

LEARNING MADE EASY



6th Edition

# Starting an Online Business

ALL-IN-ONE

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand



**Shannon Belew**

**Joel Elad**

In-demand authors and leaders in  
e-commerce strategy and development





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ALL-IN-ONE

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by Shannon Belew and Joel Elad

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## Starting an Online Business All-in-One For Dummies®, 6th Edition

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# Introduction

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Online businesses have finally found a permanent foothold in today's marketplace, leaving little doubt that the Internet is not only the conduit for a viable online business model, but is often a necessary tool for building, managing, and growing any type of business. Even traditional retailers are increasingly seeing their e-commerce sales eclipse in-store sales throughout the year, and especially during major shopping holidays, such as Black Friday.

We are excited about the potential that an online business holds and the fact that e-commerce and digital marketing are now thought of as necessary components of almost any business. Since beginning our own online endeavors, we have had the privilege of meeting and working with a variety of entrepreneurs — people who, much like you, share a dream of finding economic independence by running their own businesses. As you might have guessed, many of them found success on the Internet.

The Internet provides not only a legitimate resource for starting a business that will offer a steady source of income for your family, but also a nearly endless source of ideas and opportunities to market and grow your company. It can even give you the flexibility to work from home, the freedom to work part-time, or the ability to earn an additional source of income to help make your life more enjoyable. And maybe your online business could be the next Amazon, eBay, or Facebook! Almost anything is possible with the Internet, but the pursuit of success starts with a good idea, a solid business foundation, and an endless amount of determination and hard work.

In this book, we help get you started by sharing with you the knowledge and tools we've picked up along the way and by providing you with a few shortcuts to help further your own online endeavors.

## About This Book

---

Much has changed since we wrote the first edition of this book in 2006, but much has stayed the same. Our number-one goal for the book — to cover the many ways you can start or expand a business by using the Internet — is still the same. Likewise, many of the basic principles for starting your online business are still

tried-and-true methods. For this sixth edition, we took great care to update all the key information that has remained valid in the past few years. Our second goal for the book is to expose you, the reader, to new trends and tools that can be utilized by all types of businesses from nonprofit organizations to traditional retailers. We searched out many of the new opportunities that have recently evolved. For example, the expanding use of mobile applications, smart home devices (such as Alexa), virtual reality (VR), and video and voice search, all of which are forever changing the way businesses must operate online.

Mobility, alone, has affected almost every area of online businesses, from site design principles and shopping cart features to downloading mobile applications and making mobile payments. In 2019, mobile devices accounted for more than 52 percent of all web traffic, and some researchers anticipate that number to expand to 90 percent by 2022. Similarly, where most online searches are currently originating from mobile devices, it's anticipated that *voice search* (saying the words as opposed to typing them into your mobile device or smart home device) will eventually be the leading way to find information online. Those same smart home devices, from Alexa to Nest, along with VR, are making the consumer experience even more personalized, connecting customers to online brands, in some cases without even needing the consumer to say a word! Although this seemingly futuristic state of shopping online may seem intimidating to some, for entrepreneurs it all leads to new ways to make money online, which we delve into in depth in this edition of the book.

Similarly, another change that continues to gain momentum and provide online business opportunities is social commerce. Social media networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Snapchat, and Instagram, are now staples for both promoting your business and making money. Industry giants such as Amazon pioneered the way in which online shoppers can make purchases directly through Twitter by using special hashtags, and even nonprofit organizations are realizing significant boosts in fundraising dollars thanks to the power of donations through social media. Powering all these platforms and online businesses is the use of content to help drive website traffic (customers). Google continues to emphasize the importance of quality content and rewards those online businesses that follow suit and produce with better search engine rankings. Knowing what type of content visitors want to see and understanding how to deliver it for the best results are now critical parts of managing and growing an online business. It may seem like a lot of information, but don't worry! All these changes (and more!) are captured in this newest edition of our book.

The book also provides you with details regarding specific online business strategies and moneymaking opportunities but also covers basic offline information. It's the stuff that every small-business owner needs to understand, such as how to apply standard accounting principles and keep up with the legal side of running a business.

Of course, using this book doesn't guarantee that you will make a lot of money — or any money, for that matter. We provide you with just enough knowledge and inspiration to keep your online business dreams on track. Running a business is hard work and requires persistence, dedication, and perhaps an equal mix of patience and luck.

## Foolish Assumptions

While we wrote this book, we assumed a few things about you:

- » You're a smart, inquisitive person who is seeking information about running a business on the Internet.
- » You have an entrepreneurial spirit and are a bit of a risk taker — at least in the area of starting a business.
- » You may be looking for ways to use the Internet to build an existing bricks-and-mortar business or to increase online donations for a nonprofit organization.
- » You're comfortable using computers and browsing the Internet.
- » You use email regularly.
- » You're willing to find out about new technologies.
- » You want to use websites and online technologies to build a brand.
- » You're open to the idea of reaching out to others on the Internet using social media, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Snapchat.
- » You want to use the Internet to make money.
- » You've bought items online and maybe even sold a few things.

## Icons Used in This Book

Throughout the book, icons call attention to important details.



REMEMBER

This friendly reminder serves up important information. Whenever you see this icon, know that this information is something worthwhile to keep in mind as you move forward.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

You can usually understand an idea without having to know its behind-the-scenes details. Even when we point them out with this icon, feel free to skip them and move on.



TIP

Check out this helpful hint. We picked up this information somewhere along the way.



WARNING

Pay special attention when this icon appears. It could save you from making a fatal error — at least in your online business!

## Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading now, this book also comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet that gives you even more pointers on how to build a loyal online customer base and promote your business through social media. Also check out our list of web resources for online businesses as well as our handy checklist when launching your online business. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and type **Starting an Online Business All-in-One For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

## Where to Go from Here

You can start reading any section of the book that most interests you or that you think is helpful to you and your business. For example, if you're starting a business for the first time, you might want to begin with Book 1. For those needing a boost in marketing or expanding an existing business, you probably want to go directly to the books that discuss those specific topics. However, you should at least browse through *every* section of this book.

Even if your e-commerce skills are more advanced, it never hurts to have a refresher course on some business basics. Considering that the Internet touches many different aspects of people's lives, you never know what unexpected tidbits of information you might discover.

If you have questions or comments, you are welcome to share them with us on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/shannonbelew](http://www.twitter.com/shannonbelew) and [www.twitter.com/joelblad](http://www.twitter.com/joelblad)) or connect with us on LinkedIn.

# 1

**Start-Up  
Essentials**

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