

Bonus Chapter 5

Automation

Automation is undoubtedly one of the most important elements of any online business and the key to my Duvet Dollar system. Although it might not seem that crucial a concept in isolation, you'll soon find that it's the foundation of your business. Without automation, your business will be unable to sustain itself... it will be unable to cope... and it will crumble before your eyes. Every process, every task and every outcome is inextricably linked to this process... and I'm now going to explain why this is the case... and how you can use this concept to significantly improve your very own online business...

If your online business is to entertain any serious ambitions of making big, life-changing amounts of money, it HAS to include various forms of automation. Now, what do I mean by 'automation' and why is this concept so important?

Well, if you're anything like me when I first started, your business will be relatively small. In all likelihood you're running it entirely on your own, with perhaps only a partner assisting you. I remember how exciting it was when I made my first sale. I sent an email to the customer thanking him for his order and explaining that his set of 3 DVDs would be despatched immediately. I then set about buying some large envelopes, printing the address labels and packaging up the products before walking down to the post office to send them on their way...

Now, this is all well and good if you want your business to REMAIN small... but if you have aspirations of growth, running your business this way is not the way to go...

And why is that? Well, imagine you receive 20 orders for your DVD set. You've then got to manually send those emails to your buyers to confirm the orders, package up the products, buy all the boxes or envelopes to send them in, print off all the address labels and then post them all! Now imagine doing that for 50 orders, or even a 100 in the space of a week... AND at the same time answering customer queries or even questions from prospects!

That's right... doesn't sound like much fun does it?! In fact, it sounds like a REAL JOB... and none of us want that do we?!

Many small business owners quickly fall into this trap. I know I did. It's so easy to get caught up in the initial success of your business that you soon find yourself working harder (and for longer hours) than you did in your previous job. You sit there all day answering emails, fulfilling orders, posting products and updating your subscriber lists... BUT despite the perceived success, your business is standing still. It's not growing at all... and your profits are extremely limited as a result... or certainly NOT growing as fast as they should be anyway.

So what's the answer?

Well, this is where automation comes in... because it literally takes all of the tedious, time-consuming administrative work out of your business... Yet it does far more than merely act as your secretary... Automating your business allows you to concentrate on launching new ideas, developing and expanding your business into other, more profitable niches, and ultimately enables YOU to make more money. Furthermore, taking these jobs away means you can actually start to enjoy your freedom and your new lifestyle... which is why you embarked on this online business adventure in the first place!

Right then, I'm going to highlight the many forms of automation that appear in each stage of your business, and explain how they work. Hopefully at the end of this chapter you'll be able to put these ideas into practice yourself, and make your online business much more enjoyable and pain-free! So, let's start at the beginning...

1. Advertising Your Website

Imagine that you have a digital information product, like an e-book, that you want to sell online. (I prefer information products over physical ones because the whole process can be done automatically, without you even lifting a finger!) At this stage you probably already have a domain name and a website to sell your product. (If not, don't worry, this is the first step that you need to take so go back to the main book and work through the section all about identifying markets.) But how do you attract potential buyers to your site so they purchase your e-book?

Well, this is the first example of automation in your business. You may remember me talking about Google Adwords and bidding on keywords back in Chapter III (if you don't, take a look now to familiarize yourself with the content). Basically, a site owner selling football memorabilia for example, could bid on keywords such as 'football' and 'memorabilia', to name two very obvious examples! Now, every time someone types in these keywords, your advert will be listed (the height it's listed at depends on how much you've bid on those particular keywords and how specific the search is.)

So, once you've bid on these keywords, your work is effectively done. You can obviously return to Adwords and change your bid whenever you want, but basically, you're now advertising your products and bringing people to your website, without actually doing anything. It's now being done automatically – via a system that you've already set up.

Another example of automation can be seen through testing the success of your keywords. Something I always try to do is constantly test the effectiveness of the keywords I'm bidding on, so I'm always ahead of the curve. So I'll set up two advertisements on Google and see which one performs the best. (Again, see Chapter III for specific advice on how to do this.)

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Once you've set them up, Google will automatically and continually rotate your ads each time they're clicked on so you get an exact reading as to which is more successful at attracting customers. You can leave this to run automatically (for weeks if you like), until you're sure which ad is stronger. Then you can pick the best performer (the control ad) and put it up against a new ad, starting the testing process again! This means that you are continually improving your advertising... and you're doing this automatically.

2. List Building and Auto-Responders

After you've set up your website and started advertising it via Google Adwords or Yahoo's Overture for instance, it's time to start building your list of potential customers. As we discussed in Bonus Chapter 2, building a hot and targeted list is a crucial aspect of any online business, and once again, without an automated system to do this, your business will never get off the ground.

The first step to building a list is to offer the customer something free, in exchange for their details... which you store using a data capture device (explained in Bonus Chapter 2). This enables you to grab hundreds, thousands, even millions of names and email addresses for you to target at a later date. Once they've signed up to your free email course, e-book, newsletter etc, your auto-responder email series is ready to kick into action!

Studies have shown that it takes between 6-7 follow-up emails before a customer actually makes a purchase, so auto-responders are absolutely crucial to your business. You obviously can't send all of these emails manually, to each and every prospect that gives you their contact details... Well, not if you intend to make *Duvet Dollars* anyway!

The beauty of the auto-responder in this respect is that it enables you to write something once and then program its delivery so it's sent out to customers and prospects whenever you want it to be... without you actually having to do anything further.

Remember my 7-day Migraine Prevention Course I spoke about in Bonus Chapter 2b? Well, let's say you're sending that to everyone who signs up for it. You obviously need to write the course (which can take some time) but after that, automation makes delivering the course incredibly easy; all you need to do is program the time-scale and then set up the automated first-name field which personalizes each email... Hello [Brian], for example.

Therefore, when someone signs up for your course, your auto-responder is programmed to send out the first email immediately, and automatically plug in the first name of the prospect that has signed up. The first piece of correspondence would normally be a welcome email (similar to the one I wrote for the example migraine course in Bonus Chapter 2b), thanking the prospect for subscribing. Your second email could then be programmed to arrive in their inbox two days afterwards, your third email two days after that... and so on. All the while you're giving these people helpful information

and consequently building a relationship, increasing the chances of an eventual sale.

Imagine the situation without auto-responders. You'd have to send out each and every email manually. How would you remember which customers had received only your first email, which customers had received two of them... and when they were sent? Well, you'd probably have to write them all down on a spreadsheet, and you'd have to constantly update them! This would be incredibly difficult to maintain, and very time-consuming. However, auto-responders mean you don't have to worry about this at all. You simply set up the system... and then the emails are sent automatically.

Are you starting to see how automation impacts on practically every area of your business now?! Already, we're advertising and building a list on auto-pilot!

3. Order Fulfilment and Processing

So then, what next in the field of automation? You're successfully advertising your website, you're automatically building your list of prospects via a data capture device and you're sending out your 7-day email course...

Ah, I know. What happens when someone visits your website, likes what they see, and actually orders one of your products?! Not surprisingly, your sales and ordering process is absolutely crucial to the success of your business. If you're receiving lots of orders (and let's hope this is the case) you cannot possibly process them manually.

As I stated earlier, it can be quite fun to handle your orders in this way at first, as the numbers might be fairly manageable, but believe me, the novelty wears off fairly quickly! Furthermore, as soon as the numbers pick up, any delays in the process could mean customers changing their minds and taking their business elsewhere. Ultimately, your online business doesn't stand a chance of growing unless you automate your entire ordering process from the beginning...

3.1. Order Confirmation

Due to the increase in online fraud, customers nowadays appreciate (and even expect) confirmation of their order almost immediately, as it reassures them that everything is fine. To achieve this end you can set up an auto-responder email that immediately confirms you've received the order and the payment. Not only does this practice make your business appear reliable and professional, it also limits the potential for follow-up emails or phone calls from customers worried about their order.

3.2. Shipping Confirmation

This is important for the same reasons. If a customer hears nothing about their order and are unsure when they will receive it, they're more likely to pick

up the phone or send an email to check up on it, subsequently increasing the amount of administrative work for you. To reduce the potential for this, you can set up an auto-responder that emails the customer as soon as their order has been shipped.

3.3. Order Fulfilment

If your business sells downloadable products such as e-books or computer software for example, you can again set up an auto-responder to fulfil the orders. As soon as a customer's order has been confirmed, an email can be sent immediately (and automatically) to the email address they have given, providing a link from where they can download their purchase. Alternatively, an auto-responder could send a password that allows the buyer to access exclusive content, for example. Either way, once it's set up, the automated ordering process requires absolutely no effort from you!

But there's still something missing... What about payment?!

4. Accepting Payment

When a 'physical' store closes for the evening, their trading for the day has finished. They cannot receive any more customers and as a result, they can't make any more money. Thanks to automation however, your online business can stay open 24/7, sell products and accept payments throughout the night. That's the Duvet Dollar way! You wake up in the morning to even more money, because customers have visited your store and paid for their goods while you were fast asleep.

Your entire checkout system can be automated with programs such as PayPal, ClickBank, WorldPay and 1ShoppingCart, four systems that I use myself. All of these payment processors are very secure and using at least one of them for your business reassures customers that there won't be any problems with their order.

Automated payment systems such as these can take your customers through the sales process, collect their payment and then (in the case of digital information products and downloadable material) deliver the product instantaneously, without any effort required on your part.

Other payment processors you can use are:

www.moneybookers.com

www.2checkout.com

www.stormpay.com

www.e-gold.com

www.ikobo.com

www.e-bullion.com

Another benefit of these payment processors is that they accept a wide range of credit cards, which limits the likelihood of you losing custom due to them

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having no method of paying. These include Mastercard, Visa, Discover, American Express and e-Check amongst others.

Setting these systems up is very straightforward too. Naturally, everything is automated so you can complete the entire process online. It's quick and easy too as you only need to select the options relevant to you; ie, exactly what you want to appear on your payment form. If your business sells only single item products (such as e-books) it's even easier, as you can customize your payment template through PayPal's 'Button Factory' for example.

Then, when a customer is ready to order all they need to do is click on your order button which will take them through to your secure payment page. The customer then simply punches in their details and hey presto... job done! They then receive their downloadable product immediately, or if it's a physical product; an order confirmation auto-responder! You've made another sale, without even doing anything... or even knowing about it.

When I first started I began by promoting products for commission using Clickbank's payment processing, before setting up my own sites and using Paypal to process payments. I suggest that you start in the same way BUT progress to having your own website, products and lists asap.

5. Customer Service

As I've stated previously, online customers expect instant service. If you take two or three days to reply to a question about one of your products for instance, it's more than likely that the customer will tire of waiting and end up purchasing a similar product from one of your competitors. It's also important that you maintain good relations with existing customers so that they keep coming back again and again. As you may have guessed by now, all this can be achieved through automated emails...

5.1. Thank You Email

Arguably one of the most effective post-sales techniques is to send a thank you note of some sort, as soon as the purchase has been made. Thanks to auto-responders, these are incredibly simple to produce. The email itself doesn't have to be too lengthy. All it needs to do is say something like: "Thank you for purchasing [insert name of product] and I hope you visit [insert website address] again soon..." for example. The existence of the email itself is the important thing as it will help foster a positive relationship between buyer and seller, and they'll hopefully keep your website and products in mind for the future.

The thank you email can also be used for another purpose. In the same auto-responder, you could advertise other products on the back of your original sale. Say for example, you owned an online DVD store and you'd just sold a copy of Terminator 2 for example. Your auto-responder could not only thank them for purchasing but also include information on another (similar)

product, such as Terminator 3... at a discounted price perhaps. This is known as a back-end product or upsell.

5.2. FAQ Page

If you don't want to be bogged down answering customer's queries about your products all day long (and believe me, you don't) it's vital that you set up a Frequently Asked Questions Page. It's very easy to do, and it will limit the amount of emails and phone calls you receive by a huge percentage.

You can set this page up using auto-responders. Simply create a web address (such as [FAQ@\[yourwebaddress.com\]](mailto:FAQ@[yourwebaddress.com])) and ask your customers to send an email to that address should they have any questions. Then set up a standard auto-responder that includes the most common questions you're likely to receive (or are currently receiving). This way, when customers email their questions over to you, they'll receive an automatic and immediate response that will hopefully contain an answer to their question. (You can constantly update the FAQ page whenever you receive a question that you haven't included.)

Utilizing an auto-responder like this means that you won't have to spend hours each day answering the same questions, over and over again. It also has a positive effect on your business, as most customers will appreciate a prompt reply to their query and will subsequently be more inclined to purchase from you.

5.3. Send Free Information About Your Products

This type of auto-responder service is very similar to the one you've set up to send out your free email course, newsletter or e-book etc, with the aim of building your list. This form of customer service is another way of creating good relationships with your customers, while it also enables you to place your products literally right in front of them on a regular basis.

All you need to do is invite your customers to send an email to your chosen address, like [newproductoffers@\[yourwebaddress.com\]](mailto:newproductoffers@[yourwebaddress.com]) or [discountdeals@\[yourwebaddress.com\]](mailto:discountdeals@[yourwebaddress.com]) for instance, and an auto-responder will send out the free information on a schedule that you've selected. Not only have you established contact with a potential customer via this method, you've also sent them information about your products and given them a reason to purchase from you.

6. Automation Tips

- Use Google Adwords or Yahoo Overture to attract customers to your site automatically
- Use auto-responders to build your list of potential customers by sending out free e-books, newsletters, tips or email courses

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- Use automated payment processors like ClickBank, PayPal or 1ShoppingCart (and any one of the preferred payment processors)
- Use auto-responders for order confirmation and shipping confirmation to reduce the potential for follow-up calls and emails from customers
- Use auto-responders to improve your customer service; thank you emails, FAQ pages and free product information

Ultimately, if you can provide a quick, efficient and stress-free buying experience, your customers will return to you, again and again. The best way to do this is via an automated process. Thanks to automation, you can bring the customer inside your virtual store, you can give them all the information they need to make a buying decision, you can answer their questions, you can put the product itself right in front of their eyes, you can process the order and allow them to pay for it however they choose... and you can even follow it up with back-end offers if you like... all automatically!

Once you've set these systems up, you can literally sit back, relax (have a sleep even) and let your business run on auto-pilot!

We at Duvet Dollars.com wish you the very best of luck...