finally, I urge you to be persistent. Very few marketers get it exactly right first time. Even those who are happy with their initial sales will tweak a few things in their marketing in an attempt to make even better sales.

It's more common to see somebody write an e-book, make one attempt to sell it, and then give up and move on to the next thing. It's tempting, because we infopreneurs enjoy the thrill of the product as much as the thrill of the sale. However, if you succumb to that temptation, you'll be selling yourself short.

Persist! If you've done your research and you know your market, it's almost always worthwhile in the long term.

## Final Words

There's a common saying in business: "Fast, Good and Cheap: Pick any two". It implies you can't have all three. However, with e-books you *can* have all three of these things.

In fact, if we look at the most common mistakes infopreneurs make with e-books, they fall into these three areas:

- ⇒ **Fast:** They spend too much time trying to make their e-book perfect.
- ⇒ **Good:** Ironically, they also don't deliver enough value in their e-book.
- ⇒ **Cheap:** They invest in things like graphic design and typesetting, which don't necessarily generate a good return on the investment.

In contrast, *successful* e-book authors get those three things right:

- ⇒ **Fast:** They have a "Near enough is good enough" philosophy, knowing that it takes too long to get it perfect.
- ⇒ **Good:** They focus on high-quality content, not fluff.
- ⇒ **Cheap:** They invest wisely – for example, graphic design for a single template for all their e-books; or membership of an online photo library.

## Now it's up to you!

I hope you've learned something from this special report. 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.

I hope you've enjoyed this program. Feel free to e-mail me [gihan@gihanperera.com](mailto:gihan@gihanperera.com). I'd love to hear your comments, your case studies, your success stories, your failure stories and any questions that you have.



## 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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