*The Shoestring Marketer's Guide To:*

# Simple Search Engine Optimization

## EBOOK

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Marketing

## Legalize

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## Search Engine Optimization

# Search Engine Optimization Overview

**Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** can be an incredibly complex and intimidating process for the small business owner. In fact, countless SEO companies have made it their sole goal to make the small business owner feel that SEO is much too complicated to understand and apply to their own business.

However, the good news is that, although SEO *can* be a difficult process (in which the rules seem to change overnight), there are many simple SEO strategies that the small business owner can immediately put into place that ensures more targeted traffic, leads and sales.

This ebook is not designed to turn you into an SEO expert and only covers the very basics of the entire SEO process. However, if you dedicate yourself to applying just a few simple SEO strategies, the effects will astound you.

If you understand the basic building blocks of SEO, you will be ahead of most small business owners within your industry and will undoubtedly realize incredibly profitable results for your small business.

**What Is SEO?**

If you ask twenty-five people the definition of Search Engine Optimization, you are sure to receive twenty-five different answers.

According to Wikipedia, SEO is "a set of practices that attempts to make a website more attractive to search engines, thereby encouraging higher visitor traffic and rankings."

For the purposes of this ebook, we will explore a simple six-step SEO strategy that you can implement immediately for proven and lasting results.

Therefore, we'll explore the following six key components when it comes to SEO:

1) **Keyword research**

2) **Competitive analysis**

3) **Website optimization**

4) **Link building strategies**

5) **Creating relevant content**

6) **Analyzing your website**

## The History of SEO

Obviously, in order to learn how to make a website more attractive to the search engines, it's vital that we have a basic understanding of how the search engines work.

When someone is interested in finding out information on the internet, they typically start by using a search engine such as Google, Yahoo or MSN.

When an individual types in the phrase "Dog Training" into the Google search engine, they're obviously interested in learning relevant information about how to train dogs. Therefore, Google has created a very complex and sophisticated system (known as algorithms) that crawl the internet and determine which sites are most relevant.

The very top 2-3 sites and the sites on the right-hand side are **"sponsored sites"** and have paid for those top positions.

The sites in the middle column (under the paid search results) are the **"organic listings"** and are there, most likely, because they have optimized their website in order to attain this position.

Finally, you can also see how many webpages Google is displaying based on this particular keyword.
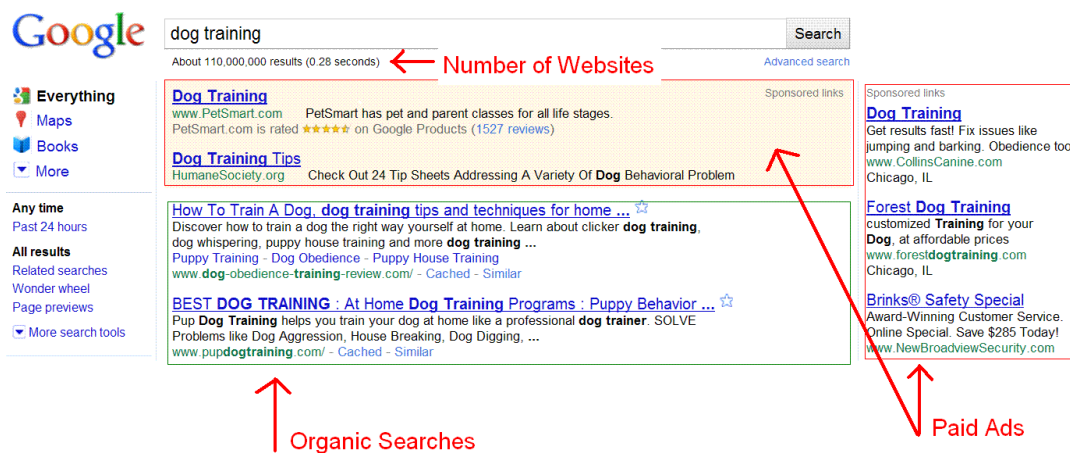


Interestingly enough, people who search the internet are becoming much more savvy and don't trust "paid" advertising. (In fact, over 70% of individuals browsing the internet don't click on paid search ads.)

So, keeping that statistic in mind, it's obviously in your best interest to rise up *naturally and organically* through the search engines.

# Keyword Research

The very first step in your SEO journey is to begin the process of keyword research.

It's incredibly important that you identify a few different keywords that your potential clients and customers will use when they begin the process of finding your company.

As an example, let's focus on "Sandy the Dog Trainer." Sandy is a local dog trainer who specializes in problem dog behavior. In addition to being a local dog trainer and working with clients, Sandy also has created several ebooks on problem dog behavior that she sells via her website.

One of the biggest mistakes that small business owners make in regards to keywords is that they utilize keywords that are much too broad (thus, too competitive). As an example, if Sandy decides that she wants to bring her website to the first page of Google using the keyword "dogs" she would have 110 million sites to compete with. That's a lot of fierce competition!

Not only is the competition fierce, but Sandy is targeting a much too broad audience. Individuals who are typing "dogs" into the search engines, may be looking to purchase a dog, may be looking for information on dog food or dog-related health problems. There are only a few who are searching for Sandy's specific services: dog training.

It's in Sandy's best interest to identify *keyword phrases* (or longtail keywords) that are much more *specific and appropriate to her particular niche*.

If Sandy narrows her keyword to "dog barking problems" she is competing against 998,000 websites. That's a little bit better.

However, the longtail keyword phrase "dog problem behavior barking at neighbors" only competes against 52,400 websites. Now, that's doable.

**Identify 25 Keyword Phrases**

Start with identifying **25 keyword phrases** that are specific to your industry. If you are having trouble, try answering some of these questions while you brainstorm relevant keywords:

1.  What search phrases will your prospective clients and customers use to find you?

2.  What is your company name? Your website URL? Your name? These are keywords that may be used when people are searching for you.

3.  What products and services do you offer?

4.  Where are you located? (i.e. If you are a realtor out of Chicago, IL, you will want to use your specific location in your keywords.)

5.  What problems do your potential customers and clients face? Use these problems as possible keywords.

6.  What solutions can you offer? Use your solutions as specific keywords.

7.  What is your mission statement, company vision and/or marketing message?

**Google Keyword Tool**

Once you have identified 25 keyword phrases, you are going to use Google's free keyword tool to refine which keywords will work best for you and your SEO efforts.

You can find the Google keyword tool at:
https://adwords.Google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal

This keyword tool allows you to investigate the popularity of certain keywords and how much competition they have.

Your ultimate goal is to identify several keyword phrases that generate consistent and regular traffic, but do not have a lot of competition.

Here's an illustration of the process using a keyword phrase from Sandy our dog-trainer.

One of Sandy's keywords is **"dog problem barking."** She then goes to the Google Keyword tool and types the phrase into the search function.

As you can see from the illustration below, Sandy is able to ascertain which keywords generate consistent traffic and which keywords contain light, medium or heavy competition.

Sandy decides that one of the keywords that she will focus on is "dog problem barking," since it has low competition and consistent traffic.
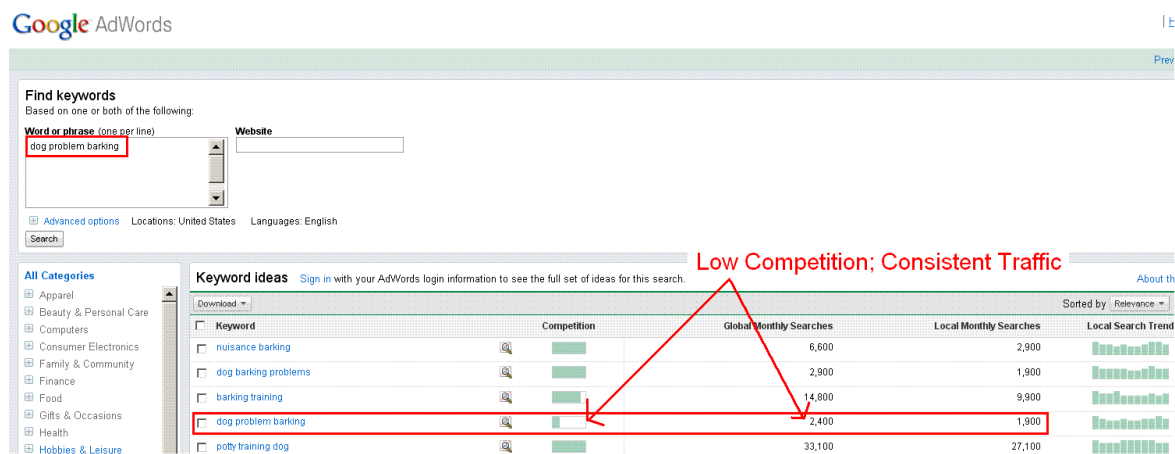
# Competitive Analysis

Once you have identified a few good keywords through the Google keyword tool, it's time to research your competition.

Start by typing ONE of your keywords into Google's search engine. You are going to focus on the top five *organic competitors* associated with that particular keyword. (At this point, you're not interested in the sponsored sites.)

First, identify competitor #1 and look "behind the scenes" of their website homepage in order to analyze their website **title**, **meta description** and **keywords.**

Websites that are interested in moving up organically through the search engines always have relevant and focused website titles, meta descriptions and keywords for each page of their site.

- The **title** of a website tells the search engines what that particular webpage is about.

- The **meta description** describes the contents of the webpage.

- The **keywords** alert the search engines to the important keywords contained within that particular page.

To look "behind the scenes" of your first competitor, pull up their website. Next, click on **View > Source** on your top toolbar and a complicated page of code (looking much like a foreign language) will pop-up. This is the language known as HTML and it is the language of the search engines.

Fortunately, you don't need to understand HTML when it comes to researching your competition. You simply need to know where to find your competitors' **title, meta description** and **keywords.**

Let's use Sandy the dog-trainer's #1 competitor to illustrate this point. When Sandy types the keyword "dog problem barking" into Google, her #1 *organic* competitor is www.peteducation.com

Sandy clicks on their website and views the source-code. She does this by going to the top of her browser and clicking on **view > source.**

A new window will pop-up that consists of HTML code (a special computer language written specifically for the search engines).

It's going to be very intimidating, but we are only going to look at a few key factors inside this code.

Sandy is just going to look at their website **title, meta description** and **keywords.**

This will be toward the beginning of the page and is highlighted below:

```
<html><head><meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html;
charset=utf-8" />
              <link rel="shortcut icon" href="favicon.ico" />
              <link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"
href="/styles/wrapper.css" />
              <link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"
href="/styles/global.css" />
              <link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"
href="/styles/pods.css"
<title>Excessive Barking: A Common Dog Behavior Problem</title>

<META NAME = "keywords" CONTENT="control nuisance barking behavior
problems stop barking">

<META NAME= "description" CONTENT="Why dogs bark, how to prevent barking
in puppies, and how to manage nuisance barking."></head>
        <body>

        <table id="peted" class="peted" border="0" width="780"
cellspacing="0" cellpadding="0" align="center">
```

Sandy writes down all of the **meta tags** from www.peteducation.com

```
html><head><meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html;
charset=utf-8" />
                <link rel="shortcut icon" href="favicon.ico" />
                <link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"
href="/styles/wrapper.css" />
                <link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"
href="/styles/global.css" />
                <link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"
href="/styles/pods.css"

<title>Excessive Barking: A Common Dog Behavior Problem</title>

<META NAME = "keywords" CONTENT="control nuisance barking behavior
problems stop barking">

<META NAME= "description" CONTENT="Why dogs bark, how to prevent barking
in puppies, and how to manage nuisance barking."></head>
        <body>

        <table id="peted" class="peted" border="0" width="780"
cellspacing="0" cellpadding="0" align="center">
```

**Title:** Excessive Barking: A Common Dog Behavior Problem

**Keywords:** control nuisance barking behavior problems stop barking

**Description:** Why dogs bark, how to prevent barking in puppies, and how to manage nuisance barking.

This gives Sandy a better idea as to which metatags her competitors are using to gain top positions in Google.

# Website Optimization

Optimizing your website simply means that you include the correct keywords in your "code" in order to make it easier for the search engines to read your website.

Over the past few years, the search engines have placed must less emphasis on website optimization. However, even though website optimization isn't as critical as it was in the past, it is still an important component to your overall SEO strategy.

In order to optimize your site for the search engines, there are three important factors to consider:

**1) Title tags**

**2) Meta description tags**

**3) Keyword tags**

It's difficult for you site to rank for keywords that do not appear in your tags, so each page of your website should be organized around the goal of ranking for a *specific keyword phrase*.

Each page should have its own unique **page title**. Page titles appear in search engine results and help both the search engines and human searchers understand what your page is about. The title of your page should include your most important keywords and be less than 70 characters.

Next, you should include a concise **meta description** of each webpage that also includes your most important keywords. Your meta description should be less than 150 characters.

Finally, you want to add 5-10 important **keywords** for each webpage. You should only use keywords that are directly related to your webpage.
If you aren't sure where to insert the meta tags for your website, simply write down the title, description and keywords for each page of your site and give it to your website designer. They will understand where to add the meta tags for optimal results.

# For more Shoestring Marketing Tips and Tools download your **FREE** Shoestring Marketing Kit:



## www.ShoestringMarketingKit.com

# Link Building Strategies

One of the most important SEO strategies is to build an **authoritative website** in your particular niche which appeals to the search engines. One of the ways that Google determines the authority of your website is how many *other websites* are linking to yours (and the larger the website the better).

Obviously, if other websites point to your website as a hub spot for information on a particular topic, it's a sure sign that you are an expert in that particular area.

Therefore, it's in your best interest to begin a link building plan in order to boost your site's credibility in the mind of Google.

Here are ten ways to begin getting links that point back to your website.

**1) Approach Other Website Owners for Links**

One way to generate links is to simply send emails to webmasters related to your industry and ask for links.

Other sites can link to your site in a variety of different ways including: reviewing your site for their audience, linking to a free giveaway (report, ebook, white paper), linking to an article or blog post, or even linking to a contest that you are running.

Although reciprocal linking can be effective, it is a time-consuming process that should only be used as a supplement to other link building strategies.

## 2) Submit Your Site to Top Directories

**Search directories** are a bit different than **search engines**. While search engines, such as Google, operate primarily using spiders and complex algorithms, search directories are run by *human editors*. Therefore, many individuals consider search directories to be a more relevant and trusted source for finding information.

Furthermore, when your site is accepted into a trusted, top directory they automatically link back to your site. The two main directories are:

1)  **DMOZ** (free)   http://www.dmoz.org

2)  **Yahoo!Directory** ($299 per year)  http://dir.yahoo.com

Obviously, every small business owner should submit their site to DMOZ since it is a free resource. However, you will need to determine if a $299 inclusion in the Yahoo! Directory is within your budget.

## 3) Submit Your Site To Relevant, Niche Directories

In addition, smaller directories are another great way to generate links back to your site. There are literally *thousands* of small search directories available. Because of the number of hours it would take for you to manually submit your site to niche directories, it may be in your best interest to hire a company to make the submissions for you.

One company that I highly recommend is Wildnet Technologies. They will submit your website to 1,000 directories for $250 or to 2,000 directories for $450.

Contact Nitin Agarwal at nitin@wildnettechnologies.com for more information.

## 4) Create Profiles On Social Networks

Social Networks are another way to generate links from high-ranking websites. Once you create a profile on a popular social network, you immediately create a link pointing back to your site. Some of the more obvious social networks to create profiles include:

1) [www.Twitter.com](http://www.Twitter.com)

2) [www.Facebook.com](http://www.Facebook.com)

3) [www.LinkedIn.com](http://www.LinkedIn.com)

4) [www.Ning.com](http://www.Ning.com)

5) [www.MySpace.com](http://www.MySpace.com)

Obviously there are hundreds of smaller, niche social networks that may be appropriate for your industry as well. If this is the case, consider joining a number of these sites as well.

## 5) Participate In Community Sites

Community sites are an excellent way to promote your website's content as well as create backlinks to your site.

Community sites allow you to interact with other members, ask questions, answer questions and even establish yourself as an authority figure on certain topics.

Some high-ranking and authoritative community sites include:

1) [www.MyBlogLog.com](http://www.MyBlogLog.com)

2) [www.LiveSpaces.com](http://www.LiveSpaces.com)

3) [www.Squidoo.com](http://www.Squidoo.com)

4) [www.YahooAnswers.com](www.YahooAnswers.com)

5) [www.Work.com](www.Work.com)

6) [www.Wikipedia.com](www.Wikipedia.com)

7) [www.Yahoo360.com](www.Yahoo360.com)

8) [www.Topix.net](www.Topix.net)


## 6) Submit Articles

Whenever you submit an article to an online article directory, you automatically generate links back to your site. However, you need to submit *many* articles to several different article directories before the effects are evident.

Again, this can be an incredibly time-consuming process unless you have an automated process in place. You can either use an online service or purchase article submission software.

**Article submission service:** [www.submityourarticle.com](www.submityourarticle.com)

**Article submission software:** [http://www.articlesubmitter.imwishlist.com](http://www.articlesubmitter.imwishlist.com)

Whether you are submitting your articles manually or using automation, make sure that you are including your articles in the top ten article directories including:

1) [www.ezinearticles.com](www.ezinearticles.com)

2) [www.suite101.com](www.suite101.com)

3) [www.helium.com](www.helium.com)

4) [www.articledashboard.com](www.articledashboard.com)

5) [www.articlebase.com](www.articlebase.com)

6) [www.goarticles.com](www.goarticles.com)

7) [www.ideamarketers.com](www.ideamarketers.com)

8) [www.searchwarp.com](www.searchwarp.com)

9) [www.buzzle.com](www.buzzle.com)

10) [www.articlecity.com](www.articlecity.com)

## 7) Write Press Releases

Writing and submitting press releases is still another way to generate quality back-links to your website. In addition, you also have the ability to target the traditional news media as well as prospective clients and customers.

Once you have written a news-worth press release, you can submit it to one of the following free press release distribution services. If they publish your release, you instantly gain links pointing back to your website.
You can submit your press releases to free press release distribution services such as:

1) [www.PRweb.com](www.PRweb.com)

2) [www.PR.com](www.PR.com)

3) [www.PRLog.org](www.PRLog.org)

4) [www.free-press-release.com](www.free-press-release.com)

5) [www.24-7pressrelease.com](www.24-7pressrelease.com)

## 8) Submit Ads to Classified Sites

Online classified sites will also bring links (and traffic) back to your website.
When posting your ad, make sure to include your most important keywords and link them back to the appropriate pages on your site.
Three of the most popular online classified sites include:

1) www.Craigslist.com

2) www.kijiji.com

3) www.backpage.com

## 9) Social Bookmarking

As you submit articles, press release, videos, podcasts or blog posts you are able to "bookmark" your content and share it with others.
Each time you bookmark your online content, you also create links from the high-ranking social bookmarking sites back to your website.
Ten of the most popular social bookmarking and sharing sites include:

1) www.digg.com

2) www.reddit.com

3) www.stumbleupon.com

4) www.del.icio.us

5) www.fark.com

6) www.newsvine.com

7) www.propeller.com

8) www.dzone.com

9) www.blinklist.com

10) www.faves.com

## 10) Video Sharing

Another way to create great backlinks to your website is to post videos on popular video sharing sites.

Furthermore, since Google now owns YouTube, having quality videos on YouTube is certainly not going to hurt your SEO efforts. (In fact, many times your actual video will appear in the Google search results.)

When you upload your videos make sure that you are using your keyword title, description and keyword (tags) as you describe your video.
Here are five popular video sites that will bring you quality backlinks and traffic:

1) www.YouTube.com

2) www.MetaCafe.com

3) www.Viddler.com

4) www.Revver.com

5) www.Vimeo.com

# Create Great Content

Without doubt, the most important SEO strategy is to create a constant flow of fresh and relevant content. As you may have heard before, "Content is King" when it comes to ranking high in the search engines.

More than anything else, valuable information that educates your prospective clients and customers will attract traffic, convert that traffic to leads and generate sales. In addition, relevant content will move you up organically through the search engines as well.

Obviously, if you are going to attract a constant flow of traffic, your content must be interesting, unique and/or educational.

In addition, as you create fresh and relevant content for your website, it makes it much, much easier for other websites to link to you.

**Start Blogging**

One of the best ways to create a steady flow of relevant content is to create a blog that you post to at least 2x every week.

There truly is no better way to create a flow of quality backlinks to your website.

Always keep in mind that blogs are a way to generate buzz about your particular industry. They are purely informational in nature and should never be seen as a way to overtly "sell" your products or services. The best part is that blogs do not need to be long in order to be effective; most blog posts are only between 250 – 500 words in length.

If your readers like what you have to say, they will find out more information about your company.

If you are interested in using blogs for SEO purposes, you will want to "embed" links back to your site inside specific keyword phrases. For instance, if Sandy the dog-trainer was writing a blog post about "Housebreaking Adult Dogs In 3 Easy Steps," she would certainly have important keyword phrases such as "housebreaking adult dogs" throughout her post.

In order to "embed" a link, she would highlight the text and click on the "chain" icon on her toolbar. Inside the pop-up box, Sandy would type the URL of the specific page in her website that refers to "housebreaking adult dogs."

In addition, it's considered blogging "best practice" to include links to other relevant sites as well. Remember, you *never* want to be perceived as a salesperson.  Your primary job is to offer educational and valuable information to your readers (which includes links to your site *and* other sites).

### Post Other Content on Your Website

In addition to posting to your blog, you should also make a point to publish other content on your website as well. Post your articles, press releases, podcasts and videos directly on your website.

This obviously achieves two main purposes. First of all, it ensure that you keep Google happy by offering fresh and relevant information to your audience. There is nothing Google loves more than to revisit your website and find that you have added new content. It's the fastest way up the organic search ladder!

Secondly, it makes your website "sticky" and therefore so much more appealing to your visitors.  In today's competitive marketplace, it's the kiss of death to have a boring, static and never-changing website. The days of the "brochure" website are coming to a close.

In its place are the new websites that are dynamic, ever-changing and educational. The more content you add to your website, the more repeat visitors you draw back to you site. And repeat visitors only means an increased possibility for more sales.

# Analyze Your Website

Once you have identified your keyword phrases, studied your competition, optimized your website and begin creating informational content and strong backlinks, you are well on your way to SEO success! The last step that you want to include in your plans is to analyze your SEO efforts.

The good news is that Google has *another* free tool for you to use for this very purpose. It's called **Google Analytics** and you can find it at: http://www.Google.com/analytics.com

The process of installing Google analytics into your website is a fairly simple process. However, it will provide you with some very powerful data including:

- The number of visitors that come to your site.

- What URL's your visitors are coming from.

- Where your visitors are located geographically.

- Which pages your visitors are reading.

- What keywords your visitors use to find you.

- The "bounce" rate for your site.

It's important that you understand that the most important statistics you are interested in studying is the number of **"unique" visitors** (as opposed to "hits" – which is a purely misleading number) and the **bounce rate** (how many visitors leave your homepage before they visit any other pages on your site).

Obviously, you want to tweak and refine your site so that you are increasing the amount of "unique" visitors while decreasing your bounce rate. (Therefore, *increasing the amount of time* that visitors stay involved in your website.)

To sign up for a Google Analytic account go to
http://www.Google.com/analytics.com

**Google** Analytics                                                                                                          jenni



**Step Two:** Once you have signed up for your Google Analytics account, you will be given a piece of code.

You either need to place the code on the homepage of your website (or have your website designer do this for you).

Eventually, you will want to place your code on every single page of your website. This will allow you to research which pages of your website generates the most traffic.

## Final SEO Thoughts

Now that you've had the chance to read through this ebook, it's safe to say that you know more than 99% of your competition when it comes to search engine optimization.

However, it's not just enough to "know more," you need to "do more."

So, it's time to take action!

Some of the items covered in this ebook may seem complex, but just take it one step at a time.

If you put into action, even a fraction of what is covered in this ebook, you will still generate impressive results.

So, just get started, dominate those search engines and get found online.

# For more Shoestring Marketing Tips and Tools download your **<u>FREE</u>** Shoestring Marketing Kit:



[www.ShoestringMarketingKit.com](http://www.ShoestringMarketingKit.com)

# About Jessica

**Jessica Swanson** has helped thousands of small business owners, all over the world, implement low-cost, high impact DIY marketing campaigns.

Armed with years of teaching and a M.S. in Written Communications, Jessica takes complicated marketing concepts, turns them upside-down, and makes them incredibly simple and outrageously straightforward.

Known for her energy, passion and "get-it-done" attitude, Jessica shares her savvy marketing tips through her weekly ezine, blog, podcasts and videos.

For more information on Shoestring Marketing products and programs, visit www.jessicaswanson.com