Rob's IM Toolbox

35 Fabulous Web Business Tools That I Use All The Time
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By Rob Cornish ©
GainHigherGround.Com

Hi, this is Rob Cornish and I'll get straight to the point:

Here you'll find a list of the tools I use regular in my online business.

Some are free, some cost money and after spending countless hours testing all sorts of different tools, this is exactly what I use to run my business.

That's it really! Take a look through, I hope you enjoy it ☺

Kind regards,

Rob Cornish
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1) Jing / Screencast
Sometimes, typing emails can get pretty tiring.

So instead I often shoot a short screencast video (basically a video of your computer screen) to reply to customer queries, send private messages to joint venture partners and communicate with freelancers.

I have the free version which is limited to 5 minutes recording (a good thing because it forces you to be concise!). Once you click "stop" you can click another button to "share" the video – this simply stores the video online and gives you a link that you can give to whoever you like.

Investment: Free
Links: www.techsmith.com/jing.html

2) Wishlist Member

I use this fantastic Wordpress plugin on many of my sites to secure the members areas so I can keep freebie seekers/prying eyes out and let customers in.

There are many alternatives but for me this is the best. It integrates easily with various payment systems (including PayPal) and email list providers (including Aweber).

Quick tip: If you are considering this but are put off by the price just get the 1 site license for your first site and once that's successful upgrade to the multisite version (that's what I did!).

Investment: $97+
Links: www.gainhigherground.com/wishlistmember

3) Skype

Free phone calls worldwide? Yes, please!

I use Skype in 4 main ways:

1. To speak with my private consulting clients
2. To speak with joint venture partners & freelancers (e.g., software developers) that I've hired
3. To interview people for content I'm creating for my products
4. To make personal calls such as phoning my bank.

Investment: Free
Link: www.skype.com/en

4) Call Recorder

This allows you to record the audio (and video if you wish) from Skype calls.

Call Recorder is just for the Mac which I find to have the best reliability (it's never ever let me down). But there are equivalent applications for the PC too such as Pamela.

Perfect for recording expert interviews in your niche - exactly what I use it for!

Investment: $29.95 (try it for free)
Link: www.ecamm.com/mac/callrecorder

5) Audacity

This is free and although it takes a bit of time to get used to (just look up some YouTube videos to train yourself up) it's brilliant for editing audio.

After I record an expert interview I can use audacity to "top and tail" the audio and edit out any bits that aren't very useful. After that's done I just click File > Export to bring out a lovely new MP3 file which I can upload to Amazon S3 (see below) and publish direct to my sites.

Investment: Free
Link: audacity.sourceforge.net

6) Easy Video Suite (EVS)

The first thing to remember is YouTube is an excellent free option– so if you are on a tight budget I would definitely recommend that.

For paid products it's nice to have your videos hosted privately and away from YouTube and this is where EVS comes in.

The thing I love about this is that it integrates directly with Amazon S3 (see below): I literally select the video or audio file I want to publish and click on "Upload". From there I just copy and paste the code that it gives me directly into Wordpress and the video plays.

If I need to change any features (autoplay, player colour, size etc) I never need to touch that code again but instead just make the changes at the click of a button inside the main Easy Video control panel.

Investment: $197 (very cost effective compared with monthly charges like Vimeo, Wistia etc)
Link: www.gainhigherground.com/evs

7) Amazon S3

This is mass "cloud" storage… "cloud" just means "on the internet" - almost certainly an inferior technical definition there but that's how I think of it anyway.

The 3 best things about Amazon S3 are:

1. It's incredibly cheap. Even with thousands of views of a 60 minute video you'd only end up paying a handful of dollars.

2. Using it means that you don't have to burden your website with the high bandwidth required for playing video or audio (I never recommend uploading a video or audio to your hosting account as it'll really slow down or crash your server).

3. The files are delivered super fast and are also private so it's perfect for publishing your content to customer download areas or membership sites. YouTube is not a great option for these purposes because the videos are public so customers may not be happy that they have paid for access to something they could have watched for free on YouTube!

Investment: Incredibly cheap!
Link: aws.amazon.com/s3

8) LeadPages

This took the internet marketing scene by storm in 2013 and it's a terrific tool for building high converting sales, squeeze and content pages in (literally) seconds.

The cleverest thing about the service is that they are effectively "crowd sourcing" split test results. In other words, as other people use high converting templates they get pushed up inside the system so you can select them as well.

They are also adding lots of new templates regularly so basically, you are guaranteed to be using a high converting template straight out of the box.

However, even though it's great, it's become a little pricey. It's still worth considering but in most cases I'd recommend Thrive Content Builder (see below) – personally I use Thrive for nearly everything in my business now and have moved away from LeadPages.

Investment: $588/year for "pro" option
Link: www.gainhigherground.com/leadpages

9) Thrive Content Builder

To me this is the single best way to build sales pages online. But it also does squeeze pages, download pages, JV pages, webinar pages and others.

Great value for money and a truly terrific piece of kit that gets better and better with all the enhancements from Thrive.

If you find the price of LeadPages a little steep, OptimizePress 2.0 a little awkward or some of the other competition a bit "fly by night", I'd simply reiterate this recommendation to you.

Investment: $97 for unlimited sites (I bought and recommend the 'membership' option on top this as it includes all of Thrives Themes & Plugins including new ones they release in the future.
Link: www.gainhigherground.com/contentbuilder

10) SpyBar

Ok, obviously I'm biased here because this is one of my products! But still, I do use it several times per day to find what's going on with websites I visit around the internet.

Investment: $12.95
Link: www.wpspybar.com

11) Pexels

Many royalty free photos here – at no cost!

I use this site a lot for presentations (e.g., webinar/video slides) and the quality is extremely impressive to say the least.

Highly recommended!

Investment: Free
Link: www.pexels.com

12) IconFinder

This is free and brilliant for little icons that you can use in your marketing.

A lot of my products have images in them that I've sourced from IconFinder.Com – for example all of the icons in my SpyBar and WP ViralPayments products are source from here!

Investment: Free
Link: www.iconfinder.com

13) Other Free Image Sites

Before paying for an image I often check out freeimages.com and pixabay.com to see if I can find what I'm looking for.

Investment: Free
Link: www.freeimages.com & pixabay.com

14) Shutterstock

When I can't find a suitable free image on the other sites listed above I use Shutterstock.

There are many other choices like istockphoto and bigstockphoto but lately I've seemed to have more luck with this.

Investment: Pay per batch of 5 images + other plans
Link: www.shutterstock.com

15) LiquidWeb

I've tried several hosting companies.

In terms of value for money and service LiquidWeb (who I'm with now) are brilliant and I have no intention of moving.

I use the 2GB VPS option they provide for $79/month.

This is a LOT less money than my previous dedicated server set up but I do appreciate you might feel it's expensive if you're just starting out.

So in that case consider Hostgator: Don't expect much in terms of support from them but for the price it's hard to beat. When you grow and make more money, move over to LiquidWeb.

Investment: Various (I pay $79/month)
Link: https://www.liquidweb.com

16) MindMeister

Noting down you plans in Word or Google Docs is great but sometimes representing them graphically can be a real help.

I use Mind Meister for this. I have no idea if it's the best mind mapping program on the market, but it's what I use.

I've also created a several of mind maps using it to use as bonuses for my paid information products. Easy, quick and helpful for your customers.

Investment: FREE for 3 mindmaps, Subscription beyond that
Link: www.mindmeister.com

17) MotionMail

This little tool allows you to create countdown timers that you can paste into your emails.

This is very useful to if an offer you are promoting is going to close down because it allows you to draw your subscribers' attention to it in a visual way.

The countdown timers are basically images so you don't have to just use them in emails, they can be placed anywhere including on your squeeze pages and sales pages.

Investment: FREE but I have the $10/month option
Link: motionmailapp.com

18) SnagIt

Has there been a single day in the past 12 months that I haven't used SnagIt? Well probably, but those days would be when I'm not on my computer at all!

It's brilliant for making fast adjustments to images such as resizing and cropping. I also use it extensively for working with the images I use for Facebook Ads. As close to as a "must have" as it gets in my book!

All the images in this list were captured and edited using SnagIt too.

Tip: Snagit and Camtasia (see below) are available as a package together. If you don't want Camtasia though, you can just purchase Snagit separately.

Investment: Varies on package and country (Free trial)
Link: www.techsmith.com/snagit.html

19) Pixlr

I still can't believe this is actually free.

Rather than explain more about it here, check out the video demo I did for you on this blog post:
http://www.gainhigherground.com/how-to-create-a-website-header-using-a-brilliant-free-online-tool/

Investment: Free
Link: pixlr.com

20) Handbrake

I don't use this often but when I do it tends to be to rip DVDs.

In other words, you put a DVD into your computer, start up Handbrake and it will produce a digital MP4 file that you can save on your computer.

(Then I can throw away the DVD and free up some storage space!)

Investment: Free
Link: handbrake.fr

21) Camtasia

All my videos are edited and produced using this. It's not perfect but it is fun to use and gets the job done fast. One of the best investments I've ever made for my business.

If you are a Mac user then Screenflow might be a better alternative but personally, I don't use that myself.

Investment: Varies on package and country (Free trial)
Link: www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html

22) Aweber

As with most of these tools there are countless alternatives and Aweber is no exception. For me though, I just *really* like it. It's perfect for starting out as well because it's:

1. Easy to use
2. Very inexpensive

As you get more advanced you'll find some limitations but to be honest in my view there's usually far more money to be made by improving your products and marketing strategies than there is in spending time upgrading to a more extensive email system.

If $20/month for Aweber puts you off then please consider the alternative cost of starting a traditional offline business (i.e., thousands before you even open the doors). It's <u>so</u> inexpensive to use and building your list is the single most profitable things you can do.

Investment: $20+/month ($1 trial)
Link: www.gainhigherground.com/aweber

23) Upwork.com

Elance and oDesk combined together to form Upwork.

Personally, I'm not convinced about the name but there's no doubt this is a brilliant place to go and hire freelancers.

I use it for transcription, graphics, web design and software development.

Just post your job and wait an hour or two for applicants to apply.

In a way Upwork represents one of the best things about doing business online: Access to incredibly low cost workers who can handle the things you either aren't skilled at yourself (and I'm hopeless at transcription, writing or software development) or simply *don't like* doing.

Investment: Depends upon project. E.g., $15+ for transcription, $150+ for software, $20+ for web design
Link: www.upwork.com

24) FileZilla

FileZilla is a FTP (File Transfer Protocol) program which allows you to transfer files back and forth between your computer and your web hosting account.

I try to avoid this whenever possible (preferring to upload via Wordpress > Add Media or to my Amazon S3 account) but still sometimes it's necessary and it's a great skill to learn (not very difficult at all once you've done it a few times).

It's also worth remembering that you can use the File Manager icon inside your hosting C-Panel to upload and download files. So in a way you can live without FileZilla, but it's still worth knowing about.

Investment: Free
Link: filezilla-project.org

25) Fiverr

What can I say?

Fiverr has been a revolution over the past few years and at such a cheap price you really can't go wrong.

I mainly use it for logo designs, some 3D product e-covers but there is so much more available too.

Once I actually bought a gig entitled "I will record nearly anything you want as a horse race for $5" for a friend's birthday (watch the video here: http://fiverr.com/arnyaustralia/record-a-mock-horse-race-call-for-you-and-your-friends)!

Investment: $5+
Link: fiverr.com

26) Google Chrome

In my opinion this is the best and easiest to use internet browser.

If you haven't tried it and are currently using Internet Explorer or Firefox give it a shot for a few days and see what you think.

Investment: Free
Link: www.google.com/chrome

27) Ignition

I get questions all the time about which Wordpress themes I recommend.

For mini-sites, membership areas and niche blogs I've often chosen Canvas from WooThemes.

However more recently I've switched to Ignition which is made by Thrive Themes (the same stable as Content Builder which mention elsewhere in this document).

It's flexible, attractive in design, fast (an often overlooked factor) and the support is excellent - well worth checking out.

Investment: $49+ (As mentioned in Thrive Content Builder above, if you get the 'membership' option you get everything made by Thrive now and in the future)
Link: www.gainhigherground.com/ignition

28) Notepad++

If you have a PC then you'll automatically have Notepad which is a simple text editor. However, I highly recommend using Notepad++ instead as it gives you slightly more features and in particular supports multiple tabs open at the same time.

I store my daily "TODO" list in it and lots of template emails I use for customer support and communicating with outsourcers and joint venture partners.

Investment: Free
Link: notepad-plus-plus.org

29) Securi

If like me you've been a victim of hacking you'll know it's one of the biggest pains you can go through online.

One of the worst things about it is that a lot of the time you may not even realize it's happened. Spam scripts hijacking your visitors' links or sending out spam emails can exist for months without your knowledge.

Securi's free "Site Check" service is great to scan your sites and find out if there's a potential problem:

Note: This can throw false positives but generally it's an excellent and very helpful tool.

If you wish you can also subscribe to their website monitoring service which informs you by email if any problems are flagged.

If there is a problem and you have a paid subscription, they'll clean it up for you for no extra charge (an unlimited number of times).

Investment: Free & Premium
Link: sitecheck.sucuri.net (Site Check), sucuri.net (Main Site)

30) Akismet

If you allow comment on your blog then this Wordpress plugin is absolutely essential to filter out spam comments which are (mostly) sent by automated robots.

I use it religiously on most sites I own!

Investment: Free
Link: wordpress.org/plugins/akismet

31) Snowball Microphone

My current microphone is an Audio-Technica AT2020 as this was recommended by a friend with a professional audio broadcasting background.

Previously (for my first 5+ years online) I used a white Snowball Microphone.

And I can't recommend it enough.

I used mine for Skype calls, creating videos, doing webinars, and pretty much everything else audio related.

It's also quite easy on the eye too which is nice given that it sits on your desk the entire time!

Investment: $48 Amazon.com / £45 Amazon.co.uk
Link: Search for "blue snowball" in Amazon

32) PayPal

Although I don't actually accept many payments directly through PayPal, my account there is essential for facilitating payments through other networks such as JVZoo and WarriorPlus.

If you are just starting out online and don't already have a Business PayPal account - make it a priority to remedy that. It won't cost you anything but it really is a must.

33) Clickbank

Clickbank is one of the few platforms which will actually sell your products for you.

It also takes care of product delivery and commission payments to yourself and affiliates. I've used it from a few years now and although it does have some downsides (support can be a little slow and there are fixed charges to list products) these are small relative to its advantages.

Investment: $49.95 product listing fee & $1 + 7.5% transaction fee
Link: www.clickbank.com

34) LastPass

Automated hacking robots will try and gain access to your online accounts by brute force - repeatedly trying logins from dictionaries of common username and passwords.

So if your password is "flowers" or even something like "flowers2014" then you are leaving yourself very much open to attack.

You should use strong passwords which look like this: 2A43%^fjsdSTo"1-

Trouble is, these are impossible to remember, especially as there are so many for all your different sites. The solution is to use a password manager and my choice is the free, basic version of LastPass.

It's totally secure - no one else can see your passwords not even LastPass and it's just such a time saver. I can't recommend it enough.

Investment: Free or Premium (I use free version)
Link: lastpass.com

35) AVG & Malware Bytes

You probably, or should I say hopefully(!) have your own virus and malware system on your computer.

However, if you have had problems then I can tell you I use these 2 applications which are free and seem to work very well on my PC.

Investment: Free
Links: www.malwarebytes.org & free.avg.com

That's it – I hope these tools are as useful to you as they are too me!

Kind regards,

Rob Cornish

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