



**The beginner's guide to acquiring customers.**

# The beginner's guide to acquiring customers

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**You can control your stock. You can choose the design of your store. You can even hire your own staff. But one thing you can't do is make people buy. Netregistry demonstrates how you can acquire customers.**

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## Introduction

Acquiring customers has no silver-bullet, guaranteed technique. After all, not everyone can afford or will be interested in your product. Not everyone will have a need for it or live within the appropriate area. The choice of whether to purchase or not will always stay with the consumer. So if a business can't make people buy, how do you increase the chances of finding those people most likely to be interested?

Thankfully, the internet is exceptionally good at customer acquisition – some would say far better than traditional marketing techniques – and as businesses slash budgets and cut marketing, it is also helpful to know that internet business is also comparatively very cheap.

Still, acquiring customers online takes more than just taking traditional strategies and sticking them on the internet. Billboard and magazine advertising may be popular in the real world, but online behaviour is very different. Having an understanding of how the online consumer behaves may be crucial in determining your best approach when targeting your audience.

- What motivates someone to buy online?
- How does a business stand out from the competition?
- How easily can people find your website?

One of the main objections some small businesses have is the amount of money some marketing methods can cost. Yet each online marketing technique allows a far greater return on investment than merely crossing your fingers and hoping customers will stumble across your site. What may seem like an expense now will soon become a valued

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overhead with clear links to increased sales. Using the internet to acquire customers eventually pays for itself – and then some.

## First things first – get a website!

Despite the global financial crisis, surveys around the world indicate massive increases in online sales. eCorner reported a 90% increase in ecommerce activity across 170 Australian online stores for November 2008, after the GFC began to bite. The UK saw a 30% increase in overall sales throughout December 2008, even while high street retailers were having to launch their New Year Sales weeks earlier to shift stock. Throughout 2009, ecommerce continued to grow. Customers are turning to the internet for convenience and bargains in difficult times, creating a boom for savvy retailers.

An upswing in online transactions isn't the only reason to look to the internet for customers. The cost of launching a business online is far, far less than needed to open a traditional business. It is possible to get started for less than \$20 per month for a web hosting package and a free website builder application like SiteBuilder. With professionally built websites starting from only a couple of hundred dollars and online stores available for less than \$60 per month, a small budget is no barrier to starting out in business.

Think about it – you could never rent traditional business premises for \$60 per month – even without the overheads like electricity, insurance, shop fittings and staff. And the money you save can be put towards marketing the business and attracting the customers needed to get your cash flow going. Such low overheads means you reach profit quicker. And these days, reaching profit quicker can be the difference between financial success and joining the statistics of failed businesses.

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With so many options available that cost less than taking the family out for pizza, there is no reason why businesses shouldn't look to the internet for customers. After all, according to the research, that's where your customers are going anyway!

## Boosting traffic with search engine optimisation

Imagine regularly attracting thousands of people to your online store every single month. Even if only a percentage of them became customers, you could easily achieve your sales targets.

Getting potential customers through your website front door is easier than you think. If more customers are leaving the slippers on and turning to the home computer to do their shopping, you need to place your website on their online high street. After all, the internet is a global shopping centre, with thousands and thousands of businesses offering enticing products and services. Search engine optimisation (SEO) can deliver floods of eager punters, interested in the products you are selling, to your website.

Consider your own behaviour. Chances are, when searching for a product or service online, you use a search engine like Google or Yahoo. A search engine helps collate the most relevant websites for your query, helping you to find an item and make a purchase extremely quickly.

With most search queries returning thousands or millions of results, it is unlikely a potential customer will click through each and every one to make a decision. How many links would you click on before you choose to make a purchase? Do you ever go so far as to look at the second page of results?

Therefore, appearing high on the first page of results against the search queries most relevant to your products is extremely important and can mean incredible differences in traffic.

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Imagine a beauty salon. If the owner were to target the obvious keywords 'beauty salon', it could be considerably difficult to achieve a strong position against the thousands of other salons worldwide. But by being smarter, you can achieve some astonishing and targeted results. For example; according to Google's own keyword tool, over 8,000 people search every month for 'facial hair removal', a popular service in such salons. Appearing close to the top of the results for that phrase would mean most of those 8000 people would visit your link. If even a tiny percentage – let's say a miniscule 2% - decided to book an appointment, you would have gained 160 new customers willing to part with money to have hot wax dribbled on their top lip. That's 8 appointments a day for an entire month! It is easy to see that even extremely low conversion rates can achieve massive results with the right search engine strategy.

And other results can potentially attract ten times that amount of traffic.

Even a seemingly odd key phrase can be incredibly valuable for the right business and can make more sense than targeting generic phrases with too much competition. Generating so many new sales means your marketing soon pays for itself.

Search engine optimisation is about researching the best phrases for you to target and maximising your appearance in those results. Achieving those results can take skill, time and effort, which is why many businesses turn to Netregistry.

Every day with low traffic is a day you lose potential sales. Don't put it off. Talk to Netregistry about boosting your search engine traffic today.

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## Google's Keyword Tool

Visit [www.google.com/sktool](http://www.google.com/sktool)

Enter your website details and some associated keywords.

You will receive the best phrases related to your business and an estimate of how many people search for those phrases every month.

How many thousands of potential customers can you attract with the right words?

## Fast customers with sponsored adverts

"Customers! Customers! Get your lov-er-ly customers!" If only retail business was as easy as buying customers off a market barrow.

Thankfully, it is.

Search engine advertising only charges you when someone actually responds to the advert. That's right, you only pay for those people who enter your store and not for those who avoid or ignore your adverts. And it can cost as little as a few cents for each one!

Google AdWords is a search engine advertising service that displays sponsored links next to the main search results. These sponsored adverts are triggered by the same keywords as the 'natural' results, meaning you can pay for your advert and link to appear against the best key phrases while you wait for your natural SEO to move your website up the Google listing.

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These adverts are paid by the click – you pay for each potential customer that comes through the link - anything between 15 cents to a few dollars. The price is dictated by the popularity of the keywords and the position of the advert on the page.

Again, Google has a handy tool to help you experiment and choose the best adverts. A specific product advert can produce some startling results. For example, portable hard drives are popular online purchases, being an essential part of many IT users' kit. Targeting an advert against the keywords 'portable hard drive' would only cost an average of \$1.37 per click to potentially attract 11-15 visitors per day. As portable hard drives carry a reasonable profit margin, a couple of sales per day could be all you need to achieve a decent return on investment (ROI) from those 15 visitors.

Some businesses have made a lot of money by balancing pay per click campaigns against strategic product pricing – building the expected cost of clicks and number of clicks needed into the margins for each sale. Once established, you could have a near automatic turnover of sales and expenses that keeps you earning money continuously. You end up buying sales!

The downside is that, because advert prices fluctuate with demand, staying within a budget and determining the best costs can be difficult for the beginner. Mistakes can be costly and damaging. That is why many businesses opt to use a campaign manager to run their pay per click campaigns. The additional fees in outsourcing advertising can actually be recouped through careful budget management making outsourcing not only easier but cheaper as well.

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## Research your AdWords campaign

Visit <https://adwords.google.com/select/TrafficEstimatorSandbox>

Enter your keywords and your suggested budget and see how many people you can expect to respond to your advert each day. With careful planning, you can choose the keywords and budget that allows an AdWords campaign to pay for itself!

## Grow your business

Floods of customers don't happen overnight. Acquiring quality customers is a continual and incremental process of implementing strategies and refining processes. Just as a traditional business will spend money on rent and staff and stock for weeks and months before turning a profit, you shouldn't expect instant results online.

A long term strategy, involving various proven techniques, can eventually help your sales reach the critical mass necessary to fuel further growth. Once you start receiving the amount of website visitors you need achieve your sales targets, there is no reason to stop. In fact, search engine optimisation should be a continuous activity to avoid your competition creeping ahead of you in the results and stealing your traffic.

The process of acquiring customers never ends. By including acquisition strategies in your ongoing business plan, you can create a truly effective online business model.

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