# Introduction

This book is the culmination of over 15 years of experience in web development and online marketing. This is much of the advice that I've given, and still give to entrepreneurs and owners of small businesses walking in the door. By no means is this book meant to be comprehensive. For instance, if you want to learn about writing HTML or about graphic design, you'll want to follow-up with other resources, my favorites of which I'll share throughout the following pages. This book was written with the idea of giving small business owners and entrepreneurs the essentials of what they need to know in order to launch their own online marketing efforts.

In this book, I'll be covering a bit of big-picture business planning, websites, the big three buckets of online marketing (search engine optimization, paid search, and social media), blogging, local, and reputation management. As each of these topics alone could fill multiple volumes of books, the purpose here is to provide you with everything you need to create a game plan for moving forward.

If you're embarking on the creation of a new or renewed website, it's beneficial to understand a bit more about what's involved, whether you're doing it yourself or outsourcing. The good news is that it has never been easier to get a credible, decent website at such a low price. The bad news is that if you want a totally custom website, the path is often dotted with many traps and pitfalls. It's kind of like building a new house. If you've ever had your own house built, or known anyone to undergo that process, you've probably heard some horror stories or experienced them yourself.

One of the important things about the web is that it's constantly changing, which means that there is a lot of misinformation out there, and that you have to constantly stay on top of industry news. But despite this environment of constant change, you can't go wrong in keeping your eye on three main areas: relevance, connectedness and passion.

Relevance is about creating content that is significant and appropriate. If I'm seeking a way to make a healthy dinner tonight, I might search "healthy soup." The search engine could provide me with some results that give me recipes for making a healthy soup, or mention brands of soup that are healthy, or might say that society is a better place when we have a "healthy soup" of personalities. Of course, the latter result has nothing to do with what I'm seeking. It isn't relevant. The search engines have become increasingly sophisticated in determining what is relevant. If you speak with someone at Google and Bing, you'll hear that it really is the aim at both companies to deliver the most relevant results.

So if you're the owner of the Acme Healthy Soup Company, how would you go about being more relevant? Simply stuffing words like "healthy" and "soup" into your pages over and over won't do it. But if you create a lot of interesting content around healthiness and nutrition, and carrots and potatoes, your content is more apt to be relevant for someone searching for information about healthy soups.

So, let's say that I've created the most relevant content in the world for healthy soups. I might have created the definitive word on healthy soups - but if no one knows about it, it will be like the proverbial tree falling in the forest. The online world is built on **connections.** We link to interesting content, and sometimes we build reciprocal relationships where those people connect to these other people, and then they connect to us. It's this web of connections that creates threads of connectivity. The search engines are giving an increasingly higher weight to those connections, as well, which is why there is a whole world of "link building," which I'll be talking about later.

The third area of online marketing is passion. Passion is the visionary focus and excitement that makes all of that content and connectedness come to life. It's the added oomph, the firecracker beneath the seat. I might possess all of the relevance in the world and an incredible amount of connectedness, but if what I'm doing online isn't based on passion, it will have little effect. And then, it's also that passion that helps to make my content more relevant, and make my connections want to be connected. Above all, don't be boring!