



How to Create Your First Ebook

By James L. Paris

We spend a lot of time in here and in our system discussing ways in which you can make money and otherwise grow your business by working as an affiliate or other sort of intermediary for the business of another; in a variety of ways, you can use your own proprietary web presence to make money by essentially selling or marketing the products and services of others. That is a terrific model, and one that will surely serve as a cornerstone of your Internet marketing efforts for as long as you're doing this (hopefully, for the rest of your life). That said, another excellent way to both directly and indirectly add to your income is through the creation and sales of your own books—*ebooks*, in this case.

I have received so many letters and emails from students over the course of this year that are telling me you all want to learn how to create your own ebooks. Some have even been prompted to move forward with this on the basis of their involvement with *ClickBank*; many of you seem to find appealing the idea of creating your own products to sell on ClickBank (as opposed to simply selling the products of others), and believe that creating an ebook is the most straightforward way to make that happen. Good enough; at the very least, of course, you will want to make an ebook available on your own proprietary website and/or blog.

Creating and selling ebooks does a few, very important things for you. First and foremost, creating your own ebooks will raise your

level of income, to be sure. Ebooks have become very popular of late, and as more and more people become accustomed to looking at the Internet as their primary source of receipt of information, ebooks will come to enjoy the same regard as more traditional books.

Additionally, putting out ebooks is helpful when it comes to the matter of credibility. When you create an ebook, you have created, well, a *book*. I can tell you that if, in addition to creating and maintaining your website and/or blog platform, you begin creating a *library* of ebooks, you will be looked at as an even greater expert in your field. Granted, ebooks are not yet regarded as being as prestigious as traditional books—for one thing, the lack of a physical book, with physical binding, pages, etc., can hurt with the people for whom that sort of substance is important, and for another, precisely because anyone can publish his own ebook, there is sometimes a perception that the same level of quality is not present in an ebook as is present in a book that has had to go through a quality control process with a third-party publisher. All of that said, a well-written ebook that is contained inside of effective packaging (more about that later) is still a credibility-enhancer over an Internet marketer who has not gone to the time or trouble of creating any ebooks. This myself for many years now.

I have to be honest and say that I may be remiss in this subject in the sense that I take for

How to Create Your First Ebook (cont. from Page 1)

granted the matter of creating ebooks; I have been doing this myself for many years now. I forget that there is still only a small number of people who know how to address the details of creating an ebook cover, knowing in what program the material should be written, and the other associated details. It really is not very complicated, but I will admit that it can be a big help if someone actually shows you how to do these things.

Note that different creators of ebooks will have their own processes by which they go from having no ebook at all, to having a saleable ebook available to the Internet audience. All I can realistically do is show you how I do it, and whether you stick dogmatically with my “system” or modify it to your own taste is up to you.

Usually, the first thing I do is come up with a concept, and then I come up with a title. Some people work in more of a backwards fashion in that regard; they will write the whole book and come up with the title as their last step. I can’t do that; I have to essentially “see” what the cover is going to look like and know what the title is going to be (it can be a “working” title, which might change before publication, but I have to have a title in place at the outset, nonetheless).

The next step is to write out all of the different topics I want to cover. I will do this in more of an informal, “bullet point” type of format, but when I’m finished with this, it will serve as my outline. When you are thinking of soliciting a standard publishing house with a book idea, they will want to see, at the very least, a proposal that, among other components, contains an outline of the book you plan to write. The outline generally consists of the contents, and a short but compre-

hensive overview of what is to be contained in each of the chapters. By no means will your ebook outline have to be that formal, but I can tell you that the better-formed it is, the greater clarity you will possess when it comes time to write the manuscript.

When I begin to create my outline, I will do so in a fairly relaxed setting. For example, I may take a pen and writing tablet with me to the beach, or perhaps to the café section of my favorite bookstore. I can tell you that at this part of the creation process, I find it actually easier to work by putting the words down in longhand. I will start by simply jotting down the points that, at this beginning stage, I believe I want to cover in the book. If I subsequently decide that I don’t like something, I just scribble it out and keep plugging away. The informality of putting my thoughts down by this process helps to keep me from becoming locked in to the book before I’ve actually decided which topics I want it to cover.

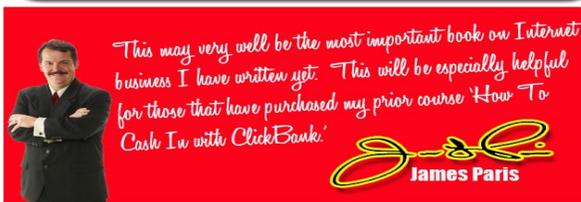
Once I have finished my list of bullet points, or informal outline, I will actually begin



How to Create Your First Ebook (cont. from Page 2)

roughing out my sales page. This surprises many when I say this, because they expect me to say that the next step of my process is for me to begin creating the manuscript. The reason I start to work on the sales page after the outline is that doing so requires me to come up with a list of product benefits that the sales page will highlight. Once I have that list, I keep it in front of me as I'm writing the manuscript, which helps me to remain aware of the things I'm promising the book will deliver as I'm creating it.

Here is a snapshot from my sales page about my e-product on ClickBank Traffic Secrets. These benefits, ultimately listed on the sales page for promotional purposes, first sat on my desk as I was creating the manuscript:



So far, then, we have looked at the process in terms of coming up with the idea for the book, coming up with a title (or working title), and then sitting down to scratch out on a writing tablet all of the different topics you want the book to cover. Now, remember that your ebook can be on any topic. Ideally, if

you have a website or blog that has a particular theme (as it should), your ebook(s) can be on any related aspect of that theme. However, some of you may still struggle with the idea of coming up with an appropriate topic for an actual book (as opposed to a blog piece or other short manuscript). In that case, there are a few things you can do.

For one thing, if you head over to do a Google search, type the word "ebook" into the search mechanism, and then filter the results via the "Shopping" tab that is usually found at the top of the results page, you will find lots of ebooks for sale (note that the results will also return other things related to ebooks, like ebook readers, etc.). There are thousands and thousands of ebooks out there. You can also head over to Amazon and go to the Kindle store, where the search results will already be filtered on the basis of ebooks (that can be read by a Kindle). Type in any idea you have, and see what comes back (note that in the case of Kindle-based search results, those will include "regular" physical books that happen to be available as digital downloads, in addition to books that are originally created as ebooks). There will be a lot of ebook ideas before you. Perhaps the best resource of present ebooks for sale through which you can sift for ideas is *ClickBank* (www.clickbank.com). The reason I like the idea of reviewing ClickBank is because all of the products found there will be those that came to life in the same way you will be bringing yours to life; the authors are entrepreneurs who seek to write ebooks as marketing and revenue-generating tools, and are doing so for an expressly Internet-oriented audience. Accordingly, the useful nuances and details that characterize the Internet marketing-oriented ebook author will be more readily apparent here. This in-

How to Create Your First Ebook (cont. from Page 3)

cludes components like the sales page, which is not something normally contained as readily in Amazon and Google search results but which is very important for you to review in your information-gathering efforts.

Note that there is nothing illegal or unethical about doing your research in this fashion; you aren't seeking to claim anything you see as your own. What you *hope* to do, as a neophyte ebook creator, is to get enough information from other saleable ebook materials to help spark your own creative juices, and/or see if you're on the right track with your own efforts.

Again, you want to go to these websites because you want to see the bullet points, you want to see the various structures...but you're also getting *ideas for ebook covers*. The reason that's so important at this stage is because your next step in this process...again, if your creating an ebook in accordance with the way Jim Paris does it...is to create the ebook cover. That's right; I create the ebook cover *before* I write the ebook. Some of you may think that's a little crazy, but let me explain.

I don't know about you, but I don't necessarily enjoy sitting at the computer and writing. I become much more motivated when I see the ebook sitting on the screen in front of me. I think to myself, "Wow...this is the product! I'm going to be marketing this product!" That's what makes me excited, and when I see my product in front of me, it gives me the motivation to begin writing. Now, maybe that's not something you need to get motivated, but I'm telling you how I do things, and what gets me super-excited and motivated is to see the actual product in front of me. This is especially useful for those of you

who are not writers by nature; that is, for those of you who are not naturally inclined to sitting and simply writing at any given moment, but who also understand that the generation of copy is an essential part of success as an Internet marketer.

In my pursuit of ideas for ebook covers, I might spend some time poking around at Google. For example, I might go over to Google and do a search using the phrase "ebook," and then I'll filter the results on the bases of ebook images by clicking on the "Images" tab at the top of the results page. Remember that you will be presented with a variety of images that have relevance to ebooks in some ways, to include pictures of ebook readers, but you will readily enough be able to identify the images that are ebook covers and will examine those closely for ideas and insight.

Once we gain a few ideas of what we might want the ebook cover to look like, I'll simply right-click on the image(s) with my mouse and save those to my own computer. You're going to want to save the image(s), because the next step in this process is hiring an artist to create your own cover for you. Now, on that note, I'm going to give you some inside information here to which you're probably going to think, "I can't believe this guy paid so little to have his ebook cover created." The ebook cover that I had made for my popular ebook *ClickBank Traffic Secrets* cost me all of \$50.00. How did I make that happen? I went to the website for Elance (www.elance.com), which is a terrific site for finding freelance computer "people" to handle anything from programming, to writing, to translating, to marketing, and everything in between, and posted the job of creating the cover for bid. Note that I do not automati-

How to Create Your First Ebook (cont. from Page 4)

cally go with the lowest bidder, but I will take the time to review the portfolios of the respondents to see both that they have a history of performing quality work, as well as enough experience doing the kind of work I need done; for example, a graphic arts person who specializes in restaurant logos might respond to my job post, but that person isn't going to be desirable to me for what I'm needing to have done.

When dealing with Elance, how it works is that you put the money in escrow, and when the project is finished, you release the money to the artist. Elance, then, essentially acts in the role of a middleman, but it's a great, protected way to get projects like this handled in a world when you can't be sure to whom, precisely, you're giving your money on the other end of the computer connection. Something that's particularly great about Elance is the breadth and depth of projects that you can arrange to have created on your behalf. Even just a quick look at the Elance home page tells you that you can hire people to do everything from designing graphics, to writing, to designing websites, to creating iPhone applications, and on and on. Note that a lot of these professional independent contractors who gain jobs through Elance are working outside of the United States, and the rates some will charge can be very, very low. For example, the opening segment of the video that is available at the home page of the Christian Internet Income site (www.christianinternetincome.com) was created by someone for me for about \$175. It's only about 45 seconds in length, but there was a lot of intricate editing that took place to create it, and that job was satisfied through an Elance posting.

Anyway, that's how I go about getting my

ebook covers made. Now, depending on how comfortable (or not) you are with the idea of creating your own sales page, you could actually use Elance to hire someone who could create your sales page for you. I create my own sales pages, and I use a program called Adobe Photoshop to create my sales page graphics, but when it comes to the ebook covers themselves, I will hire those out, because I really want those to look top notch (which isn't to say that I don't want the sales pages to look terrific, as well, but sometimes I have to strike a balance between outsourcing some of this to professionals and saving money where I can).

When you are assembling the sales page, something else you might want to consider is the use of video to help things stand out a lot more. To help facilitate the process of getting your video to a sales page, I recommend the use of BYOAudio (www.byoaudio.com). BYOAudio exists precisely to help people like us easily add both audio and video to our websites and blogs. It's very easy to use to upload a video that you record and place on your sales page. One of the really neat things about BYOAudio is that one of the options available to you is to create your video directly from the BYOAudio platform, using your own webcam and microphone. The net result of doing it like that is that it saves you the upload step in the process.

As for the video content itself, do not get alarmed, thinking it has to be something very professional or super-polished. It can be something as simple as you sitting at your desk and talking about how the product works or what it is about. What you will find is that simply having a video, even one that is very basic, markedly changes the way in which the sales page appears to the prospec-

How to Create Your First Ebook

(cont. from Page 5)

tive purchaser of your ebook. Because the Internet provides for a multimedia format, it is a good idea for you to sell your ebook in all forms possible—through written words, of course, but also through audio/video.

OK...now it's time to begin actually writing the ebook. We've certainly put it off long enough, have we not? In what format do I write this ebook? Well, the best way to do it is in a standard word processing platform. I write everything in Microsoft Word, and I would imagine that nearly all of you utilize Word as your standard, "go-to" word processing program, as well. For those of you who do *not* have Microsoft Word, there is a free version of the software that's available by going to www.openoffice.org.

Before I forget, I want to mention that if you're not terribly confident about your own organic writing skills at this point in time in your Internet marketing career, you might want to hire someone over at the aforementioned Elance to edit your work. Remember that I mentioned that you can have a whole host of tasks performed through Elance; this would be one of them. Actually, if you were inclined to do so, you could have someone through Elance write the entire ebook for you. You could take your pieced-together outline, perhaps turn it into something more readable for someone else, and have that person ghostwrite the whole thing for you for maybe as little as less than \$200. That said, it's not a bad idea to have some experience in manuscript creation yourself, and you may find that you rather enjoy the process of writing the ebook on your own. Speaking for myself and partner Bob Yetman, I can tell you that the writing process is something that comes rather naturally to us (even if we don't always love it), so for people like he and I,

there's not much point to paying to have someone do that which comes easy for us anyway. Still, if you do write the ebook yourself, and you don't have anyone in your circle on whom you can trust to do a good job of editing the manuscript, it's not a bad idea to get someone through Elance to help you with that task.

When you've finished creating the book in Microsoft Word or in the free counterpart at OpenOffice.org, you will next pay a visit to PDF Online.com (www.pdfonline.com), which will allow you to convert your Word document into a PDF file. Now, why do we use PDF? PDF is the most common format that is used to deliver an ebook to someone. It allows you to make sure that the file, and how it looks, is "locked in." If I just send you a Word file, depending on the settings on your computer, you might open it up and find a variety of formatting problems; the paragraphs could all be misaligned, there could be all kinds of spacing and layout problems...the point is that the document could end up looking a lot different on your computer than it looks on mine. That won't happen with a PDF file. A PDF file will look the same on your computer as it does on my computer. There are really no limitations on the Word-to-PDF conversion, either. For example, if you want to put links inside your Word document, those links will carry over to the PDF version. PDF is the standard for the creation of universal, digital products like ebooks, and will likely remain so for some time to come.

From here, you can use Pitch Magic (www.pitchmagic.com) to help you create what's called a Thank You page, which is the page that pops up after the purchase is made—if you've purchased just about any-

How to Create Your First Ebook (cont. from Page 6)

thing online, but particularly a digital product of some kind, you will have surely seen Thank You pages before. If you're selling through ClickBank, that's all going to pretty much be integrated. You can also use *Pay-Pal* to collect money, and inside of your Pay-Pal account there is a place to put the URL of the Thank You page so that after someone has ordered, that page then comes up. I happen to use a product called *1ShoppingCart*, which is what we use here at Christian Internet Income and Christian Money.com to process all of our orders. To use a service like 1ShoppingCart, you have to have your own, separate credit card merchant account. This service allows me to perform immediate fulfillment with a Thank You page, plus immediately send out a Thank You email that contains the product link.

Let's talk a bit about the idea of creating more of an ebook "package" by including a video as a part of the ebook product. If you can justifiably charge, say, \$25 for an ebook, you can probably charge \$50, and maybe even \$75, if you decide to include a video, as well. I have found, through direct experience, that people really enjoy videos. I think the reason people like them so much as a part of an ebook product is because the computer

screen itself is so naturally a kindred spirit to the television set; in fact, it's really more natural to view graphics on a computer screen than it is to read off of one.

The videos that I create to go along with my ebooks are all screencast videos. This means that they are videos that take pictures of your computer screen. This is important to me, because so much of what I do is instructional. When you are demonstrating something on your computer, you want that information to be high quality and easy-to-read and otherwise very simple for the viewer to comprehend. Quality screen shots will allow that to take place. I use a product called *Camtasia Studio* (www.techsmith.com/camtasia) to make this happen.

Note that at \$297, Camtasia Studio might be considered a little pricey by some of you (although they do offer a free trial). You can do a search for "screen record software" and perhaps find lower-priced software, but that said, I have to say that I really love the Camtasia Studio product. I have been using it exclusively for almost three years now, and it's what I use specifically to create the videos that serve as the demonstration accompaniments to the ebook packages and products that I bring to market.

By taking a simple ebook...maybe something that's only about 25 or 30 pages long...and adding to it a screen record video of an hour in length, you now have a product that can justifiably be sold for double or even triple the price that you would charge for the ebook alone. You will notice, when you peruse ClickBank to see how others charge for product packages that include videos, that many people will charge, say, \$99 or so for products like that. One of the things that adding a



How to Create Your First Ebook (cont. from Page 7)

video allows you to do, beyond the obvious fact of creating a bigger and better product, is to engage in some strategic pricing that gives you a leg up on your competition. Here's what I mean: In the case where you are offering an ebook by itself, it's generally understood that you would be regarded as overpriced if you were to price your product comparably to another which offers both an ebook of similar length *as well as* a video. Accordingly, you have little choice but to make the price of a single ebook *subordinate* to the price of a package. If you add a video to your ebook, you automatically add value to the product, which means you can charge more for it, but you also have created for yourself a range in which you can price your product, with an eye to perhaps undercutting your competition.

For example, if your ebook, by itself, would sell for \$25, and a competitor's ebook (assuming similar length and makeup) and video package together sells for \$75, you now have the opportunity to price *your* package in such a way that it yields more to you in financial return, but remains the better deal. You could price it for, say, \$50, which shoppers will notice to be a substantial improvement over the competition's price point, but which still gives you twice the money on each sale that you would earn with just the ebook alone. Of course, this is just an illustrative example, and you might not want to offer such a discount in price compared to your competition. Staying with our example, you could strategically price with a figure like \$67, which still gives you the more attractive price point but which also allows you to put more money in your pocket on each sale.

The point is that adding a second component

to your ebook and thus making it a genuine package gives you greater latitude in the area of pricing and marketing, and, ultimately, provides more benefit to you.

In fact, even if this is going to be your very first ebook, I would not be shy about adding a video to create an even more attractive package. One thing to remember is that without regard to the topic of your ebook, you should be able to create a useful companion video. There is certainly nothing wrong with you adding a video that is nothing more than you sitting and discussing your ebook, but to really make it "jump," I would consider utilizing a screen record video like that which we spoke about previously. Depending on the composition of your ebook, you could use such a video to walk people through some of the contents of your ebook that you think might be appropriate to explain more elaborately in a video. Alternatively, and probably a better idea, would be to have a separate PowerPoint-type presentation (Microsoft PowerPoint) that you create and record on your computer. What I particularly like about a video creation like that is that the video contents, besides the audio narration, are truly unique to that part of the product, and are not simply a video duplication of the ebook itself.

Please note that this month's edition of the newsletter is the first of what is intended to be basically a "two-part" look at the creation of ebooks. Now that we've discussed the first mechanical steps you should take to create an ebook, we will use next month's newsletter to discuss ebook creation in a more open-ended fashion, and talk about some important ideas that will ensure that *your* particular ebook products are as high-quality as they can be. Be on the lookout for it!