



HOW TO MAKE THE INTERNET WORK FOR YOU SERIES

I've decided to put together a series of free fact sheets with bite-sized information on How to Make the Internet Work for You. My aim is to provide busy people with a short cut to developments on the web who don't have the time to keep up with all the changes, or do the training. The series is especially geared to people who:

- work for themselves and will benefit from knowing more about how to use the internet to market their business or themselves on line
- would simply like to learn more about how to get the best out of the internet for their personal use, and like the idea of surprising the younger generation in their lives by showing them that they're well up to speed on the latest thinking!

Drawing on my last two years' training in internet marketing and daily, on-going learnings into the latest internet tools and techniques, my hope is to explain things in plain English so that beginners right through to the most seasoned internet marketers can learn something of value.

Part 1 : COPING WITH INFORMATION OVERLOAD

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is a brilliant web tool for helping you to keep on top of information overload via what are called RSS feeds (Really Simple Syndication). These are the orange buttons you see on lots of web/news sites now, particularly where the information is regularly up-dated or changes on a daily basis.

Once you have subscribed to your favourite, or work-related, web sites or blogs via the relevant feeds by clicking on the orange button, Google Reader provides a single place for all these feeds to be collated in a single list, which you can then review in an eighth of the time. This way you don't only save time, but you will never again miss out on an important piece of information because you were too busy to check on a particular site.

There are other similar web tools that do this (known as aggregators as they aggregate the information) but the brilliant thing with Google Reader is that you can configure it to enable you to first scan all the information and news in list, headline form with the option to then read posts in more detail as and when you choose. It also lets you easily bookmark or immediately share things of interest or importance with your colleagues, friends and family with little more than the click of a button.

You will need to sign up for a Google Account, which is quick and easy, and once you have this you will be able to access other useful Google applications, such as Google Mail, and web tools for promoting and analysing your web site if you have one.

SOCIAL BOOKMARKING - SAVE, SHARE AND ACCESS INFORMATION FROM ANY COMPUTER



Social bookmarking is, as the term suggests, a way to bookmark (ie save) web site links to your favourite information, articles, news, research, recipes etc on line, and easily share them with colleagues, friends or family. Unlike the old way of saving your favourites on your computer, social bookmarking enables you to save the information virtually so that you can access and share it from any computer.

You will have seen the various social bookmark icons on web pages or at the end of news articles or blogs. There are many social bookmarking sites that have evolved to cater for different markets with different interests with names such as [delicious](#), [Furl](#) and [Ma.gnolia](#). The idea is that people subscribe to their chosen social bookmarking site, and then save their favourite pages to that site. As with Google Reader, you will need to open an account, which is a simple process.

You can also use social bookmarks to discover new or useful things that other people have already found and saved, as well as follow which sites your contacts or friends are bookmarking. You can then use what's called 'tags' to organize your bookmarks, which are like key words, and are more flexible than folders.

One of the most well known sites to initially get to know is called [delicious](#), which I use for my favourite bookmarks. The site also shows the number of people who have bookmarked certain pages of interest so that you can see the most popular things people are bookmarking. For work or business use, however, it's important to check out the other social bookmarking sites for marketing purposes.

There are also news bookmarking sites, such as [Digg](#), [Reddit](#) or [Mixx](#), with [Digg](#) being probably the best known, where you are able to review and vote on the news articles or stories which are posted. The news stories getting lots of votes then become more popular and move to the 'front page'. This has obvious marketing benefits for individuals and businesses wishing to get their service or product noticed, and thus discussed and talked about.

STUMBLEUPON – FINDS WEB SITES FOR YOU RELATED TO YOUR INTERESTS



Another social bookmarking site which is good fun to use and very clever! Perfect if you enjoy discovering new things about topics you are interested in or for researching and developing new ideas.

[StumbleUpon](#) has a toolbar which you download in your chosen browser. When you press the Stumble button to search for your chosen topic it notices and remembers what you like, and then comes up with more similar sites that you might not otherwise ever find! You can also select your topics of interest and it will return searches on these. Unlike doing a random search, the sites are ones that other people have found useful or interesting, and therefore given them the thumbs up – if they don't like what they see, they give the site the thumbs down. This means that the more thumbs up votes for a site, the better the site is likely to be. StumbleUpon can be incredibly addictive, and is a brilliant marketing tool, which I'll be highlighting in future fact sheets.

SOCIAL NETWORKING – SITES LIKE FACEBOOK, MYSPACE AND LINKEDIN

Social networking sites initially proved hugely popular with younger people who wanted to keep in touch and share their lives, photos etc in one place, on line with their friends and family.

These days people from all walks of life are using them to keep in contact with people they know, and network with those they don't, for business purposes and building up business relationships. You set up a profile page, and can add as much or as little information as you choose. You can then search for your friends, colleagues or family and ask them to become a friend. It's up to you to decide how public you wish to make your page, and you first have to accept someone as a 'friend' before your full profile becomes visible.

As with social bookmarking sites, there are lots of social networking sites that are cropping up daily to cater for specific markets and interests, including companies creating their own, but the main ones are:



started by Harvard students as an internal networking site for them, which then opened up to other university/college students, and now widely used by people of all ages for either personal or business marketing purposes. [Facebook](#) has a large number of applications you can add to your profile, ranging from the useful to the ridiculous! A few of the more useful are different ways to send messages to groups of friends, posting links to favourite articles/web sites, setting up photo albums and sharing virtual gifts.



the largest social networking site with people from all backgrounds and walks of life.
[MySpace.com](#)



for professionals looking to make contacts and build business relationships.
[linkedin.com](#)

These sites also have common interest groups or forums, which you can join, or establish your own, which has obvious advantages for marketing products and services if done correctly. More and more people are increasingly using their social networking accounts in place of email as a faster way to keep in touch.

FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS



I'm really keen to answer any questions you might have, which I'll probably turn into a Frequently Asked Questions guide in the future, so do send me an [email](#), and I'll get back to you. You can also let me know if you have any particular aspects of the internet you'd like me to cover in future Fact Sheets, and I'll do my best to include these. In the meantime, feel free to forward this to anyone else who you think will find it useful, and look out for part 2 in the series.

TAMSIN BUTTERS runs [nudgeme.co.uk](#) specialising in nudging busy people to get to their important stuff, and [marketing coaching](#), including the latest in internet marketing, for people running small businesses or working in jobs from home.

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