

# Squidoo It Yourself

Tricks and Techniques for Higher Lens Rankings and Profitability on Squidoo



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First Edition - 2006

Other Books & Publications by these authors include:

- Beyond Code
- Lasting Relationships
- Drawing Horses
- How To Launch a Website on a Shoestring Budget
- How To Launch a Website on a Shoestring Budget
- Pye In The Face



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# What is this book about?

Squidoo is quickly turning into one of the most talked about communities on the web. Although Squidoo and SquidU feature a wealth of information on this rapidly evolving tool, the founders of SquidooItYourself wanted to build a site with objective, third-party, and useful opinions. SIY is a collection of traffic-building tips, module tricks, ebooks and money making-strategies from Squidoo fans and leading lensmasters will help you build a lens that stands out from the pack.

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# Introduction

By Dave Pye

OK, I'll admit it: I'm a Squidoo addict, and I'm considering counseling to get this small sea creature off my back.

By day I make a living as a search engine marketing consultant. In my free time I look after my more than 50 Squidoo lenses covering topics such as Dean Martin, "Blade Runner," Irish pubs in Boston, hockey fights, dog sweater patterns and, well, I could go on. Let's just say I have eclectic tastes.

As of this writing, two of my lenses about TV shows sit comfortably in the Squidoo Top 100 Most Visited: Trailer Park Boys: Welcome to Sunnyvale! and Bada Bing - The Sopranos Central. Each gets roughly 350 hits a week.

Google recently listed the TPB lens at #24 for the term, which is pretty cool. As a result, I've worked on it a lot lately — sort of like buying new drapes before your parents come to visit. Since this lens looks pretty good right now, I'd like to walk you through it and explain what makes it work. Visit <http://www.squidoo.com/trailerparkboys/> open 'er up and we'll begin.

I'll run down the lens from top to bottom, making a few comments along the way. First, the introduction. Always put some time into your intro; don't just copy and paste it from

I look after my more than 50 Squidoo lenses covering topics such as Dean Martin, "Blade Runner," Irish pubs in Boston, hockey fights, dog sweater patterns and, well, I could go on. Let's just say I have eclectic tastes.



somewhere else. Use a photo, and make sure your text is at least as long as the graphic. I tried to make the TPB intro funny. And, as many folks don't know much about the show, I inserted a few interesting snippets to entice them to keep reading.

I like to use "Write" modules wherever possible, as this is where you can write original content and include photos. The next module down (Who in the Frig ...) features a photo of TPB's main characters and a show synopsis. These modules should also include external links, which seem to boost Lens Rank.

Amazon Lenses (see Watch the TPB on DVD!) allow you to specify order and write blurbs about whatever you want to sell. Take the time to pick the order; don't just let Amazon decide. Also, choose your items with care and write unique summaries, like I did here for each of the TPB DVDs.

Next we have another Write module containing a photo and links to an external TPB FAQ. I also included a quote, as quotes are great content for lenses. You can have a module devoted to them, or spread them throughout, like I do in my Sopranos lens. Trivia is another fun item for lenses, and if you include trivia in a Write module, you can add another photo, too.

After that is another Amazon lens, this time for TPB Posters. If Amazon has different types of products devoted to the same subject, split them up into separate modules and spread them out. Another word on items for sale and descriptions: It will be well worth your while to customize the revenue-generating modules, as visitors will appreciate the effort and in turn be more likely to buy.

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Link modules (see TPB Websites) are probably the most popular type around. My best piece of advice is to (painstakingly) write good, funny and evocative text for everything you include. Visitors will welcome accurate descriptions of the links you provide, and that good karma may earn you a sale or at least a good star rating!

The CafePress module (see TPB Apparel) is great because their site has lots of TPB-related schwa. The images here help liven up the lens and add more skimmable content. As with the Amazon modules, be sure to customize where you can. One word of caution: I've seen these shirt designs go from relevant to completely non-related from day-to-day. To avoid this from happening you need to hardlink to the right products directly from the module. This can be done in the options settings in each module.

Up next is another Write module, with guitar chords to the show's infamous "Liquor and Whores" song. I even found a photo of two of the characters playing their guitars to add to the mix. Get creative with Write modules; quotes, quizzes, chords, trivia, etc. are all fair game. The idea is to get your audience interested enough to stick around for a while and get hooked on the content. This either leads to them giving the lens a good lensrank, bookmarking it or referring it to a friend.

Keep in mind that RSS feeds are your friend. For TPB News, I pull in any news article from Yahoo that contains the phrase "Trailer Park Boys." You can customize Yahoo news feeds for absolutely anything by visiting <http://news.yahoo.com/rss>. I love this feed and use it in all my lenses.

Get creative with Write modules; quotes, quizzes, chords, trivia, etc. are all fair game. The idea is to get your audience interested enough to stick around for a while and get hooked on the content.



Flickr modules (see TPB Pictures) are great fun, especially if there's an abundance of related subject matter accurately tagged back at the main site. But as with CafePress modules, relevancy can fluctuate. It's best to link to a specific photo set or one photo at a time to ensure you're always displaying the best content for your lens.

My lens wraps up with another Write module with some trivia thrown in this time (see Take the TPB Quiz!).

I hope this little review has been helpful and given you a few ideas to take back to your own lenses. And I encourage you to spend some time with this e-Book to learn more about the little hobby that has become my obsession (and perhaps yours, too). Happy Squidooing!

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David P. Rye". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

It's best to link to a specific photo set or one photo at a time to ensure you're always displaying the best content for your lens.



# What is Squidoo?

*"If you build it, they will learn."* - A Squidoo mantra.

First things first - what the heck is a Squidoo? It isn't a snowmobile that can drive on water. At it's simplest, Squidoo has been called a sort of MySpace ([www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)) for adults. While that analogy is becoming popular, and it's oh so clever, it couldn't be less accurate.

Wikipedia has the following description, "Squidoo is a commercial website launched in October 2005. It is a platform designed to make it easy for anyone to teach others about topics they care about."

The official word from the site's about page is that Squidoo is an "... online platform that makes it easy for anyone to build lenses on topics they are passionate about. These lenses help you find a unique, human perspective on things that interest you... fast. Not only can Lensmasters spread their ideas, get recognized for their

**Official 2006 World Cup Shirts** by The Gaffer LensRank: #1

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It's fast, fun and free. (And you could even earn some \$\$, for you or for charity).

**About the Lensmaster**



**The Gaffer**  
In 1984, The Gaffer moved from the UK to Florida and has been tolerating the

[More...](#)  
[Contact the Lensmaster](#)

**About This Lens**

**Tags**  
soccer, world cup, world cup shirts, ...

See other lenses in [Sports](#)

**Stats**

Wikipedia has the following description, "Squidoo is a commercial website launched in October 2005. It is a platform designed to make it easy for anyone to teach others about topics they care about."



expertise, and send more traffic to their Web sites and blogs—they could also earn royalties.” Former luddites can become instant online authorities and the possibilities are astounding. Over 20,000 lenses and 8,000 lens masters currently make up the network, and there is no end in sight.

The private Squidoo beta launched in October, and already some of the earliest lenses have Google Page Rank and are pulling in significant search keyword referrals from major engines. Google’s affinity for Squidoo is especially noteworthy, and many search engine marketers and optimizers are taking notice. And it’s official: In a recent interview at SXSW, Squidoo’s Senior Director of Community Development - Heath Row - was quick to point out the rate at which new lenses have been getting indexed. Listen to the full interview [here](#).

So a lens can be a lot more than a shortcut for searchers to subject matter on a focused topic. From an SEO standpoint, it can also serve as a shortcut to getting newer websites indexed by search engines who regularly crawl, and give credence to, Squidoo’s growing network. Make lenses for your clients, your company, or anything you are passionate about. It’s the next big thing in so many ways.

## Disclaimers and other distractions

### **Squidoo as a marketing device**

We do not suggest that Squidoo is a soup-to-nuts answer to increasing your credibility, web traffic or Google rankings. We see the site as a component to a larger web market-

We do not suggest that Squidoo is a soup-to-nuts answer to increasing your credibility, web traffic or Google rankings. We see the site as a component to a larger web marketing strategy.



ing strategy. In our experience Squidoo has the capabilities of increasing all these things your performance on search engines will always be a factor of the particular search engines algorithm and the inherent credibility behind the lens.

### **Squidoo as the de-facto source of information**

Fortunately for you, most of the really awful lenses will sink to the bottom of the peer reviews so as to be out of sight to most visitors. There will be some lenses that by sheer brute force remain popular and highly ranked.

## Getting Started

Creating a Squidoo lens is remarkably easy from a technical standpoint, but that doesn't mean you should avoid putting some honest thought into what your subject matter will be.

The Internet is littered with the bones of half-finished ideas and abandoned projects. So before you even begin, ask yourself: Is this lens going to be something you're still working on and maintaining in a month? If you're not positively certain, you should probably build a lens about something else.

If you decide to move forward, creating a lens is simple — just register for an account and review the easy-to-follow directions. As you begin working on your lens, keep in mind these observations on some of the more basic modules and the different ways they can be used.

Creating a Squidoo lens is remarkably easy from a technical standpoint, but that doesn't mean you should avoid putting some honest thought into what your subject matter will be.



# Lens Focus

More is more. When it comes to Squidoo lenses, it would appear that more content is better for your ranking. There is a practical consideration here, but as with all websites and blogs - relevancy is the key. The more relevant and useful the information in your Squidoo lens, the more likely it will come up in the lens search and also be indexed by Google, Yahoo, MSN and other engines.

**Maven** by Robert Glazer LensRank: #3,212

Rate It: ★★★★★ (by 3 people) [Print](#) [Email](#) [Add to Favorites](#) [Lensroll](#) [Add to del.icio.us](#) [diqq this](#)

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**Bobby's Best** Buying even the most standard household and lifestyle products can be overwhelming. Who's got the time to research, compare and price match? Bobby's Best is your unbiased source for everyday product research and buying tips. This site gets to the heart of what's good and what's bad. It won't bore you with comparing the details of various products and services, Bobby's job is to do the hard work and tell you the "one" to buy.

**What do you like to buy? Make a shopping lens**

▼ **About the Lensmaster**

**Robert Glazer**  
In addition to being a consumer product junkie, I am an entrepreneur and business  
[More...](#)

▼ **About This Lens**

The more relevant and useful the information in your Squidoo lens, the more likely it will come up in the lens search and also be indexed by Google, Yahoo, MSN and other engines.



If your lens is nothing more than self-promotion, or an Amazon Module farm, then it will be ignored and discredited with poor star ratings. If your topic is on blogging, for example, a rapidly changing content-management environment, you will need to ensure the postings are frequent and up-to-date. There is no value in creating a lens that is purely a placeholder for arcane facts or a shallow affiliate revenue play.

## Adding Content

Unless your lens is deliberately archiving content, you will want to write original material whenever possible. This content might take several forms. One method is to feed your own blog postings into the lens via an RSS feed. This provides fresh content on a regular basis, without any additional effort from you on the Squidoo side.

Other shortcuts to building significant original Squidoo content include posting previous articles you have written into your lenses. Our only caution here is that you will probably want to make these postings an introduction to the article, rather than reposting the entire article itself. Although there is no limit to the amount of content you can add to your lens, it will become difficult to read and cluttered with longer, intact articles. Our suggestion is to write a short abstract of the article and then link to it elsewhere - using the text link module - to an instance of the full piece hosted on another site or blog.

Unless your lens is deliberately archiving content, you will want to write original material whenever possible.



# Creating incoming and Outgoing Links

Community is a key component in the development of the Squidoo site. Many reviewers have compared it to established online gathering places like Friendster, Wikipedia and MySpace. The more interlinking lenses within Squidoo, the more likely visitors will continue to travel within the main domain. This provides the advantage of keeping visitor attention focused inside of Squidoo while allowing you to create loops and relationships between your lenses and those of your friends.

And don't forget to "look out for #1," as they say. If you're making a résumé-type lens all about yourself, your profession, your interests, etc., then make sure to build a link list containing all your other lenses. This will help these lenses to get spidered by search engines and keep people who enjoy your work browsing your Squidoo pages.

## The Roll of Blogs and Your Lenses

RSS feed modules from news sites or blogs related to your topic are a great source of frequently updated content. It's easy to find at least one that is somehow related to your lens. You can even tailor feeds (e.g., Yahoo! News RSS) to specific keywords of your choosing.

Interlinking lenses provides the advantage of keeping visitor attention focused inside of Squidoo while allowing you to create loops and relationships between your lenses and those of your friends.



# Using Other's Lenses to Build Your Rankings

I have it on good authority, and through a lot of trial and error, that one of the main facets of Squidoo's lens rank system is based on outgoing links. One of the few places you can create custom A Tag links is within the text module. The text module is probably my favorite, because you can also add a graphic and use a few other HTML tags. Links you create yourself, as opposed to outgoing links from Flickr, Amazon or Superstore modules, account for the lion's share of the ranking algorithm.

To see this in practice, visit the lens I created for one of my favorite bands, the Happy Mondays, and scroll down to the trivia section at the very bottom. After I gathered the content, using HTML I manually linked to sites related to the individual questions. Although this lens is quite good, it was buried in the rankings for weeks. After I added all the outgoing links it shot up thousands to it's current rank of #250. The proof is in the pudding.

## How Does Freshness Affect Your Score?

As your lens evolves and the number of visitors grows, it's important to keep true to the medium if you are to continue to attract readers and keep them coming back. The difficult thing with a lens or blog is you are literally as good as your last post – if visitors scan

As your lens evolves and the number of visitors grows, it's important to keep true to the medium if you are to continue to attract readers and keep them coming back.



#### Electronics reviews

##### Crucial Gizmo USB 2.0 Flash Drive

Storage is becoming cheaper and more portable by the day. If you are looking for a device to help bridge the gap between a floppy disk and an external hard drive, then a portable flash memory device is a great option. Simply plug it into your USB port and it's ready to go.

##### Dish Network

I have been a Dish Network Subscriber for almost two years now and have been very happy with their service. I give Dish the edge over Direct TV because of their great selection of receivers, many with the ability to connect to two TV's and with built in Tivo functionality.

##### Sony DCR-HC21 MiniDV Handycam

A higher end video camera will give you a better picture, more recording options, a higher resolution still camera and more advanced editing features, all in a tiny package.

the first post and it is of no interest, they will move on rapidly without really exploring the site. If you are using your lens like a blog then around 300 words is good for a posting. Not too long, something that can be easily read in 1 minute.

## Using RSS Feeds

The Yahoo! News RSS feed is the best kept secret so far for Squidoo's RSS module. The feed looks amazing when translated, as opposed to Google News which looks absolutely terrible. The articles don't double up, and the 100 word excerpts look like you painstakingly wrote them yourself.

The best part is yet to come - the feeds are completely customizable. You can create an RSS feed, which is fully compatible with Squidoo, simply by typing in your desired keywords. Be sure to visit the feed customization page and bookmark it immediately (scroll down to get to the form). I am currently using it on my Sopranos, Chris Farley and Dave Chappelle lenses if you'd like to see some examples. Happy RSSing!

Why not divide your subject or topic into more than one lens? It's easy enough to link them to each other, and the relationships will assist in drawing visitors, getting the lenses indexed and eventually even Google page rank or link proliferation.



# Multiple Lens Strategies

Lenses can get real big - real fast. People tend to consider web pages that scroll down forever as being sub-par. It's been ingrained into negative perception right along with frames and anchor tags. So if you find the size of your Squidoo lens spiraling out of control, you may want to consider the possibility you've bitten off too much content for a single lens.

**Innovation**

- #21 Balance innovation and continuous improvement**  
Innovation and continuous improvement are not mutually exclusive.
- #55 Commoditize your work at regular intervals**  
You don't have to wait for someone else to commoditize your work
- #69 Balance home runs with small wins**  
Home runs are great. But small wins are important too!
- #107 Detach the idea from the source**  
Don't let your perceptions on the messenger taint the value of the message
- #121 Learn to exploit innovations**  
If your competitor is not innovating but is great at exploiting innovations you are still at a disadvantage.

**Personal Branding**

- #42 Maintain visibility**  
Out of sight is out of mind!
- #49 WAG**  
WAG = Watch your attention-getters!
- #53 Always be ready to win the boxing game**  
Whether you like it or not, people will "box" you. If you are prepared, you can ensure that they put you in the right box.
- #54 Expand your "100% Trust Network"**  
How many "100% Trust" relationships do you have?
- #66 Keep "Your story so far..." ready**  
Everyone has a story. What is yours?

So why not divide your subject or topic into more than one lens? It's easy enough to link them to each other, and the relationships will assist in drawing visitors, getting the lenses indexed and eventually even Google page rank or link proliferation. You can build a lens on the three Stooges - but there's more than enough information available out there to warrant a lens on Curly Moe and Larry separately. A lens on your favorite author is a great idea, but you could also consider making separate ones which branch off for each

of her books. It's OK if you can't fit all of your ideas into one Squidoo lens when there's no limit to the amount you can make and share!

A lens on your favorite author is a great idea, but you could also consider making separate ones which branch off for each of her books. It's OK if you can't fit all of your ideas into one Squidoo lens when there's no limit to the amount you can make and share!



# Graphics and Images

## White Backgrounds on Your Lens Images

If you're using a photo for your intro, or in a text module, I've found that editing the graphic so it has a main subject on a white background looks really good within the Squidoo

design. Depending on your search, Google images will often return many pre-made examples. So look for images that have white backgrounds, or create them yourself with PS or Fireworks for a cool effect. Here are some examples on lenses I've built:

- I think the photo of Angelina Jolie in the trivia section on white looks really cool. I found that as-is.
- For my Sopranos lens, the group photo graphic I found as-is with the white backdrop.
- On my lens dedicated to the TV series The Office, I took the color out of the caricature of Ricky Gervais background near the bottom.

Photoshop's 'magic eraser' tool makes it incredibly easy to drop the color or background from an image in order to make it white. Click and hold the eraser icon until more selections pop up. That's where you'll find it.



Visual thinking is a module in [visual thinking school](#), a course designed to help you learn how to think and communicate better using the visual part of your brain.

Visual thinking is a way to organize your thoughts and improve your ability to think and communicate. It's a way to expand your range and capacity by going beyond the linear world of the written word, list and spreadsheet, and entering the non-linear world of complex spacial relationships, networks, maps and diagrams.

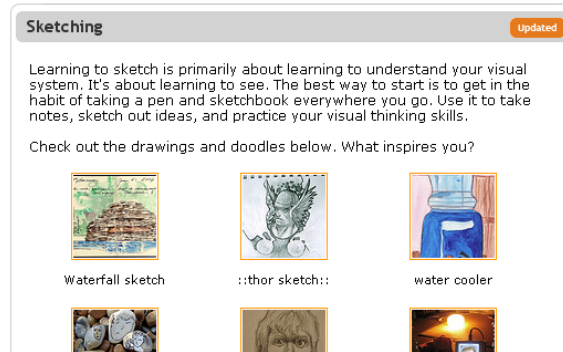
It's also about using tools -- like pen and paper, index cards and software tools -- to externalize your internal thinking processes, making them more clear, explicit and actionable.

I have been experimenting with using custom borders on several of my lenses, using the same orange color which dominates the Squidoo template. The exact number of the shade is: #FF9900.



# Stroking Your Images Makes Them Happy

Your friendly neighborhood graphic editing tool will have a border or 'stroke' ability as it is called in Photoshop. I have been experimenting with using custom borders on several of my lenses, using the same orange color which dominates the Squidoo template. The exact number of the shade is: #FF9900.



I think that adding an orange border makes the images appear more seamless with the overall design, and I really enjoy using the effect. So far, I have implemented it my Happy Mondays and Beta Band related lenses. See if you agree, and did you know that absolutely no word in the English language rhymes with Orange? Food for thought - literally.

Nothing says "avoid me" like a lens without a bio. The entire Squidoo site is dedicated to experts and what we can learn from them.



# Your Biographies and Profiles

Nothing says "avoid me" like a lens without a bio. The entire Squidoo site is dedicated to experts and what we can learn from them. Setting up a lens without a substantive bio is like submitting a résumé to a headhunter without your name on top. So make sure to update the placeholder information to which Squidoo defaults.

Keep in mind, however, that your bio is not a résumé. Copying and pasting your résumé into the profile section will come across as impersonal and stuffy.

Squidoo is a community, and the way this community grows is through the same human connections that make other networks come together — authentic communication and stories. Your bio should give readers a reason to trust you and get to know who's behind the lens. We're not suggesting you share your hygiene habits with your readers, but let them meet the person beyond the boring details like education and hobbies.

If your lens is a professional or work-related site, it's always a good idea to discuss the



▼ About the Lensmaster

 **Rajesh Setty**

I am someone who EATs with passion! I am an Entrepreneur, Author and a Teacher.

I currently serve as the Chairman of CIGNEX Technologies, Inc which I co-founded in late 2000. My latest book *Beyond Code* (Foreword by Tom Peters) was published in October 2005. I speak and write frequently on

Squidoo is a community, and the way this community grows is through the same human connections that make other networks come together - authentic communication and stories.



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### More Than a Blog

A revolutionary new way to publish your stuff on the web.  
[www.squarepace.com](http://www.squarepace.com)

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### Make Your Own Page Like This

It's fast, fun and free. (And you could even earn some \$\$, for you or for charity).



*The one serious conviction that a man should have is that nothing is to be taken too seriously.* - Nicholas Butler

**David James Pye** - reasonable blogger, self-important humorist, fledgling lensmaster, damn good Search Engine Marketing consultant and all around narcissistic pain in the kiester. His passion for internet purveyance, hockey, Greek food and [Boston](#) is eclipsed only by his outstanding warrants for international vagrancy. Read on - and Godspeed.

### ▼ About the Lensmaster



**Dave Pye**  
Squidoo has me completely obsessed, and I'm considering counseling to help get this

small sea creature off my back. Secretly Canadian and living in Boston, MA. Working as a Search Engine Marketing Consultant. Big fan of stand up comedy, movies, hockey, jetskiing and forging company cultures. I love meeting folks in my field, so please never hesitate to say hello.

[Contact the Lensmaster](#)

### ▼ About This Lens

Tags

### Dave's SEM-Related Certifications

Dave is an Adwords Qualified Individual, which means he has completed Google's [requirements](#) for their Advertising Professionals Program. This certification and seal is given only to experienced AdWords pay-per-click account managers and requires a minimum of experience, client spend history and a 75% or better exam score.



things that make you an expert. For example, if your day job involves developing websites, you should mention the number of years you've been in the field and one or two milestones that justify calling yourself an expert. In addition, listing professional affiliations or memberships will help you connect with others in the Squidoo community looking for friends or fellow members from affiliations or clubs.

"I love Dave's bio, which he updates frequently with a combination of professional infor-

Google, Yahoo and other search engines index your bio info, so someone searching for your name or company likely will come across your Squidoo bio in the natural search section of the results.



mation and hilarious garbage you'll come back to read again. Here's his latest:

“The one serious conviction that a man should have is that nothing is to be taken too seriously.”

- Nicholas Butler

**Dave's Squidoo Bio:** David James Pye - reasonable blogger, self-important humorist, fledgling lensmaster, damn good Search Engine Marketing consultant and all around narcissistic pain in the keister. His passion for internet purveyance, hockey, Greek food and Boston is eclipsed only by his outstanding warrants for international vagrancy. Read on - and Godspeed.

## Search and Link Considerations

Google, Yahoo and other search engines index your bio info, so someone searching for your name or company likely will come across your Squidoo bio in the natural search section of the results. This might be good news or bad news for you depending on how "part-time" your lens stewardship is. If you're in a corporate job, you might have to filter your content through the lens of your position and employee responsibilities. Good luck with that one.

If you write your bio in HTML, you can highlight certain things you want to bring to the reader's attention. HTML also lets you give the bio a more formatted look and add links to other web pages, blogs, resources and email. I've even seen a Google search box

Like most of the other money generating lenses, the products displayed are triggered by keywords of your choice.



included in a lensmaster bio.

## Your Photo

Let's be frank: Not all lensmasters need to be seen by the public. If you have a good picture of your mug and believe it's worth sharing, then please go ahead. If on the other hand your identity needs to be kept secret, a nice little piece of stock art will do. Squidoo does a pretty good job of resizing oversized images, but it's always a good idea to save your photo for the web (72 dpi is considered the standard).




## Shopping Modules

### eBay

Heath, Seth and the team keep coming fast and furious with brand new module additions. The latest being a live wire right into eBay listings related to your lens. Like most of the other money generating lenses, the products displayed are triggered by keywords of your choice. I have been testing the eBay module with many of my lenses over the last few days, and I have some initial observa-

**Great Stuff on eBay** Updated

Here is a link to some of my auctions on eBay. Enjoy !!!

	<b>STARBUCKS 1st STORE SEATTLE PIKE PLACE CARD W /\$5.00 VAL</b> Current Bid: \$9.99 Time Remaining: 20 hours, 49 minutes
	<b>RARE STARBUCKS 2005 PIKE PLACE BEARISTA BEAR ~ NO RESV</b> Current Bid: \$14.97 Time Remaining: 20 hours, 59 minutes
	<b>~HOW TO SELL ANTIQUES &amp; COLLECTIBLES ON EBAY ~</b> Current Bid: \$18.95 Time Remaining: 22 hours, 9 minutes

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tions.

It can throw your design off with unsuitably large font sizes. This doesn't always occur, but on several lenses it blew out the right hand margins due to the obese product title size. I'm sure this has been documented and will be remedied.

I couldn't link to individual auctions without errors. Like the Amazon module, you can let the AI pick or enter in specific product numbers and custom descriptions. So far, I haven't been able to link to specific auctions properly. I will undoubtedly keep trying.

Pick Your Products | Display Options

**UPDATE: You can now only feature up to 5 products per Amazon module. Want to show more? Add another module!**

There are 2 ways to add Amazon products to your lens. Please pick one.

LET AMAZON PICK  
A live, automatically updated display of Amazon products, based on your tags.

LET ME PICK  
Choose specific products you want to show on your lens.

You have to put a lot of faith into the AI due to the short life spans of most of the auctions. I don't foresee a lot of people investing the time needed to link to a specific auction and write a unique description if there are only 12 hours left until bids close. So far, the modules auto-choices leave a lot to be desired. But, of course, it depends on how general or specific your keywords are. Also, for some reason the AI tends to choose items with no photo, leaving an ugly placeholder.

A great addition to Squidoo, which has a little growing up to do yet. Ambitious, and full of future promise.

One thing I decided early on in my Squidooing, was to be careful about where I place any Amazon lenses and how long I make them. If you feature more than say 3 products per module, it looks like selling stuff is the only reason you've built the lens in the first place.



## CafePress

CafePress has its highlights and lowlights as a marketplace, but paired with the right subject matter it may just compliment your Squidoo lens nicely. Seth writes on Squidoo blog: "Not yet announced to the public at large is our hot-off-the-press module with CafePress. It uses CP's new, powerful TopicAds program so you can feature the latest and greatest CP designs right on your lens." An exciting prospect, to say the least. I played with the CP module quite a bit last night, adding it to over ten of my lenses - with varying degrees of success. Here are a few observations for those of you who haven't kicked the tires on it yet:

- Pro: Huge inventory of products to potentially feature and sell through your lens.
  - Con: You can't target specific products - you're at the mercy of "TopicAds" - which isn't very intuitive at present.
    - Pro: The custom made graphic designs and multiple items make for a huge selection of hats, shirts, mousepads, coffee mugs, pillows etc. to feature.
    - Con: The custom made designs are also often quite awful.
    - Pros: The wide breadth of subject matter increases the likelihood of relevant niche products to sell on your lens.
    - Cons: Again, the wide breadth of subject matter allows for an awful lot of crap.
- I think this module has a lot of potential, but currently it is quite buggy (often only returning the CP logo) and I won't be using it on a considerable scale until you can target specific designs and products. But when it gets to that level of detail, it will be a terrific module.

Don't be afraid to have more than one Amazon module. If you have a lens about your favorite sporting team, for example, and lots of content - you can have a lens for books, a lens for DVDs and a lens for apparel



## Amazon

One thing I decided early on in my Squidooing, was to be careful about where I place any Amazon lenses and how long I make them. I've sold 2 sets of DVDs in the last week, so I must be doing something right. See if you agree:

- First of all, keep your Amazon modules short. If you feature more than say 3 products per module, it looks like selling stuff is the only reason you've built the lens in the first place. It detracts from the lenses' credibility and appears a bit disingenuous in my opinion.
- Don't be afraid to have more than one Amazon module. If you have a lens about your favorite sporting team, for example, and lots of content - you can have a lens for books, a lens for DVDs and a lens for apparel - but spread them out around the page and separate them with good content. This is much better looking and better perceived than one long module with a big load of products.
- Many of the lenses I have browsed have their Amazon or SuperStore modules on the very bottom of their page. People aren't coming to your lens to look at products. If, however, they see something they like while they are there - that's when a sale will happen. Make sure you have content modules underneath your Amazon section so people will have to scroll down in order to see all of the text, photos, RSS etc. It's kinda comparable to the 'impulse buy' P.O.S. you see in supermarkets. "Well, I wasn't planning on buying a copy of the Enquirer, but since I'm stuck here in the checkout line..." You get the picture.

Amazon modules are quite clever, and often return the perfect results in relation to your lenses' subject matter. What it does not do, however, is provide any sort of a product

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description. If you choose to make a custom selection using product ASIN numbers, you can also write your own blurb about the item.

Are you trying to sell books? Provide a synopsis or info on the author or any awards it has won. DVDs? How about a plot summary, details on special features or running time. Sell the item via the language that you use. Actively endorse and convince your visitors based on your hand-written kudos and testimonials. It works.

And obviously, all of these rules can also apply to the SuperStore modules.



**Books to help you get going**  
A selection of books for early stage businesses trying to get m

**The Art of the Start : The Time-Tested, Battle-Hardened Guide for Anyone**  
by Guy Kawasaki  
*What does it take to turn ideas into action? What does it take to turn a perfect pitch? How do you win the war to establish a brand without bucks? These are some of the questions everyone faces when starting or revitalizing a business. Guy Kawasaki, former marketing maven of Apple, provides the answers.*  
**Amazon Price:** \$16.98 (as of 06/26/2006)

**The Bootstrapper's Bible: How to Start a Business With a Great Idea and (Almost) No Money**  
by Seth Godin  
*Getting ready to start a small business especially when you don't have a lot of money on hand is an adventure, to say the least. This book offers inspiration, ideas, and roadmaps, but "The Bible" is the first to combine them all. This book is a must-read for anyone who is considering starting a business.*

The private Squidoo beta launched in October 2005, and already some of the earliest lenses have Google PageRank and are pulling in significant search keyword referrals from major engines.

## Search Engine Optimization

The official word from the horse's mouth is that Squidoo is an "online platform that makes it easy for anyone to build lenses on topics they are passionate about. These lenses help you find a unique, human perspective on things that interest you ... fast. Not only can Lensmasters spread their ideas, get recognized for their expertise, and send more traffic to their Web sites and blogs—they could also earn royalties."



## ▼ About this Lens

Lens Contents ▶

Related Tags [Edit](#)

Your lens uses the following tags:

books, marketing, sales, startup, entrepreneur, business, business, business school, entrepreneurial, finance, guy kawasaki, marketing, sales, seth godin, startup, student

Other similar lenses also use:  
none

Consider these other tag variations:

books,  
books,marketing,sales,startup,  
businessschool entrepreneur,  
godin guy guykawasaki  
kawasaki marketing, sales,  
school seth sethgodin startup,

Business and Finance [Edit](#)

Lens Freshness: 0 days

Squidoo was once heralded as a way for less technical individuals to get in on, and make a little money from, affiliate marketing. Eight months into its existence, the most that a single lens has ever made in a 30-day period is about \$30. So the dreams of riches are on hold, and some people are losing interest in the platform. We happen to think this is a good thing because it seems to be weeding out those lensmasters who only create lenses as a misunderstood get-rich-quick scheme. But Squidoo's true benefit to web marketers may still be realized.

The private Squidoo beta launched in October 2005, and already some of the earliest lenses have Google PageRank and are pulling in significant search keyword referrals from major engines. Google's affinity for Squidoo is especially noteworthy, and many search engine marketers and optimizers are taking notice. In fact, at a recent interview at SXSW, Squidoo senior director of community development Heath Row was quick to point out

the rate at which new lenses have been getting indexed.

So a lens can be a lot more than a shortcut to subject matter on a focused topic. From an SEO standpoint, it can also serve as a shortcut to getting newer websites indexed by

If you have had a lens for a while you will notice that your rankings are never static. We suspect this is due to several factors, the most important being that Squidoo is still growing and thus in a dynamic state of flux.



search engines that regularly crawl — and give credence to — Squidoo's growing network. Make lenses for your clients, your company, or anything you are passionate about. At the end of the day, it's another one-way, incoming link from a network Google seems to be playing nice with.

Having said that you may have noticed that your rankings are all over the place from one day to the next? If you have had a lens for a while you will notice that your rankings are never static. We suspect this is due to several factors, the most important being that Squidoo is still growing and thus in a dynamic state of flux. This roller coaster ride is partly due to the freshness of the lens content. We believe that the recent and frequent update of the content helps preserve a high ranking although we have no hard evidence of this yet. Other factors likely include:

- Lens size, number of modules, etc.
- Traffic - both internal and referral.
- The number of outgoing text links.
- The star ranking (how other lensmasters have voted for you).



It's generally confirmed in SEO (Search Engine Optimization) circles that Google and other search engines are more likely to accurately index a URL that contains hyphens as opposed to underscores.



We're very interested to hear from others what they think reasons for lens rank ups and downs might be - and what new factors are on the horizon for the algorithm?

It's generally confirmed in SEO (Search Engine Optimization) circles that Google and other search engines are more likely to accurately index a URL that contains hyphens as opposed to underscores. So, if you want to build a lens on say foam rubber yoga mats - and [squidoo.com/foamrubberyogamats](http://squidoo.com/foamrubberyogamats) is taken - you're better off using:

- [squidoo.com/foam-rubber-yoga-mats](http://squidoo.com/foam-rubber-yoga-mats)
- and NOT [squidoo.com/foam\\_rubber\\_yoga\\_mats](http://squidoo.com/foam_rubber_yoga_mats)

According to Google engineer Matt Cutts: "Google doesn't algorithmically penalize for dashes in the url." So if your perfect lens name is already taken, don't fret. You heard it straight from the horse's mouth. The underscore is dead! Long live the hyphen.

## Conclusion

It's unclear just how successful the Squidoo concept will be. There are certainly a lot of lensmasters and visitors to the lenses but it might be a little too early to bet on the success of the idea. As with any revolutionary idea the innovators and early adopters have arrived in droves. The next step will be for the early adopters to encourage their friends and colleagues to discover what they already know. This might take a little time but given the fact that Google indexes the lenses so quickly we believe these pages will be found by many more. With more traffic comes the possibility of more clicks and purchases.



So keep them fresh and tell your friends. We look forward to seeing where this strange sea creature takes us.

## Contacting the Authors

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## Shameless Self Promotion

Fresh Tilled Soil is an experienced team of sales, marketing, and design experts passionate about building high growth and meaningful businesses. We believe that every business has the potential to be great. We have discovered that businesses can achieve great things by getting the basics right. And that's harder than you think!

### Why Are We Called Fresh Tilled Soil?

We see every business leader as a farmer approaching his fields in the spring with the challenge, "how will I get a great crop from this patch of soil." Each year the farmer has to extract the best crop from a limited resource. Only the most primitive farmers slash and



burn in their pursuit of new growth. Businesses are the same, you're either extracting exceptional value out of your existing customers or you're leaving behind a trail of ashes. Are you a slash and burn or a long-term farmer? By tilling the soil you already have, i.e. your existing customers, you can achieve far more than you would by abandoning them in pursuit of the elusive new customer.

