

The “No-Selling, Mostly-Automated, Actually Kind Of Fun” Method For Getting Your First Offline Client ...and Several Dozen More!

So I've spent most of the last few years building an offline business. I focus primarily on web design and development, though I do some SEO and marketing as well. This is a quick and dirty manual where I try to go more in-depth than my Offline Legends video about how you can replicate what I do.

I don't doubt for a minute that every person who actually follows what I lay out will make money. Unfortunately, most people won't actually take action. It's unfortunate, but it is what it is.

I read WSOs and offline techniques from time to time, and in many cases, I feel like the methods could work, but they're not for me. Usually, this is because it involves selling techniques I'm not comfortable with, cold calling (which I hate with a passion), or a ton of work that's hard to automate.

Fortunately, my method doesn't involve any of those things. I've picked up bits and pieces over the years from talking to other people who know what they're doing (including some of the other “Offline Legends”), and I've pieced together my own way of doing things.

I like it because:

- I don't ever talk to anyone on the phone unless they are calling me because they're interested in web design work. No cold calls, ever!
- I can automate nearly all of it. I keep my hand in the most important aspect (customer contact and project management), and leave the rest to others.

I don't want to waste your time or mine, so let's get into the details. A lot of this you probably already know, or it's obvious stuff, so I'm going to try to focus on the main things that most other offline marketers don't do.

#1 - What To Sell

As I mentioned, I primarily sell web design and development. I realize that this is different from most offline marketers who primarily push SEO.

Plenty of local businesses can use SEO, and people love to talk up how profitable it can be, but quite frankly, I find that there is less competition, and far more people willing to pay big bucks for website design. I would love a \$2000 per month SEO client, but I'm just as happy with a \$5000 one-time web design client this month, and then another next month, and in general, the latter causes me far less stress.

The best part is, once a business owner has been impressed with your website work, selling them on SEO is easy!

In my experience, finding web design clients is easy and finding SEO clients is more difficult. My method has worked for either, but keep that in mind.

#2 - Hiring Your Team

A lot of people get stuck on this step. Hiring a team isn't as simple as it's often made out to be, but it's not that hard. This is how I've hired every single one of my designers and developers.

- Go to oDesk.com
- Post a job that basically says this (paraphrased, of course):

"Hi, I own a web design and development firm, and I am looking for someone who can design (or code) websites quickly and professionally. Please let me know your cost per project (or per hour for coding), your experience, how long your turnaround time would typically be, etc.

Start your reply with the phrase "{some phrase here}" so I know you read my job description."

You'll immediately get dozens of applicants.

- Instantly reject anyone who didn't follow that last bit. If they don't read your instructions, you don't want them working for you.
- Hire anyone who looks good (maybe 3-5 people, if you find that many that look good)
- Assign them a project. If you are starting out, have them design your website that you will use to attract clients, or have them create a random design to use in your portfolio.
- Instantly see the kind of work they do, how responsive they are, how long their turnaround time really is, how quickly and accurately they make requested changes, and more. You're basically giving them a thorough job interview, and in the end, you have several designs you can use.

That's it. If I "hire" five designers, I'll usually end up with three decent designers, and sometimes one gem of a designer that I assign a large number of projects to. Once you have designs (in PSD format), do the same thing for developers, and have them code the PSD into Wordpress.

For under \$200, you now have a team of designers and developers, who you've tested and can feel comfortable using for clients.

Assigning a design project

When I assign a project to a designer, I try to use as little description as possible, unless my client was very specific about things. My description will typically look like this:

I need a redesign of [xyz.com](#) to look more professional and modern. They like the style of [abcd.com](#) and their colors are red and dark blue. They want to keep their current logo, which you can find on their current site.

That's it! For the initial project, where the designers are creating your own website, find a few designers' websites (preferably from other cities), and give these as examples of what you like. A good designer should be able to take that style and create something based on it, but without looking the same as the original at all.

#3 - Getting a List Of Businesses

I feel like this has been covered ad nauseum by everyone in the world, so I won't spend too much time on it. I get a list of as many local businesses as I possibly can. I use two methods for this:

Yellow Page/Google Places Tools - I use Power Leads Pro, which is fairly expensive, but it's also a very good piece of software. There are other software programs far less expensive. Look at WSOs to get a deal or Try-Before-You-Buy Software, so you can test it out before buying. You can get a great list of companies, most of whom are already advertising in the Yellow Pages, which means they know the value of advertising. Anything that finds a fair number of businesses, **and their website URL**, should work

Massive Lists of Businesses - Search for this online or on the Warrior Forum. These aren't particularly cheap either, but you can get a list of nearly every single business in your area. Enough to market to for over a year, probably. In the Baltimore area alone, I think there were over 600,000 businesses total on my list.

#4 - Marketing Preparation

Parse the List

This is the most time-consuming part, but I recommend doing this yourself first, and then hiring it out once you know how to explain what you look for. I will show you ways to make it faster in a minute.

1. Remove every business that doesn't already have a website.

This often surprises people, since they automatically think that this is the market we should be targeting. On the contrary, businesses that already have websites is the perfect market. Most businesses have terrible websites, and most businesses owners are aware that their website sucks. They already see the value of a website, and it's not hard to convince them that they need something better. Not only that, but it's much easier to find an email address for a business with a website.

2. Visit each URL of the local businesses you found in step #3.

3. If the business is a national brand, remove them from the list

4. If they have a decent website (only about 25% of local businesses do, in my experience), remove them from the list

5. If they are a union, charity, school, church, or government organization, remove them from the list.

6. Take what you have left, and promote to them.

As daunting as it may sound, I can actually parse about 500 records in an hour. Get a Firefox plugin called URL Lister. Copy 50 URLs from your spreadsheet and paste them into the box. Hit OK, and all 50 sites will open in 50 tabs in Firefox. Start at the first tab, and hit Ctrl-F4 to close each one.

When you come to a site to remove, hit Alt-Tab to go back to the Excel spreadsheet and delete the record.

I usually spend less than 2 seconds looking at a site. In most cases, it's easy to tell right away whether or not I can help them. As I said, about 75% of websites will have terrible to average designs, so there will be lots of records left.

If a site is unavailable or if it comes up with a 404 or not found error, I keep it on the list. If a business owns a domain, but doesn't have a website currently online, they are still a decent prospect.

Finding Email Addresses

This is something you can easily do yourself, but it's time consuming, and very inexpensive to outsource, so please find one or more people on oDesk to do this. Use a Google document that you share with everyone involved, so it's very easy to keep track of everything.

Here's how to find a contact email:

- If you are using PowerLeadsPro, there may already be an email associated with some businesses. If so, great!
- Otherwise, visit the site, and look for contact info. It's often on a contact page or sometimes on a "Meet Our Team"-type page.
- If it's not there, use the Whois system to look up domain registrant info. As long as it doesn't look like it was registered by the previous web designer, you're good to go.

If you can't find an email after all that, mark the record red. It's good to keep it for future reference, but you won't be contacting them right now.

If you get only a contact form, mark it yellow, and put the contact form URL in the email field. You can fill that out later.

Otherwise, you now have a large list of people to contact. Get ready to generate some interest among local businesses!

Your Unique Offer

One more thing - and this is key. You need to have something that sets you apart, and it needs to be free for everyone. For me, I offer to create a free mockup design, so people can see exactly what I can do for them before they commit to anything.

This helps start dialogue with far more businesses than would normally contact me. This gives the business owner something free, which activates the law of reciprocity, and it gives us even more of a reason to meet. Once you meet with a client, you are far more likely to convert a sale, because people like doing business with people they know. Once you've met them in person, they know you.

Feel free to offer whatever you'd like, but make it good, and constantly remind prospects that you are offering it.

#5 - Marketing

Writing the Email

This is the part that most people seem to screw up. I've consulted with so many offliners, and despite my protests, they always want to send an "ad" to the client. What do you do when you get an ad? If you're like me, you get several SEO advertisements every day from people who have clearly never been to your website. I delete them all, and so do nearly all other business owners.

It's hard enough to get your message in front of business owners. You don't want to shoot yourself in the foot right away by sending them something that they'll delete without reading. It is imperative that your email sound personal and friendly.

I've developed a simple exercise to get just the right message, and it works pretty well. Pretend a friend of yours just found out that you're starting an offline business, and they say "I know just the person that could use your services - their website sucks. Here is their email address.", but they don't formally introduce you or notify the business owner of your relationship.

So now it's up to you to write to this person. What would your email say? You'd probably introduce yourself, explain what you do, and how you can possibly help them. You'd probably ask to meet with them or maybe invite them to lunch. You wouldn't send them an ad - you'd send them an email, and that's the key to getting clients to pay attention.

Tell them to email you back or call you, and make sure they know that you don't want to bother them, and tell them that if they respond saying no, you won't email them anymore.

So that's it. Write that email, and you'll be all set. The subject should be short and simple, and make the user confident that this isn't an ad.

"I Can Help Your Site Rank #1 In Google!" -- BAD

"Does Your Business Need a New Web Design?" -- BAD

"Can I Take You To Lunch?" - OKAY

"Your Website" - GOOD

Sending The Email

So now you're ready to send. I outsource all of this, but if you want to do it at first, that's a good idea, just so you can see how it works, and more accurately direct your team once you've hired someone.

- Create an address @yourwebsite
- Login to the web mail client
- Send the exact same email to each email address you've found.

That's it. I recommend sending at least 500-1000 before analyzing the results. So many people send out 10 emails, don't get any responses, and give up, assuming that it doesn't really work. This is a numbers game, and persistence pays off. So does follow up...

Following Up

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I cannot say this enough! If you don't followup with the people you haven't heard back from (and that will be most of the business owners that you contact), you are leaving so much money on the table.

About 1-2 weeks after the first email, send a second email. This one should be different. It should remind them of your first email, mention that you haven't heard back, and reiterate your invitation to meet with them or to lunch, and push your unique offer.

When you send any email, have a spreadsheet that you can mark with responses. When someone responds with a positive or negative response, mark it on the list. After a week or two, filter the list to show everyone who hasn't responded, create a new spreadsheet from that, and send the followup messages.

Repeat this as many times as you'd like. As long as you don't send to anyone who has already responded, you should keep getting responses. After the first two mails, I usually keep about two months between subsequent emails. People that heard your message the first time, but were too busy to respond may now be in a better place to move forward with you.

Following Up With Interested People

Not only is it important to followup with people who haven't responded, but it's also essential to keep on top of those who have responded. Business owners are some of the busiest people on the planet. They know they need a new website design, but they don't have time to deal with it. If they respond and express interest, don't stop getting in touch with them unless they change their mind and tell you no.

If you create a free mockup for a client and send it to them, write back if you don't hear from them after a few days. If you still don't hear back, give them a call. Don't wait weeks. Followup within three days at most. If a business owner feels that you are bugging them, or they want to revisit it in a few weeks, they will tell you. Otherwise, assume that they are just busy, and you are doing them a favor by reminding them of this project.

Awesome Tools To Help

I use two email tools that are vital to keeping me on top of followup, and learning about my potential clients. They are both very useful in my day to day dealings, especially since I practically live in my inbox. They both are meant to be integrated with gMail, which I use for both my personal and business email accounts. My business address is @ my domain, but I manage it through gMail (I recommend doing the same, by the way).

The first is called Rapportive - [Rapportive](#)

It basically links your gmail account to the search function on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, so when you load an email, it gives you a photo of the person you are conversing with, and their most recent tweets and posts. It also shows all recent email conversations with them.

It also allows you to connect with them with a single click on these sites, plus you add notes about them that only you can see. They appear every time you load an email conversation with them, which is very helpful! The photo is nice, since I can put a face to the name, and if I meet someone for lunch (which I do quite often when prospecting), I can recognize them easily.

The second is called Boomerang - [Boomerang](#)

I've only used this for a few months, but I don't think I could live without it. When I respond to an email, it immediately goes out of my mind. If someone emails me about a potential web design project, and I respond with some questions, it's very easy to forget about it if they don't respond. I can set Boomerang to reply to the message, making it unread, and putting it at the top of my inbox after a specified time, if I haven't received a response.

This has put me so on top of things when it comes to following up. If a potential client hasn't responded to my email two days ago, now I know, and I can immediately respond. This has driven my conversion rate way up! Business owners are busy, and they can forget to respond to my emails. Boomerang makes sure that I don't forget too.

Every time I send an email, I check the box to boomerang it in 2 days if I haven't heard a response. If a prospect tells me they can't deal with this until next month, I set the message to boomerang in 4 weeks. If they want to wait until the first of the year to tackle a website project, I set it to boomerang the message on January 5th. It's simple, and it makes sure I never forget to followup with a prospect.

Another great feature of Boomerang is mail scheduling. Though I do this full time, I do a lot of work at night as well. Many times, I want first contact emails to be sent during business hours. I used to

compose emails in Notepad in the evening, and then try to remember to paste them and send them during the day. Now, I just schedule them in Boomerang.

Determining a Price

So you've gotten some interest, you've met with a client, and now you have a willing prospect. How do you figure out how much to charge? Unfortunately, there is no magic method of determining a good price. I typically try to start at \$1000, and go up if they want things like ecommerce, moving parts, things that will require custom coding, etc.

Try to get a feel for what the client is looking to pay, and then work within that, if possible. When you're starting out, it's not a bad idea to lower your prices further if necessary, to get your first few clients, and get your feet wet, but don't make this a habit. So many of my clients were about to pay \$8000-\$10,000 for a site, when they found me and I would do it for \$4000. If your rates are reasonable, you'll already be charging far less than your competition. Don't lower them even more.

Many times, I like to give a higher price and tell the prospect I can create the website we discussed, plus a Facebook fan page, mailing list integration, etc. - things they didn't request but might be interested in. If they balk at the initial price, I tell them I can lower the price if I remove some of the extras. This allows me to back off a higher price without looking like the original price was over-inflated.

The Wonders of Networking

I've actually written a WSO about how to get clients at networking events, and it helps me pull in thousands every week from the one method alone.

Though I won't discuss the exact method here, suffice to say that business to business networking events are an easy and awesome way to meet people that need your services in a fun and casual setting. Go to the events, swap business cards, tell people who you are and what you do. If you meet other designers or developers, strike up a conversation, tell them what you do. I've met tons of designers who don't develop and developers who don't design. They now subcontract projects to me, and occasionally straight up refer their clients to me.

These events are an easy way to get the word out about your business, and meet other people that do what you do. Best of all, nearly all of them are free. Check your local business journal or search online to find out about events going on in your area. If you live in a decent-size city, there will be several a week or more going on.

So that's the basics. There's lots more that you can do to attract clients and make money, but this guide will get you started, and get you dozens of clients.

Now let's face it - the biggest reason why people won't make money with this is because they won't get started. When there are several things to setup, it can take a while to get moving, and eventually, many people just give up. I know how it is - it's happened to me before.

Well, now you have no excuse.

I will:

- **Setup your entire business website**, with one of my custom designs (absolutely everything you need to be ready to get clients today!)
- Create and **send you 250 business cards** with your colors, logo, and contact info on it (these are very useful, and I'll show you exactly what to do with them!).
- Give you **a list of at least 1500 businesses in your area** with existing websites for you to review and promote to.
- Let you join my [Hands-On Mentoring Program](#) for free for a month, so you will have **phone and email access to me personally**, so you can ask any questions that come up, and get advice as you need it.

Everything up front will be done for you. All you have to do is follow the simple instructions in the manual, and start getting customers.

As if that wasn't enough, I'll also:

- **Create a series of custom emails** for you to send to the businesses. Creating a great email that converts isn't easy! I'll take care of it for you.
- Walk you through hiring the oDesk.com contractors that you'll work with (for design, development, emailing, etc.). Remember - you don't pay them until they actually do work for you. I'll include the exact script I use to find the best contractors to do great work for a low price!
- **Coach you through interacting with your first few potential clients, so you can easily close the deal!**

* These three things (and more!) are all part of the Hands On Mentoring program, mentioned above, which you will have

free access to.

The package above is easily worth \$2000. It includes a **website**, a ***parsed list of local businesses***, ***business cards***, and most importantly - **personal guidance from me** while you get started!

For a very limited time, this is available for only \$299.

Even if you use designers and developers on oDesk to create your website, **you'll spend about the same amount just on getting the website designed and developed.** With this, **it's all done for you**, plus you get the *list of local businesses to promote to* (worth its weight in gold!), *business cards*, and ***personal access*** to someone who has been through all of this before!

Quite frankly, if you aren't willing to invest \$299 to start an all-out profitable business, then you really aren't ready to start any type of business. **Don't try to take on everything by yourself!** In six months, you'll still be where you are now. I know - ***I've done it a million times!*** It wasn't until I was willing to invest in myself and in my business that I was able to start making real income, and *it's just continued to grow and grow!*

Obviously, I can only offer this to a limited number of people. Otherwise, I'd be on the phone constantly when I need to be working on my own businesses. If you're interested, I suggest you take advantage of this right away!

[Click Here](#), So I can Help You Get Started!

I'll be in touch right away so we can get your business up and running immediately!

All the best!

Robert Dickson

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