

**Steve:** I had a clear vision, that the Internet was the communication tool of the future. I could see that, and there was nothing on the Internet about ostriches. I really thought I would be a worldwide broker of ostrich leather — hides as they are called in the trade — making a few dollars on each one and selling thousands of them to whoever would buy them.

How wrong I was! I do sell hides, but I'd be a pauper if I relied on them for running the business.

I wanted to provide good content and I wanted to build a list of names — absolutely crucial to a good sales organization. So I started saving email addresses — even from the few people who arrived at the site in early 1996 before the pages really went live. Collecting email addresses is one of the main reasons for our success.

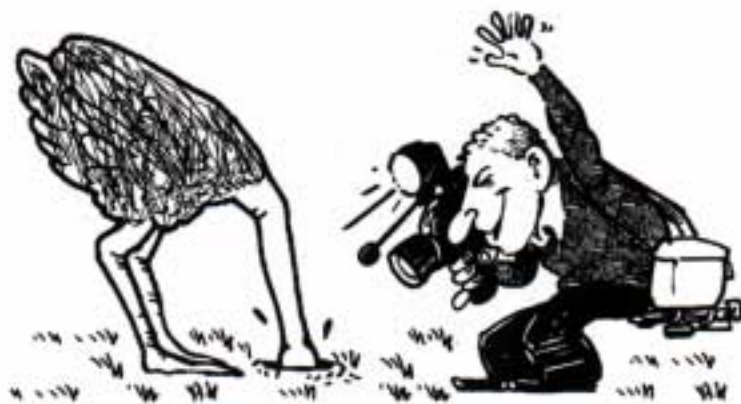
I knew that creating good content and then sending more good content via email would make people more comfortable to buy stuff from us. Familiarity breeds content and confidence.

**Audri:** That has a nice ring to it! How has your Internet marketing strategy changed over time?

**Steve:** By May 1996 I hadn't sold one hide, so it changed very quickly. I had written a business plan with my dad for ostriches and I thought that other people would probably need a plan, too. So I rewrote mine — and made it generic.

I wrote a long HTML page about it and sent an email out to a few hundred people in May 1996. I charged \$95 for it and got about 20 orders (about \$2,000). From this I realized that people wanted information — and they were willing to buy it.

At about the same time, I received an email from an author in Germany. He had written a book about ostriches and wondered if I could sell it on the Internet for him. I wrote an HTML page and sent out an email in July 1996 and we got our first order in late July 1996 for one book. By July 1997 I had sold over 500 books.



Besides the book, I produced a couple of videos on ostrich farming and organized a two-day seminar. A very knowledgeable ostrich farmer and breeder ran the seminar and I got it videotaped. This became another good seller for us, as have numerous other publications and software relating to ostrich farm management.

Along with the reference material, I put up some pages about ostrich meat and we receive a steady supply of orders from this. Our main focus now is on finished product for the one-time visitor — such as feathers, meat, dusters and our new range of Exotic Ostrich Oil Skin Care Cosmetics.

For the worldwide community and farmers we focus on better animal husbandry, reference material and, of course, the sale of livestock.

Training seminars, consultancy and other speciality services have all been implemented, even though none of them were part of the original concept.

**Audri:** This shows how important it is to be willing to change your initial ideas about what will work. Testing and monitoring is crucial for success.

How long did it take to start making sales?

**Steve:** From our initial newsletter of March 1996, I received the first check in late May 1996 for the Business Plan. From there sales started drifting in and became pretty steady by about September 1996.

**Audri:** So, it took two months to get going and about six months to get a steady stream