CHEAP BUT GOOD

ROB FRANKEL

A Guide That Proves
You Don't Have to Spend
A Whole Lot of Money
To Do Business on the Web

Volume I

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1. Why I wrote this E-Book

Greetings. I suppose you're wondering why I decided to give away this e-book. Well, I'm doing this for a number of reasons. First, it's got a lot of information that you could probably get for free anyway, but at least now you've got it all in one place. Second, everything in here is proven, real life stuff. In fact, everything you read about here comes straight out of my own personal experience. I take particular pride in the fact that I've built everything in my career with off-the-shelf stuff; mostly free and low-cost items and services. Which means that you can, too. Third, it answers a lot of the most frequently asked questions that I get, which means I can save everyone time by directing them to download the answers in one simple permanent file.

It's also a blatant ruse to create more publicity for my book, *The Revenge of Brand X: How to Build a Big Time Brand™ on the Web or Anywhere Else*. I figure if you're serious about getting up and running on the web, you'll also be serious about creating the most critical part of that business -- your brand -- and buy the book.

There. I said it.

Anyway, ***this is by no means a complete listing*** of stuff. Just some proven tools and services that have worked for me. If I get a big enough response to this edition, I'll publish more. If you have stuff you want to see included, send it by e-mail to me and I'll consider it for inclusion.

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2. FrankelBiz: How to Get Even More For free

Of course, what you don't find here or in the book, you can always find -- for free -- at my site, http://www.robfrankel.com. I also want to take this moment to suggest you join FrankelBiz, the only **free** discussion list on the web that actually *prohibits* discussion. **I list a couple of resources here, but I kid you not, one post to the** FrankelBiz **list will result in your being pummeled by responses from terrific people with great products and services.**

FrankelBiz consists of a few thousand people just like you. Highly ethical, honest and enterprising people who are committed to building each others' online businesses via the web. The FrankelBees post their discounts, wants, needs and offers everyday, usually with a special added value especially for other FrankelBees. We don't allow MLM's or other Get-Rich-Quick quackery (Read the FAQ's for the whole story). We have, however, generated millions of legit dollars of business -- real cash, not trade -- for our list members. This is a great group, I encourage you to join us for, of course, **free**. Archives are **free,** too, available at http://www.robfrankel.com/list-archives

You can also join us every Monday morning, 9 AM to 10 AM Pacific Time, for Frankel's **Free** Clinic. This is the one hour where anyone can drop in and chat (no plug ins required) while getting one hour of **free** consulting time.

You'll make great connections, too, with other FrankelBees. Clinic archives are **free** at http://www.robfrankel.com/frankelbiz/freeclinic

Finally, I'm giving this e-book to you for **free**. If you find this beneficial, or if you decide to take any of my recommendations, do so by clicking through the hyperlinks embedded in this document. Some of them are affiliate links; others just get you there and pay me nothing at all. I have no other interest in these vendors other than the revenue their links may provide. Seems like a fair trade, no?

Other than that, knock yourself out.

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3. Free Stuff Can Kill You: What's Worth Paying For

It's been a number of years since the web dented all of our lives. And chances are that if you're reading this little tome, you've been touched by its power. Unfortunately, along with all the power has come a lot of garbage. You don't have to look much further than your e-mail in box to find promises of making millions overnight, spying on anyone, de-scrambling cable TV signals for free or the ever-famous hot-underage-Swedish-girls-just-waiting-to-meet-you.

Yeesh. It's enough to make you think that all this cyberstuff really is just hype.

It isn't, you know. The truth is that you really can make money on the web. And for a lot less than people will try to sell you. Personally, I deal with clients who have lots of money to spend on building their businesses. But that's only because they know that in business -- online or off -- the more money you have, the faster things happen. Assuming, of course, that you have people aboard that know what to do with that money. Lord knows we've all seen what happens to a twenty-something when he gets his hands of a couple of million bucks in cash.

At least we used to see it. Not anymore. If there's been any lesson we can learn from the dot com meltdown, it's that no amount of money can substitute for smarts. And smarts is free. It's just how you use those smarts that counts.

Right off the bat, let me tell you that you can't launch a business with no money. Sure, there are ways to cut corners with nobody being the wiser, But there are certain things that you're going to want to spend a little for. Not much. Just enough to be reliable. Notice that I didn't say *pretty, cool,* or *sophisticated* When I say reliable, I mean reliable. And among those, I suggest the following:

1. **Web Hosting:** This is critical, but you'd be amazed at how many dopes fall for the old "HOST YOUR SITE FOR FREE" routine. It may have come from a Domain Registrar, who builds in his hosting costs with his registration fee. Or it could be some other black magic concocted in his back room. Who cares? The point is that if you can rely on your site being up and running 24/7/365, you're sunk. No matter how well your site is designed, nobody will see it if the server crashes ten times day. Moreover, you'll piss a lot of them off, which doesn't exactly work miracles for your referral rate. There are plenty of reliable hosts that don't charge more than $10 or $15 a month. That's worth it, for sure. For a reliable, helpful and responsive team that

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packs a lot o value, I like the guys at WestHost. They're FrankelBees, so let them know who sent you.

2. **E-Mail Software:** Yes, there are plenty of free or light versions of e-mail software, but there's a reason they're free: they don't allow you to use the features that will save you time and effort as your business grows. And let me tell you, e-mail is the backbone of any web-based business, for all kinds of reasons. Mainly, it's the lifeline to your user base (or if you're really slick, your branded community), along with your vendors and affiliates (if you have them). The best one I've found is Eudora, for the Mac, which is under $50. Eudora has a free version, but for full horsepower, I recommend you spend the extra bucks. Remember, that having the ability to insert a variety of your own hyperlinked signatures, pre-written templates, searching and more will come in really handy as your volume of mail -- and purposes for mailing -- increases with business activity.

3. **E-Mail Merge Software:** As your business grows, you're going to want to send a lot of people a lot of specific information about their relationship with you. Updating subscriptions, earnings, order status are just a few things you want to personalize to your community. But mail-merge software works the other way, too. When I was pre-launching my book, The Revenge of Brand X, I used an great product for the Mac called e-merge to personalize my e-mails to hundreds of editors. Because we did such a cool job of low pressure, personalized approach, we got a tremendous amount of positive response (about 25%!) and lots of book reviews. And most importantly, we didn't get one "how dare you spam me, you pig" letter. The e-mail merge software I use is under $100 and absolutely terrific.

4. **Database Software:** It doesn't have to be expensive, but it does have to be able to organize and export data in a way that works with your mail-merge and financial stuff. And don't get scared with the sound of a phrase like "database." Chances are that nobody really needs anything more than a simple spreadsheet program that can track records, sort them and link with other spreadsheets so that everything gets updated accurately. If this didn't come with your computer, chances are you can buy an office products package for $200 to $400, that includes everything, including that all-important word processor (below). For my money, I like Microsoft Office as a package for either the Mac or PC. Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint are all you're ever going to need. But I'd stay away from integrating Outlook. Weird bugs.

5. **Financial Software:** Hey, if I told you I run my entire operation on a simple version of Quicken (not even the special "made for office work" edition), would you believe

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me? Well, I do. Probably because I don't need all the special forms and stuff they offer. But even so, this stuff is rarely more than $45 off the shelf.

6. **Word Processing:** Get a good one, and promise me that whatever you write, you'll run it through a spell checker before you post it to your site or send it out into the void. Nothing says "unprofessional" quicker and more credibly than easily preventable spelling errors. Grammar errors are pretty excusable, since most people think the past tense of "bring" is "brang", but for torpedoing any credibility you may have, spelling errors take the crown. Again, chances are that the word processor that came with your computer will do just fine, as long as it integrates nicely with your spreadsheet program, has a spell checker and can read other word processing files without breaking into too much of a sweat. If you do happen to buy one, it's included in Microsoft Office.

7. **HTML Software:** There are tons of these floating around for free. And even a couple of web browsers like Netscape include basic apps along with their free browsers. Of course, here you get what you pay for -- only the most basic HTML functions. For the record, both my personal website and the site for the book were done with Adobe Pagemill, which is about as simple - and at around $49 -- as cheap as it gets. Although it seems tempting to use Microsoft FrontPage because of all the "free extensions" that are included, you'll find that few web hosts enjoy dealing with them and that in the long run, you're better off letting them link your clean HTML site to their particular functional needs.

8. **Graphics Software:** This is really a judgment call. These days, there are so many cheap and easy download sites with pre-fab art that you can probably get away without anything too sophisticated. Again, chances are the stuff that came on your computer will probably do the job, as long as it can save graphics to .GIF,.JPG and .PNG format. Or, you can become a member of Art Today. I make no money from this link, but it's SUCH A DEAL, I couldn't resist.

9. **E-mail/POP Account:** Probably the biggest myth online has to be the idea of free e-mail. If you want to stop the kids whining without prying open your wallet, free e-mail is just fine. The time they waste viewing the unwanted ads will keep them from downloading pornography, I suppose. But if you're in business, you want a reliable connection, preferably from a company that has scads of local dial-up numbers no matter where your travel plans take you. If you really want to give yourself an ulcer, try cheaping out with some local provider only to find yourself on the opposite coast for a week, cranking up long distance charges just to get access to your e-mail. If

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you're serious about business, get off AOL as soon as you can. Their service is expensive and way below par. Although they have tremendous dial-up locations, everything else -- technical and otherwise -- will only serve to hamper your efforts. **Recommendation:** Personally, I prefer Earthlink for this, since they now include Mindspring and a host of other ISP's. They offer great service, lots of national dial up numbers DSL and good customer service for under $20 per month. Call them **1-800-EARTHLINK**, let them know you were referred by **robfrankel@earthlink.net.** One more hint: if you are a member of the American Automobile Association (AAA), they'll reduce the rate to $17.95 a month.

Okay, so now you have the basic stuff that I use. Just about everything else I use, like FTP software, is free and usually comes packed in with whatever hardware you already own. All in all, I figure that you ought to be able to bring it all in for way under $1,000, easy.

And if $1,000 is too much to invest in yourself, believe me, pal, you ain't cut out for doing business, period. On the other hand, if you plan on earning more than even $300 per month in perpetuity, you're breaking even by month four, and in the black thereafter.

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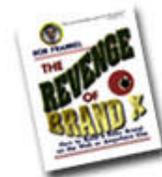
4. You Gotta Have Your Own Search Engine

There are all kinds of buttons and whistles you can slap on your site, but none are more valuable than a mini-search engine for your site. Your site design can be as bad as bad gets; ugly as the day is long -- and the one thing that can save you is a site search engine.

The reasons a site search engine works are many: First, it helps your users find exactly what they're looking for. And if there's anything you should pick up from The Revenge of Brand X, it's that people come to your site seeking solutions. You might as well make it easy for them to find what they're looking for.

Second, it makes you look professional. Let's face it, you probably don't have a site search engine because you think it's a bitch to script that kind of stuff. Well, it *is* a bitch to script a search engine, but you don't have to. There are at least three really good site search engines you can use for free. Each of these will automatically generate the HTML code for you online, which you simply stick on the page where you want it displayed:

1. Atomz.com: They have a killer service that will serve and index your site (up to 500 pages) for FREE. Pay them a little more, and they'll serve and index over 1,000 pages. This is great for searching or creating an automatic FAQ answer.

2. Searchbutton.com: Partially owned by none other than utility-meister Jakob Nielsen, they do the same kind of thing as Atomz.com. The basic stuff is free; the more involved stuff costs a tad more.

3. WhatUSeek.com: They do the basic search thing for free, too, although they present the search results with one of the banner ads they serve. WhatUSeek also sends you a weekly report of the keywords that people searched on your site. The others may, too, but I haven't checked them out for that.

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5. Free Tools for Search Engines

Everyone knows that you've gotta get on a search engine if you want people to find you. And the truth is that if you really want to stand out, you probably should pay a pro to do the listings for you. But that *doesn't* mean you *have to pay a pro your first time out*. Just get your URL out there. You can do it for free with a couple of good tools (there are probably more, but these are a good start:

1. Submit-It: Although it's now a part of Microsoft's Bcentral gig -- and they do their very best to hide the free service -- SubmitIt still works for most of the major search engines (except Yahoo, which I'll talk about in a minute) for free. The best part is that it automates a lot of the work, but you still have to plan on settling in for the better part of an hour to get things done.

2. JimTools: Be careful using this one. Jim Tools is great, and warns you that if you select the huge, submit-to-everything option, you could end up on the wrong end of a few thousand opt-in junk lists. Personally, I don't care. The more people who know about my site, the better. I simply filter out the spam from those others.

3. Yahoo: Yahoo makes you go through the motions to Suggest A Site. The easiest way to submit your site to Yahoo is to go to the category you want to be in, and drop down the page to the very end. You should see a link that says "suggest a site." That's your baby. Click and go. Of course, Yahoo is going to try to hit you up for a few extra bucks, but their basic listing is free.

4. Open Directory Project: Netscape's Open Directory Project is a backbone for a bunch of major search engines. It's staffed entirely by human volunteers, which means you can become a project manager for a category for a certain amount of time yourself. It doesn't get a lot of press, but it gets a lot of action. You can make a lot f very influential friends here, too.

To know if and where your site ranks, there are a couple of nifty tricks you can try:

1. Spyonit: This site allows you to track a phrase or URL, letting you know by e-mail or Instant Messaging when the phrase or URL you register is listed or mentioned somewhere new. Very cool.

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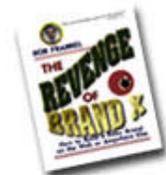*Page* 9*!*

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2. <u>Alta Vista</u>: To see who's linking to your site, go to Alta Vista's search box and type in the URL whose links you want to see. Instead of typing the "http" part, type in "link". The results will show you everyone linked to the URL in question.

3. <u>Link Popularity Check</u>: This is a nifty little site that allows you to type in your URL and see how yours stacks up in a few different engines.

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6. Newsgroups, Discussion Lists and E-Zines

When it comes to free publicity on the web, you've got a number of choices. Newsgroups are one. E-zines are another. But discussion lists are where I think it's at. Personally, I think newsgroups are for suckers; trailer parks of the internet, with nothing going on other than a whole lot of rambling, drifting conversations about all kinds of stuff. Newsgroup require people to log on and search through messages. For my money, I'd rather hit the people who are passionate enough about their own interests to actually sign up to receive what I've got in their daily e-mail.

And that, to me, says discussion lists. The only rule you want to follow with discussion lists is to read their FAQ's before you start contributing. Most of them (with the exception of FrankelBiz) won't allow you to blatantly sell whatever it is you've got. They consider that spamming and it could get you booted off the list. Harvesting e-mail addresses and contacting members off list is also *verboten* (even on FrankelBiz).

The key to promoting your business on discussion lists is two-fold:

1. Make sure you post with a signature line that contains a hyperlink for your business, so that interested readers can simply click and find themselves at your site.

2. When you post, offer a solution to the previous contributor's issue. Show people how willing you are to help. Over time, they'll see a pattern that suggests what a neat guy you are, and they'll click your sig line, I promise you. Just don't start commenting on things about which you obviously are not qualified. It only takes one idiotic post to brand you as, well, an idiot. And discussion list members have very long memories.

Here's a few of my favorite discussion lists, along with resources about where you can find more:

1. Adventive: John Audette runs some of the best stuff on the web, including I-PR, I-Sales Digest, I-Wireless and a couple more. He's a great guy, very nice and very smart. These lists are among the best of the best for reaching advertising and marketing people.

2. I-advertising: Adam Boettiger's list reaches tons of advertising professional people. One of the oldest and best.

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3. FrankelBiz: Hey, how much more do I have to say? This list is composed of non-professionals, for the most part. These are ready-to-rock people who actually do business with each other, over a variety of disciplines.

4. GNE World: This is search engine of newsletters. You never know what you'll find there.

5. Liszt: A search engine that not only lists newsletters, but archives them, as well.

6. PAML: Publicly Available Mailing Lists offers searches for over 7,500 lists. Have fun.

7. If you absolutely MUST go the Usenet/newsgroup route, there's always good old Deja, which allows you to search every trailer park by interest, and scour their archives, as well.

If E-Zines are your thing, these directories might make your job a bit easier:

1. http://www.ezinesearch.com : This is a basic directory/search engine of zines.
2. http://www.web-source.net/web/Ezines/ : Another great resource to find what you're looking for!
3. http://EzineSeek.com/ : Yet another.

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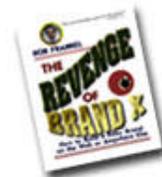Volume I
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7. Fulfillment and Credit Cards

If you're in the business of selling stuff that has to be shipped to your users, you're going to need someone to pick, pack and ship it. Maybe even someone to process the credit card order. Nobody is going to do that for free, but you can come pretty close if you find someone who will do it for you on a "per piece" basis.

But what do you do if you *don't have* a merchant account or credit card gig? Well, you have a bunch of alternatives:

1. Ifulfill: I recommend ifulfill.com to everyone. The FrankelBees at ifulfill.com have a cool page on their site that generates the HTML you stick on your web page, which becomes your order form. It cost almost nothing to set up and thereafter, they charge you only per sale (with a slight minimum that I manage to beat every month). They even lend you their credit card account to use for the purchase. Sure, they charge you for that, but not until they ring the sale. I use them for my book.

2. PayPal: This is another way to get your payment from anyone's checking or credit cad and zapped into your checking account for almost nothing. It's not free, but it is another "pay as you go" type deal and it really works nicely. If you don't have a credit card thing happening and do your own fulfillment, PayPal is a very cool option, especially when you consider that not all of your customers may not have -- or want to pay by credit card.

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8. E-Mail List Hosts

Building a branded community that supports your users is *so* important, that I devoted a whole chapter to it in my book. If you know how to skillfully build a branded community, you can lower acquisition costs, increase revenue and profitability, get cheap market research and almost everything else your business requires, all due to the nurture and support that flows from your site. Of course, the engine that drives that community is e-mail. And not just blasting personalized messages to your users.

A branded community requires interaction of users amongst each other. And for that, you need an interactive mailing list, so that any one member can send his message to everyone else on the list.

Let me start out by saying that if you really had to, you could simply have everyone direct their messages to you, which you could then edit and blast back out to your list of subscribers. Lots of people start out that way and it's definitely *el cheapo* way to go. But when your list passes, say the 250 member level, things start getting a little messy. That's when you may want to find a list hosting service. It makes it easier for people to join and unjoin, automatically trap data, send out your FAQ's and most importantly -- save you time. A good list host allows you to moderate each post as it comes in, edit it and send it along to the server, which does all the heavy lifting of sending each post out to the rest of the list.

I generally believe that using free list hosts is risky, but if you're going to risk anywhere, this is probably where you're going to have to bite the bullet. Other wise, you're looking at spending anywhere from $200 to $3,000 per month for this kind of service.

The risks involved with free hosts include spotty delivery, slapping text ads at the bottom of your messages and the usual technical glitches. But by far, the most serious risk is the potential thievery of your members' e-mail addresses for others' nefarious purposes. You don't want other people stealing and abusing your members' e-mail addresses, but if you're really squeezing nickels, you may have no choice. Most free services have limits on the number of users they allow before they charge.

Among the freebie list hosts to consider:

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1. Topica: Basic service. Used by many, but not by me. Personally, I prefer to pay my way rather than risk abusing those addresses.

2. ListBot: Owned by Microsoft, it's free and even the ad-free Gold edition is only $99 a year.   You get neat management tools, including a web page subscription form that can trap data.

3. e-Groups: Recently purchased by Yahoo, e-groups previously merged with onelist.com and survives as Topica's evil twin.

If you have a list that requires more professional quality, Sparklist charges by the number of messages that go out per month, but their charges are more reasonable than many out there who offer the same services.

So there you have it for Volume One. I don't know if there'll be a Volume Two, but hopefully, this will get you started without having to spend a fortune. See you online!

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