20 Must-Have Tools to Automate an Online Business

With all the information online about tools and techniques available to help someone effectively manage and run an online business, how do you ever decide which ones are truly useful to have in your business management toolkit? Here's my listing of the 20 indispensable tools that I cannot live without:

1. Article Marketing: SubmitYourArticle.com automates the article submission process by allowing you to submit up to eight articles each month and then distributes the articles to hundreds of web sites, article directories and ezine publishers. Without a doubt, this has been my most effective online marketing tool that has produced tremendous results for my business.

2. Audio Recording/Podcasting: AudioAcrobat.com makes audio streaming fast and simple, whether you want to add an audio greeting, audio testimonials, podcast or videos to your website or send out an audio postcard or record a teleclass.

3. Backup: Carbonite.com offers an unlimited amount of data storage for $50 per year. Carbonite is very intuitive and went directly to my email files and Roboform files to back them up without me having to manually select the backup files. I frequently use this service to find the original version of a file that I've accidentally overwritten, as well.

4. Blogging: Typepad.com is both simple to use and powerful. You can set up as many blogs as you desire with a Pro account, and you can customize your blog in an infinite number of ways. Once it's set up, the online interface makes it a snap to make new posts to your blog.

5. Bookmark Manager: SPURL.net makes managing a moderate to massive amount of bookmarks very easy. You create any number of categories in which to file your favorites, and adding a favorite website is as easy as clicking a button.

6. Color Matching: Pixie is a tool that I use daily to help me match a color exactly for a document that I'm creating or a color I'm trying to replicate on a website. Run it, simply point to a color and it will tell you the hex, RGB, HTML, CMYK and HSV values of that color.

7. Content Management: Edit.com is a website maintenance service that makes your current website editable so you can change the content yourself. They handle everything to get your site set up and provide you with telephone training to walk you through your first edits. There is no software to install because it just uses your web browser. At no chärge, you can have them review your website to ensure that your site is compatible with their service.

8. Email Líst Management/Autoresponders: aWeber.com is a great service for creating, mailing and reporting back on the success of your newsletter as well as to subscribe your readers to a sequential autoresponder, either associated with your newsletter or with another product. I love to be able to see how many readers opened my newsletter, who opened the newsletter, and what links they clicked on from the newsletters.

9. Fax: MaxEmail.com lets you send and receive faxes through the Internet/email and makes your need for a fax machine obsolete. The faxes arrive in PDF format, so you can easily share you faxes with others as needed. They also offer voice mail on your fax line, and the voicemail message arrives as an audio file in your email inbox.

10. Graphics Program: SnagIt.com lets you show someone exactly what you see on your screen. Select and capture your screen image and send it to SnagIt's editor to add professional effects, edit the image (resize, adjust color), and or drop it into your favorite application.

11. Hosting: Aaces.com offers the ability to buy a hosting plan in which you can host and manage a large number of websites through one account rather than buying multiple hosting plans for each website for your business. And, their customer service can't be beat.

12. Idea Management: With EverNote.com you can easily store and quickly access typed and handwritten memos, webpage excerpts, emails, telephone messages, addresses, passwords, brainstorms, sketches, documents and more! A free version or a 30-day trial of the paid version is available for download.

13. Merchant Account: PracticePaySolutions.com offers an all-in-one ecommerce solution that helps you take payment online. The coolest feature that they offer in this service is the ability to do batch uploads of charges, so if you have a number of clients on retainer that you invoice every month, you can simply create a spreadsheet and batch upload the data rather than entering each client's information individually.

14. Publicity Tracker: Google Alerts lets you type in an unlimited number of search terms, like your name, your company name, your industry, the name of your competitors, etc. Google will then deliver an email alert for any mention of your search term online. This is a wonderful way to track your own PR as well as industry trends.

15. Password Management: Roboform.com is the top-rated password manager and web form filler that completely automates password entering and form filling. You'll never have to remember a password again! I maintain both my passwords and user info and that of my clients in this program.

16. Shopping Cart: KickstartCart.com is easy to use and setup, and offers the ability to create affiliate programs, follow up with prospective and current customers with autoresponders, create coupons for limited-time offers, as well as enable buyers to immediately download electronic purchases (ebooks, audio files). There is a free 30-day trial, but don't sign up until you have the time to test drive it--30 days goes by fast!

17. Spyware: CounterSpy.com will protect your computer from spyware, adware, Trojans and other malware threats.

18. Teleconference Line: LiveOfficeFreeConferencing.com lets you meet with colleagues, associates or even family members through a teleconference bridge line that can bring up to 250 people together at one place over a teleconference telephone line. You can use the line to conduct classes and training and record your calls, as well as manage your participants from an online interface.

19. Time Tracker: TraxTime.com has helped me keep track of my consulting projects for years. You simply create projects and clock into and out of them, with the ability to write memos about how you've used your time.

20. To Do List Management: Accomplice.com works online and offline, integrates with Outlook and other software you already use, and syncs with your PDA. What I love most about this software is that I can create in-depth, hierarchical to-do lists (tasks and sub-tasks of a bigger project) very easily, and add additional tasks on the fly as they occur to me. I can see at any point what are my more important tasks and what is coming due soon.

Try out these tools with the trial offers provided and see how your business becomes easier to manage!

About The Author
Online Business Resource Queen (TM) and Online Business Coach Donna Gunter helps self-employed service professionals learn how to automate their businesses, leverage their expertise on the Internet and get more clients online. To claim your Free gift, TurboCharge Your Online Marketing Toolkit, visit her site at GetMoreClientsOnline.com . Ask Donna an Internet Marketing question at AskDonnaGunter.com .

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