

# Selling Information Product Online

**By Patric Chan**

<http://www.OnlineNicheSecrets.com>

## **About the Author:**

Patric Chan, is a direct response expert, internet infopreneur, international speaker and author. Already, at the age of 24, he has achieved extraordinary results in the internet marketing world. He has joint-ventured with many well-known internet marketing experts in product creation, selling online, and managing online businesses.

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## **Selling Information Products Online**

In my experience, before most people set up an online business they've already got a pretty good idea about what they want to sell. It's often something they've worked with in the past or something they use in their spare time, like model aircrafts or football memorabilia. The Web, they believe, is the perfect way to get those products to the public with little expense.

But not everyone comes online with an idea in hand. In this eReport, I'm going to look at two kinds of product you can create and sell on the Web: *information products*.

Let's start with information products.

On the Web, information products mean e-books. These are small books that are downloaded from the Web (like this one) and are usually aimed at niche markets. It costs a lot of money to make a print book and if the market is small, few publishing companies are going to bother with the risk and the expense. E-books cost little more than the time it takes to write them.

And anyone can write an e-book! You don't have to be John Grisham or the world's leading expert to write a book. Everyone knows something that other people don't know, whether it's how to fix a TV or how to tell the difference between a blue tit and a crow. You don't even need to write it yourself. If you've got an idea for a book, simply find yourself a ghostwriter, tell them what's on your mind and get them to write it for you!

### **Finding a Writer**

If you don't want to do the writing yourself, finding a writer for your e-book is dead easy. Finding a good writer though is a whole other ball game. Everyone and their aunty thinks they have what it takes to win the Pulitzer if someone would just give them a chance, but even most college graduates have a hard time constructing a sentence, let alone writing a complete book. And you don't want any old book. You want a book your readers will enjoy reading in a style that speaks to them.

If you've already hired someone to write your newsletters for you, they're probably going to be the first person to ask. Every time you hire a new writer, you're taking a risk. You'll have no idea how talented they are, how much they know about your industry or how

well they can write in the style you need. A writer you already work with though, does know about your industry—and you know how well they can write.

If you don't have anyone on call though, Elance is a good place to search. Again, check the portfolios carefully and pay attention to people's feedback. Elance encourages its clients to review the work of the people they hire. These are great pointers to the reliability and skill of a writer you're thinking of hiring.

One little tip for hiring writers on Elance is not to pay too much attention to the amount of work the writer has done in the recent past (another little piece of info Elance gives you). You don't want to hire someone who's too stressed to give your book the attention it needs, and just because someone's new to Elance, or doesn't use it very much, doesn't mean they don't have a lot of experience. They might have a lot of clients outside Elance.

In short, you want to find someone who can show you an e-book they've already written and ideally on the subject and in the style you want.

Now, once you've made the hire, it's important to remember that you're paying someone to do the writing not the thinking. It will be up to you to supply the writer with all the information he needs to get the job done. The more you help the writer with the ideas you want the book to contain, the greater the chance you'll get the product you want.

And finally, don't be surprised if the writer demands that you stump up some cash in advance. On Elance, a deposit of as much as 50% isn't uncommon. This a result of all the unscrupulous buyers who have bought services and not bothered to pay the bill. Too many writers have been stung in the past and most of the more established ones will want to see at least some cash to know you're on the level. There's often room to negotiate the deposit though, and you can sometimes use milestones to lessen the risk on both sides.

## **What Can You Write About?**

In essence, there are four categories of books. Of course there are a plethora of subcategories in each of these main categories, but the main ones are:

## **i. Pleasure Books**

Usually fiction: novels, short stories, poems, romances, sci-fi, historical, adventure or humor are the most popular, but they're all hard to sell online. Most people prefer to buy fiction in stores.

## **ii. Inspirational Books**

Spiritual books, devotional writings, uplifting life-experiences, Biblical or other religious writings, stories from the heart, or life-changing principles. A select market that you need to know well to make pay.

## **iii. Study Books**

There is a constant need for reference material both for business and academic use. This could cover everything from supplementary reading for school kids to advanced math tutoring for university students. Know something others don't?

## **iv. How-To Books**

"Do-it-yourself" and self-improvement books. Straightforward approaches, pictures and analogies that teach everything from archery to amateur zoology.

Although *all* these types of books sell, the **how-to-books and guides** are by far the best sellers on the Web. You don't have to be massively original here. The most profitable books are those that offer a slightly new take on a topic with proven popularity. There's no point in picking a subject that only interests you and your best pals.

I've found that TWO of the most popular—and most profitable—topics for "how-to" e-books are "Solving a problem" and "Giving convenience".

When you're looking for a topic, first make sure it's a subject that you do actually have some knowledge about—or alternatively, make sure you hire a writer who does.

If you've found a subject that no one else has touched, or even come close to touching, it's unlikely that anyone will want to read it. The reason that there are millions of romances on bookshelves—and almost all of them the same—is that publishers know they sell. And like you, they're interested in making money not breaking new ground.

So how do you assess the popularity of your chosen topic?

**Here's a simple three-step process:**

1. Identify keywords for your book idea.
2. Conduct a search of your keywords to determine how many people are searching for the information you're putting out.
3. Run your keywords through the search engines and look for the following information:
  - a. The number of e-books already available on the subject.
  - b. The number of paid sponsor ads for the search. This indicates that there is interest on the subject—otherwise big companies wouldn't be wasting their marketing budgets to sponsor the searches.

And what does all this information tell you? First, it tells you whether there is a market at all; and secondly it tells you whether the market is saturated.

**Choosing the right topic**

We discussed earlier the importance of choosing the right topic or your Ebook. The Internet is primarily used to communicate, entertain, educate and research. It is thus no wonder that nonperishable, information-intensive products - including books, travel guides, magazine subscriptions - are the most popular online products at present. Content-rich sites, subscription-based sites to advertiser-supported sites focusing on a wide range of topics, have been sprouting all over the Internet.

Ebooks and guides on various subjects have been prospering in the recent past. Anything you can put in a physical book, you can put in an Ebook. You can sell just about any content — as long as you have an offering that has a market and an ability to get it (legally) to your customer. Yes, there are exceptions. In some cases you might be competing with big companies with a chunk of the market share.

Once you have selected your subject, it's just a question of putting it all together and making the sales. Show it to your friends and

colleagues to get their feedback, add some pictures to break up the text if you can, and upload it onto your server.

Your basic sales method is likely to be through a website, but e-books also make great bonuses, joint venture opportunities and ways to add extra value to your sales.

Information products have two great advantages. First, they're dead easy to put together. If you've always thought of yourself as a bit of a writer and want to do it yourself, you can have fun and hit the keyboard. If you'd rather pay a pro, you can probably make the money back once you've shifted about thirty or forty copies—follow my marketing methods and that will take you less than two weeks.

Best of all though, information products give you an unending stream of revenue. Once you've uploaded the book onto your server and set up the website and payment system, the money pretty much rolls in by itself. There's no shipping, no inventory, no fiddling about with order sheets. You just keep an eye on the marketing, make sure the users keep coming and count the number of times people download. Put a series of books like this out, combined with my marketing methods and you're looking at a very nice way to make a living.

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