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CHAPTER

Information Product Opportunities: Fire Up Those Revenue Streams

Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises.

—DEMOSTHENES

The term *infopreneur* is a relatively new industry buzz word that is making waves because it opens doors for entrepreneurs to generate new streams of income. Simply put, an infopreneur sells information. Information products are offered in many formats:

- ✓ Books
- ✓ eBooks
- ✓ Special reports
- ✓ Audio products
- ✓ Videos
- ✓ Teleseminars and web seminars
- ✓ In-person seminars/workshops
- ✓ Workbooks

- ✓ Tips booklets
- ✓ Virtually any format in which you can deliver information

Selling information can create new revenue streams for an existing business, or lay the foundation for a new business opportunity. Many successful business owners have been doing this for years. Here are some examples:

Tom Antion (www.antion.com) is the author of *The Ultimate Guide to Electronic Marketing for Small Business*, as well as numerous other books and dozens of information products including:

- ✓ Audio CDs and cassettes for \$19.95 to \$49.95
- ✓ Books, both self-published and contracted with major publishing houses
- ✓ eBooks for \$9.95 to \$97.00
- ✓ Seminars starting at \$265.00 per attendee

Tom promotes his products online and through speaking engagements. He also proudly admits to making millions from his products.

Joan Stewart is a publicity expert and founder of www.publicityhound.com. Joan currently offers over 100 information products including:

- ✓ Tips booklets for \$5.00 each
- ✓ Special reports for \$10.00 each
- ✓ Recordings of teleconferences on CD for \$39.95
- ✓ Subscription to her bimonthly newsletter for \$39.95

Joan promotes her business with a free weekly newsletter and through speaking engagements.

Dottie Walters is the author of *Speak and Grow Rich* and is the founder of www.speakandgrowrich.com. In addition to published books, Dottie sells:

- ✓ Recordings of her audio seminars for \$35.00 to \$125.00
- ✓ Subscriptions to *Sharing Ideas* (a magazine for professional speakers; a two-year subscription costs \$95.00)
- ✓ Videotaped programs for \$69.00
- ✓ Workshops and seminars from \$395.00 to \$1,995.00

Dottie promotes her business through speaking engagements and networking within the professional speaking industry.

Dan Poynter is the author of *The Self-Publishing Manual* and numerous other books, and is the founder of www.parapublishing.com. Dan has built an enterprise based on his expertise in several topics: self-publishing, parachuting, serving as an expert witness, and cats (that's right, cats!). Dan publishes a popular free e-zine with a subscriber base of over 25,000 people and sells the following products through his web site:

- ✓ Special reports for \$4.00 to \$19.95
 - ✓ Mailing lists for \$3.00 to \$107.00
 - ✓ Power packs that combine all his products for \$297.00 to \$897.00
- Dan conducts dozens of speaking engagements each year and even sells attendance to a popular weekend workshop that he hosts in his own home.

Throughout this book, you will learn about these and other successful infopreneurs—savvy business owners who either run their entire businesses by selling their information products, or use their products to reel in additional revenue. Their stories appear in interview format so you can read their actual words and find out how each has managed to build and grow an information product business. Some happened by accident, and some were carefully calculated. All have achieved admirable success.

BENEFITS OF INFORMATION PRODUCTS

Revenue is often considered the primary benefit to information products. While money is a big motivator, there are numerous advantages you may not have considered.

PASSIVE INCOME

Perhaps one of the most compelling reasons to sell information products is the opportunity to generate passive income. Passive income is money that is

generated without extensive ongoing effort by the business owner. Rental property income is the most traditional example of passive income. Once an information product is created and the distribution is automated, sales can occur with little additional effort.

COST OF ENTRY

The cost of creating electronic books and special reports is minimal. If you already have a computer and word processing program, the biggest investment is likely to be your time. You may want to invest in a PDF creator program, though you can still generate products without one.

EXPERT STATUS

Publishing a book enhances your credibility and can lead to speaking engagements and media interviews. Many authors treat their books like fancy business cards, using them to open doors of opportunity. With the right spin on your topic, media exposure could bring you a windfall of new business. Just look at any author who has made it onto the *Today Show* or the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. Even an article in a local newspaper can prompt dozens of readers to buy your products or visit your web site.

NEW PRODUCTS BRING NEW CUSTOMERS

As you add more info products to your line, you spin a web of opportunity. Each product may appeal to each customer differently. Some may buy one product, others may buy another product, and ideally, most customers will return and purchase multiple products.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

Each new product helps you reach new markets with your advertising efforts. You automatically create a new reason to send a press release when you announce a new product. You can also promote the new product to your newsletter subscribers and to other businesses that complement yours. These targeted marketing opportunities could change with each new product introduced since each could appeal to a different audience.

CROSS-PROMOTION OPPORTUNITIES

Giveaways are a fantastic use for info products. You could reward new subscribers to your e-zine by giving away a free eBook or special report. Or you could send your downloadable product to other business owners and allow them to distribute it for free, provided they include your author bio and a link to your web site. This strategy will attract new customers as well as increase exposure to your target audience.

POTENTIAL FOR CORPORATE DEALS

You can negotiate rights to resell your content. Paulette Ensign, founder of www.tipsbooklets.com, sells her tips booklets by the thousands to businesses that reproduce them as giveaways for their own customers and employees. Not only does she make money selling the reprint rights to the booklets, but she reaches thousands of potential new customers. You can create a similar opportunity with any of your info products. You could resell your books, audio programs, or workbooks to corporations or other professional organizations to give away to their employees, sales staff, or customers, or for use as training materials.

WORD OF MOUTH

Getting new business by word of mouth is one of the best kinds of advertising that money cannot buy. Companies like Yahoo!, Craigslist, eBay, and Half.com were built into huge operations thanks in large part to the buzz generated by enthusiastic site visitors. When you create premium products with tremendous value, inevitably your customers are going to talk about it. The challenge is to make your products buzzworthy. If you can exceed your customers' expectations, the buzz will happen naturally and over time your revenues will grow as a result.

GENERATING INFORMATION PRODUCT IDEAS

Everybody is an expert at something. If you run a successful business, that makes you an expert in your industry. If you have a passion for a hobby,

sport, or other special skill, you can use what you know about the topic to educate others. Here are some ways to generate product ideas:

- ✓ Consider what information you have that other people want to know about.
- ✓ Survey your customers and ask them what they would like to learn.
- ✓ Make a list of your skills and interests. Identify topics that you can elaborate on and that would appeal to an audience of buyers.
- ✓ Teach people how to do something—You could explain how to do what you do for a living, how to create something, how to market your type of business, or how to locate resources.
- ✓ Create a directory. Do you have a list of 50 or more resources that people in your industry need? Sell it!
- ✓ Take a broad topic and develop a niche. John Gray, author of *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* capitalizes on relationship advice. Following the success of his first book, he went on to write *Mars and Venus on a Date*, *Mars and Venus in the Bedroom*, and even *The Mars and Venus Diet and Exercise Solution*. In addition to carving out a niche and creating multiple products, Gray used savvy marketing strategies with his title and branded his books with the memorable “Mars and Venus” theme.
- ✓ Read books about your field of interest. Is there a book that covers an important piece of information in one chapter that deserves to be expanded? Could you write a whole book or special report about that topic?
- ✓ Jump on a trend. This book is a great example of an emerging industry trend since becoming an infopreneur is a hot topic in the small business community. There are dozens of books that cover portions of the topics discussed in this book; however, this is the first book to bring it all together. Find a trend in your industry and develop products that the market is hungry for.
- ✓ Get dialed in by hosting teleseminars. For topics, think about the valuable information you can provide in a one-hour call. Better yet, make a list of potential guests that you can interview. You could charge for attendance at the seminars or offer them for free and sell the recordings. Joan Stewart, founder of www.publicityhound.com,

has mastered the art of earning income from her teleseminars by interviewing popular guests and charging for both attendance and recordings after the fact.

- ✓ Take your show on the road. What could you teach a live audience? Outline some topics and consider teaching at your local adult learning center or becoming a professional speaker and host your own workshops. You can also sell recordings of your live presentations. Mark Victor Hansen, cocreator of the popular *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series of books and numerous other books and products, hosts seminars throughout the year. Admission to his Build Your Mega Speaking Empire workshop costs \$995.00. Not only does he make a mint in registration fees, but you can be sure he sells plenty of books and add-on products to attendees.
- ✓ Create an interesting visual presentation. A videotape or DVD of a demonstration, speech, or technique can be sold to eager buyers. These can be especially effective for crafts, food, the fitness industry, and other hobbies.
- ✓ Take an inventory of the people you know and see if you can incorporate them into your projects. People like real-world examples and advice from experts. Consider interviewing your peers and include excerpts in your print publications.

Table 1.1 lists some information products for various businesses.

KEYS TO SUCCESS WITH INFORMATION PRODUCTS

To convince customers to get out the credit card and buy from you, your product strategy should include the following elements:

- ✓ **Quality:** There are a lot of information products out there, and some are downright lousy. Make sure that whatever you produce is of the highest quality. Written documents, audiotapes, and video programs should all be professionally edited.
- ✓ **Expertise:** Demonstrate any credentials that you have in your field. This is not the time to be shy. Publicize your education, experience, awards, or achievements in the area that is your specialty.

<i>Type of Business</i>	<i>Potential Info Products</i>
Professional speaker	Directory of resources such as speaking venues Subscription to your newsletter Workbook Book that covers your topic in-depth Audio recordings of presentations Video recordings of presentations
Chef or restaurant	Recipe collections (with themes like quick meals, pasta, healthy options, appetizers, party foods) Cooking tips Video demonstrations Cooking classes
Jeweler	Explanation of how jewelry is rated Resources for buying and selling estate jewelry Resources for buying or selling online How to repair or restore jewelry at home
Pet services	Pet first aid Recipes for pet treats Tips for caring for an aging pet Training techniques for dogs, cats, ferrets, and others How-to start a pet business
Financial services company	Retirement planning advice Property, stock, bonds, or other investment advice How to buy with no money down How to clean up a credit report How to get certified as a loan agent
Musician	How to play an instrument How to perform a special style of music How to book paying gigs Tips for breaking into the business
Comic bookstore	How to identify collectible comics How to publish your own comics Resources for comic collectors Price guides Subscription newsletter
Hobby or craft	How-to guide Directory of resources for selling products Tips for marketing this type of business Workshops or classes

TABLE 1.1 How to develop information products for different types of businesses.

Strangers are not going to buy from you unless you can demonstrate your expertise and ability to deliver on your promises.

- ✓ **Value:** There is a fine balance when determining the price of products, and too many infopreneurs price their products out of the ballpark. Check to see how your competitors are pricing their products. Some set their price points higher to demonstrate the extreme value of the information they are selling. If you use this pricing strategy, be sure you are delivering information that is worth the hefty price tag.
- ✓ **Delivery:** Product delivery needs to be efficient and timely. Customers who purchase electronic products such as eBooks and reports want instant gratification. Though you can manually e-mail electronic products once you have completed a sale, this strategy will make you a slave to your online business. Ideally, you should set up a system to automate the delivery process. Added advantages of automation are that you won't have to constantly check e-mail for sales notifications and you can make money and deliver products from anywhere in the world.
- ✓ **Marketing:** Few businesses can survive without marketing. You need to let people know you are there so you can entice them into buying from you. A solid marketing plan is essential to success with info products.
- ✓ **Repetition:** This is part of marketing, but warrants its own line item (a repetition in itself) because it is so critical. The average consumer needs to be exposed to a product *six to eight times* before making a buying decision. This means that you need to expose your audience to your product offerings and your business over and over and over again. You can do this with your web site, e-zine, speaking engagements, articles, and other publicity efforts.
- ✓ **Development:** All info products should be up to date. At the same time, new products should be in development and complement the other products you have available. Think about how McDonald's structures its business. The fast-food chain relies on a group of staple products (Big Macs, fries, Quarter Pounders) and introduces new products throughout the year. To test market viability, some products are only available for a limited time. The products

that sell best are added to the permanent menu. New products also attract new customers who may, in turn, purchase some of the legacy products.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING INFORMATION PRODUCTS

Much of this book is devoted to marketing: It is important to think about this factor before you even get started as an infopreneur. If you're going to sell info products, you will need a strategy to promote them. Consider the following tools:

- ✓ Build a web site specializing in topics related to your products. Provide free information as a teaser or sample of what you have to offer. If you offer free information that is useful, you may eventually convert many of those free users into real buyers.
- ✓ Find public speaking engagements (including workshops, seminars, and classes). If you speak at an adult learning center, your bio—with your name—is distributed to everyone who receives the catalog, even if the class only seats 15 people. Seminar-speaking experience also helps you earn credibility while gaining valuable exposure.
- ✓ Free teleconferences can help get the word out if you take advantage of advertising with your online networks. Ask peers to announce your events in their e-zines or on their web sites. Although you aren't selling your product up front and instead are providing information, you are exposing people to your name and your products.
- ✓ Newsletters and e-zines are an inexpensive yet valuable way to market to your customers. Make it easy for web site visitors to subscribe, and then send out consistent and valuable content on a weekly or monthly basis.
- ✓ Up-sell and promote additional products when someone makes a purchase by including a brochure about your other products or by offering a special discount on a related product at the time of purchase.

- ✓ Establish yourself as an expert in your field by being seen and heard everywhere. Participate in interviews, publish articles in print and online, and seize every possible opportunity to get your name out in the world. Brand yourself as an expert.
- ✓ Take advantage of media exposure. Radio is an inexpensive way to reach a lot of people in a short amount of time. Many talk radio programs interview experts through a call-in format. If your topic is interesting enough to reach a broad range of listeners, you could go on a radio tour right from the comfort of your own home. Print publicity is also beneficial. Find news angles for your topic and contact newspaper, magazine, and TV reporters.
- ✓ Create an affiliate program. Offer other businesses the opportunity to sell your products and pay them a percentage of each sale.
- ✓ Swap advertising with web sites and e-zines that reach your target market.

TRY THIS

Make a list of potential topics and products that you want to create. Ideally, you will develop a long list of opportunities. Once you make your list, prioritize which ideas you want to tackle first. It can be overwhelming to take on too much at once, so determine where your best opportunities are (in the sales world, we call this “low-hanging fruit”) and begin the product development process.

Infopreneur Profile

Joan Stewart
The Publicity Hound
Port Washington, Wisconsin
www.publicityhound.com

PRODUCTS:

- Forty-nine five-page special reports with titles too numerous to mention (\$10.00 each)
- CD recordings of teleconferences (\$39.95 each)

- Cassette recordings of teleconferences (\$14.97 each)
- Printed transcripts of teleconferences (\$10.00 each)
- Subscription to bimonthly newsletter (\$49.95)
- Mentor program (\$1,500 for six months, \$2,500 for a year)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CONTENTS:

The title is an inch wide and content is a mile deep. In other words, very narrow specialized topic with in-depth information.

Who is your target audience for your materials?

Anyone who wants to self-promote.

Where do you sell your materials?

Through my web site, e-zine, blog, and affiliates.

When did you first publish your material?

About five years ago.

What made you decide to publish electronic reports?

It's much easier and cheaper than hard copies.

How does your publication enhance your business?

It positions me as an expert. It brings in a lot of revenue. And my web site sells while I'm sleeping.

What was the process you used to publish?

For special reports, I simply bought a special report on how to create special reports, written by Jeffrey Lant, an information entrepreneur. Actually, each special report was originally intended to be a chapter in a hard-copy book. I thought I'd write a special report that would become chapter one of my book and sell it at my web site and through my e-zine; then when I had 20 reports completed, I'd start looking for a publisher. They sold so well, so quickly, and in such volume, that I would have been crazy to turn them into a book that I couldn't have sold for much more than \$25.00. Now, I have 49 reports.

How do you market your materials?

I market primarily by excerpting tips for my weekly e-zine. If people like and need the tips, they buy the full report. This works like a charm.

What has been the most challenging part of the publishing process?

Keeping so many reports in front of people on my list continuously.

What has been the most rewarding part of the publishing process?

The revenue.

What have you learned from the experience that you would like to share with others?

Don't offer special reports in hard copy, like I did originally, or you'll find yourself in front of your printer all day. Offer electronic versions only.

Looking back, is there anything you would do differently?

I would have never offered print versions. And I wouldn't have hesitated to raise the price like I did. I was reluctant to raise the price from \$7.00 to \$9.00. When I finally did, I saw no drop in sales.