

24/7 Publishing

Some time back, I moved my magazine-based *Blatant Opportunist* column over to an online ezine format. Published exclusively on my *Guru's Lair* web site. In doing so, I found I have become part of what is now being called *24/7 Publishing*.

Using 24/7 publishing, content and support gets added *when and as it becomes available*. Twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. Handled in a *continuous* rather than a batch manner. Delivery is primarily via the web, and only secondarily as hard copy or CD ROM.

Here's a sampler of the exciting new consequences of emerging 24/7 publishing...

the store is always open—Your message can be easily read at any time from any place. Worldwide. Readers come to you, rather than having to get solicited through expensive ad campaigns. Each reader is inherently targeted.

costs are ridiculously lower—You go directly from source material in layout packages to web servers. There are no proofs, mechanicals, chemicals, darkrooms, plates, presses, or makeready. One person can easily do the entire job.

there are no remainders or returns—In fact, there are no unwanted copies ever. Only those copies which actually get read exist at all. And then only when an end user decides to print them. Your cost per copy is essentially zero.

ad response is instant—Ads can get run or changed at any time. Costs of ad preparation are much lower. Response to ads can be quickly and accurately measured. Performance is fully accountable. Customization is trivial.

readers gain immediacy—Your content appears right now, rather than the typical month or two of publication delays. Direct reader-to-reader contact becomes possible through chat, forums, user groups, and email.

middlemen are eliminated—You get to make all your own mistakes, rather than paying others to make them for you. There are no longer any hassles with service bureaus, postal bureaucrats, pressmen, mag distributors, or ink salesmen.

content is fully searchable—Major keywords are instantly searchable worldwide, while any word or number anywhere in your text can be immediately located and ranked by a local search engine. Creative ping-pong of engines, forums, and newsgroups can add selected new visitors.

content is fully linkable—Your editorial material could get instantly connected to underlying tutorials, to advanced

theory, historical background, or related content by other authors. You can also offer clickable movie clips, photos, sound bytes, or animated demos.

archives are forever—Magazines get thrown away. Back issues are rarely saved. 24/7 publishing lets the reader find any item in any issue back to day one. Just knowing that a complete archive exists brings the readers back.

deadlines become livelines—Instead of everything having to be in one place at one time, content is added when and where appropriate. Whenever a grouping becomes logically "full", it is simply marked and archived as such.

color is free—Unlike print processes, full color is nearly as easy to do as black and white. In fact, there is even a 24/7 black and white "penalty" for unenhanced content. More on this in www.tinaja.com/acrob01.html

authors gain flexibility—The physical arrangement of how content appears is at least as important to comprehension as the content itself. Unprecedented flexibility can now be offered the originators of the source material.

layout is easier—There are no physical page sizes as such, so each article and each ad can be just the size it needs to be for its intended message. Further, there are no limits to how small the print can be. Acrobat's magnification feature easily lets you put arbitrary detail into a chart or listing; it also greatly eases disabled access.

And last, but not least...

you have absolute and total control.—You will get to do exactly what you desire exactly when and how you want. Largely free of traditional magazine restraints, deadlines, and employee incompetence.

The Downside

It seems that many people buy books but steal software. Your perceived value of *anything* received online is quite low, and outright theft is rampant. A strong reluctance still remains to pay for anything over the web. Fortunately, this is rapidly changing. Acceptable online transaction schemes are becoming newly popular.

There's also the "curling up with a good book" factor. But many of the magazines themselves are clearly shooting themselves in the foot over this one. Through wall-to-wall ads, sloppy production standards, underpaid authors, or appallingly rapid technical content.

There are literally millions of web sites. Heroic effort is required to position yours so it attracts strong and ongoing access interest. You will tend to get far fewer readers than a traditional mag. Then again, most of these readers should have strong interest in what you have to say.

Online viewers are notoriously impatient. They have a very limited attention span. Be slow or sloppy in delivering your pages and they are gone. Certain viewers still have not yet installed a free Acrobat reader, despite Acrobat's utterly and totally overwhelming superiority.

Regardless of these current limitations, I see ezines as the great wave of the future for technical publishing. The ezine delivery economics, permanence, targeting, correctability, absolute control, hyperaccess, and immediacy simply can not be beat. So much so that I'd predict imminent peril for many traditional magazine titles.

Your crucial remaining problem over 24/7 publishing economics, of course, is...

Getting Paid

A traditional old line magazine was supposed to get its production costs paid by the advertisers, while the profits were supposed to come from subscriptions and newsstand sales. Aided by secondary incomes from name list rentals, card decks, seminars, reprints, books, and possibly even sales of T-shirts or mugs. Helped along by sharing staff and production costs among several related titles.

Similarly, all authors were supposed to get paid a living wage in a timely manner. Yeah, right.

24/7 ezine publishing offers wildly different economics. Those obvious viewer ploys of "pay by download", "pay by subscription", and "pay by hour" do not appear to be working out all that well.

Instead, it seems that *indirect* payment methods seem to work best, based on the foremost net marketing rule of *give a lot away to sell a little*. Here are some 24/7 ezine cash flow ploys that are currently working well for me...

banner ads—Banners are smaller ads associated with your web site pages. Clicking through takes the viewer directly to a sponsor's site. Banners can be charged by a flat rate, by the impression, by clickthrough, by the action, or by hard sales. Much more on [banner ads](#) in [BANNYEAR.PDF](#)

regular ads—By using *Acrobat*, regular print ads can easily be included on any presented page. Only a single file is needed, and absolute control of fonts and appearance is guaranteed. Targeting can be tight. Hotlinking is instant. The payment can be per year or per view.

direct sales—Just about anything can eventually get sold online, *if* the price is right, *if* you wait long enough, and *when* online payment methods dramatically improve. And, of course, *if* you generate enough traffic. An interactive online catalog helps. See [www.tinaja.com/synlib01.html](#)

bargain page—Everybody likes a bargain, so a continuing online "yard sale" tends to work very well. I've personally combined this with a small overhead surplus electronics operation. Supplies are gotten from various military sites and regional school auctions. Details at [RESBN81.PDF](#)

bookstore associate—[Amazon Books](#) offers an incredible associates program. For each book of theirs you actually

sell via your website link, you get a commission of up to fifteen percent. You do have a lot of competition, though. See the example at [www.tinaja.com/amlink01.html](#)

cash and carry consulting—I have found considerable demand for my *InfoPack* services. These are basically a one shot "I'll find the best answer to your problem that I can for a fixed fee. Normally one hour of professional time is involved. More details in [INFOPACK.PDF](#). These also lead to consulting contracts and story ideas.

directory referrals—There's a new [Synergetics Consultant's Network](#) on my ezine website. Listings are free, but there is a 5% placement fee due when and as work is completed. Naturally, you do not include anybody whom you cannot honestly and wholeheartedly recommend.

online auctions—These have become an amazingly popular phenomenon. But there is considerable abuse potential, and I am not all that sure this fad has any staying power. But an auction service just may work for you.

reprints and CD's—Hard copy reprints of individual files and entire volumes can get [Book-on-demand](#) published. Similarly, a fully searchable, and continuously updated collection of all your site material can be sold as a CD. Cd costs have dropped dramatically.

Some Hints

Here's some of the key insider secrets for 24/7 web publishing that currently seem to be working for me...

content is king—Your site should be a mix of unique and sole sourced material not available elsewhere, a reference library of definitive and hard-to find materials, and well thought out annotated gateway links to carefully chosen related sites. If your site also serves as your primary web access, it should work for others as well.

give a lot away to sell a little—This is your centermost key to web based success. Show them what you can do. Give away sample chapters, older or limited code modules, any products beyond their prime. Make them an *immediate* offer they simply cannot refuse.

use Acrobat—*Adobe Acrobat* in the forms of PDF files or direct PGML completely blows HTML away on all counts. You'll precisely control exactly what your viewer will see, using any magnifiable and smoothed combination of high quality fonts, text, illustrations, pictures, links, animation, sound, disability aides, and graphics you like. All done within one single fast-loading and byte-serving file. More details at [www.tinaja.com/acrob01.html](#).

make access and nav easy—Arrange your site for intuitive use by both beginners and experts. Use roadmaps, searches, "power nav" buttons, and "what's new" pages. Aggressively seek out all the major and minor search engines, spiders, and robots. Make key newsgroups, columnists, and web magazines painfully aware of your site. Welcome most incoming links, but only return links to those sites you can honestly endorse. *Strongly* discourage any incoming links that are misleading or inappropriate.

know your media—Web based presentation often should have "chunkier" and shorter content entries. Presented in

larger and fancier fonts than a traditional magazine article. Seek a balance between print and screen.

colorize—Older black and white content looks awful on the web. Especially raw scanned bitmaps. Use PostScript when and where you can. Convert grays to tints and add colors when and where appropriate. See my [SPOTCOLR.PDF](#) and [COLORIZD2.PDF](#).

provide bells and whistles—Use byte range delivery to give fast first page loads. Full search for all filetypes is a must. Show site stats on a "semi-public" page for advertisers. Use secure transactions, forums, photos, chat, and cameras. Avoid cutsey animation or obnoxious audio.

keep banners sacrosanct—Paying customers reasonably expect placement *only* with similar clients. Never use junk banners of any sort. Never use a banner exchange service. Never use any banner that you do not personally approve and position. Never use exchange banners. Keep your own banners in the minority.

banners load last—There's nothing more infuriating than waiting around for some unwanted ad to download before you reach useful content. Always download banners *last*, and only *after* everything needed to actually view or exit the page is in place. Details in [BANNLAST.PDF](#).

use advetorials—An advetorial is technical material that is highly useful, yet leaves the reader with an irresistible urge to whip out their VISA card. Hot links make advetorials especially web friendly. See [ADVETORL.PDF](#) Always give editorial links for advertisers. They often generate more ad traffic than the banners themselves.

use your referral logs—Insist on raw dialy log access from your ISP. Especially that *referral* info that tells you where your traffic comes from. This quickly spots many broken links, reveals hot sites that are linking you, and even shows which search engines are finding you using which terms. More on referral log tools in www.tinaja.com/weblib01.html

provide feedback—Make it real easy for readers to interact. Some will come back and buy something. Obvious "doubly indirect" ploys here are voice helplines, conspicuous email buttons, stats, forums, chat lines, and order forms.

practice kaizan—This is a uniquely Japanese term meaning something like "continual small improvements" So, make changes to your site on a *daily* basis that can improve its appearance, content, gateways, and its ease of nav. Pay attention to detail. Make viewers return daily.

give them something extra; leave them wanting more—Nuff said on this one. ♦

Microcomputer pioneer and guru Don Lancaster is the author of 35 books and countless articles. Don maintains a US technical helpline you'll find at (520) 428-4073, besides offering all his own books, reprints and consulting services.

Don has a free new catalog crammed full of his latest insider secrets waiting for you. Your best calling times are 8-5 weekdays, Mountain Standard Time.

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