

## ***Power Websites Under \$400***

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A Blog has been setup to provide further information related to this report at

<http://powerwebsites.blogspot.com>

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## 1. Introduction

This report is intended to help internet entrepreneurs and self-employed professionals market their products and services online. Our mission is helping internet entrepreneurs succeed, by providing free, unbiased advice and a full range of ecommerce and webmastering services including web design, hosting and internet marketing. In this report I have condensed thousands of hours of research and experience working with my clients.



Having an attractive and informative website puts you immediately at the head of the pack from the perspective of buyers who are looking for your product or service. However, this is only the starting point. Having a successful website – a website that draws traffic and makes sales – requires many different skills. In fact, creating a successful internet business requires a totally different *mindset* than any other type of business. People use the internet to look for *information*, and this is what you must give them, *way before* you offer to sell them anything. Equally important, what you really want is to draw people to your site from search-engines. If you do it right, this is completely free, targeted traffic of people who are looking for what you have to offer. Furthermore, this process which is called Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, only needs to be done ONCE (albeit over a number of months until you find the correct formula). When you start getting targeted traffic, you have solved about 75% of your problem. Yet most people have no idea how to bring visitors to their site. This is the most crucial thing with which you should begin your website project.

Every once in a long while, information comes my way that completely alters the way I handle MY business (which is helping my clients succeed on the internet). Please begin by having a serious look at the [Make Your Site Sell eBook](#) (\$30). This may well be the only internet marketing and sales copywriting book you will ever need – it has been compared to [Cory Rudl's MarketingTips](#) as “10 times as good and 1/8<sup>th</sup> the price” and to [John Reese's \\$1000 Traffic Secrets manual](#) (at 1/30<sup>th</sup> the price).

[Click here to purchase “Make Your Site Sell” eBook](#)

You can also get the “Make Your Site Sell” Free Trial AND the SBI Action Guide from the following url:

[Download the “Make Your Site Sell” Free Trial and SBI Action Guide](#)

However, it only contains leading chapters, so we recommend you get the full version.

Making an attractive and effective website does not have to cost a lot of money. To prove this, I designed BestCommerceTools.com and had it built for under \$400. My additional monthly expenses for the site are about \$100, but that is optional (you can have a complete commerce solution for \$25/mth or less, and I show you how in this report).

We hope you find the information in this report useful, and do please [send us feedback](#) so that we may improve it (especially if you have information that you think would be of use to other entrepreneurs, send it to so that we may include it in future editions).

To your success,

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## 2. Power Hosting

### 2.1 Introduction to Power Hosting

What we are calling “Power Hosting” is any number of revolutionary hosting and internet marketing platforms that have emerged over the last 5 or 6 years. These platforms bring together such a compelling range of products and services of use to internet entrepreneurs, and at a rather extraordinary price (\$25/mth or so), that we are currently sending about 75% of our clients to them for hosting. (Note: see the next Chapter for your options using traditional hosting providers).

Here are some of the services provided:

- Getting your presence on the internet (traditional hosting and domain name)
- Building your website content and presentation, and inputting products into your store (if you have a store)
- Tracking visitors to your site - know who came, from where, and how long they stayed (advanced web statistics)
- Building traffic to your site - knowing how to make your site search-engine friendly; and knowing the keywords people are searching for (keyword popularity / supply ratio), and keyword brainstorming tools
- Staying in touch with customers with newsletters, ezines and bloggers
- Automating customer communication and the sales cycle with sequential auto-responders
- Tracking the success of your advertising campaigns - Google and Overture Pay Per Click - and measuring your overall return on investment (clicks to leads to sales)
- Selling products or services with an easy to use shopping cart linked to a Merchant Account or to Paypal
- Selling downloadable products (Note: selling information products on the internet is a HUGE business)
- Getting others to promote your site through affiliate programs and having them link to your site (which also increases your search engine ranking)

These services if purchased separately would cost approximately \$1400 a year, and yet almost all of them can be had for about \$25/mth from the two leading “Power hosting” providers, which are [SiteSell](#) and [ThirdSphere](#).

But which one is right for you? For this you need to understand the purpose of each of these functions and their importance to your business.

In the sections below we provide explanation of the various functions that we consider necessary in order to have a thriving internet business. Not all of these functions may be necessary to your particular business; but you should understand what they are in any case.

If you are already internet-savvy you will know most of these things already, but I recommend your skim through anyway.

### 2.2 Basic hosting and web design options.

A web host is a computer (server) on the internet that is always turned on, and that “hosts” your web pages and that handles your email. The next chapter describes traditional hosting and the options there in some detail. All the “Power hosting” providers also provide traditional web hosting services (of course). The basic function of a web host are:

- To host your website. This involves giving you a unique username and password on their server from which you access a directory where you can upload files (html files, images, audio files etc) to your web host. Once you have uploaded a file to your server, it is normally immediately accessible from the web. For example, if you upload a file called, say “cats.html” to your default web directory on your host, anyone may go to the web at the url <http://mysite.com/cats.html> and immediately view that page.

- To handle your email.

Traditional hosting normally costs \$10/mth or less. It is even possible to find free traditional hosting providers (however, they typically put advertisements on your site so this is not recommended). If you are paying more than \$10/mth for a traditional hosting provider, exclusive of e-commerce services like shopping cart etc, you are probably paying too much.

Once you have opened your hosting account, and have your server and domain name, you can begin to build your website content. There are different ways of creating a website and the one you choose ultimately depends on what you want to do with your site.

Here is a quick summary of the options (and my recommendations):

If...	Then...
Your website is primarily a show-case of your work and talent (a so-called “brochure website”) AND you don’t need to collect email addresses AND you don’t care much whether you are going to get search-engine traffic (ie, you are just using your site to refer clients that you have met offline)	Use a traditional hosting provider. Build your site yourself or hire a designer.
You want to collect email addresses of your visitors for your newsletter; or else you have a few simple products to sell (5-15), that don’t change frequently (including digital downloads); or else you are planning a search-engine optimization campaign	Use a “Power Hosting” provider ( <a href="#">SiteSell</a> or <a href="#">ThirdSphere</a> ) . Build your site yourself or hire a designer
You have more than 30 products, or else products that change frequently or require complex shipping calculation or have multiple product options (color, size)	Use a “Power Hosting” provider, with a database-backed product catalog. You probably want to use the <a href="#">Sitesell + Shopsite</a> combination, as there is nothing anywhere near like this in their price range. Cheaper options are described below.
You sell a lot of products on auction (ie eBay) and want a system where you can sell both on your own store and at auction	Try <a href="#">Vendio</a> , <a href="#">Andale</a> , or <a href="#">Zoovy</a> or any of the other providers that specialize in auction stores. This is the ONLY case of a serious internet business that I would recommend anything other than the Power Hosting providers ( <a href="#">SiteSell</a> and <a href="#">ThirdSphere</a> )
You are selling products online, but for some reason the Power Hosting providers can’t meet your need	There are a great number of ecommerce providers, but most don’t come close to the Power hosting providers ( <a href="#">SiteSell</a> and <a href="#">ThirdSphere</a> ) in terms of actually making a website that will draw traffic and make sales. However, if for some reasons the power hosting providers don’t meet your need, try any of the vendors above or else <a href="#">CityMax</a> or <a href="#">Yahoo Stores</a> . A few other good fairly inexpensive carts you can use on your own website are <a href="#">ShopFactory</a> (for Unix systems) and <a href="#">AspDotNetStorefront</a> (for Microsoft systems)
You are not particular about your site design and you just want to get online quickly and cheaply without hiring a professional designer; AND you don’t really care about search-engine traffic	Use any of the template-based commerce providers. <a href="#">Godaddy</a> has a functional web building tool with hosting starting at about \$4/mth. You may also want to try the <a href="#">CatGen</a> free open-source web catalog building tool.

<p>You have some products to sell, but are on a very tight budget and want to get online quickly and get search-engine traffic to your unique products</p>	<p>Try the CatGen open-source web catalog building tool with hosting on <a href="http://CatGen.com">CatGen.com</a>. CatGen sites rank very high in search engines, as they are part of a much larger system. You may also want to consider getting an OSCommerce site (see below).</p>
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### 2.3 Hiring a designer vs. doing it yourself

It is quite possible to design your site yourself. There are fundamentally three ways to do this:

- Use a hosting provider that has a web building tool. Godaddy has one fairly reasonably priced.
- Get a software that will do it for you, such as Microsoft Front Page, the free Mozilla Composer, or any number of other software that you can find at your nearest Staples (or else search [download.com](http://download.com) for “html editor”)
- Learn how to use professional website design tools like Macromedia Dreamweaver and Adobe Photoshop

As a rule of thumb, unless you are very artistic and/or perfectionistic and/or willing to invest considerable time in it, a do-it-yourself website will not look professional. Of course, there are exceptions, and you should give it a try if it excites or inspires you. Be aware, however, that becoming a professional web designer is a 1000-hour process that requires tools worth several thousand dollars to do it right, in addition to extensive image and clip-art libraries. Furthermore, you can get your site designed professionally for as little as \$400 from [BestCommerceTools](http://BestCommerceTools.com), so consider whether the projected income of your business is worth that kind of investment up-front. If you are really strapped for cash and have a pretty good idea what you want, see the chapter [Get your site designed for \\$100 or less](#).

Certain ecommerce applications don't lend themselves well to custom-designed website – this is especially true of application service providers (ASP) for e-commerce stores. A list of these is given further on.

The one advantage of designing your site yourself, is that it will be easy to maintain (modify when you need to make changes). However, even a professionally-designed website can be easily maintained by a software such as Macromedia Contribute, that costs about \$150 (and about half that for Academic versions of the software, you may search the web for “Macromedia Contribute Academic” if you are a full-time student). You may also try any html editing software, you can use the free Mozilla Composer.

### 2.4 Tracking visitors (website statistics)

All hosting providers give some means of tracking the number of visitors to your site. The information available includes the number of “hits” (total files served by your web server to your visitors) and “unique visitors”. The only one you really care for is unique visitors. Once you start getting upwards of 100 unique visitors a day, you're in business – but only if these visitors are “targeted”, ie really interested in your product or service – and only if you have the skills to convert them to paying clients or newsletter subscribers.

Web hosts provide different software packages for viewing your webstatistics. They vary between almost useless to quite extraordinary. Some of the ones we like are [Awstats](#) and [Urchin](#) (which is a premier statistics package). These packages will tell you not just the number of visitors to your site per day; they will also tell you pages most viewed; the country of origin of the request (and sometimes the region of origin in case of highly sophisticated web stats like Urchin); the keywords that people entered into the search engines that brought them to your site (VERY IMPORTANT); and in some cases, the actual path that users took through your site. Needless to say, having good web statistics is KEY to the success of your internet marketing program.

One of the most unique and extraordinary services provided in this category is the [SiteSell](#) service. Their service not only tracks your statistics and the path taken by visitors through your site; they will also tell you how high you rank in the search engines for your chosen keywords; and they will submit your pages automatically to the engines and then track whether the search engines “spiders” (or robots) have actually come to your site, and if not will

resubmit again.

## 2.5 Building traffic and understanding how Search engines work

Techniques for building traffic would fill an encyclopedia and change frequently (the search engines don't actually publish their algorithm for how they "rank" websites). So, we must proceed by induction i.e. why is Company A higher in the search results for "African Widgets" than Company B, when both appear to make exactly the same product? And so, while search-engine optimization is an art, there are some general rule-of-thumb guidelines we can use:

1. Search engines rank websites according to the number of incoming links. In other words, if your website has 80 other sites pointing to it (and especially if the incoming links are from high-ranking sites), you will be ranked higher than a site with no links, for the same keywords. This is where Affiliate programs can serve very well (increasing number of incoming links); but also blogs and newsletters, particularly if they are archived on other people's sites (you should always include a link-back to your site in your blog or newsletter)
2. However, even if you have no incoming links at all, if your keywords are unique enough (and there are not too many competitors), you will appear in the search results – and sometimes in the top ten, which is where you want to be (the purpose of all internet marketing is to appear on the first page of the search results for your keywords of interest).
3. Search engines rank websites by the keywords that appear in the meta tags (part of the html of your page) and on the main page content. If your keywords are ONLY in one of these places, you will not be ranked. You MUST fill your website pages with the keywords you want to be ranked on, to have any hope of your site coming up in the engines.

Please note that all websites appear in the search engines if you type the right thing – for example your website should definitely appear if you type your name or the name of your company. This means nothing except that the engines have found you; it won't get you traffic because nobody knows or cares about your name or the name of your company and so they are not searching for it (well, let's just say not many people know ☺) .

Search engine marketing is THE fundamental task that most small business need to do to succeed. If you haven't yet purchased the My Site Sells eBook for \$30, please do so now, there is a full volume in there about search-engine marketing (the "Traffic" book). Get it from here:

[Click here to purchase the Make Your Site Sell eBook](#)

## 2.6 Newsletters, ezines and bloggers

Aside from your internet marketing campaign, building-up your newsletter or Ezine is your second fundamental task as an internet entrepreneur. The people on your mailing list are your wealth, and you should treat them with the greatest possible care. You should be feeding them regularly with information that they need and want to know, and you should do everything you can to get them to sign up when they first visit your site, because it's unlikely that they will come back.

This is another large topic, that is covered in the SiteSell Free Download.

[Download the My Site Sells Free Trial and SBI Action Guide](#)

And in the [Make Your Site Sell](#) eBook.

A special note about Bloggers: A blogger differs from a newsletter primarily in that people can respond to your article by posting comments about it and/or sending you feedback. It also automatically keep a trail of the blog on a website. Bloggers are a very powerful marketing tool that will be covered in more depth in a future edition of this report. For now refer to the following excellent resource:

<http://www.buildabetterblog.com/>

## 2.7 Sequential auto-responder series

A sequential auto-responder series is a software application that tracks when your visitors have signed-up to your mailing list and sends them follow-up mails on the days you specify. This is a very powerful tool for staying in touch with your customers and “warming them up” to your offers by building confidence in you.

There is a very informative tutorial of the use of auto-responder series on the [Thirdsphere site](#).

## 2.8 Ad tracking

An ad tracker is a special html link that enables you the “track” the number of people that click-through, and that automatically measures the conversion rate of clicks to “leads” (signups to your newsletter) and to sales. This is essential information that you need when setting up and analyzing the success of your internet marketing program.

All of the Power Hosting platforms have the ability to do ad tracking. You may also purchase a product such as [Ecomincs](#) that is a complete email marketing and externally-hosted shopping cart solution (see below), however the full package is more expensive than the Power hosting providers.

## 2.9 Affiliate management

Affiliate management refers to a system where people sign-up to your website as your “affiliates”, in order to market your products from their own websites. This can vastly expand the sales of your products.

The way this work: When somebody signs up to your affiliate program, they get their own custom link to your site (that is similar to an ad tracker). They will post this link to their website. Anyone who clicks-through that link gets flagged by certain code within your website as coming from that affiliate site, and if that visitor then returns to your site (typically within a year) and purchase any of your products, your affiliate gets credited a commission.

The way this works is that the user receives a “cookie” from your website which is put into his browser. The cookie will be set to expire within a certain amount of time. When the user returns to your website, using the same computer (and assuming he has not deleted his cookies from his browser), your system is able to flag that user as coming from the affiliate who originally sent him, and to credit your affiliate with any resulting sales. All affiliates systems also have the ability to credit an affiliate manually with a sale, which is used for word-of-mouth referrals and/or when the user buys your package from another computer than the one that first referred him or her. (Obviously, either your client or affiliate must inform you of the sale).

Affiliate management systems all have a private area where your affiliates can login and see the number of clicks they have generated and resulting sales and commissions.

See below for a comparison of the main affiliate management systems for small business. You can also purchase a complete stand-alone affiliate management system for about \$200 from [www.groundbreak.com](http://www.groundbreak.com) (“Ultimate Affiliate”).

## 2.10 Shopping cart systems

There are two primary types of shopping cart systems.

Externally hosted shopping cart system are systems where you put a “Buy Now” link on your web page that sends the visitor to an external system for completing the sale. The main systems in this category are [Paypal](#) and [Ecomincs](#) (which is a store-front for 1shoppingcart.com). [Thirdsphere](#) also has an externally hosted shopping cart included in the basic package.

Internally hosted shopping carts (also known as full ecommerce systems or database-backed sites) is where the product page and “Buy now” link are automatically generated by the software tool you are using. These sites generally have some kind of administrative interface where you enter your products, images, prices, etc, and the product pages are then generated automatically. There is a variety of vendors listed in the table above under “Basic hosting.”

A few very inexpensive shopping cart system especially worthy of notice:

[Paypal](#) is the easiest shopping cart system to setup in order to accept credit card payment. All you need to do is go to the Paypal site and request a Business account. They will require you to give them your bank account number and to validate it (they will send in two small deposits that you must confirm the amount of). There is no charge for the application, there is no minimum monthly fee, and the whole process takes less than a week. To use the cart, you just enter the correct html on your page and when the user clicks on it it redirects them to Pypal. Here is a sample site that uses Paypal shopping cart: [Rituals Make-up Studio](#). Note that you still need to create your website (Paypal does not do that for you).

[OSCommerce](#) is a leading open-source (free) shopping cart system used by thousands of shops worldwide. The user interface and the graphics tends to be a little clunky (which should automatically disqualify it for any serious store, unless you are on an extremely tight budget); however it is possible to customize the user interface and/or to purchase custom templates (search the web for “oscommerce templates”. For a good sample of OSCommerce carts follow [this link](#) and for some very qualified OSCommerce programmers see [BestCommerceTools.com](#), [oscexperts.com](#) and [justtwogirls.com](#)

[CatGen](#) is a free open-source e-catalog that can generate websites to any host you have ftp access to (including a free website) and also to Catgen.com for a small yearly fee (\$100). It works well with Paypal cart. CatGen is an easy do-it-yourself tool, sites look a litte clunky but they can be customized by a good designer or programmer (see [BestCommerceTools.com](#)). CatGen compares favorably to products costing hundreds of dollars (for example [ShopFactory.com](#)) but it is free. Additionally, hosting on CatGen.com will automatically give you search-engine submission and often high-rankings because of the value of being part of a very large product catalog (the search-engines favor large web sites).

[Thirdsphere](#) has an excellent external shopping cart included in the base package (\$25/mth) that interfaces with major payment gateways and/or Paypal. It also interfaces with ad-trackers and affiliate management, and is an extraordinary value.

## 2.11 Merchant Accounts

With the exception of Paypal and a few similar services (usually higher-priced), to accept credit card payments you need to open a merchant account. A merchant account enables you to accept credit card payments, either in-person (so called “card present” transactions), over the telephone, or on the web. Note that to accept credit card transactions on the web you also normally need to purchase a payment gateway service (for example, from authorize.net) Most merchant accounts have minimum monthly fees of \$20 or more.

Merchant accounts tend to have very precise requirements in terms of the type of businesses and products that they support. If you violate any of their terms, they will hold all your money and/or refund to your customers, and you will have to pay chargeback fees and probably more. Also, you should beware of credit card fraud, that is very common – you, the merchant, will be held financially responsible, not the merchant account providers. For this reason you should tread very cautiously into this territory. There is an excellent article on Merchant accounts in the [Make Your Site Sell ebook](#); and you should be aware that Merchant account providers vary greatly in terms of the quality of their customer service and their integrity.

We will be providing more information on Merchant accounts in a future edition of this ebook. For now, I suggest you start your search with [QuickBooks Merchant Services](#) (this is a “card present” service for the most part, but they will provide a payment gateway if you ask).

## 3. Traditional Hosting Providers

### 3.1 Summary and recommendations

A traditional hosting provider is a company that provides web hosting and email services. Most of them will also provide [web statistics](#). Some of them also provide automated web building tools and some kind of ecommerce

services. Check carefully however whether their ecommerce services match what you are looking for.

We are pointing most of our clients towards the power hosting providers, reviewed [below](#); because of the broad range of services provided at comparatively low cost, and the avoidance of the need to have multiple providers (ie separately providers for shopping cart, newsletter, affiliate management – which can get expensive). However there are some situations where a traditional hosting provider is called for. This can include:

- You just want a place to park yourself on the web – ie you don't need advanced shopping cart or newsletter services (or maybe you just need basic newsletter services, such as the one that is included in [BestCommerceTools](#) hosting accounts)
- You are able and willing to do your keyword analysis and Search Engine Optimization using free tools, and you have the expertise to do it
- You need a specific development platform for a pre-built or custom web application (i.e. a certain shopping cart software that will only run on Unix or Windows systems)
- If you are planning multiple websites, make sure you choose a provider, such as [BestCommerceTools](#), that provides unlimited domain hosting. Otherwise you will need a separate hosting account for each new website you make.

### 3.2 Some recommended providers

Unless you are clear why you are doing it, you should not spend more than \$10/mth for a traditional hosting provider. Below are a few providers that I have investigated; they all have this common characteristic that they provide a huge amount of disk space and bandwidth at no additional cost to a normal host, and outstanding customer support. For the price, all of the following represent excellent values.

#### Recommended Standard Hosting Providers

Feature	<a href="#">BestCommerceTools</a>	<a href="#">GoDaddy</a>	<a href="#">Dreamhost</a>	<a href="#">IPower</a>	<a href="#">Powweb</a>	<a href="#">Aplus</a>
Yearly Cost	\$102.00	\$37.80	\$119.40	\$95.40	\$93.24	\$119.40
Domain registration included	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Setup cost (with 1-year prepay)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Money-back Guarantee	<a href="#">90-days on unused services, No Questions Asked</a>	N/A on yearly plans	90 day	30 day	30 day	30 day
One-on-one telephone training 1 hour / consulting on any aspect of your web business		✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Cost of web design, programming and maintenance	\$10/hr	N/A	>\$50/hr	>\$50/hr	>\$50/hr	>\$50/hr
Type of support	Telephone support for 90 days (up to 1 hour total), Email thereafter	Telephone, Email	Telephone, Email			
Disk space	2000 MB	500 MB	2560 MB	2000 MB	2000 MB	2000 MB
Monthly bandwidth	120 GB	25 GB	120 GB	80 GB	150 GB	50 GB

Email accounts included	Unlimited	1	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Email account management	via cPanel	via cPanel	via cPanel	via cPanel	via cPanel	via cPanel
Webmail available	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mailing lists included	Unlimited	N/A	Unlimited	N/A	N/A	N/A
<a href="#">Choice of mailing list system</a>	<a href="#">PHPList</a>	N/A	Mailman, Custom			
Full domains hosted	Free Unlimited	1	3			
Mirrored and redirected domains	Free unlimited	Free unlimited				
CGI, PHP, mySQL, Perl	✓	Only PHP and mySQL	✓	✓	✓	✓
FTP access	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shell/SSH access	On Request	✗	✓			
Shopping Carts included	Paypal, OSCommerce, Agora					
Additional applications included	<a href="#">Fantastico</a> can install 40 popular Open Source applications. We will put it most anything else for \$20					

## 4. Power Hosting Providers – the full comparison review

### 4.1 Executive summary

The services provided by the Power Hosting companies ([SiteSell](#) and [ThirdSphere](#)) are so compelling and so reasonably-priced, we are now pointing 75% of our clients that way. The choice breaks down, more often than not, into which one of these two services to use. The [Ecomincs](#) platform is also excellent, although a little pricey, and is recommended if you have many different websites and you need email list management, shopping cart and affiliate management services for all of them.

Below is a detailed comparison table to help you decide. But here are the general conclusions of our research:

- SiteSell is a better marketing platform (more tightly integrated with search-engines) but a poorer sales platform than Thirdsphere (less range of features, especially in terms of shopping cart integration, digital download and affiliate management)
- If you need a built-in externally hosted shopping cart, digital download and/or affiliate management capability, go with ThirdSphere (if you were to use Sitesell, you would have to purchase these using an external service i.e. Ecomincs)
- To create a Sitesell site is an amazing learning experience in search-engine marketing. If it's your first website, you may want to use Sitesell just to learn the process. After you have learned the process, you can accomplish the same thing using web marketing products such as [WordTracker](#) and [WebPositionGold](#). WebPositionGold, which costs about \$150, will do most everything that Sitesell does, although you will have to do it manually. There is also the free [WEB CEO](#) – functionally equivalent to WebPositionGold and very recommended.

- You don't have to purchase the Sitesell product to use their marketing knowledge. You can just buy the [Make Your Site Sell \\$30 ebook](#), downloading the [SBI Action Guide](#) for free, and use their marketing info on any host, such as ThirdSphere (Note: you may need to purchase WebPositionGold and the WordTracker service).
- If you sell products for which you need an internal shopping cart (database-backed site), use Sitesell with the Store Build-It (Shopsite) add on.
- If you are planning on creating multiple websites, consider using SiteSell with [Ecomincs](#) for your first site, then afterwards use either Sitesell or a traditional hosting provider.

#### 4.2 Comparison table (Sitesell, Thirdsphere and 1ShoppingCart)

Here is the full feature comparison. I have included the [Ecomincs](#) service for comparison purposes (if one needs an Affiliate management system with Sitesell, you will need this or another system).

Feature	<a href="#">SiteSell</a>	<a href="#">Thirdsphere</a>	<a href="#">Ecomincs</a> (a 1shoppingcart store-front)
Cost	\$300/year for base package  Add \$400 for Store Build-It option (first year) and then about \$150 per year after that	\$25/mth, all-inclusive	\$29/mth for email marketing and shopping cart  \$49/mth if you also want digital download  \$79/mth if you also want Affiliate management
Basic Hosting and email	✓ unlimited storage and transfer	✓ 500MB storage	✗
Automated web page builder	✓	✓	✗
Automated graphic link / banner builder	✓	✗	✗
Compatible with Dreamweaver, Frontpage or other website creation software	✓	✓	✗
Automatic search-engine submission	✓	✓	✗
Handles multiple websites	✗	✗	✓
Keyword popularity analyzer (keyword supply/demand) similar to <a href="#">WordTracker.com</a>  <i>This is an essential research tool</i>	✓	✗ (requires external service i.e. <a href="#">WordTracker</a> )	✗
Search-engine rankings reports, similar to <a href="#">WebPositionGold</a>	✓ (automatically generated )	✓ (must be manually generated)	✗
Unlimited newsletters and sequential auto-responders, and	✓	✓	✓

ability to send html newsletters			
Integrated shopping cart, compatible with Paypal and major payment gateways	Requires Store Build-it Pro Option (\$800) or external system	✓	✓
Affiliate management	Requires Store Build-it Pro Option (\$800) or external system	✓	✓
Digital product download	Requires Store Build-it Pro Option (\$800) or external system	✓	✓
Ecommerce store with database-backed product catalog	Requires Store Build-it Mgr (\$400)	✗	✗
Ad trackers	✓	✓	✓
Ad tracking integrated with shopping cart	✗	✓	✓
Pay per click (PPC) mass bidding tool	✓	✗ (requires external service i.e. <a href="#">WordTracker</a> )	✗
Marketing information	300+ page manual, case studies etc (also <a href="#">available separately</a> for \$30)	✗	✗
Good technical documentation	✓	✓	✓
Clean, simple, easy to use	✓	✓	✓
Quality of technical support	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

### 4.3 Sitesell reviewed

[Sitesell](#) is an entirely unique service that excels in providing information and tools for internet marketing. In fact, Sitesell advertises that 65% of their sites make up the top 3% of trafficked websites. This is a very impressive statistic. They are also correct in saying that most internet businesses start the process backwards – they should start by deciding what keywords they want to capture (bring visitors in for), and then put those words on their site.

The following link compares Sitesell to some of the other popular ecommerce providers, including Yahoo Stores. It is worth checking out:

<http://buildit.sitesell.com/compare/compare2.html>

Sitesell comes with a 300+ page manual of proven best practices for creating successful websites. They even give out this manual, called the SBI Action Guide, as a free download. It is well worth reading and explains their system very thoroughly. It is available for free [here](#) (however, it is also a tutorial for the Sitesell keyword analysis tools so it is not that useful unless you have already purchased a Sitesell site).

### 4.4 Thirdsphere reviewed

[Thirdsphere](#) is exceptional in that it brings together for a very low cost all of the services that an internet

entrepreneur needs. Those that it doesn't include are the keyword popularity and search engine submission services, which can be handled separately for free, once you have the knowledge. I will be updating this document shortly with an article on search engine marketing.

Thirdsphere is a solid, well-supported and documented development platform. The "Automation station" that they provide is intuitive and easy to use; and their sites are fully compatible with Dreamweaver or other professional design tools (like Sitesell), yet there is also the option of a do-it-yourself web building tool.

You can use Thirdsphere with the Sitesell marketing and SEO material; please standby for further information on this or [write to us](#).

#### 4.5 Ecomincs reviewed

[Ecomincs](#) is the "king" of external shopping cart softwares and email list management. In addition to the standard features such as multiple newsletters and sequential auto-responders, externally hosted shopping cart with a full range of supported payment gateways, ad trackers, and full affiliate management, it has a number of features especially valuable if you are doing extensive email marketing

- Ability to use from several websites at once (you can put a return url in the "add to cart" or subscribe links)
- Time-limited offers and discount coupons
- Up-sell offers
- Complex affiliate commission calculation
- And many others...

#### 4.6 Conclusion

Use a Power Hosting Provider (Sitesell or Thirdsphere) unless you have strong reason not to. Some of these reasons may be, incompatibility with a particular shopping cart / database management you may need, or incompatibility with a particular web programming toolkit you may need. Sitesell and Thirdsphere are Unix-hosted platforms, but Sitesell does not support web programming.

## 5. Web Design – how to get it done for \$100 or less

This section is written for entrepreneurs who have a pretty good idea what they want in a website and are willing to take the risk to hire an offshore web designer or programmer to give them what they need. With prices of fully custom-designed websites dropping to about \$300, including full customer support and training (see [BestCommerceTools.com](#)), hiring an offshore designer is a less attractive option. Still, one can get a very nice website done very cheaply.

The following are the popular marketplaces for web designers and programmers. Please note that these are "buyer's marketplace." You can expect 10 to 30 bids for a typical small project of less than \$100.

Typically, payment will happen via escrow. When the seller (web designer) submits a bid and you accept it, you put the money into an escrow account. When the work is completed to your satisfaction, you release the money; and if the work doesn't get done to your satisfaction, you will request an arbitration, that may return all, part or none of the money back to you depending on the situation. If the programmer or designer does not communicate regularly and promptly, it is probable that you will be get the money back.

When using any of these services, be sure to keep an audit trail of all correspondence in case there be difficulties.

There are the major sites:

[RentACoder.com](http://RentACoder.com) – probably the major marketplace for self-employed offshore software development, web design, email marketing, translation etc. Free to webmaster / buyers, vendors pay a fairly small percentage plus an escrow fee.

[Guru.com](http://Guru.com) (similar to rent-a-coder)

[Elance.com](http://Elance.com) – the major marketplaces for larger projects and firms offering offshore software development and web design (but also a good collection of smaller projects). Free to buyers. Wide range of services offered in many different categories. Definitely worth checking out.

## 6. Website Audio

Website audio is the procedure used to put a streaming audio voice greeting on your website, so that a visitor can hear you talking to them. This is one of the best investments you can make for your internet marketing program. It allows you to engage potential customers through sound as well as sight, and makes a statement about your technological savvy. For a good explanation of the benefits of having audio on your site, see the [SonicMemo](#) website.

What most people don't realize, however, is that it is not necessary to purchase an expensive website audio subscription service to have audio on your website; nor is it necessary to purchase a software that generates special codes and html. Putting audio on your website is as simple as putting an embedded Flash Player control on your web page. This is done very simply by modifying the web page html, uploading the Flash Player (.swf) file to your website, and then creating and uploading an MP3 file with your voice greeting.

All you need is:

- 1) The Flash player. You can get it for free from [free-website-audio.com](#).
- 2) A means to record your voice greeting as an MP3 file. This is done most easily with a computer and a microphone and Windows Sound Recorder. However, the mp3 files produced by Windows Sound Recorder don't work well with Flash, so you will have to convert it to MP3. This can easily be done with a software called [DBPoweramp](#).

The standard Flash player that you get for free from [free-website-audio.com](#) is not recommended for recordings longer than a few minutes, as these may take up to 10 seconds to load and your visitor will not know what is happening during this time. Instead, we recommend using a Flash player with a loading indicator for this. You can see some samples at [free-website-audio.com](#) and purchase it from this site for only \$30.

## 7. Conclusion

I hope you have found this report useful, and please send me feedback and suggestions. Our mission (and our love) is to help self-employed professionals and internet entrepreneurs be successful.

To your success,

Marc Beneteau

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## 8. About BestCommerceTools.com

### About BestCommerceTools.com



BestCommerceTools.com is a full-service hosting, web design, consulting and internet marketing services company with offices in Yonkers, New York, and Kathmandu, Nepal. We are a family business, currently consisting of partners Marc Beneteau and Rebekah Darcy Mulhare, and associates in Russia, India, Nepal, and Central/South America. We offer some of the most competitive rates on the internet for hosting, web design, search-engine optimization and internet marketing assistance, and friendly, available one-on-one consulting and training. Because our overseas associates work around the clock, you can be assured of service and support even when our US-based team is unavailable. Later on this year we will be offering 24-hour support via chat. We specialize in affordable, professionally designed web sites that use open-source tools. We welcome and support international clients as well as US-based ones.



We believe there is no substitute for a professional website design and for individual, one-on-one assistance that gets answers to very specific targeted question you have.



For more information about us read [Too Good to Be True? \(Frequently Asked Questions\)](#).



Our website design and programming packages start at just \$399, so [let's get started today - allow us to be bid on your project](#).

