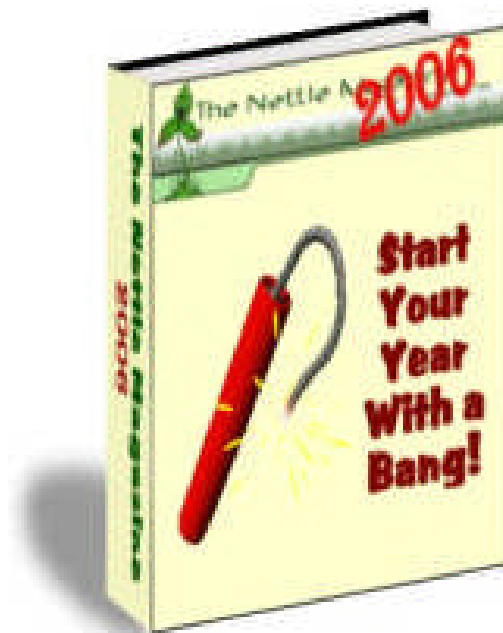


# The Nettle Annual 2006

*compiled by  
David Congreave*



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## **Contents**

|                                                                          |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Viral Marketing .....                                                    | 4  |
| Editor's Note .....                                                      | 4  |
| Internet Marketing Highlight of 2005.....                                | 5  |
| Internet Marketing Prediction for 2006.....                              | 5  |
| Favourite Programs/Websites of 2005.....                                 | 6  |
| The Truth About Doublers – A Lesson in Viral Marketing .....             | 7  |
| Motivation and Inspiration.....                                          | 12 |
| Mind Manoeuvres .....                                                    | 12 |
| Stop Watching and Spot Liars .....                                       | 13 |
| Working with Clarity.....                                                | 15 |
| Engineering a Successful Environment .....                               | 17 |
| Pay It Forward.....                                                      | 20 |
| Web Marketing .....                                                      | 22 |
| Click Thru Marketing Explained.....                                      | 22 |
| Killer Testimonials .....                                                | 23 |
| Making a Full-Time Living from the Traffic Exchanges – Part<br>One ..... | 26 |
| Making a Full-Time Living from the Traffic Exchanges – Part<br>Two ..... | 30 |
| How to Help Others Succeed in 3 Easy Steps.....                          | 37 |
| Web Marketing .....                                                      | 41 |
| Dylan Campbell's WYSIWYG.....                                            | 41 |
| The Genuine Article.....                                                 | 42 |
| FREE.....                                                                | 45 |
| List Building Is For Everyone .....                                      | 49 |
| Keep A Proper Perspective .....                                          | 52 |
| Wasting Time & Money .....                                               | 54 |
| Training Day .....                                                       | 58 |
| PC Housekeeping.....                                                     | 62 |
| Format C:/.....                                                          | 62 |
| Making Windows Work for You.....                                         | 63 |
| Temporary Trash Removal .....                                            | 66 |
| Batch Files .....                                                        | 68 |
| Small and Home Business Coach .....                                      | 71 |
| Coach's Corner .....                                                     | 71 |
| Internet Marketing Highlight of 2005.....                                | 72 |
| Internet Marketing Prediction for 2006.....                              | 72 |
| Favourite Programs/Websites of 2005.....                                 | 72 |
| Q&A With Laurie.....                                                     | 73 |

|                                                           |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Small and Home Business.....                              | 79 |
| Sensei Says.....                                          | 79 |
| Make Your Website Great? .....                            | 80 |
| Break Down the Barriers to Success .....                  | 82 |
| Strategic Planning – Tomorrow’s job .....                 | 84 |
| Internet Security .....                                   | 86 |
| Smoke & Mirrors .....                                     | 86 |
| Internet Marketing Highlight of 2005.....                 | 87 |
| Internet Marketing Prediction for 2006.....               | 87 |
| Favourite Programs/Websites of 2005.....                  | 87 |
| Recognizing and Avoiding Pyramid Traps .....              | 88 |
| Fool Me Once.....                                         | 91 |
| Something for the Weekend .....                           | 95 |
| The Best Movie Stuff of 2005 .....                        | 95 |
| Best Romantic Comedy That Can Be Enjoyed by a Guy .....   | 96 |
| Best Animated Film that Really Made Me Laugh.....         | 97 |
| Best Straight-Up Thriller .....                           | 97 |
| Best Historical Drama that is Also Very Contemporary..... | 98 |
| Best Reason Not to Go to the Movies.....                  | 98 |
| Best Movie I Saw Last Year.....                           | 99 |

# Viral Marketing

## Editor's Note

David Congreave



*David Congreave is the editor of The Nettle Magazine. He lives in Leeds and works for Paypershop Ltd, a small, family, internet business.*

## **Internet Marketing Highlight of 2005**

*[Your Lucky List](#) really stood out to me because it demonstrated that it is possible to release an old-fashioned concept, but still draw people in by the thousands by putting an original spin on it.*

*By focussing on the needs and interests of the user, [Your Lucky List](#) created a program that can be useful to everyone and not just to a minority of “big-hitters”.*

*In that respect, I believe it even beats [ListDotCom](#) as the essential list-building machine.*

## **Internet Marketing Prediction for 2006**

*I believe we'll see a gradual change in the focus of products moving from e-books to software.*

*E-books will continue to be produced and be popular, but will be quickly overtaken by software as the marketers preferred choice of product.*

*Resell rights will increase in popularity and will increasingly be used for list-building as well as for creating additional streams of income. If you have yet to learn how to setup and use resell rights, be sure to do this soon.*

## **Favourite Programs/Websites of 2005**

### **Your Lucky List**

As stated above, this is really useful list-building website that doesn't rely on early adoption to make it work. If you have yet to try Your Lucky List, you can do so now and still benefit from it.

### **Net Marketing Exposed**

The most refreshing, interesting and down-right scary, e-book that I read in 2005.

If you are relatively new to working online this e-book could literally save you thousands of dollars in lost revenue.

### **SureFireWealth**

I can't remember who originally introduced this website to me, but I'm EXTREMELY glad that they did.

This is the best source for products with resell rights that I have found to date. Not the cheapest website around, but it proves the old adage that you get what you pay for.

### **Free Software Alert**

Ok, so it's a little big-headed to include one of my own websites in this list, but this has far and away had the highest conversion rate of any of my previous projects.

I think this result offers an interesting insight into what internet marketers are interested in today.

### **Impact Pop-up**

The more I use this program, the more I appreciate just how flexible it is.

The range of customisation permitted when creating these pop-ups is far in excess of my previous supplier. Plus, not having to pay a monthly fee is just perfect.

## **The Truth About Doublers – A Lesson in Viral Marketing**

In autumn 2004 I began a vendetta against money doubler programs.

Doublers are a thinly-veiled version of the Ponzi scheme. Probably illegal and definitely immoral.

It wasn't just the prevalence of such programs at the time; it was the attitude of many people towards these online scams. Views ranged from the "don't care" variety to "they must be ok, because I'm making money with them" naivety.

After several frustrating forum discussions, I decided to write a strongly-worded article, denouncing these programs and exposing their fraudulent mode of operation. "The Truth About Doublers" was born.

At this stage I think it's only fair to admit that my motives were not entirely altruistic. Although I liked the idea of educating the uninformed about the dangers of these schemes, I also recognised it as an opportunity to raise my profile and to experiment with the concept of viral marketing.

Viral marketing is simply advertising that propagates itself. So named because of the way in which real-life viruses can reproduce and spread in rapid order.

There are many forms of viral marketing, the most common being affiliate programs. Someone purchases a product and then recommends it to someone else, who recommends it to someone else, and so on.

The most famous example of viral marketing is arguably that of Hotmail. Hotmail give away free email accounts and, because each email sent contains an advert for Hotmail, users of the service are advertising the service continually.

Essentially, viral marketing is about giving users of a product or a service an incentive to share it with others. If the incentive is strong

then the viral effect will be strong. If the incentive is weak or non-existent, then the viral effect will quickly dissipate.

Incentives can be categorised thus:

**REQUIRED:** Users have no choice but to promote to make use of the service. Eg – Hotmail.

**REWARD:** Users are offered money and/or gifts for telling others.

**INTEREST:** Users share it with others simply out of a desire to spread something interesting or cool.

I played around with the first category to begin with by putting the article behind a Tell-A-Friend form. Readers had to tell others about the article before they obtained access.

I soon rejected this idea, however, as I didn't want to make the article difficult for people to get to. The goal was still to educate. It was also a bit of a stretch to ask people to recommend an article they hadn't yet read.

REWARD was a possibility and, on reflection, offering a freebie in exchange for telling others about the article might have proved useful. But, ultimately, I was looking for the article to peak the reader's interest and make them feel compelled to share what they had read.

The first job was to email all my networking contacts and invite them to run the article in their newsletter or to link to it from their blog or website. The response was tremendous and many of the people I wrote to were only too happy to lend their support to the campaign.

The next job was to try and make the article viral.

I created a second page to the article and made an exhaustive list of ways that readers who connected with the article could support the campaign. These included:



## **Link back to the article**

I asked the reader to consider linking to the article from their website. To make it easy I included the HTML so it could be copied and pasted easily.

## **Display Banner**

Again, I included the HTML and the direct link to the banner that readers could use.

## **Tell-A-Friend**

This was a simple form so the reader could email others. I used the free service available from Bravenet.

## **Traffic Exchanges**

I created a simple splash page and listed the link that traffic exchange users could rotate.

## **Mailing List**

I appealed to list owners to feature the article or a link to it.

## **Blogs**

I invited blog owners to feature the article or a link to it and, considering how tightly woven blog networks can be, I suggested sharing it with other blog owners.

## **Forums**

No, I didn't ask people to spam forums. I suggested the reader start a thread in their favourite forum to discuss doublers and to use this article as a spring board.

## **Safelist**

This was aimed at owners of safelists or advertising networks and invited them to promote a link to the article.

So, it's nine months later, and how has it done?

Well, I've trawled through my web stats and, at the time of writing, the article has received 41,692 visits.

Depending on your traffic generating prowess you'll likely think this is pretty good or pretty average. Either way, it's not a bad return for a campaign that cost nothing in monetary terms.

This figure, of course, doesn't take into the account the number of visits to other websites, blogs and newsletters, that have reproduced this article in full. A search on Google for "the truth about doublers" returns over 2600 results.

You may also be interested to know that it still receives well over 100 visits every day. Mainly due to search engine traffic.

As you'll recall, I asked readers to link back to the article. But, crucially, I asked them to use the term "money doubler programs". I did this because I was looking for a similar result to the campaign that got a page about George W Bush ranked number one in Google for the search term "miserable failure" (try it).

Currently, the article ranks number one in Google for the following terms:

- money doubler
- doublers
- money doubler schemes
- money doubler programs

I get a certain, smug satisfaction from seeing my article, denouncing money doublers, sitting on top of pages promoting these crooked schemes.

So, what have we learned?

Well, as a case study for viral marketing, "The Truth About Doublers" nicely illustrates a couple of techniques and demonstrates what can be achieved with nothing more than a good idea that people are willing to share with others.

If you are looking for some publicity for your website, viral marketing could prove very beneficial. Here's how to do it:

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