



SitePoint Marketplace

A guide to buying websites

Buying established websites with revenue and/or traffic can be a fantastic business opportunity, if you follow a few guidelines.

Before you place a bid

Before placing a bid, it makes sense to ask a lot of questions and conduct your own research.

Here are a few of the things to look into:

1. Unique visitors. Is the amount of traffic the site receives influenced by the domain name being used to host images, scripts, or tools used by other Websites? Hosted material can dramatically inflate a sites true traffic and revenue potential.
2. Content. Is it unique? Licensed? Written by the owner? How current is it and how frequently does it need to be updated? Is the content evergreen or does it go out of date quickly?
3. Hosting. Is it included in the price, and if so, for how long? If not, does the site need a Windows or Linux Server? Does the site have high server needs, which would require you to lease a dedicated server to host it?
4. Inbound links. Is the owner of the site that you're bidding on doing any cross-linking among other sites/domains that he owns? If so, will those links stay up after the sale?
5. Revenue Continuity. If you were to buy this site, would there be revenue continuity. For example, can you obtain accounts at the ad networks the site is

currently using?

If it's an ecommerce site, can you warehouse the inventory yourself or open an account with the same wholesaler? If you have to ship products yourself, would your shipping expenses be higher than they are currently because of where you live? If the site takes credit card orders, is a merchant account required? Do you have one already?

6. History. The longer and the more complete a site's history of traffic and revenue is, the safer your investment. Look at the history of the website/domain name at Archive.org and in the Google cache.
7. Licenses. Is the software behind the site unique? If it is unique, will you have copyright transferred to you? If it is licensed, are there any renewal fees, and what are they? Are any other sites based around the same scripts/software?
8. Non-compete. Can the owner of the site re-use the same software and/or content to create a competing Website once the sale completes?
9. Email lists. If the site comes with any email lists, are they double opt-in? How frequently are they mailed to? What are the email distribution costs? Can you see samples of the emails that have been sent out? Is the domain name on any spam blacklists?
10. RSS Feeds. Be sure to verify whether or not RSS feed traffic is included in the unique visitor and page view count of a site. Since RSS updates are automatic, they may artificially inflate traffic statistics.
11. Page Strength. Run the domain name against the Page Strength tool, which takes into account a multitude of different factors when generating a score, including inbound links, age of the domain name, pages indexed, DMOZ listings and more.

Conducting the transaction

1. Consider using Escrow.com for transferring funds.
2. Remember, if you pay via Papal, you cannot dispute a sale unless physical goods were transferred. Consider having the seller mail you a CDROM with the contents of the site, and sending it via FedEx, UPS or DHL.

Alternatively, fund your PayPal account with your credit card or bank account,

for that transaction, so that you're not using money that was already in the account. You may then have recourse with your bank or credit card company in case of a dispute.

3. Alternatively, mail a check, money order or draft to the other party via a tracked service. That way, you can verify the contact information and address that you have is valid.
4. Get the phone number of the other party, and talk to them on the phone, even if it means you have to stay up late or wake up early to catch the other person in a different time zone.
5. Get signed agreements outlining exactly what you're buying, what the sale includes, and what information the seller warrants is true. Get this faxed or, even better, sent via tracked mail to a non-PO BOX address.
6. Look at the Whois info of the domain name you are buying and ensure it matches with the person you're talking to.
7. Search for other sales/auctions conducted by the person you're buying from. Google the seller's user name to see if they are a member of any other forums.
8. Ask for references from other SitePoint members that the seller has dealt with before. Check the references, ideally via telephone.
9. Consider paying in two instalments, one before and one after the Website is transferred to you.
10. Before transferring money, you might also ask the seller to place your own analytics code (from a service such as StatCounter.com or OneStat.com) on their Website for a few days.

Remember: The ads in the SitePoint Marketplace work the same as ads in any magazine or newspaper. It's up to you to do your homework, and conduct a transaction safely and cautiously. SitePoint is not a mediator, arbitrator or enforcement authority, and cannot get involved in disputes between parties.