



Romancing the E-tail

If you need advice on matters of the heart, Michael Webb is your man. Oprah, NBC Nightly News and even the 700 Club have called on his vast knowledge of romance to help those who want to enter, repair or rekindle a relationship.

And, as it turns out, Webb is just as savvy about marketing and business as he is about Eros and Cupid.

Webb's specialty is online retail – or e-tail if you will. In fact, he's built an entire career and a very lucrative business around it at www.theromantic.com. Prior to becoming a savvy entrepreneur within the digital retail marketplace, Webb was a successful author speaking and writing on the topics of romance and love.

Webb, like many of his clients, has dealt with a broken heart, and it was this broken heart that led him to a new approach to publishing and selling his books. In the year 2000, he had a successful book -- *The Romantic's Guide: Hundreds of Creative Tips for a Lifetime of Love* -- on bookstore shelves and he was riding high on the talk show and lecture circuit. But, despite this success, his publisher wasn't ready for a longer-term commitment. It was then Webb began hearing the siren song of e-books.

Having built a career based on researching relationships and romance, Webb put those skills to use in researching e-books. The trick, Webb understood, was effectively harnessing the power of the Internet to help drive sales. "I looked around to see who could do this specifically and who could process the credit card transaction because that was really the critical piece."

A perfect love match was made when Webb found ClickBank, the largest online retailer for those engaged in the buying, selling and promoting of digitally delivered products and services.

ClickBank facilitates customer transactions and provides guaranteed tracking of sales, state-of-the-art fraud protection, a totally secure platform and handles in excess of 20,000 transactions a day. ClickBank manages all the purchases and financial transactions Webb needed to launch his online business.

Webb wrote his first e-book and, after signing up with ClickBank, his business was started. "From the first day I published with ClickBank I was making money; very good money. I've never looked back," Webb said.

“I’ve had big offers from large publishing houses to go back and publish more print books but I’m not interested. ClickBank is far more helpful to me than a publishing house,” he stated.

The problem, Webb explained, is that with a traditional publishing house, an author gives up most of the control – and most of the profits. “When you sign a contract in the publishing world you give 90% of your rights away to the publishing house,” Webb said. “They have almost complete control over your book.”

In publishing an e-book, Webb has the ability to control *every* aspect of the book: from what is written, how it’s written, when it’s produced, how much it costs and what commission you pay ClickBank affiliates for promoting the book. Everything is under the discretion of the product vendor.

Webb hasn’t limited himself to just offering a book or two either. His Web site offers dozens of books and articles all aimed at improving romance in people’s lives.

Webb has over 200,000 subscribers to his newsletter and has written a dozen books which he sells for \$29 a piece.

But, going a step further, Webb also provides a great deal of advice, romance and dating how-to’s for free. “I want to make as much material available for free because I have a number of customers – from Africa and elsewhere – that simply can’t afford a \$29 book,” he said. “So I have over 10,000 pages of ideas on dating, romance, how to improve your marriage and how to improve your love life, all of which can be downloaded for free.”

For others contemplating getting into the digital Internet retail business, protecting your intellectual property is often a concern. Webb says not to worry. “With PDF’s, the vendor can dictate if you can print it out or you need a password to access it. You can also limit how many times something is printed,” he said. “There is digital maintenance and rights you can put onto your e-books that protect your business, your identity and your customers.”

While the money is good (Webb earns well into the six figure range) and he has a built-in network of ClickBank affiliate sellers, it’s the freedom that ClickBank provides that lets him manage his business so well. “I travel around the world all the time. And, with just my laptop and a wireless café, I can conduct my business from literally anywhere. There’s very little I have to do because ClickBank makes it streamlined and almost wholly automated for me.”

When Webb is not traveling or writing his books and newsletter, he’s living the dream. “Every morning I have to pinch myself and ask myself is this real,” he said. “The best part is I get to be home with my wife and children and get to spend every hour of every day with them if I want to. You can’t put a price tag on that.”

With a job like that he probably doesn't have to work too hard on his romantic life either. Although, if need be, Webb probably has a good idea where he can go to get the information to improve it.