

# THE SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL WEB SITES

– by David Siegel, author of *Creating Killer Web Sites*  
– trade paperback and more, due Spring 1997

## SUMMARY

*Secrets of Successful Web Sites* (working title) will be a much-anticipated book following the success of David Siegel's first book *Creating Killer Web Sites*. Siegel's first book has set sales records and establishes a new paradigm for publishing using a book/web-site combination.

*Secrets of Successful Web Sites* addresses the business and resource side of creating web sites. It is meant to be the definitive book on web project management. It is to be "In Search of Excellence" for the web, with practical advice as found in "The Business Side of Creativity: The Complete Guide for Running a Graphic Design or Communications Business."

Although many books address management and design issues, this book highlights issues of specific concern to those producing a web site. It takes readers behind the firewall to see the side of the project that normally doesn't get out. It will become the web-producer's handbook.

**The primary market for this book is anyone paying money to have a site made**. The secondary market is anyone making a site for money. The tertiary market is people who will potentially become members of one of the first two markets within a year. We estimate the total market at about 2 million potential purchasers in 1997. Of that, we hope to sell into at least 10% for total sales of 200,000 copies. The book is divided into two sections:

**The first section** consists of 20 case studies that will make up two-thirds of the book. Each chapter will be devoted to a serious web site project, presenting both the client point of view and the contractor point of view. These case studies will be very visual, with details on how much time and money was spent on the projects (research so far suggests they will give us this information), how the team collaborated, what the successes and failures were, and what the parties would do differently if given the chance to do it over.

**The second section** further delves into the client-contractor relationship and examines concerns salient to each: project management, rights, contracts, source materials, writing, graphics, navigation, cost/benefit analyses, upkeep and maintenance, scheduling, resource requirements, documentation, etc. This section details the four-phase process of web production. It also shows the step-by-step process of working with a designer to get the site you want. Two bonus chapters will cover cyber rights and contract issues, including a complete contract as an appendix.

*Our goal is to produce a book that becomes a must-have strategic weapon for anyone working on either side of a web contract.*

## **FEATURES**

Title: *Secrets of Successful Web Sites*

Author: David Siegel

Season: Spring 97

Major Cover Notes: By the best-selling author of *Creating Killer Web Sites*

Pages: 370

Format: trade paper, 4-color throughout

Size: 10" by 8"

Cover: Possibly two covers for two different markets

First printing: 30,000 +

Associated Web Site: yes

*We are considering the option of two different covers and introductions aimed at the two primary markets: site owners and site developers.*

## **MARKET**

**The primary market for this book is anyone paying money to have a site made .** The secondary market is anyone making a site for money. The tertiary market is people who will potentially become members of one of the first two markets within a year. It is important to make sure site owners can't live without this book as well as providing web-wise business advice to those starting up as contractors.

**The client side:** Over 2 million people will be involved in collaborating on a web site in 1997. These numbers will almost double in 1998. Anyone paying to have a web site built will need this book for its case studies and step-by-step guide to project management. If you are paying thousands of dollars to have your site made, isn't it worth \$50 to find out how much others have spent, what they've done, and what they've learned? We estimate sales of 150,000 copies into this market.

**The developer side:** Most web developer shops now creating web sites for a living are 1-3 people working together. They typically have very little knowledge about the business of design. Many have "left their day jobs" to pursue web design. They have not run their own businesses before. They need all the practical business advice they can get. Based on the success of *Creating Killer Web Sites*, we can expect to sell at least 50,000 units in this market.

Although this is not an intranet book, there will be case studies involving intranets and the production of sites via databases. People doing intranets will be attracted to this book as well.

*For each web project that costs over \$2,000 to build, this book should sell 1-4 copies. There will be at least half a million such projects in the next two years.*

## **COMPETITION**

There are several books on internet marketing (like the first few listed). We could only find one with our focus on the process of project management and strategy. We haven't seen "Web Site Management Excellence," but we'd be interested in a copy. We know of no books in development like this.

### **Strategic Internet Marketing**

**Tom Vassos**

List: \$24.99

Published by QUE

Publication Date: Aug-96

ISBN: 0-7897-0827-2

### **Build a World Wide Web Commerce Center : Plan, Program, and Manage Internet Commerce for Your Company**

**Net. Genesis Corporation**

List: \$29.95

Published by John Wiley & Sons

Publication date: June 1, 1996

Dimensions (in inches): 9.28 X 7.55 X 1.01

ISBN: 0471149284

### **Designing Large-Scale Web Sites**

**Darrell Sano**

List: \$34.95

Published by John Wiley & Sons

Publication date: February 1, 1996

Dimensions (in inches): 9.26 X 7.54 X .73

ISBN: 047114276X

### **Web Site Management Excellence**

**Linda Brigman**

List: \$29.99

Published by Que Corp

Publication date: September 1, 1996

Dimensions (in inches): 9.39 X 7.61 X 1.09

ISBN: 0789709112

*There will certainly be competition, but with a book like this our toughest opponents will be buyers, not publishers. We must get them to stock it in the business section!*

## SELLING POINTS

David Siegel's first book spent 8 weeks on Amazon.com's best-seller list. David Siegel is widely regarded as one of the top web gurus of web design. David Siegel's company, Studio Verso, is a well respected shop. The CKWS web site has become a destination for developers. The business customers can afford this book. It will cost them money not to have it! Longevity: the principles are independent of the current state of the Web. Fully illustrated with enthusiastic interviews of people on the cutting edge. The case-study sites will host banners featuring the book, driving even more traffic to the book's web site.

*Bookstores will order this book in quantities of 10-20 based on the success of Creating Killer Web Sites.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

We feel pretty good about the amount of work we've put into the book so far, but what we don't have is a comprehensive list of sites to be featured. We have, however, already begun two test chapters on two sites, which we have not included in this proposal because these chapters won't really take shape until we've gotten materials from most of our sites. Right now, we're putting our energy into contacting sites and developers. With that in mind, here is the table of contents:

Introduction	3	<b>1-3</b>
Part I: 20 Case Studies		<b>4-200</b>
each site to be 10-12 pages		
Part II: Principles		<b>201-345</b>
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*This is really two books for the price of one. It will make David Siegel into the Tom Peters of the Web.*

**PART I: CASE STUDIES** Two thirds of the book is in case-study format. We plan to interview twenty successful sites and tell the story of their development, from needs to concepts to final product. We want to focus on the process and the client/contractor relationship. We'll pick various kinds of sites, from small jobs to large-scale sites to search engines to on-line stores. Sites are selected based on their being successful ventures for their owners.

Our group [The Verso Book Division, as-yet unnamed ("Verso Unplugged"?)] is in a good position to speak with the people who made these sites and learn what they went through. Few authors can get this kind of information out of site owners and designers. They trust us. At the beginning of each chapter, we'll have an info-graphic showing a matrix of various factors that went into the site, so sites can be compared across categories. Readers will get a good sense of how much each phase of the site cost. We also expect to include summaries and averages, in addition to a newly generated survey of salaries in the web-development world coming out next spring.

Because we will interview too many sites initially, we'll be able to edit the mix as the book takes shape. We're planning on about 20-30% attrition from first interview to draft and another 10% dropping out after that.

We may also be able to tell the stories of two or three disaster projects – projects that melted down and had to be scrapped or salvaged but are good learning lessons for everyone reading the book. We will be lucky to get two good ones.

The case studies will look at two perspectives: the client's and the contractor's. [For a list of proposed sites we plan to approach, please see the appendix. ]

**On the client side**, we'll explore the need for a new site or redesign, the process of finding a group to work with, negotiating terms, establishing the budget and time line, selling the project to upper management, working with the creative group, content wrangling, problems and changes, decisions made, degree of success (or profitability) and a summary from both parties of what they'd do differently if they could do it over.

**On the contractor side**, we'll learn how the client first contacted them, what led to the deal, resource management, job flow, presentations, the hard parts, the late hours, the miscommunications, the lost opportunities, the last-minute changes, and advice for others wanting to design web sites.

*Most clients should buy this book for the case studies alone. We plan to get the information that most sites won't give out.*

**PART II: PRINCIPLES** This section of the book covers the design and production process as it applies to web design. While many books outline principles of design, none has yet addressed web issues from both points of view. The purpose is to give both the client and the contractor information and advice, so each can see what applies and what the other side goes through. Each chapter below has a quick description of its contents. If you would like more details on any chapter, please contact us.

Much of the material from this chapter comes from my learning experiences at Verso, yet different agencies have different styles. I will try to present it from my point of view while emphasizing other views and giving people different options so they can choose the way that works best for them.

### **1 Net Equity**

What is the business proposition here? What is the value proposition? Why are we doing this? Why are good web sites expensive? How will we make money with this site? What are the critical business questions to answer before going forward? What opportunities will give us a chance to make money with our web site? What is relationship selling? What is one-to-one marketing? How can it make us money, rather than cost us money?

### **2 Net Present Value**

Whether a site makes money directly or contributes to the bottom line through increased savings, a site must provide value to the surfer. What contributes to that surfing experience? I talk about the fundamental underlying principles of a site being the embodiment of a “good idea.” A good site starts with a good idea. From there, three sets of values contribute to the delivery of a first-quality site:

- production value
- design value
- content value

When you do all three well, you are rewarded by surfers showering you with their hits.

### **3 Partnering**

A client needs a web site. All she needs to do is find someone to make it. Should it be in-house or contract? How can you find the right group to work with? How can you evaluate several groups? How to write an RFP for the Web? What works and what doesn't? Are the traditional agencies catching up yet? Should you go with a four-person group working out of an apartment? What's at stake? What are the pitfalls? How does choosing the right group become a career-furthering activity?

Contractors need clients. How should web developers do marketing? How should they advertise their services? What happens when the phone

rings? What happens when it doesn't? How do you close the sale? Who writes the contract? What happens next?

To Bid, or Not to Bid, that is the question. This chapter will discuss bidding Vs hourly in some detail.

#### **4 Rights**

I am constantly asked about copyright issues as they pertain to the Web. This "bonus" chapter will give a clear understanding of where copyright is today and how to avoid problems in the future. Written by a lawyer, it will be thorough, yet relevant, and it will cover 99% of the questions most people have from a practical standpoint.

#### **5 Contracts**

Most small businesses have contracts but really don't understand what they are getting into when they make a web site. This chapter covers employment agreements as well as client contracts, liabilities, rights, sales tax, delays, kill fees, third-party rights, reproduction rights, logos and other non-web use, each party's responsibilities, etc.

This chapter includes a standard web project contract and takes you through it step by step. This will become known as "The Siegel Contract" and can be found on the web site for all to take.

#### **6 Setting Up**

This valuable chapter shows how to communicate with your clients completely on the Web. How to set up a client site and run the entire project from there. Every decision, every important e-mail, every meeting and every set of deliverables goes into the project site in chronological order. Part I will show some project sites for other contractors so readers can get a sense of how project sites work.

This chapter will have some interviews from several project managers on what their jobs and job-descriptions are. It will also talk about e-mail and other forms of communication during a project. It will also include a client talking about dealing with Verso.

This chapter will also talk about client presentations and new tools for collaboration.

#### **6 Phase 1: Goals and Requirements**

This is perhaps the most critically important phase of the process, yet few clients are prepared to pay much for it. This process takes the RFP to a set of working blueprints that will see the site through to launch.

In this phase, you want to have that "good idea" on which to base the site. What will be the functional metaphors and features that get clients to react positively? What kinds of web-based things can you do for customers that you couldn't do before? The idea is to provide a set of possible concepts that help drive the message of the site not only to the team, but to the visitors, the press, and to upper management as well.

This is the “focus” phase of the project, since clients typically have a lot of content ready to put on a web site and a lot of divisions screaming to get their content up. You must take a customer-centric point of view and try to see what value you can provide to incoming surfers who may turn into customers. How can you help them along the sales or service cycle? It’s critically important to focus on customers here rather than content.

- Develop user models
- Develop goals document
- Establish measurements of success
- Establish technical baseline and compatibility issues
- Develop site plan
- Develop content plan
- Develop schedule
- Develop site map and structure issues
- Write engineering specifications
- Develop final estimate

At the end of Phase 1, the client should see the various choices open and what they might cost. If they are presented as a range of choices (a feature/benefit matrix), the client can then choose the set of features for version 1 of the site that will give him/her the most bang for the buck. It should be clear what the follow-on versions of the site will be, at least in concept if not exact ideas.

## **7 Phase 2: Exploration**

Using the initial requirements and estimates from Phase 1 as guides, the next step is to develop comprehensive look-and-feel studies for the site. This is the creative phase. You might choose to present one or several studies on the project site and let the client team members discuss the ones they like. The phase ends with a final specification for the site, complete with site map, detailed requirements for various key pages, navigational elements, and delivery dates.

- Develop branding strategy
- Develop look and feel
- Develop navigation scheme
- Final presentation and sign-off of all design issues
- Establish content for beta test and launch of site
- Develop launch plan
- Write User-Interface specs
- Research resources for images and sounds

One important aspect of this phase is that HTML is the very last step. You must understand how it works, but it is quicker to mock up most pages in Photoshop. This chapter will show how to use tools like Photoshop and

Fusion to mock up the site without making it work. This phase starts by expanding possibilities, then narrowing down choices, finally arriving at one “winner” set of visuals on which to proceed.

Sidebars: feature creep and decisionitis

## **8 Phase 3: Development**

With the design decisions made, the project goes to the production department to “set the nails.” Whether you’re a one-woman tornado or a fifty-person group, you must get closure on phase 2 before “throwing it over the transom” to production.

This phase includes user-interface and navigational refinement – different from look-and-feel. It’s also time to hire any outside artists to do production art or gather outside artwork like photography for use in the site.

- HTML Production

- Image preparation

- Outsource content

- Site optimization

- Scripting

- Internal test of all functioning elements

- Browser compatibility check

- Alpha site review

- Beta test version ships

- Webmaster dry-run

- Develop guidelines and templates for ongoing maintenance

## **9 Phase 4: Delivery and Maintenance**

After beta testing, there are always a few hundred little things to fix. It’s also time to hook up any software scripts or databases (see next chapter), debug and QA the site. After it’s ready, add lists of links the client may want and prepare for launch. The site then goes to the hosting webmaster, who’s tested and readied her server. Part of the documentation is showing the underlying file and directory structure. Finally, I discuss content flow and life-cycle management.

There will be a small survey of content-management systems and what they can do for you. We will also talk about site maintenance contracts, who offers them, and what their pros and cons are.

- Final preparation of site for launch

- Continued testing

- Site launch

- Training of staff for maintaining the site

- Perform any maintenance on contract if necessary

- Deliver documentation

- Ongoing maintenance plan

- Overall issues

## **10 Technicalities**

Because not all sites will have databases, we cover engineering in a separate chapter. This chapter will be a must-read for anyone considering doing business on the Web. It will cover the most important aspects of database publishing and site maintenance tools:

- Online commerce
- Database-driven web sites
- Dynamic content
- Intranet databases
- Security
- Content management systems
- Interfacing with legacy systems
- Site management

## **11 Business Practices for Consultants**

This final chapter covers some real in-the-trenches material for setting up your own small business. It will be sort of a “Dave’s secrets of success” for starting a successful web-design shop. This is not meant to overshadow any of the current “how to set up your small business” books on the market, but rather to cover issues pertaining to web developers specifically. It will cover in more detail:

- Setting up your office and systems
- Provider issues
- Server issues
- Pricing: bid vs hourly work
- Estimating: the heart of any good relationship
- Marketing: How to sell your services
- Promotion and PR
- Legal ditches to stay out of
- Collecting
- Conflict
- How and when to bail
- How to keep selling even while working 100 hours a week designing.

**CALLOUTS AND SIDEBARS** This is a partial list of callouts and special features:

- The top-ten mistakes clients make in hiring a designer
- The top-ten mistakes clients make with contractors
- The top-ten mistakes contractors make in dealing with clients
- The top-ten ways to turn off your audience
- Will graphic designers all become web designers?
- Will it get cheaper to make good sites?

## Promoting your site

*This part of the book is supposed to be a web-developer's bible. We hope to set the standards for how all contractors deal with clients and give contractors a feeling of solidarity in dealing with flaky clients.*

**THE COMPANION WEB SITE** The book includes a web site, at which all the references required for a good redesign can be found: a list of good contractors, business resources, contracts and pro-forma documents, and updated cases. There will be a very relevant on-line bookstore on the site. We will also probably feature a full case or two from the book on the site.

*The web site will be a watering hole for book buyers as it will contain a lot of quality resources and updates. It should give the visitors ten good reasons to buy the book. We already have advertiser interest!*

**GOALS IN PUBLISHING** I want this book to penetrate the business market. I am very excited about selling to a much larger market than that of CKWS. I want to do everything possible to try to get on the Business Week Top-Ten book list. This is a challenge, because business books don't overlap with design books.

I would like to consider publishing a single-color non-illustrated hardcover version of this book and would like help determining the marketability of such a version. Another possibility would be to publish two four-color versions, each with its own cover and intro, and possibly title.

I am interested in working with a publisher who will maximize the potential of this book by working on ideas like these. Please tell me what you would recommend for capturing these two markets.

*The key to this book's success is tapping into two separate markets.*

**APPENDIX 1: THE SITES** This is a current list of the sites we plan to invite to be in the book. We will focus on sites that use good design and third-generation principles to attract and serve visitors. There will be big sites, little sites, commerce sites, parts of sites, in-house designed, collaborative and cooperative sites, etc. We're meeting people with good stories every day. We are confident we'll come up with at least 20 good stories:

Women's Wire  
Levi's  
Porsche  
Joe Boxer  
cnet  
The Hamptons  
Kelloggs  
Doonesbury  
HP Financial Online  
Kinkos  
Armani Exchange  
Trilogy  
Land Rover  
Elle Magazine?  
Porsche  
Virgin Records  
Carnegie Hall  
Sobek  
parentsoup  
Salon (electronic magazine)  
feed  
word  
ny times online  
slate  
SGI  
The HP Financial section of the HP site  
Some other parts of larger sites  
The Weather Channel

**APPENDIX 2: THE QUESTIONS** For your reference, here is a summary of the questions we'll ask in our surveys. These are not the actual questions, but they are the broad categorical lines of questioning.

### **Client Questionnaire**

What were the goals of the redesign?

How did you put the team together?

What was the schedule? How long did it really take?

What were the phases of the project and how did they go?

What was the approval process?

What did it take to generate or modify the content for the site?

What outside resources did you use?

Looking back on the project, was the strategy the right one? Did things go as planned?

What were the budget considerations? What were the important factors in determining the budget?

What was the final QA and shipping process? How much testing did you do?

Do people need to registers? If so, has that worked?

What feedback do you get from the site?

How do you measure success?

What were the technical aspects of engineering the site?

What is your maintenance plan and budget?

What are the ongoing content and maintenance needs?

If you could do the project over again, what would you do differently?

### **Contractor Questionnaire:**

How did the client learn about your group?

How did they contact you?

What did you have to do to get the job?

What is your project-management approach?

Who worked during which phase?

How do you get ideas for sites? How willing was the client to listen to your ideas?

What was the process of communicating with the client?

Did you use third-party resources?

Was your contract satisfactory?

What was the final QA and shipping process?

Where is the site being hosted?

Do you host any of your clients' sites?

How was maintenance figured into the design?

How does it work behind the scenes?

If you could do the project over again, what would you do differently?