

What You Need to Know About...

# Making Money With *Worms*



~ 2016 Edition ~

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# Introduction

## About This Guide

Thank-you for your interest in "What You Need To Know About Making Money With Worms"!

**\*\*VERY IMPORTANT\*\*** – Before you go any further, please take the time to sign up for the [Worm Business e-mail list](#) (just click that link and you should be taken to a sign-up form). I have plans to continue updating this guide over time, and there will also be updates relating to various other related projects I've written about here.

## **What's In A Name?**

Right off the bat I feel the need make sure there is no misunderstanding about the contents of this guide.

Let's look at the two main parts of the title in more detail:

**"What You Need to Know"** – this should not be interpreted as "*everything* you need to know". I can only imagine how big I'd need to make this guide if I had set out to accomplish that goal. My aim here is to give you a solid foundation - where you go from there is up to you (but I may have some recommendations - wink wink). This guide DOES provide everything you would need to know to get the ball rolling with some form of worm-related business venture!

**"Making Money With Worms"** – this is not a typical worm farming "how-to" manual It is a guide about the income-earning possibilities available to anyone interested in the field of "worm farming" (I'll explain what I mean by this in the "[Key Terms & Distinctions](#)" section)

I decided to put this guide together to help demystify the topic of entrepreneurial vermicomposting (fancy speak for "making money with worms" - haha), and to help get people pointed in the right direction.

There are a lot of people that seem drawn to the idea of starting up some form of worm farming business - yet there isn't really all that much reliable, high quality information on the topic (at least not freely available, and all in one spot), especially

not info geared towards those wanting to build a thriving business in the 21st century.

Similarly, there are quite a few "myths" associated with worm farming. And still some questionable, or even downright illegal worm farming "investment opportunities" floating around.

I've had my own vermicomposting business for close to a decade now (as I type this), and I know from experience how deeply satisfying this type of venture can be. Earning income from doing something you love is amazing, but when it also happens to be something that's good for you and your family - and the planet as a whole - it just doesn't get any better than that!

**What This Guide Is NOT** – In a lot of ways this is definitely NOT a typical worm farming guide (as already mentioned). If you are looking for step-by-step methods for setting up worm beds, feeding worms, harvesting castings etc, you *might* be disappointed. This is more of a "big picture" guide, with a particular focus on helping newcomers get something started, and earning as quickly as possible. It also puts quite a bit of focus on the "power of the web" (online promotion, digital products etc) – something that tends to be largely ignored by vermi-entrepreneurs.

Needless to say, this also is NOT about "getting rich quick" with worms! While I'm happy to explain how you can start earning some money fairly quickly/easily, my advice for anyone getting into worm farming to "get rich" is to move on. This is probably not the field for you!

Yes, there are plenty of people who have been able to earn a *very* nice living from some form of vermicomposting business – but they are almost always people with a serious passion for the topic, and folks NOT afraid to invest some serious "blood, sweat and tears" to make it happen.

(We'll talk more about the "right" and "wrong" types of people for worm farming a little further along)

**Full Disclosure** – I talked earlier about (questionable) "investment opportunities". Well, I feel it's only fair that I point out right away that I myself have some paid information products in the worm farming space, and in a sense this guide has actually been "sponsored" by the [Worm Farming Alliance](#) – a membership and educational resource you will learn more about shortly.

YES, I would absolutely love to entice as many of you to join as possible.  
But...

NO, this is not even remotely close to a “pitch-fest” for the WFA. Other than two smaller sections, and the occasional mention here and there, you won't really even see references to this resource. I've included a lot of good quality information in this guide for the benefit of all those who have an interest in the topic – regardless of whether or not you ever become a WFA member.

While I am on the topic of disclosure, I also want to mention that the guide contains affiliate links (you will learn all about affiliate marketing later on). What this basically means is that if you click through the link and decide to purchase the product being recommended (something I use and love myself), I may receive a commission. There is absolutely no pressure – and this is simply another way to help “fund” the work that went into this, along with future updates etc.

This particular version of the guide you are reading was actually created specifically for the kind folks who are helping me spread the word about it (and the WFA), so it will also contain affiliate links for the WFA membership. If think you might want to join at some point, please make sure to click through one of the links here (eg in the footer of each page), rather than simply searching for the site online. This way my team ends up getting credited with the referral. Alternatively, you can [email me](#) before joining and let me know who referred you to the guide.

**\*\*\*Usage & Sharing Rights\*\*\*** – This guide can be shared freely! Please pass it along to anyone and everyone you think might benefit from it. That being said, you may not alter the content (or structure of the guide) in any way, claim it as your own, or sell it. If you are at ALL unsure about what you can do, please [contact me](#) before doing it! :-)

## **About Me**

I'm sure a fair number of you are quite familiar with me and my background, but I'm including some highlights for the benefit of those who aren't.



I originally caught the “worm bug” back in 2000, when I was working as a lab/field tech (mostly staring into a microscope identifying aquatic invertebrates all day long) at an environmental consulting firm. I learned that someone from the toxicology lab had rescued Red Worms (commonly used for testing) and was keeping

them under her desk in a recycling bin. As an avid fisherman and aquarium hobbyist (with an interest in "live foods") I was very familiar with Red Worms by this point, but it was the first time I had ever seen a real "worm bin". My own previous attempts at vermiculture had failed miserably (will save those stories for another day - haha).

It was love at first sight! The idea that these little red earthworms were converting my co-worker's lunch scraps into beautiful compost utterly blew my mind. Thankfully she could see how excited I was, and she insisted that I take a bunch of the worms home with me. The rest, as they say, is history!

A LOT has happened during the years that have followed, but it's safe to say that vermicomposting has remained a very important part of my life. In 2007 I decided to launch my own worm composting website, [Red Worm Composting](#) (RWC), and I was even hired to write a pretty well-known worm farming newsletter and eBook (that shall remain nameless...I need to keep *some* "secrets" after all! Wink, wink). I decided to move on from the paid gig a year or two later so that I could put more focus on RWC and other related ventures, but in some strange way, it pleases me to see that all my original content continues to be recycled in the newsletter to this very day.

In early 2008 I decided to take a leap of faith by forming an alliance with a U.S. drop-shipper and to start selling worms from the RWC site. Not long after – fuelled by the optimism from some early success, I even decided to try my hand at starting up a small "real world" venture from my suburban home here in Ontario Canada.

The first year and a half of that business was probably one of the most stressful times of my entire life. But the good news is that there were many (MANY) valuable lessons learned along the way...and all that pain and suffering (haha) eventually led to me coming up with a completely new way of operating a worm biz on a small scale – an approach that has worked extremely well for me ever since (you'll learn more about this later on).

My early worm business years ALSO helped to inspire me to form the Worm Farming Alliance.

On that note...

## **About The Worm Farming Alliance**

Once I had completely immersed myself in the world of worm farming (which involved purchasing and reading ALL back issues of Worm Digest & Castings Call, along with

[Worm Farming Alliance](#) ||| [Worm Biz E-mail List](#) ||| [Table of Contents](#)

various other books and publications), it became more and more obvious that, while there seemed to be some great communities for worm composting hobbyists, there didn't seem to be a group just for entrepreneurial vermicomposters.

What I realized during those first two (brutal) seasons of my "real world" business, was that there is a BIG difference between being knowledgeable about worm farming, and actually building a successful worm farming business. I fell on my face so many times, and came VERY close to giving up completely. Had I been a part of a tightly-knit family of people on a similar path during those stressful months, things would have been *so much* easier - and I likely could have avoided many of the huge mistakes I ended up making.

In late fall of 2009 I decided to create a group called the Red Worm Composting "Inner Circle". I'm proud to say that among our members we had people like Heather Rinaldi ([Texas Worm Ranch](#)), Matthew Wilson ([Worms Etc](#)), and Cristy Christie - no relation, lol ([Slo County Worm Farm](#)) - who have all continued on to become well-known and successful in the industry.

The [Worm Farming Alliance](#) itself launched in early 2011 (all Inner Circle members were grandfathered in). I'll be the first to admit that progress has been painfully slow at times (or more accurately, painful AND slow - lol), but we've really been gaining momentum in the past year or so - largely thanks to the help provided by my volunteer admins, Larry Shier and Brian Donaldson.

We have lots of ground to cover here - but if you're curious to learn what all the WFA has to offer, there is more information to be found towards the end of the guide (and a link at the bottom of each page).

## **Key Terms & Distinctions**

**Worms** - When I used the term "worms" I'm primarily referring to the earthworm species that can easily be raised in various types of bins and beds. They are often referred to as the "composting worms". There are various ways to make money with soil worms as well (eg. selling as fishing bait), but it's beyond the scope of this report to get into any detail about that (although many of the same business recommendations outlined here will still apply).

**Worm Farming** - I use the term "worm farming" very loosely. Keep in mind that (for our purposes) it is a blanket term for anything relating to vermicomposting (using



worms to convert organic wastes into high quality natural "fertilizer") or vermiculture (literally the "culturing of worms").

**Worm Business** - When I refer to a "worm business", "vermicomposting business", "worm farming business", "worm biz" ...or any number of other variations, I'm simply referring to a business venture that generates revenue from products/activities/services *relating* to this overall *topic* of worm farming.

I want to make it very clear that you do NOT literally need to "farm worms".

Technically, you don't even need to ever touch (or look at) a real worm in your life, if you don't want to! [But in my humble opinion you'd be missing out! I do encourage you to get your hands at least a bit dirty - I think you'll be very glad you did]

**"Real World" Business** - In this report I will refer to my "real world" worm business. This in my small Canadian business that literally involves raising and selling of composting worms. I always use the term "real world" to distinguish it from the rest of my business (a mostly-virtual business) - which is conducted online. Technically, my "real world" business is largely online as well - but let's not muddy the waters too much here! lol

The "virtual" biz involves selling worms as well - real LIVE ones even (haha) - but I never lay eyes on those worms, let alone handle them. It's all managed via keyboard taps and mouse clicks! :-)

I'll flesh this out a bit more further along - so don't worry if you have no clue what I am talking about!

**Vermicompost vs Worm Castings** – These are terms that tend to get used interchangeably as well. Technically, castings refers to actual worm poop (for lack of a better term), while vermicompost more accurately refers to the material removed from vermicomposting systems. The latter will generally contain a high percentage of castings, along with other materials that have never passed through a worm (or at least weren't processed when they did).

Absolutely no need to split hairs here! I *tend* to use the term "castings" when referring to the product that gets sold to customer. I'll usually use "vermicompost" when simply referring to what's getting produced in a worm composting system.

For our purposes here, we can basically consider them the same thing (but I'll get into more detail about all of this in the "[Selling Castings](#)" section).

# Getting Started

OK - so where do we start?

This may seem a bit strange, but I urge you to start with "WHY".

## What Is Your "Why"?

WHY exactly are you drawn to the field of worm farming...and WHY do you want to make a business venture out of it?

Is it "for the money"? (That's OK, don't be embarrassed - obviously this is an important factor for many of us)

Is it because it will be good for your soul (or soil? lol)?

Is it because you are sick and tired of toiling away at a day job you have no passion for?

Is it because you want to do your part to make the planet a better place?

Is it because you are retired, and want something to keep you busy?

Is it for some other reason?

Most of the time, it's going to be a combination of different factors. Just make sure you are very clear on this, and that you are doing it for the right reasons.

I myself have been entrepreneurial (at heart at least) since childhood. Funny enough, my very first business involved selling bait worms (and golf balls!) collected from a nearby golf course one summer with my older brother.

I've held down "day jobs" before, and most of them even related to my (biology) degree, but the rat race never really clicked for me.

Once I developed a crazy passion for worm composting, the idea of starting up a business - [at least once I realized I didn't actually need a "farm", lots of expensive equipment or investment capital]- just made sense. Especially since, by that point, I had a pretty popular website on the topic (RWC).

I don't want you to feel like I'm trying to tell you what to do here, but having watched a lot of people start up ventures like this over the years (and obviously having started my own business), I do feel I'm in a pretty good position to offer some advice.

Having a powerful "WHY" (which again can be made up of multiple reasons) can make all the difference, especially when challenging circumstances arise! It will help to keep you focused and help you to continue pushing ahead.

## **What Do We Need To "Make Money With Worms"?**

Let's start by talking about some of the personality traits and habits that tend to lend themselves well to this type of business (or really, most types of businesses)

### **Here are the traits and habits of people who tend to do well:**

- Good work ethic and ability to stay focused
- Passion for the topic of worm farming
- Putting a lot of time/effort into networking and finding mentors
- Open-minded - willingness to heed advice of those more experienced
- Choosing a path that caters to strengths/interests
- Patience - often a willingness to start small and gradually build up from there.

### **Some of the traits/habits of people that DON'T tend to do well:**

- Little to no actual vermicomposting experience/knowledge, yet treat what they do know as "gospel".
- Stubborn - often critical of the information offered by those much more experienced/knowledgeable.
- Lack of focus - "go big or go home" types who want it all "yesterday" - grand visions without much substance.
- "Easy money" mentality
- Lack of real passion for the topic of worm farming.
- Determination to start a full-time venture right out of the gates (without putting in the necessary research/planning ahead of time)

Ok let's get a bit more concrete and literal here.

### **We're obviously going to need:**

- 1) At least one product/service to sell, OR at least one way to generate revenue (will touch on the "virtual" approaches that don't require selling later on)
- 2) At least one "place" to sell these products/services.
- 3) At least one way to make our product(s) visible to those who might be interested in

buying it/them (ideally, #2 will help with this)

Yes, ultra "common sense" stuff here – but it's amazing how many people put almost ALL of their focus on the product(s), assuming everything else will just fall into place over time.

Products (especially good quality products) are hugely important – don't get me wrong – but when you flip things upside down and put a lot of focus on developing your overall "platform", the possibilities - and your overall chances of success - expand a great deal!

## **My 'Worm Biz' Recommendations (For What They're Worth)**

Before really digging in, I think it will help to provide you with some of my MAJOR pieces of advice relating to starting up a vermicomposting business. This way, even if you're in a real hurry (and don't make it all the way through the guide) you'll still end up with my "in a nutshell" summary.

Some of these things are closely related, but I still think it's worth mentioning every single one individually.

1) **Start Small** - If I had an official worm farming business "motto" it would likely be "*start small, and let things grow from there*", since this is a piece of advice I've shared over and over again with those thinking about starting up some form of vermicomposting biz. There are SO MANY advantages to taking this approach. It saves you a ton of money, it involves very little (if any) risk, it allows you to learn-as-you-go, and overall, it's just a lot less stressful (so a lot more fun)!

Who knows, maybe you will end up realizing that worm farming isn't the best "fit" for you. Wouldn't it be nicer to realize this *before* going too crazy with it? ;-)

2) **Keep Things as Simple and as Focused as Possible** - In my experience, new entrepreneurial vermicomposters tend to make things far too complicated and time-consuming before they've really even accomplished anything! They're off registering a business, getting business cards and letterhead, buying loads of supplies and equipment, buying loads of worms, etc etc etc...before REALLY thinking about the core requirements.

If there is ONE single piece of advice I want to leave you with from this report it's the recommendation to KEEP IT SUPER SIMPLE (K.I.S.S.) early on (and in general) -

*especially* if you are not a seasoned vermicomposting veteran.

[NOTE: I'll elaborate more on this a bit further along, but I want to make it clear that "simple/focused" is NOT just the same thing as "small"]

What's funny is I basically did the opposite when I first started out - I made things *way* too complicated, and ended up utterly frustrated and burned out. Gradually over time I've refined and stream-lined my "real world" biz and as a result have ended up with a *much* simpler (but also *much* more fun, *and* more profitable) business!

I typically suggest starting with ONE main product – something you can really put your time and energy into, something that gets you excited. Rather than running around like a chicken with its head cut off, tossing a bunch of stuff against the wall to see "what sticks" (the term "jack of all trades, master of none" comes to mind), you are laser focused on mastering ONE main thing. Sure, you may end up "leaving money on the table" as a result – but over the long-haul it will tend to be a more sustainable approach.

3) **Start With a Self-Evaluation** - We've looked at the importance of "WHY", along with the fundamental business requirements - and that's a great start, but it's also important to assess your own goals and "life situation" before digging in too seriously.

Having a solid foundation in WHY is critically important for your long-term success (acts as both an anchor and a guiding force), but you still need to assess WHAT you *want* to do vs WHAT you *can* realistically do, based on WHAT you have in front of you.

Where do you live? (Country, region, type of property/dwelling)

How much space do you have?

How much time do you have?

What is your state of physical health?

Just generally, what are your main limitations?

How much seed capital do you have?

What resources do you have available (or could at least readily obtain)?

What are your interests? What aspects of worm farming really get you fired up?

I want to make it very clear that there are worm-related money-generating options for pretty well *anyone* reading this report (the very fact that you are reading the report proves that) - BUT the variety/number of options available will really depend on your specific situation.

Once again, this probably seems like "common sense" but, well...you know what they say about common sense vs common practice!

4) **Embrace The "Power of The Web"** - As touched on earlier, a lot of people seem to put almost ALL their focus on getting going with their product(s)/service(s) early on, and treat "websites" (etc) as an afterthought...often as something to invest in once the money starts rolling in, or once things settle down and they "have more time".

I strongly encourage everyone to start building their online platform (I'll explain what I mean by this later on – but it's basically all your overall online presence and brand) as soon as possible, since the results of this type of work - while often pretty minimal and discouraging early on - tends to snowball over time.

5) **Network As Much As You Can** – Gone are the days where the super-secretive, information-hoarding worm farmers end up being the most successful. I understand the tendency to view others with similar businesses as you as "competition" - and an independent approach is definitely better than being totally dependent (eg businesses based on worm farming "buy back" schemes of years past). But, as Stephen Covey pointed out in "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People", it's "interdependence" (the basic idea being , "let's work together for something even better") that is actually the ultimate choice.

Developing strong, high-value relationships with others in the industry (and related industries) is a practice that will pay long-term dividends, for you, for the people you connect with – and for the industry (even world) as a whole!

6) **Conduct (At Least) Some Market Research** - Even if you're only planning to start up a fun "hobby business", it's going to make good sense to spend some time assessing your local market (unless you have zero plans to have a "real world" business). If the term "market research" makes you think of bar graphs and pie charts, and seems like a scary idea, let me assure you it's NOT something you need an MBA for. It's really just a matter of seeing what's happening in your region, state/province etc.

Some things to look for: local businesses, organizations/clubs etc relating to vermicomposting (and regular composting), urban farming, gardening, earth-friendly living, fishing etc.

Can you find ads relating to any of this in online classifieds (for your region)?

Are there any municipal programs relating to composting or vermicomposting? Local work-shops?

Are there any farmer's markets in your area? (If so be sure to check them out)

Any eco/plant/farming (etc) fairs/shows?

Good ol' Google is a very handy tool to start your search - simply enter queries like "red worms, YOUR REGION/CITY/STATE" (no quotes, and obviously substitute your own region or city etc).

Local publications can also be helpful (especially the classified ads section)

[**TIP:** Don't make the mistake of assuming that just because there are others with vermicomposting businesses in your region (aka "competition"), that you are doomed to fail! Almost the opposite is true, in fact - multiple related businesses likely indicates a decent amount of demand. On the flip side, if you don't see *any* activity remotely related to worm farming etc, this doesn't automatically mean the market is "wide open" for you to dominate. More likely, it's an indication of a lack of public awareness/interest.]

Market research actually ties in nicely with networking as well. As you are conducting your research, be sure to keep a detailed log of all the relevant businesses and organizations you come across. These can become very important contacts - especially in cases where they have a complimentary focus (eg. a local eco-farm would likely be very interested in connecting with a vermicomposting business).

You'll notice my earlier mention of "competition" (i.e. with quotes). I did this because in a lot of cases, these folks can become potential allies if you actually take the time to reach out and get to know them!

7) **Offer As Much *Unique* VALUE As You Can** - This will likely seem like a given... like "common sense". We all know the importance of selling high-quality products and treating our customers properly, right? Well, that's certainly a good starting place - but if you really want to build a strong business over the long-haul, and want to stand out from the crowd, I highly recommend digging deep and coming up with ways you can be "*remarkable*". This ties in closely with the self-evaluation stage, since it's your own unique set of skills, knowledge, experience, interests and resources that can make all the difference!

Speaking of "value"...

8) **Put A REAL Value On Your Time** – Another common small-entrepreneur mistake is to assume one's own time is "free". In other words, as long as your supply (and any other obvious overhead) costs are less than the revenue coming in, you're making money, right?

WRONG!!

I learned this the hard way...in a rather dramatic fashion, I might add!

When I first started up my "real world" business, I was getting worms shipped up in bulk from the U.S., placing them in holding beds, and then re-harvesting for smaller, individual orders. I felt like I had made a *major* score! After all, the U.S. pricing on worms was WAY lower than Canadian pricing (and I'm guessing the exchange rate wasn't nearly as brutal as it seems to be these days).

Of course, I failed to take into account that one week shipping times (at best) can take a toll on worms – so to assume I'd be able to recover the exact same poundage as I purchased was pretty silly.

But regardless, what *really* killed me was the time it was taking to re-harvest the worms from the beds.

Getting back to the "dramatic" example, alluded to earlier...

One order in particular will likely be burned into my brain for the rest of my days on earth. (Speaking of "dramatic" - haha)

It was a larger order than normal – 5 lb instead of the usual 1 lb – and my supply of good worms was getting to the point of making it even more difficult than normal to fill orders. I spent SO MUCH TIME desperately trying to get the order ready. It literally got to the point where I had spread garbage bags out on the living room floor underneath an assortment of worm bins, with floor lamps shining over top – *just* so I could actually spend some time with my wife while she watched TV! That's how much time I had been spending in the basement during recent evenings.

[And yep, it's safe to say my wife has put up with some crazy antics over the years!]

And the sad irony?

In the end - apart from the shipment being majorly delayed – I had to give up after



only 3 lb of worms had been harvested (so naturally I had to refund the difference).

I like to joke that it would have been more profitable for my business if I had simply paid this customer what I was charging for 5 lb of worms and then sent him on his way!

I say "joke" - but it's actually not far from the truth.

The entire situation was absolutely and utterly *insane!*

Bottom-line, put a value on your time - even if it's \$10/hr (or whatever minimum wage happens to be these days) – and keep track of how much time you are spending on different tasks.

My example was pretty extreme, I'll admit – but this sort of thing creeps in a LOT more than you might expect, without most of us even realizing it!

In our attempt to "keep overhead low", we can somehow justify spending (for example) 5 hours creating our own sub-par website header graphic, rather than spending \$50 (or even less when you use sites like Fiverr) to have an actual designer do it.

And the kicker is that during those same 5 hours we COULD have been focused on other important work (ideally work we're talented at, and work that's more directly-linked to revenue generation).

9) **KEEP GOING** - This is another simple piece of advice that might seem a little light and flaky (with a healthy dose of "rah rah" on the side). But in all honesty, I think in a lot of ways it is pretty well the MOST IMPORTANT advice I can give.

Starting is usually easy! Trust me on that. If I had to pick a baseball position/role that most closely represents my journey as an entrepreneur...without pausing for a millisecond I would yell STARTER!

I am the KING of starting stuff!

BUT...(I think you can see where this is headed)...it's the "finishing" part that has always given me trouble!

(I'm not a "closer"...and the real irony is that I'm not even a serious baseball fan! lol)

I've started more entrepreneurial projects (and have pursued more "business ideas") than I care to think about.

I've had a ridiculous number of hobbies and interests over the years.

I started a Masters degree, but ended up dropping out.

If "good intentions" were a currency, I'd be a millionaire (but we all know what road is paved with those - lol)

Yet what's really interesting (and I suppose not the least bit surprising) is that all of the real "success" I have achieved has been the direct result of simply NEVER stopping...with certain (important) things.

It hasn't always been pretty...it hasn't always been fun...half the time I think I'm crazy, and all I wanna do is RUN!

(Hmmm...maybe I *should* have pursued that career as a song-writer after all!)

**BUT, even small steps forward, taken regularly, can lead to amazing things.**

On a related note, you *may* want to check out an article I wrote (on a badly neglected website that I started a long time ago - haha) called "[One Small Thing](#)".

[Oh, and something worth mentioning about the Masters degree – while the educational value of those years was great (since I was studying topics relating to my current interests), dropping out was actually one of the best decisions I've ever made...since it led me down the path to starting up my worm farming business and getting to know all of you! Wink wink]

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On that note, it's time to wrap up this section, so we can talk about...

## **Revenue Generation – The Major Categories**

Ok let's look at what I feel are the major categories of worm biz revenue generation:

1) **Selling Worms** - this is a very common starting place for new entrepreneurial vermicomposters and one I endorse wholeheartedly. I know from experience that starting up a little worm-selling biz can be relatively "easy" (compared to some business ventures) and, bare minimum, a great little source of side income.

2) **Selling Vermicomposting Systems & Supplies** - this might be a good possibility if you've come up with your own specialized worm bed/bin design, or if you just generally have some solid building skills, or if you have the passion and sales skills to sell a lot of units designed/manufactured by someone else. But for a lot of people, this will be better suited as more of an "add-on" to a business mostly focused on selling composting worms.

3) **Selling Worm Castings** - this tends to be the one that attracts the most interest, and for good reason. Some of the most successful people in the industry have a primary focus on worm castings and related products. Worm castings have been shown time and time again in academic research trials to offer unique - and arguably *superior* - plant-growth-promoting properties, and usually can be sold for considerably more than typical composts. There is much higher potential for repeat business than with composting worms, and this taps into MUCH larger mainstream markets (eg. gardening/landscaping/farming).

BUT - this higher potential tends to come at a much higher cost/risk, at least if you plan to get really serious about castings production.

4) **Selling Vermicomposting-Related Services** - there are various services directly related to worm farming you could offer, including system installation & set-up, consulting, waste pick-up (with off-site processing), school presentations & workshops etc. But also plenty more that tie in well with vermicomposting - such as food garden installation and eco-landscaping.

This is one better suited for those with fairly extensive experience (whether it be in worm farming or the related field) - and could represent a good "add-on" for later. It also tends to be better suited for those with strong communication skills.

5) **Online Income Generation** - this one tends to be shrouded in mystery and often viewed with suspicion. Like the worm farming industry itself, the "making money online" field has a very checkered past (and present for that matter). But the good

news is that there are lots of great ways to generate income online with a high level of honesty and integrity - and better still, with the potential of having *very* positive impact on the lives of many, many others.

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OK, let's now chat about each of the major categories, mentioned above, in more detail.

# **Selling Worms**

## **Overview**

The "traditional worm farmer" approach (back from the "olden days") would likely have involved deciding if you wanted to be a grower, a distributor, or simply a basic seller (or all three for that matter). If you planned to actually grow your worms, you would set up a lot of worm beds or pits - usually pretty low-tech in design - then add some bulk bedding materials like aged manure, peat moss etc, before stocking with a large quantity of worms (typically purchased from another supplier). As a distributor or seller, you would simply purchase worms from a grower (or a maybe distributor, in the case of a seller) and then resell them.

If you were a serious worm grower, typically you would require a LOT of space - at least if you had any hopes of building your business up to a decent size. You would also need a lot of supplies, and likely some expensive equipment. Naturally, those who already lived on rural properties - often with farming experience and equipment - would be the ones to gravitate towards this approach.

Distributors would also need quite a lot of space - but more importantly, they would need to be very talented in the art of worm shipping and handling. And of course they would need some pretty serious sales skills if they had any hope of moving large quantities of these worms.

Sellers could take any number of different forms: tackle shops, gas stations, marinas, garden centers, or even enterprising individuals wanting to make some extra money.

Yes, these worm-selling models are still alive and well in this day and age. But thanks to modern technology, most of us vermi-entrepreneurial types have a LOT more options available to us.

The two obvious categories of worm selling are: 1) Selling your own worms and 2) Selling worms grown (and maybe shipped) by someone else.

Let's now look at each of these in more detail:

## **Selling Your Own Worms**

If you have a reasonable amount of space (although you might not need as much as you think, as we'll discuss in a minute), and you enjoy caring for, and just generally, working with composting worms, this can be a great option. The standard approach

has been to sell your worms by the "count" or by the "pound" - naturally, the latter option will warrant more focus on learning how to grow larger worms (the bigger they are the more they will be worth to you).

[**HINT**: Worm spacing, nutrition, and perhaps to a lesser extent, moisture content, are all very important]

Both of these approaches are great - especially if you do have the space and are talented at growing lots of worms and/or bigger worms - but there is another option, especially well-suited for those just getting started. Something you *won't* likely find discussed in any worm farming manuals (that I know of). It's what I'll refer to here as...

### **The "Worm Culture" Or "Worm Mix" Approach.**

The main idea is to provide customers with a worm-rich (and ideally, cocoon-rich) material they can use to stock a new system with.

Over the years I have noticed many times that when I stock a new system using material from another thriving system, the population in the new system tends to explode very quickly and the worms themselves are very healthy, "happy" (as in happy to stay where they are) and active. On the flip-side, something I've noticed about stocking systems with bulk worms is that, almost without fail, I have ended up with some dead and dying worms, and at least some (if not "many") worms that don't seem content to stay where they are.

Here are some of the perks of the worm culture/mix approach:

1) **Lower worm densities** - you're not forcing the worms into a big seething mass and then firing them off into the postal system (or more ideally, handing them over to the customer). Worms have more space to spread out in so they are a lot less stressed.

2) **Loads of younger worms and cocoons** - it's well-known that hatchlings and young worms can adapt to a brand new environment a lot more easily than older adults. They also grow up pretty quickly - especially when lots of space and ample food are available. So what might start as a small "weight" of worms, can still represent a LOT of "worm composting potential", and can become much bigger "biomass" of worms in a relatively short time span.

3) **Lots of rich habitat material** - when "gobs of worms" are packed up for shipping it's usually in some form of sterile, inert bedding material like peat moss or coconut coir. Not exactly prime time quality habitat for the worms. Again this stresses them out - and it doesn't offer much "inoculation potential" (ie good microbes and critters) for the new system either. When you include lots of rich habitat material the worms were already living in, the chances of them thriving en route, and in the new system are going to be that much higher.

4) **"Easier"** - it is a lot easier to grow top notch worm culture mix than it is to grow "pounds of worms", and the amount of space needed tends to be a lot less. This makes it a great option for those who are just starting out.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** There are absolutely some nuances here! The worms should be raised in a certain way in order to make this a realistic practice. I am in NO WAY suggesting that you bag up a bunch of worm bed material containing decomposing food wastes (etc etc) and call it "worm mix". It is very important to do it right!

I actually stumbled on this approach "accidentally" (we're talking about the "real world" biz here) some years ago now, and have not looked back since. I've continued to tweak and refine my methods, but the overall concept and approach hasn't changed significantly since.

If you would like to learn more about the worm culture/mix approach, and just generally, about how I operate my "real world" worm biz, the good news is that I will be launching a course called "Bootstrap Worm Farming". If you have not already done so, please make sure to sign up for (and stay subscribed to) the **"Worm Business" e-mail list** – it's one of the ways I will keep everyone posted on this (and other) upcoming projects.

[WFA members will receive Bootstrap Worm Farming for free (and will even be able to promote it and earn 90% commissions) – the only "catch" is that monthly subscribers won't receive access until their 3<sup>rd</sup> billing cycle (so I recommend choosing the quarterly, half-year, or yearly billing option if you don't want to wait)]

### **'Paley100' Methods**

On a similar note, I recommend checking out Brian Paley's article "[How To Breed, Raise, and Maintain A 100-Pound Stock of Worms in a Single Room](#)" for some additional insights about this sort of thing. I'll be the first to admit that it is a TOUGH article to slog through at times, and some of the information is downright terrible - but

there is also a lot of hidden gold in there in terms of how to potentially raise a lot of worms in a small amount of space.

I became so fascinated with some of the concepts presented that I decided to create a summary guide called "The Paley100 Method". Out of respect for Mr. Paley's work (and the fact that he made his article freely available) I won't ever be offering it for sale - but all members of the Worm Farming Alliance get free access to it.

The MAIN idea being presented is that if you manipulate various environmental factors in a worm composting system you can essentially create a MUCH larger population of very tiny worms - these worms could then be grown out to full size in a relatively short amount of time. In other words, you could indeed potentially keep "100's of lbs" worth of composting worms in a very tiny space.

It would cost far less to maintain them (since small worm systems will tend to be low nutrition systems as well), and just generally be a lot less work once everything was rolling along (it will usually take a fair amount of time to get your small-worm systems established, though).

This has *huge* implications for pro worm farmers and vermicomposters alike!

Can you imagine being able to keep a full-fledged worm business tucked into one corner of your basement??

I myself have seen some evidence of these principles actually working.

**Paper Pulp Experiment** - while working as a TA for a university soil science class, I put together an experiment involving the set-up of various worm composting systems, to see what type of habitat and food materials worked best (based on health of the worms, number of cocoons produced, and properties of the finished material). One major surprise for me was the system containing primarily short-fiber paper pulp (a waste product from the recycling industry). By the end of the experiment it was absolutely loaded with very TINY worms, and had by far and away the highest cocoon densities of any of the treatments (in the range of 2X more than the next highest, which was the manure treatment).

**My Neglected Outdoor Bin** - some years ago, I built a large wooden slat worm bin. Early on I didn't have any effective way to actually remove compost from it (and it was quite deep), so I just continued to add materials without actually taking anything out. Well, eventually I smartened up and enlisted the help of my brother to create a swinging door at the bottom so I could access the beautiful vermicompost that had



accumulated.

It was no surprise that the material was well-processed by that point - but what WAS surprising was the fact that it contained LOADS of teeny tiny worms (many of them adults).

**Larry's Paley Euro Bin** - WFA admin, Larry Shier, has also reported "accidentally" developing a Paley-type of system when he just kept dumping Euro cocoons into a single, smaller bin containing lots of cardboard bedding. When he checked on it after a while he was very surprised to find that much of the bedding was processed and that the system was LOADED with countless tiny Euros. He reports being able to grow them out to bait size within a couple of weeks.

**Exciting WFA 'Paley100' Developments** – Various other WFA members have been testing out Paley-like set ups, some of them with great success! Prominent WFAer, George Mingin, even created a series of follow-along videos (documenting his own Paley experiments) and posted them in the private Facebook group.

I myself have some systems going as well, and plan to continue "playing" with (and reporting on) these sorts of approaches.

Needless to say, the "Paley Movement" seems to be gaining some steam...at least inside the WFA anyway! ;-)

Should be interesting to see where things go from here!

## **Selling Worm Bought From Suppliers**

We talked earlier about "distributors" and "sellers". There are still plenty of people who buy and sell worms in this manner - and some that do quite well with it. But these days, the amazing thing is that you can do either one without EVER having to touch or even look at a single worm, thanks to the "power of the web".

As I mentioned earlier, when I first started up my "real world" biz, I bought worms from a U.S. supplier and had them shipped up to me in Canada. This seemed like a good idea at the time - the \$\$ savings alone were substantial - but as I quickly realized it wasn't a realistic long-term game plan.

Thankfully, someone referred me to a local supplier who had low pricing by Canadian standards. But regardless, buying in bulk and reselling just didn't work for me

personally. At the time I was selling by the pound. Just the difference between what I was paying and what I was selling the worms for made things challenging enough, but the real killer was TIME. I was spending far too much of my time re-harvesting worms for orders, as I touched on earlier.

**Let me once again remind you to be very mindful of your time, and what it's worth!**

Please be assured I'm not saying this reseller approach can't work - that's not the case at all. If you happen to have a really great supplier close by it could actually work very well. But you will need to have some sales chops if you want to be really successful with it since the margins are going to (usually) be lower than when selling your own worms.

## **Drop-Shipping**

Another potential option is to have someone else take care of your order fulfillment. This was the very first worm business approach I tried. I was contacted by a supplier and asked if I would be interested in selling their worms on the Red Worm Composting website (which had become fairly popular by that point). Initially I was *very* resistant - worried my audience would view me as "money hungry" etc - but I am so glad I got over that, since the revenue has been very important for helping me to continue my work.

I still remember the thrill of those first few sales. We were way up north at my in-laws, and while I *was* attempting to "work" up there, it was mostly about family time – so actually earning money while not even really "working" was a pretty cool feeling.

Another similar memory was from early in the next spring season. Once again we were "up north" visiting family and for whatever reason the sales just kept coming in. All I had to do was pass along the customer shipping info to my supplier. He took care of the rest!

I was hooked!

Ever since then drop-shipped orders have been an important part of my overall "worm business". Since much of my focus has been on creating educational content relating to worm composting (and since this type of "work" can be very time consuming), having someone else do the dirty work has made good sense.

Let's now look at the pros and cons of drop-shipping

## Pros

- Less work
- Less time involved
- Great way to supplement your existing worm business (during low-supply times etc)
- Still able to build up your customer base (unlike affiliate marketing - discussed later on)

## Cons

- Smaller profit margins
- Headaches if you don't find a high quality supplier (it's YOUR reputation on the line)
- Not very well suited for local sales
- Just generally, you will likely need a bit more sales savvy in order to do well with it.

## Finding a Good Supplier

As you might guess, good quality drop-shippers and wholesalers are worth their weight in gold. Connect with the right person (or better yet - team of people) and your business can become a great deal easier, enjoyable and, yes, profitable.

What to look for in a good wholesaler/drop-shipper:

- 1) **Well-Established, Respected Business** - it makes good sense to find someone with a well-established business and a good reputation in the industry.
- 2) **Someone Who Specializes in Wholesale/Drop-Shipping** - taking this a step further (and at the risk of stating the obvious) naturally, it's great if you can find someone who is already specialized in wholesale/drop-shipping. There are plenty of people who would likely jump at the opportunity - but that's not to say that they would all be fully prepared to meet your needs!
- 3) **Excellent Communication Skills** - whether you are a "phone person", an "e-mail person", or you prefer to communicate with people via hand-written letters (ok I'm kidding), it is very important that you work with others who can be reached quickly and easily in a way that suits you. I myself am absolutely NOT a phone person - and pretty much refuse to even use the phone most of the time (yes, even with family and friends) - so excellent electronic communication is an absolute requirement for anyone I work with.

On a related note, it's vital you find someone who is willing to take you and your business seriously, and who will engage in open, honest communication. If you feel like someone is giving you the run-around or just generally doesn't seem particularly interested in your business, walk - no RUN - away! It's just not worth the potential headaches try to do business with someone like that.

4) **Excellent Product(s)** - yes this one is perhaps the *most* obvious of the bunch! Yet, as we'll discuss in a minute, it's amazing how many people overlook it in pursuit of the almighty dollar! I highly recommend you test out any potential drop-ship/wholesale partner that ends up on your short list. Assuming you live in the same country as them, have them ship to you - but also set up some form of "real customer" scenario with a friend or family member.

It's also helpful to do as much research as you can. Some of the major vermicomposting forums and groups have topic threads, even "trusted vendor" lists etc that can help you find reliable suppliers.

5) **Fair Pricing** - this one is a bit more tricky. We all want the best price, but it's VERY important to remember that sometimes the "best price" *comes at a price!* This is why I included price as the last thing to look for. Far too many people make it their most important consideration. In the short-term this can sometimes work out very well – but my recommendation is to take more of a long-term view. If someone is able to offer rock-bottom prices, they are likely cutting corners in some other way. Even if their products are excellent, they could end up running themselves into the ground simply because they're not generating enough revenue for their own business.

My own "supplier" is actually more of a distributor/manager. He works with multiple growers/shippers. His pricing is not the lowest by any means, but the reliability of his network is unparalleled, and the quality of his products is top notch. This is hugely important to me – especially since I live in another country.

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Remember - this type of "strategic partnership" is a two-way street. Just because you are sending business to someone does NOT mean you're suddenly entitled to treat them like your employee. If you want this business relationship to work, you need to treat these people with the utmost respect.

There is a lot more to drop-shipping than what I've described above, but hopefully that at least gives you a taste of the possibilities.

## **Getting Started With Selling Worms**

Even if you're completely new to worm farming, I'm sure by now you're getting some ideas for how to get the ball rolling and to start making some extra money from selling worms quite quickly. We've talked in pretty general terms - let's get a bit more specific.

### **Bentley's "Suped-Up" Reseller Method**

As I've mentioned, the basic reseller approach - buying worms in bulk and then selling smaller quantities to customers – can work ok if you can find a high quality supplier (especially if local), and have a reliable method for quickly preparing the smaller orders (remember my lesson about time management) without compromising the health of the worms.

One way to boost the return on your investment is to put your new worms “to work” before selling them off. Here is a simple step-by-step approach you may want to try out for yourself:

- Set up a series of very basic tub systems with a mix of (moistened) shredded, corrugated cardboard and aged horse manure (ideally from a source you've already determined to be "worm-friendly"). You may want to mix in some chick starter feed or worm chow as well – but don't go overboard with this (maybe a cup or two for a decent sized “worm bin”). Erring on the side of caution is *always* the best approach.
- Order a bulk quantity of Red Worms (or Euros etc), and divide the worms evenly between the bins (stock at densities *under* the typical recommendations – maybe 1/4 lb per sq ft of bin surface area). This will help to stimulate a lot of reproduction and cocoon-laying.
- Make sure the systems have excellent ventilation, and are sitting in a location with temps between 20 and 30 C (68 and 86 F).
- Once the worms have been added, leave them completely alone for 2-3 weeks (other than making sure they've settled in OK at the start, and the occasional peek in to check up on them).
- At the end of the "work" period you can start to sell off your worms by "count" (will talk more about this in the next example), or separate them completely from the habitat material and sell by the pound. Even a light-harvesting approach should be pretty quick when using this bulky manure + bedding habitat material.

**[Promotion Tip** - Placing ads in free classified sites like Craigslist, USFreeAds, and Kijiji (for Canadians) can be a simple - and at times, *very* effective - method for easily drumming up some early sales.]

- Top up your systems with more aged manure (without cardboard this time) and go through the same process of letting the worms "work" for 2-3 weeks before selling them.

Naturally, this could work even better if you stagger the process so that you have "working" systems (no harvesting) and "selling systems" (worms are being harvested from) going at the same time.

By the end of this second cycle you should have some fantastic nursery bins, with loads of cocoons, and likely lots of small hatchlings as well. You *might* try a 3rd cycle (once again topping up with more aged manure), but my hunch is that you'd see the "law of diminishing returns" at work, with fewer cocoons being added to the system.

During all of this you should have also been able to sell the "worker" worms for a decent profit. Let's say you charged 5 cents per Red Worm, and assume there are about 1,000 Reds per pound - this would work out to ~ \$50/lb in revenue.

If you got 10 lb of Reds for \$200, the numbers are looking pretty good - even with your time factored in.

The kicker, though, is that you should end up with lots and lots of awesome starter worm culture mix (from nursery systems) which can then be sold to new vermicomposters, even regular backyard composters. Just make sure the customers are very clear on what it is they are buying - and be sure to price accordingly!

It's hard to estimate a \$ figure for the nursery mix sales - since there are a variety of factors to consider - but it's safe to say that this could add \$100's more to your bottom-line.

## **John's "Worms For Dates" Method**

Good friend, and long-time Red Worm Composting follower, John White, created what I feel is a *really* cool little side business for himself – especially cool since he uses it mainly as a means of funding fun dates and trips with his wife (smart man)!

And just so you know, it was actually John I 'stole' the "5 cents per worm" idea from (I've never personally sold worms by the count).

His approach has been ridiculously simple. All he did was set up thriving Worm Inns (a Regular Inn first and then a Mega) and, once well-established, he simply started selling worms (\$5 for 100) via little ads in Craigslist.

[ASIDE: I used to top up orders regularly with worms from the Mega I had set up at the time, so I'm not surprised this worked out well for him]

Now just imagine if you had 3-5 Megas going at the same time! ;-)

You can learn more about John's experience (via a rather goofy article I wrote) here: [John's Worms For Dates Method](#)

## **Final Thoughts About Selling Worms**

One key piece of advice I want to leave you with relating to selling worms relates to the idea of "commodity" vs "experience". One mistake I see over and over again is new worm business owners focusing obsessively on their pricing and (for some strange reason) on trying to be a better version of their "competition" - i.e. in essence, basically the same - but just a little bit better.

Competing mostly based on price essentially turns composting worms (or any other product for that matter) into a commodity, and everyone involved in the price wars ends up in what's known as "the race to the bottom". A situation where, unless you are Walmart (lol), no one is going to win!

A much better approach - and one that ties in very well with selling some form of "worm mix" - is to provide people with an overall *experience* - ideally an AWESOME experience - instead of handing over a gob of worms and basically saying "cya later".

For me, education and extensive customer assistance is a huge important part of the overall "experience". I've had plenty of people basically tell me that while they know they can find composting worms for less elsewhere, they would prefer to support me based on the work I've put into sharing information etc.

This is where your overall "platform" can play a very important role.

You don't just want to be some random merchant selling worms. There should be an

entire story, and even some form of "mission" that goes along with your venture (in essence, this helps your customers/followers to connect with some of those important "WHY"s we talked about early on).

And NO, I'm not just just talking about a cute little "About Us" blurb on your website either - lol.

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OK, now it's time to switch gears a bit and start talking about...



# Selling Systems & Supplies

As touched on earlier, this category is often associated with selling worms - although there are certainly some companies out there that specialize in selling specific systems and supplies.

My advice, if you are treating these products as add-ons, is to *ease* yourself into it. Whatever you do, please don't drop \$1000's on a big wholesale order of Worm Factories (for example) right off the bat, unless you are very confident you can move them quickly.

It's a big expense, they will need to be stored somewhere, and you (more than likely) haven't even had the chance to test out the market.

Remember my mention of being all over the place when I first started up my "real world" business? Well, part of that insanity seemed to involve a desire to sell anything and everything remotely related to worm composting. What's funny, is I actually *did* look pretty seriously into the possibility of buying a bunch of Worm Factories wholesale, but thankfully the cost and storage issues deterred me in the end.

One dumb move went ahead with, though, was a bulk purchase of "BioBag" products. I dropped close to \$500 for biodegradable kitchen scrap bags, doggy poop bags, and kitchen scrap holders. The small profit margins ALONE should have scared me away from this idea - but how I actually figured these products would be "hot sellers" among vermicomposters is beyond me.

You can probably see where this is going...lol

What's funny is the dog poop bags actually did go fairly fast (and maybe I should have looked into the possibility of selling more of them...hmmm...OK, maybe not! lol), but the kitchen scrap bags and the scrap holders were duds. Years later I still had boxes of the bags (which by then couldn't even be sold, since they had degraded over time) and a big stack of the scrap holders. I literally ended up giving away the holders with pick-up orders just so they wouldn't be taking up space in my basement any more!

Lesson learned! (And let this be a lesson to YOU! Don't go crazy with add-on products until you know they will be hot sellers, and *only* if the profit margins are reasonable)

## **Who Is This Well Suited For?**

A serious focus on systems, supplies and various add-on products is well suited for: **A)** those who are skilled "creators" and who have actually come up with their own (ideally unique) product(s), and/or **B)** those who have serious sales/marketing chops - and likely some solid e-commerce skills as well (although you can certainly outsource this).

Let's now look at each in a bit more detail.

**"Creator" (Inventor/Designer/Builder/Scientist/Engineer)** - Have you come up with your own effective worm composting (or related) system? Does design/construction/invention etc come very easy to you? Can you spot some limitations/problems with systems currently available, and come up with a more effective (or perhaps just more attractive, user-friendly etc) solution?

In this case, creating a business focused on selling your creation(s) may make good sense! Maybe you can create a great new modular flow-through system (or some sort of harvester) that goes together like a piece of Ikea furniture?

Or perhaps you are an animal nutrition specialist and you've created the "ultimate" worm food mix?

Whatever the case may be, **the absolute greatest chance of success involves solving existing "problems"/frustrations** - so I highly recommend immersing yourself in the communities relating to the types of products you are interested in creating (eg vermicomposting, worm farming etc groups) and REALLY paying attention to the questions and concerns being brought up over and over again.

Usually it comes down to asking yourself:

How can I make \_\_\_\_\_(insert product, process etc)...

Easier? (user-friendly, hassle-free etc)

Less expensive?

More effective?

More attractive? (this won't always be of interest)

Obviously if you can tackle multiple "problems" with one product, or take care of a major "problem" more effectively than other product creators, your chances of hitting on a winner will be that much greater.

What will also help your chances of success as a "creator" is if you also happen to be a...

**"Lean Mean Selling Machine"** - Some people just seem to have a knack for sales & marketing. Increasingly (and thankfully) this is becoming less and less about smooth talk and textbook tactics, and more about simply being able to connect and communicate clearly and honestly with another human being. The ability to really get inside their heads and understand their challenges, frustrations and fears - and a desire to add real value to their lives.

Generally speaking, here are some of the traits of these types of people:

Self-motivated "go-getter"

Ability to laser focus (and remain focused)

Ability to get important things done quickly

Ability to effectively assess market demand, product potential etc

Not getting overwhelmed with a lot of things going on at once

Someone NOT fazed by adversity/risk

Someone not afraid to outsource & delegate

Someone with excellent communication & networking skills

Genuine passion for the products they are promoting

If you are selling products created by someone else these skills will likely be even more important since, chances are, you'll be dealing with lower profit margins.

NOTE: if you also happen to have some serious web-related skills (website creation, content creation etc) you can probably get away with not being quite as much of a "Type A" as I described above.

## **Virtual Alternatives?**

We'll talk more about information products in the "Online Income-Generation" section, but I think it's important to at least touch on a particular type of info product that relates to selling vermicomposting equipment and supplies.

If you ARE a "creator", rather than (or perhaps in addition to) selling the actual creation itself, you could sell plans/instructions so your customers could build it for themselves.

Obviously this has the advantage of involving a LOT less work (and hassle in general). Really, you'll do virtually all of the work early on - yet you could easily end up earning

from it for years! It's nice for the customers since it's likely a less-expensive option that will give them a sense of empowerment (using something you've built with your own hands is a lot different than something you bought ready-made).

I myself teamed up with a designer/builder pro some years ago to create the [VermBin Series Plans Package](#) (plans for DIY flow-through bins) - and it still continues to sell quite well to this day.

Well laid out plans for top notch worm beds, various types of harvesters, and really, any type of DIY equipment that could make a vermicomposter's job a little easier, could all sell very well.

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Of course, it's very important to point out that this type of product definitely doesn't need to be "virtual" at all. Even if it's a digital product it could still be sold on physical CD/DVD - and, in fact, this would likely increase the perceived value as well (so a higher price could be charged). There are some great online companies (eg [Kunaki](#)) who can take care of creation and shipping of these types of products.

In the case of some sort of manual or set of plans, you could literally print them off and mail them to customers if that is their (or your) preference – or, again, find an outsourcing company to take care of it.

## **Worm Bin Drop-Shipping?**

One other possibility worth mentioning quickly before we move on to the next section is worm bin drop-shipping. As touched on earlier, drop-shipping in general can be a much easier (and cheaper) way to get started – and it's a great way to test the waters initially to see if there is any interest, without the risks, costs and hassles typically involved in wholesale purchases.

If there was ONE system I would recommend for this it would likely be the Worm Inn – especially the [Worm Inn Mega](#). I realize I am going to seem very biased since I do sell (via drop-shipping of course! lol) Worm Inns – but please be assured that the ONLY reason I sell them is because I use them myself and love them (hands-down my favorite home-scale, manufactured system).

This past spring I decided to put together a report for WFA members to let them know about the good opportunity Worm Inn drop-shipping represents. Just “for fun” (and out of curiosity) I decided to do a sales tally for the Worm Inn Megas that had been sold from the Red Worm Composting website between Jan 1 and April 30<sup>th</sup> (2016) so

that I could discuss the results in the report.

What I found really surprised me!

During that time-frame, 47 Worm Inn Megs were sold. On the surface this really doesn't sound all that impressive for a 4-month sales figure, but once you dig a bit deeper, it's not *too* bad.

I don't want to take up too much space here getting into it, but the bottom-line was that the actual income earned from just those drop-shipped Worm Inn Mega sales was \$1788.45 USD (considerably more once it was converted into CAD).

**Things to keep in mind:**

- This was ONLY Worm Inn Megs
- This was "take home" income (what was cleared after paying supplier and paypal fees)
- The Red Worm Composting website had mostly been on "pause" for quite a few months by that point.
- There was NO active promotion involved.

I definitely don't share this to brag, that's for sure – but rather to illustrate that there is a decent opportunity to earn *at least* some extra money via drop-shipping.

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And now, for the topic many of you have been waiting for...drum roll please (lol)...

# Selling Worm Castings

## Overview

This is naturally something a LOT of entrepreneurial vermicomposters are drawn to. It's no secret that castings can work wonders in your garden, and - unlike plenty of other trendy fertilizers/amendments/methods - there is a wealth of legitimate (peer reviewed) academic research to back it up. Since it has been shown to have unique (in many cases superior) properties in comparison to regular composts, and since relatively small amounts can have a significant positive impact on plant growth, plant disease suppression - even pest suppression, it can also fetch a premium price.

*AND...*it probably doesn't hurt that some of the most prominent/successful people in the worm farming industry happen to be castings producers.

Here are some other potential perks associated with selling castings:

- In comparison to selling composting worms (and systems), repeat business is much more likely (assuming a quality product).
- It taps into some MUCH larger markets/demands, such as food farming, greenhouse horticulture, home gardening, legalized (and I guess "not-legalized" - lol) marijuana growing, turf management & landscaping.
- It has great marketing potential - the ultimate all-natural "fertilizer" created by earthworms from materials most people think of as "garbage"... what's not to love about that?!
- It's a growing market with a great deal of future-potential - as awareness grows, so too does interest in worm castings.

ALL THAT BEING SAID...

One of my important "take-aways" here is that setting up a *serious* castings operation is not ideally suited for everyone. In fact, it's not something I would even recommend for the vast majority of entrepreneurial vermicomposters right out of the starting gates.

On that note, let's look at...

## **Important Requirements & Challenges**

Obviously, there are different levels of commitment and involvement with this type of business. Just as you can start up a fun little "hobby" worm business, so too can you do something similar with castings (or a combination of the two for that matter). In the "[Getting Started](#)" section we'll talk some more about these sorts of bootstrap businesses.

You could also potentially connect with a serious castings producer and simply resell their product. This is actually the only way I myself have sold castings thus far, largely due to my space limitations here in the "burbs". I'll talk more about this approach in the "Getting Started" section as well.

BUT, if you are thinking about producing your own castings on any sort of serious level, you should have (in my humble opinion):

- A lot of space, ideally in a climate-controlled environment, but *at least* fairly well protected from the elements. (I'm sure you can guess what will happen to castings quality with rain pouring down on it, and having it getting baked in the sun)
- A consistent, high-quality feedstock
- Serious vermicomposting beds - ideally some form of flow-through systems, but if well-protected, lower-tech systems, such as windrows and wedge systems could also work (will just require a longer vermicomposting period).
- A LOT of worms, assuming you want to hit the ground running.
- A solid handle on all relevant laws/restrictions that apply to this type of business ("fertilizer" labelling, waste handling, pathogen destruction etc)
- IDEALLY, some sort of "pre-composting" system, especially if you are using manure as a foodstock.

And of course...

- A very consistent (and effective) end-product, free of pathogens, weed seeds, pesticides etc

Obviously, this begs the question, "so what exactly is a 'serious' castings business?". This is something that could be debated endlessly, but in my opinion (and supported

by communication I've had with people in the industry), this is anything beyond a small, part-time venture. If you are selling some bags of castings from a market stand (from your home etc), it's not going to be as critical to get everything right. If the product doesn't look exactly the same from one month to the next, or if it has some weed seeds in it, it's probably not going to be a huge deal.

[Needless to say, you should still do things properly, and be ethical though!]

But if you are putting your product in stores, and just generally getting a lot of it in the hands of the public, I strongly recommend making sure you are following the lead of other serious producers.

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Overall, this is venture that will often require more investment capital (maybe a lot more), more research and leg-work, and just generally more commitment than the sort of "worm businesses" we've mainly been talking about so far.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of gray area when it comes to the castings industry. It's nowhere near as well-established as the large-scale thermophilic composting industry, and as such it doesn't have a nice, neat set of "official" standards/requirements that everyone needs to adhere to.

Sadly, this leaves the door wide open, allowing pretty well anyone to produce and sell "worm castings". Some people honor the science, and follow the recommendations of industry leaders - others, not so much.

Let's now look at some of the common types of questions people seem to have about castings:

How many days are required in order for "high quality" castings to be produced?

What makes some castings "high quality" and others "low quality"?

CAN quality castings be produced in 14 days (or less)?

Is a pre-composting stage required?

Are all feedstocks created equal?

Is there such a thing as "100% pure worm castings"?

Is the bucket method just as good as flow-through systems?

Can I raise (and sell) worms using the same systems (as used for castings production)?

These and other related topics have resulted in some *very* heated debates among



WFA members.

Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this guide to get *too* deep into this topic. Really, it is a topic that deserves it's OWN guide! (Hmmm...we shall see! lol).

That said, let's dive in a bit more deeply, and explore some of the important considerations for those thinking about selling castings.

**Potential Issue Of Pathogens** – Unlike hot composting, which has the requirement of reaching pathogen-killing temperatures for at least a few days, vermicomposting is a mesophilic (essentially "moderate temperature") process. There has been academic research demonstrating the potential of composting worms to destroy pathogens, but it is very important NOT to assume this means that all vermicomposting systems, set-ups, and situations in general, are going to result in 100% pathogen destruction all of the time.

If you are using a feedstock that may contain pathogens (eg. livestock, human, and pet "manures") it will be particularly important to make sure these pathogens are killed off before the end product is sold to the public!

[But whatever you do, DON'T even think about sterilizing the finished product – remember that much of the benefit provided by castings comes from the beneficial microorganisms it contains]

On that note, perhaps now is a good time to look at...

## **Important Responsibilities**

Given the fact that this is still a gray area material, I personally feel that a LOT of responsibility falls on the shoulders of castings producers/sellers.

**Naming** – at the start of this guide I touched on the "vermicompost vs castings" issue. As mentioned, I am pretty mellow about it. My preference seems to vary from one day to the next (lol), but generally I do tend to use "castings" when referring to the product being sold.

Academic heavyweights, such as Dr. Clive Edwards, seem to prefer the term "vermicompost" since the finished material, no matter how well screened, is always going to contain at least a small percentage of material that has not passed through the earthworm digestive system – or has done so without any further change.

Some people even feel that it is false advertising to use the term "castings" at all. I personally think this is taking things a little too far.

BUT, what I don't feel comfortable with is the use of terms like "100% castings", "pure worm castings" etc – especially if the product has been produced very quickly, or worse - if it has not even been through a legitimate vermicomposting process.

I'm certainly not the only one bothered by this practice. Here is (part of) what Tom Herlihy (more info about him in a minute) had to say on the subject, via an ongoing email exchange he and I had:

*"Just because something looks to the naked eye like perfect black coffee grounds does not make it pure castings. I have examined multiple materials with a simple hand lens, every product making such claims, and all have huge amounts of non fecal pellet material (small and black, but not fecal pellets which look like mouse poop)."*

He went on to make what I think is a fascinating point (absolutely worthy of your consideration):

*"If we as a VC community praise the microbial component of vermicompost, we need to understand that even if a "pure casting" could be produced, it would have a more narrow microbial community than one that has some worm worked bedding that was exposed to different surface secretions, and has different substrate to support different microbial communities.*

*We don't know where all the benefits from using VC in plant production come from - why would we want to select away potentially more active (maybe more than the fecal pellets) materials?"*

I agree with this sentiment 100%! And it reminds me of yet another important consideration that seems to be missed by a lot of people.

There are SO MANY different factors involved - not to mention many different needs/requirements of the end user. Not every kind of castings/vermicompost is going to be ideal for every type of application/situation. And needless to say, not all castings/vermicomposts - even those created following a similar set of protocols - are going to be identical materials.

This brings us to the topic of...

**Quality Control** – It also largely falls on our shoulders to decide how exactly our castings/vermicompost gets produced. As touched on, there is no official set of standards for how castings must be produced in order for us to be "allowed" to call them castings. This is unfortunate - and hopefully something that will be remedied before too long.

In the absence of such standards, however, I think it makes the most sense to follow the advice/example of academics and industry leaders.

Tom Herlihy, (who founded one of the most well-known / largest castings-production companies in the world - [Worm Power](#))\*, says their vermicomposting process (using continuous-flow reactors - aka "flow-through" systems) takes anywhere from 45-60 days, depending on such factors as the time of year and density/vigor of his worm herd. It's important to note, however, that the process actually begins with a 42-day "pre-composting" phase (don't worry - we will come back to this important topic in a minute)!

\*NOTE: At the time of this writing it seems as though Tom may have moved on from Worm Power, but he is still actively involved in the world of vermicomposting.

In "Vermiculture Technology", Dr. Clive Edwards cites (pages: 95, 96, 101 - and likely elsewhere) "30-60 days" as the typical processing time for advanced flow-through beds processing "most organic wastes". He says the material in outdoor windrows can take anywhere from 4-18 months to get fully processed, and that "wedge systems" (aka "walking windrows") usually require 3-4 months.

[NOTE: Obviously, there are various factors, such as temperature, that can have a major effect on this, regardless of what type of system is being used]

Conditions in these "high-tech" continuous flow reactors are just about as optimized as you can get, so in my mind the "30-60 days" (ideally with pre-composting phase ahead of time) seems to be a good baseline for high efficiency systems.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Unfortunately there is no mention of bucket systems in "Vermiculture Technology". *Perhaps* the smaller size (with high densities of worms) *could* help to speed up the process somewhat. But I myself am still not quite sold on the idea of producing high quality "7-14 day castings" in any system, let alone a plastic bucket. Yet another "fun" topic that as resulted in some lively debates in the WFA private Facebook group! ;-)

## Pre-Composting - Is It Needed?

Having some form of brief thermophilic composting phase before vermicomposting can be beneficial for multiple reasons. It helps to remove excess nitrogen (which can otherwise get released as ammonia - a deadly toxic gas for worms), helps to decrease the chance of overheating in the vermicomposting bed, kills weed seeds, kills pathogens, and also helps to make the material more worm-ready (starts the breakdown process).

If you are getting into castings production on a serious level, especially if you will be using any form of manure as a feedstock, it is *highly* recommended that you include a pre-composting phase.

As touched on earlier, Tom Herlihy shared with me that Worm Power's current pre-composting phase lasts 42 days. This is definitely on the high end of the scale. Jack Chambers of Sonoma Valley Worm Farm (now [Terra Vesco](#)) mentioned a 14 day process he was using back when I interviewed him (you can find the multi-part interview on the [RWC Interviews page](#)), and my friend Cristy Christie (again...no relation! lol) has said "no more than 21 days" for her own operation.

What's interesting is that in this older Worm Power video, Tom gives the impression that the composting phase is about 15-20 days (prior to a 45 day vermicomposting period): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6TiawLx0J8>

I would probably lean more towards "14 days" end of the scale (assuming a high quality, aerobic thermophilic composting process), since the longer it goes, the less food value there will be for the worms.

If you are curious about what precomposting system the pros use, I can tell you that Jack Chambers (and others) have recommended [O2 forced-aeration systems](#), but he now actually sells his own [aerated pre-composting system](#).

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As touched on earlier, there is a lot of debate regarding how long is "long enough", and basically how to actually know when you have "high quality castings". Is it the look, feel and smell of the material? Is it the nutrient profile as determined by a testing laboratory? Is it the microbial profile? Is it the starting materials, processes/systems, and duration that matter most?

Here's what Tom Herlihy had to say about it in one of our e-mail exchanges:

*"In my opinion there is no good lab measure of VC potency. It is such a complex mix of microbial, chemical and biochemical parameters that no single economical measure exists.*

*I tell vermicomposters to simply grow a few plants and let them tell you the difference between materials. It is cheap, relatively fast, and frankly more important than a lab sheet (after all, the end goal is to grow nice plants)."*

I completely agree with this sentiment. While having a lab analysis done definitely has some merit (and in some cases is even required for proper labelling etc), a lot of people get WAY too hung up on this, and almost seem to forget the overall end-goal - to grow bigger, healthier, more productive plants!

## **Getting Started With Worm Castings**

As you can probably tell by now, I am ALL about the "start small" approach. While I do feel it's important to do things properly if you're planning to get remotely serious with castings production, this is not to say that you can't produce and sell smaller amounts of the stuff and still end up with happy customers and some extra money in your pocket!

The two main ways of doing this are: 1) make your own, and 2) sell material produced by someone else. Let's look at each one in a bit more detail.

### **Small-Scale Castings Production**

My main recommendation right off the bat is to use some form of flow-through system. The airflow is very important for optimizing the vermicomposting process (remember it is an *aerobic* process) and ensuring that you end up with a quality, stabilized product that can easily be screened. With any sort of enclosed, plastic bin, the moisture content remains too high, and air flow is poor – so things can go anaerobic and end up proceeding a lot more slowly. Often this can also result in an inferior product.

A very simple approach would be to set up a series of [Worm Inns](#) (preferably Worm Inn Megs), or [VermBins](#) in a corner of your basement (or garage/shed, assuming you

have a way of limiting the impact of seasonal temperature extremes). If you stagger the set-up of each system - maybe a month apart - this should help to stabilize your supply somewhat.

Combined with John's worm selling approach (mentioned earlier), you could likely end up with a nice little side business, and have lots of fun in the process!

## **Buying From A Castings Supplier**

My only semi-serious foray into the 'castings biz' involved selling material produced by my then-local-worm-supplier. To be completely honest, this wasn't 'A-Grade' stuff - it was produced in an outdoor system (exposed to the elements) in a pretty haphazard manner, and it had weed seeds in it.

BUT, there's no doubt it was worm-worked vermicompost - and based on my own testing, and on the great feedback from customers, I knew it was beneficial for plant growth.

Nevertheless, I charged 'B-Grade' prices for it – haha - and certainly didn't make any crazy claims about its potency.

Looking back, it was actually a pretty cool arrangement. My friend would drop off 'super-totes' of the material (one or two at a time), and it would sit (protected with a tarp) in my driveway. I sold it in 14x26" sand bags ([from Uline](#)) - bagging it up based on orders that had come in. Believe it or not, I actually used an old Worm Inn on a wooden stand as my bagging machine (lol) - and it worked really well!

Even with the low pricing, and the time required to get the bags ready for customers, I calculated that the work I put in was worth somewhere in the range of \$40/hr after expenses. No too bad if you ask me.

That being said...

Unlike selling worms, however, the demand was *very* seasonal! What's funny is I actually first tested it out early in the summer...and ended up selling almost nothing. When I tried again the following spring, the demand was off the charts and the stuff sold like gangbusters for a couple of months.

All in all it was a valuable experience, but in the end I lost my supply once my friend decided to move (and basically to get out of the 'worm biz').

## **Some Recommendations:**

- Ideally, find someone with solid quality control measures in place, who is producing large quantities of top notch castings.
- If you DO end up with a somewhat inferior (but still decent) vermicompost, make sure you are not misleading anyone with your marketing, and seriously consider selling the material at a discount
- As always, make sure to crunch the numbers, including your own time, to make sure it's a viable enterprise.
- Consider giving away small free samples early on, to help spread the word (and hopefully provide you with some positive testimonials)

## **A Word Or Two About Worm Castings Tea**

No discussion of selling worm castings would be complete without at least some mention of "worm tea".

There, I mentioned it.  
We're done. ;-)

Kidding aside...

This is another product with some decent earnings potential, and even some solid scientific research to back up the claims. BUT, similar to castings, it has some inherent challenges - and is not without its fair share of controversy.

I have never personally attempted to sell worm castings tea, nor have I even researched the topic to any great extent, so it is probably best to leave it at that for now.

[But DO stay tuned! Maybe I will enlist the help of a castings tea veteran to put together a section on the topic in the next edition of the guide! :-) ]

# Vermicomposting Services

This is another possibility for entrepreneurial vermicomposters, and - similar to the systems and supplies category - it's something that is often an offshoot of an existing vermicomposting business - rather than being a primary focus.

It typically requires a lot interaction with customers, and potentially even some public speaking, so it tends to be well-suited for those with excellent communication/presentation skills, who enjoy working directly with others. In a lot of cases this will also be better suited for those with a considerable amount of experience/expertise - and not quite as ideal for those just getting the ball rolling.

In this section we'll look at some possibilities that are solely in the realm of vermicomposting, and some others that tap into various other (often much larger) markets.

## Services Directly Related To Worm Farming

**System Set-Up** - I don't imagine there are currently a lot of people anxiously looking for someone who can come set-up their worm bins for them - lol - *but* if you happen to be a bit of a go-getter, and especially if you have plenty of farming/horticulture etc contacts, you could likely develop a business around helping others set up large-scale systems to handle their organic waste streams.

This would actually tie in very nicely with the system design/construction and/or sales we were looking at earlier. If you have come up with your own design or you are basically acting as a sales representative for a system manufactured by someone else, it would make good sense to pitch prospects on a "full package" sort of deal.

On a smaller (more "residential") scale, I also think there could be some decent potential for offering various types of "vermi-gardening" services. Perhaps you could set up backyard composters, install vermicomposting trenches, worm towers etc. That said, the approach might work best if "piggy-backed" onto an existing eco-landscaping (etc) business, as we'll discuss in a minute.

**Consulting** - This one ties in closely with the last one (specifically the large-scale system set-up). Naturally, if someone is going to hire you to help them get going with some sort of vermicomposting operation, system set-up would likely be part of the



process. Again, this is far more likely to be an add-on to an existing (ideally, well-established) business. Hanging out a "Vermicomposting Consultant" shingle straight out of the gates probably won't be the most effective way to get the ball rolling. lol

Think about all the various types of livestock farmers - and just generally, waste-producers - out there who would love to not only deal with their waste stream, but also have a new income stream as a result. If you put together a high-quality information package that helps farmers (et al) visualize the possibilities, it probably wouldn't be too difficult to get your foot in the door with these folks!

Reminds me...

As some of you may know, when I first started my "real world" business I simultaneously launched a (very naive – lol) project with a popular local restaurant that involved me taking away ALL of their compostable food wastes. The idea was that I would (attempt to) vermicompost all of it on my property (did I mention I live in the 'burbs'?!). It was a learning experience to say the least, and it's actually what led me to the development my "vermicomposting trench" idea (trenches worked great for dealing with these water-rich food wastes) so there was plenty of "good" that came from the "mistake".

Anyway, long-story-short, I ended up having to end the arrangement by late summer (there's NO way it would have worked once temps started to drop in the fall, plus I was just completely burned out from all the hauling and dumping – lol!)

But here's the interesting thing (that actually relates somewhat to this "consulting" idea)...

The owner of that restaurant, while perhaps a bit disappointed when I ended our arrangement, didn't stop thinking about the possibility of using the wastes for vermicomposting. And some time later (a year or two I think), he actually approached me with the idea of starting up a full-fledged vermicomposting business (primary focus on castings production) using his waste-stream. With limited knowledge, experience and time, he was hoping he could recruit me to help him make it happen.

Unfortunately, it just wasn't something I wanted to get involved in at that time (and when it comes down to it, I don't think my "calling" will ever involve setting up a large-scale castings operation)...but the moral of the story is that if you can effectively demonstrate the business/environmental/PR potential that vermicomposting offers, it's safe to say that a fair number of business/farm owners would consider the possibility of setting something up as an add-on to whatever they are already doing (which

actually ties in with a topic will look at a bit later in this chapter). And they certainly won't want to try and figure it all out on their own (so hiring a consultant will make sense)!

My prediction is that vermicomposting consulting could become much more of an in-demand service in the future, as more and more mainstream interest in vermicomposting develops.

**Waste Pick-Up** – While there are plenty of businesses that have compostable organic waste streams, the fact of the matter is that many (if not most) of them would probably rather have someone else take the stuff away and deal with it than actually trying to do something themselves (only so many hours in the day, right?).

I feel there is a lot of potential here for enterprising vermicomposters to charge businesses to take this material away (they are almost certainly paying to have it removed anyway) and to process it in vermicomposting beds.

I know of at least one Worm Farming Alliance member who is doing this right now - Cathlyn Haddix, owner of "[Curb to Compost LLC](#)" - and here is an example of someone doing it with bokashi (and subsequent composting):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGsssXKBeBc>

Just make sure you look into the regulations relating to waste-hauling/handling for your region if you plan to get remotely serious with it!

**"Worm-Shops"** - This is one with some interesting possibilities and, in my humble opinion, quite a lot of potential. In my region, municipal worm composting workshops are VERY popular every year. Many people, while interested in the topic of worm composting, prefer a more hands-on learning experience vs simply learning about it on the web (or in books).

My first "light bulb moment" about this idea actually came about somewhat accidentally. I had been puzzled by the fact that a particular (drop-ship) customer kept coming back and placing large worm orders via the Red Worm Composting site. I wondered what on earth she was doing with all those worms! lol

Well, thankfully it eventually came up that she was buying all these worms for various private vermicomposting work-shops (aka "worm-shops") she was holding.

I was *intrigued!*

Here's what I love about this approach:

- Potential to earn quite a bit of \$\$ at once (and potentially even in advance) for a fairly small amount of "work".
- Assuming you are passionate/knowledgeable about the topic, actually working directly with the customers can be a lot more powerful than simply interacting with them online (or even while sitting at a market stand etc).
- Could be a great lead in for selling other products.

I think the bulk-buying approach could work well (and could even be more effective than for other wholesale-reseller scenarios) - but I also think bags of "worm culture mix" would work very well in this situation. ESPECIALLY since you have the opportunity to educate the customer on the spot, and since it's a less expensive option (but if you have a good supply of your own, it could end up being more profitable).

For those with a bit of web savvy, it wouldn't be too challenging to create a special page on your website where people could register (and even pay) for upcoming events. Show how many people have already signed up to add a bit of urgency, and it could help you fill up the spots quickly. Naturally, this kind of approach will work best once you have built up an audience (maybe even an e-mail list, facebook fan page etc) since you can reach a lot more people (a lot faster) than if you are simply relying on website traffic.

You may have to pay to rent some sort of meeting facility or classroom in order to hold events like this – but assuming there aren't a huge number of participants, you might think about hosting "worm bin parties" in your home, or out in your backyard (would be perfect if you also happened to have some vermi-gardening, outdoor vermicomposting systems going as well).

## **Piggy-Backing On Other Types Of Businesses/Services**

NOTE: This topic applies just as readily to vermicomposting products as it does to vermicomposting services (maybe even more so) - but I think it make sense to include it here, now that we've spent some time looking at both.

Vermicomposting on its own is still a pretty small industry. While it does feel like more and more people become interested in it with each passing day, trying to establish a big, booming full-time vermicomposting business – while certainly possible – can take plenty of blood, sweat and tears (not to mention time).

This is where “piggy-backing” can really help.

Plain and simple...vermicomposting products/services can serve as great up-sells and add-ons for various types of related, and even unrelated businesses.

Here are some examples (but there are certainly many others):

- (Eco)Landscaping
- Food garden installation
- Houseplant maintenance services
- Rabbit (and other livestock) farming
- Horse boarding stables and riding schools (etc)
- Restaurants, Hotels, Resorts
- Mainstream composting/mulching businesses

With the increase in environmental awareness, more and more people are becoming interested in "green" alternatives. But plenty of people are still pretty unfamiliar with vermicomposting itself, so it helps when you can get your foot in the door with something a lot more 'mainstream'.

Eg. Let's say you have a thriving landscaping business already. Why not start offering some additional services like castings or casting tea applications, vermi-gardening or compost system set-up etc? Actually SHOW people first-hand what vermicompost and worm tea can do - and then see how excited they get about it! (wink wink)

Naturally, some of these clients will want to try out vermicomposting for themselves!

Eg. I've collected a LOT of worm-rich material from the old manure heaps at horse boarding stables over the years, so I've often imagined a sort of “ultimate” eco-business that would involve generating revenue from horse boarding fees, along with the sale of composting worms and worm castings – even food crops grown on the same property.

Eg. On a similar note, many years ago some rabbit farmers realized that they could not only employ composting worms to help them deal with all the rabbit manure, but that they could actually boost their income significantly by selling the worms and castings along with the rabbits.

In many cases, adding a vermicomposting component can actually help to boost the growth of the main business as well. Let's say you own some sort of fair trade coffee

house, or even an organic juice bar, vegan restaurant etc etc (even regular versions of all of those would be fine). If you fed your compostable wastes to a huge herd of hungry worms – don't you think that would increase the “cool” factor of your establishment? It probably wouldn't be very hard to get some publicity about that!

Eg. [The Red Feather Lounge in Boise Idaho](#) might very well be the ONLY restaurant with a giant worm bed in their basement, but what's to stop you from doing something similar? I don't know if they sell worms or castings – but it's certainly something that could be done (and plenty of people would buy the products just based on the novelty alone, I'm sure).

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So many possibilities with this it makes my head spin!

Hopefully you now at least have a taste of the potential of this “piggy backing” concept and – if you do happen to have another type of business – can start to see how you might be able to tie in vermicomposting.

And now for something completely different...

(Often ignored...)

(But incredibly important...)

# Online Income-Generation

## The "Power" Of The Web

As you might have guessed already, this is a topic that is near and dear to my heart. It is literally ONLY because I immersed myself in the wacky world of web marketing many years ago that I am even here writing these words. Truth be told, I am actually a very introverted, *non-go-getter* type in the "real world". As scary as it is for me to imagine - if the web did not exist, I'd probably just be some quiet guy with a vermicomposting hobby (hardly anyone knew about)! haha

Thanks to the web, I've been able to share my passion with literally THOUSANDS of people from around the world, and to even turn that passion into a "career" of sorts.

Apart from allowing introverts become extroverts (lol), the web has massive potential due its ability to "leverage" your efforts. Unlike the trading-hours-for-dollars typical of most main-stream jobs, with an online business you can do most of the work ONCE, and have it pay dividends for years to come.

[NOTE: **Please don't misinterpret that last statement!** You absolutely *do* need to continue putting in an effort. But the "magic" results from the fact that all your efforts tend to compound over time. Once in place, websites and other web properties can in essence "work" for you, even when you yourself are not actually working!]

## **So What Exactly Is "Online Income-Generation"?**

For our purposes here, when I refer to "online income-generation" I am mainly referring to strategies that help you earn income on auto-pilot.

Let me explain what I mean.

With a typical business, someone pays money for a product or service and there is some sort of "work" involved in fulfilling your end of the bargain. As automated and stream-lined as I have made my own "real world" business, when someone places an order for composting worms there is "work" that needs to be done (and time used up) in order for the customer to feel like they got what they paid for! :-)

I will need to harvest the worm mix, pack it up and either hand it over or ship it to the

customers. If I simply let the orders come in, but don't actually do anything, I'll end up with a bunch of angry customers! lol

With the "online income-generation" I'm talking about here, much of the work is done *before* the income is earned. AND, once the majority of that work is done, it can take on a life of its own and continue generating revenue for your business, with very little additional work required on your part.

Clear as mud?

One quick example to hopefully help illustrate my point. Earlier I mentioned how I was able to clear nearly \$1800 USD in profit just from Worm Inn Mega (drop-shipping) sales on my badly-neglected Red Worm Composting website this past winter/spring. Well, the fact is, I put a LOT of blood, sweat and tears into that website for many years – and that is the major reason I am able to continue “reaping the rewards”, even though I am not blogging there very much anymore.

Still a little hazy?

Have no fear - even if this all seems a little confusing and weird (maybe even a little bit suspicious - lol), I think it will make a lot more sense as we move along.

Make no mistake, the web can be an outstanding tool for promoting a "real world" vermicomposting business - and once again, I am doubtful I would even have made *any* real progress in this arena if it wasn't for my own tiny little website for that business - but that's not specifically what we are talking about in this section.

Moving on...

Here are some common “virtual” ways to generate revenue online:

Affiliate Marketing  
Online Advertising  
Information Products

We'll look at each of these in more detail, but let's start with the "requirements".

[NOTE: As alluded to above (with my mention of the Worm Inn Mega selling example) drop-shipping can probably be considered “virtual” as well – since it really does require at least some form of website in order to be effective, and much of it is automated (other than passing along the customer info to your supplier). I decided

not to expand on it any further here, but do keep in mind that some of the promotion ideas I share for these other approaches – as well as all info relating to online “platforms” - could just as easily be used to help you boost drop-shipping sales as well]

## **The Requirements**

Obviously, if you plan to get serious with online income-generation there are going to be some basic requirements. The fact that you are even reading this guide is a good sign, though. It means you probably have some form of computer (although I realize a lot of people do use mobile devices and tablets for web access these days) and that you are reasonably comfortable surfing the web, signing up for e-mail lists etc.

You are also likely someone who has at least a reasonable grasp of social media - maybe even some of your own accounts (eg Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube etc).

Those of you who are a little further along likely have some form of website or "blog" (maybe both!).

Well, as you can probably guess, this is a fairly important part of building up any form of virtual business. But the good news is that getting yourself up and running with a new site or blog is not as challenging/scary/expensive as you might think (we'll revisit this topic a bit later).

## **Web Platform - Defined**

Over the years of working with vermi-preneurs I've emphasized the importance of having a website in order to effectively tap into the “power of the web”. More recently I've been starting to put increased emphasis on the idea of developing your overall (online) "platform". Let's now look at what I mean by that.

In the literal sense, there are all sorts of platforms online - software platforms, social media platforms etc. While these can represent important tools for us, this is not the type of "platform" I am referring to.

What I am talking about is your web presence - in a sense, your overall web "brand". All your communication channels and points of contact with prospects, customers and followers – (*hopefully*) unified by a common story/theme/vision/mission.

The more time and effort you put into building a strong online platform, the wider



your reach, the larger your audience, the more influence and impact you can have. Of course, this will also translate into greater revenue-potential for your business (both in terms of the "virtual" approaches we're looking at in this section, as well as any form of "real world" business).

Website development is obviously an important part of platform building. In fact, your website(s) usually serve as the "heart" or "hub" of your platform. Kind of like your "home base". Contrary to what a *lot* of people think a website should be (basically just an online shopping page for your products), your site(s) should have a strong overall purpose/mission that extends beyond simply selling products to people.

[NOTE: Don't get me wrong here! **There are multiple stages involved in building your platform.** Having a basic product website is MUCH better than having no site at all - especially if you've put a lot of time and effort into developing other parts of your platform such as social media etc accounts. I am speaking in terms of what I feel should be your *ultimate* goal - not what you should expect to develop right out of the starting gates.]

This is yet another topic that requires *much* more of an in-depth explanation than I can provide here - but let's see if I can provide a very quick and dirty run down of the key ideas.

First and foremost, your platform needs to offer some form of VALUE - especially in this day and age, with a dizzying array of options to choose from. Simply putting up a basic product/promotion website is not going to be enough - unless of course you are offering extreme value elsewhere (eg on Facebook, Youtube etc) and *then* directing people towards the site. But value definitely needs to be somewhere in the equation.

So how do we offer "value"?

In the most basic terms - by HELPING PEOPLE! (rocket science, eh?)

This Zig Ziglar quote is one of my favorites:

***"You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help enough other people get what they want."***

OK, so how do we "help people"?

By sharing information, answering questions, offering support/encouragement.

Getting back to our website...creating various forms of valuable, high-quality website "content" is going to be an important part of the process. If you follow the online marketing world at all, you'll like know that "content marketing" has become all the rage – something everyone seems to be talking about.

I think this is great! It's a sign that increasingly people are getting tired of slick salesmanship, and are demanding true value in exchange for their attention.

Many new vermicomposters make the mistake of assuming they have "nothing of value" to offer just because they are not an "expert". This is completely NONSENSE, and I urge you to get the idea out of your head as quickly as you can!

*Everyone*, has something to offer - whether they realize it or not!

Even your own journey, your own "story" is something many others would be interested in learning about. What you probably think of as boring and not-worth-mentioning, others will likely find fascinating.

So the "journey" angle is something I *highly* recommend if you are just getting into website creation and blogging. Honestly, if you look my website creation history, I'm sure the majority of my online content (mostly in the form of blog posts) simply revolves around my vermicomposting (etc) activities.

*Don't under-estimate the power of the seemingly-mundane!* lol  
(Just look at what gets posted on Facebook and Twitter! haha)

Another great approach (role you can take on) is what I call the "roving reporter". Get in touch with people who ARE considered "experts" and get their opinions on topics of interest to vermicomposters. Follow their websites, report on their activities etc. Apart from the high quality information you will glean, this can also be a fantastic way to rub elbows with (get to know) prominent people in your market, and often get more traction yourself. Many of these folks would be happy to link over to an interview/article featuring them, and just generally to tell their own tribe about these sorts of things (which can result in a lot of new visitors getting sent to your site, among other good things).

Similarly, the "resource gatherer" is another great hat to wear. Instead of content creation, we're talking mostly here about content *curation*. There is a WEALTH of shareable content online - YouTube alone is a goldmine! Obviously, you give credit where credit is due - and you certainly don't plagiarize someone else's content - but there are lots of different ways to do this effectively. And the kicker is that it can also

end up being an excellent networking strategy. If you reach out to the people you are writing about they will appreciate that - and they may even share it with their own audience (similar ideas as discussed in the "roving reporter" example)!

Another important role I recommend developing for yourself, if you want to do well online, is the overall role of "problem solver". The greater your understanding of your audience and the interests/challenges/frustrations/goals etc floating around in their heads - the greater the chance of you being able to actually help them (which again, can greatly increase the chances of your own success over the long-haul).

Simply spend some time in community forums and groups reading through the questions being posted, and it shouldn't take all that long before you start to get a good feel for the topics that come up over and over again.

[NOTE: When I say "problem", I don't mean to imply something really "bad" that's happening to people (although, sometimes it certainly can be). In a lot of cases it might be more of an "unfilled need" or common frustration. If enough people have the same unfilled need/frustration, and you can provide valuable solutions...it's safe to say that "good things" will come your way!]

Before we move on...

Just so you know, we'll revisit the topic of websites at the end of this section. So, if you are at least toying with the idea of creating a website and/or blog of some sort please make sure to read through that part (there is also an e-mail list you may want to sign up for if you want to learn more).

In the meantime, let's finally look in more detail at these mysterious "virtual" income-generation methods I listed earlier.

## **Affiliate Marketing**

Similar to drop-shipping, with affiliate marketing you are promoting products where someone else will take care of "fulfillment". But the key difference is that you are "promoting" vs actually "selling". You are NOT selling products/services as your own - you are just recommending products/services created by other people.

Usually the process involves someone clicking through a unique affiliate tracking link which puts a special tracking "cookie" into their browser and - assuming they make a purchase (or do whatever is required in order for it to be deemed a successful referral)

- the affiliate should receive a percentage of the sale or some sort of flat-rate commission.

This can also apply to various types of "leads" (where someone fills out a form, providing contact information), but this one is less applicable in our case.

What's great about affiliate marketing is that you don't need to deal with most of the hassles and time-consuming activities associated with a typical business that sells its own products/services.

No need to warehouse or ship anything, or even provide web access (as in the case of information products, for example). There is zero customer service or product support (although you MAY want to "incentivize" your promotions with your own related offers/packages - we'll talk more about that in a minute). And your reputation isn't on the line *quite* as much. That said, it is still very important that you **promote only those products you believe in - ideally, ones you yourself use and love.**

Here are several examples to illustrate how other approaches differ from affiliate marketing:

- Drop-Shipping -

On my Red Worm Composting website you will find a banner and a link in the upper navigation that take visitors to my "Buy Worms" page (similar situation for Worm Inns). Although all these physical products are sent to customers via drop-shipper, it is still a case of selling MY products (I receive money, customer receives a product - and they associate everything with ME).

- Information Products -

Similarly, (at the time of writing) I have a banner on the Red Worm Composting website advertising the "[VermBin Series Plans Package](#)" (DIY flow-through bin plans). When you click it you are taken to another page on the RWC site where you can learn more about the package and can purchase it. I am the one who accepts the payment (via Paypal in this case), and the one responsible for providing customers with access to the download area (luckily this is all automated - which is why we'll also be looking at info products later on in this section).

- Affiliate Marketing -

On one of my other websites I used to have a banner in the sidebar advertising the Worm Factory 360 system. Unlike the Worm Inn Mega banner on the RWC website, it linked (via an affiliate link) to the WF360 page on the Nature's Footprint website. Any

time someone clicked through, and then actually bought a WF360 I received a commission.

This is the most basic form of affiliate marketing - and definitely not the way I recommend doing it (unless it is a really hot item and/or the merchant does an outstanding job of selling the product on the page where the ad-clicker ends up) - at least not as a primary method. Interestingly enough, that WF360 banner did quite well for a period of time - likely since Nature's Footprint has done a great job selling the system on their own website, and since it already had a great reputation.

Still, I consider that to be a sort of "lazy" (little effort, but also the least effective) approach - if you are short on time or just want to get something happening while you get other things set up - great - but if you do have some time, I recommend putting more effort into it.

Here is my overall "BIG IDEA" for effectively promoting affiliate products - and something that ties back in with the "platform" information I shared earlier...

Create a HIGH VALUE educational resource for your website visitors - one that provides people with a lot of excellent information about the product you are promoting, pros/cons, answers questions/concerns in people's minds, offers tweaks/suggestions you've discovered.

Some Possibilities - let's use the Worm Factory 360 example

1) **Free Reports** - Based on your own experience, or research into the experience of others, you could put together a high-value report that educates people about the Worm Factory 360 system. Obviously Nature's Footprint has their own "propaganda" (I'm kidding of course - but it's safe to say they are a tad biased when it comes to describing their own products) - but you could provide an in-depth, objective review.

Maybe you could compare multiple systems to make it even *more* interesting. One MAJOR topic of interest for new vermicomposters seems to center on the question "what kind of system should I use? (and why?)". If you help to answer that for people they will be *far* more likely to either purchase from you (if you are a seller) or purchase from your recommended vendors (if you are simply promoting the product as an affiliate).

#### PROS of Free Reports

- If done well - they can have a high perceived value.
- After the initial investment of time, usually very little additional time required. But it

can continue to "work" for you.

- Very easy for people to share - potential to go "viral"
- Quite easy to put together using tools freely available online (and/or those already on your computer)
- Provides reader with an all-in-one info package (they get the info they want in a lump sum, without having to wait around for future installments etc)

### Cons of Free Reports

- They CAN take a lot of focused time and effort (if you want something really top notch).
- They can be a bit overwhelming for readers - too much info at once, so a greater chance of readers not making it all way through (and then forgetting about).
- Maybe not as "human" as videos/audios (i.e. a bit harder for people to really connect to you as a person, which can really help to build trust).

2) **Website "Follow-Alongs"** - If you have some sort of blog as part of your website (something I *highly* recommend), this can be a great venue for providing visitors with an in-depth review of various types of products - especially physical products since the visual component (photos of the system etc) can really help people connect with, and get excited about something.

[NOTE: You can STILL provide "eye candy" (and do follow-alongs) in the case of virtual information products - just take pictures of what YOU are doing in relation to what you learned from the product (eg. #1 if you are promoting some sort of eco-gardening information product, start up your own project testing out the methods and show people all the steps and results along the way. eg. #2 obviously in the case of virtual plans - like the [VermBin Package](#) - you could create a follow-along relating to your building and use of the system)]

Getting back to our WF 360 example - you could take people through the process of setting up and using the system, gradually over time. Although I wasn't actually promoting the system at the time, this is what I did on the Red Worm Composting blog after Nature's Footprint sent me a free WF 360 to "play" with (yet another perk that can come from building up a strong online "platform", I might add!)

### PROS of Follow-Alongs

- Takes less time to create each installment - easier to piece something together gradually over time than to sit down and tackle it all at once.
- Really easy for people to relate to, connect with - get EXCITED ABOUT! Seems a lot more "real" since you are actually watching it all unfold.

- On a related note, it is easier for people to connect with you as a person (so, again, there may be more trust involved)
- Bite-sized chunks of content are much easier to read and digest - making it more likely people will stick around all the way through (if done well, it can almost be like a good mystery - leaving your audience on the edge of their seats waiting for your next installment)
- It's well known that people tend to need multiple points of contact before they are ready to buy something – a follow-along provides this.

### Cons of Follow-Alongs

- May be a little TOO slow at marketing a product effectively. While you *can* warm someone up and get them interested, the problem is you may not provide the answers they need fast enough, so they may go elsewhere.
- Not something that can be passed around like a report (link can be shared - but requires people to stay on website to consume)
- Can be BIG (and complex) once complete - so potentially overwhelming for those who haven't been following each posting as it happens.

3) **Video/Audio Series** - same sort of idea as what we've already been talking about, except instead of something in writing (often with supporting images), here we are educating people via video/audio. In some ways, and in certain cases, this can be a more powerful option since people will be able to connect more readily with the person behind the resource. This is a double-edged sword though - if you happen to have a strange voice, or bad speaking habits it could turn people off in a hurry, so be sure to honestly assess your strengths/weaknesses - ask friends and family if need be - before deciding on your format.

They say that variety is the spice of life - so there is certainly nothing stopping you from trying out ALL these (and various other) approaches!

It's always the "BIG IDEA" that's going to matter the most anyway - again, the key is always going to be to provide as much helpful, *honest* information as you possibly can (but in as concise a way as you possibly can - you don't want it to be a snore-fest! lol!) about the product/service you are trying to promote. The less you make it about "promoting" and the more you make it about down-to-earth, value-added "sharing", the greater your chances of success.

**IMPORTANT NOTE** - All these methods can also work really well for your own products (i.e. don't assume it is only good for affiliate marketing). The important thing to remember, though, is that when it is YOUR product(s) being discussed, you will be

walking an even finer line between education and self-promotion. The advantage of affiliate promotions is that you are an outside (ideally, objective) observer, so your followers will tend to trust your opinions more than that those of the merchants. Rather than doing any sort of in-depth review of your own products (which wouldn't really make sense), my recommendation would be to focus more on educating about general "problems" your products help to solve.

**"Incentivization"** - the basic idea here is that you are providing some form of incentive for people to purchase a particular product through your affiliate link. When done properly it is a fantastic approach since it allows you to add even MORE value to the offer (which, as mentioned, should already be high quality). This in turn makes it more likely that someone will be interested in purchasing through your link. It also gives you the opportunity to provide full-disclosure about the fact that you are receiving a kick-back (this sort of transparency not only helps to build trust, but it's becoming increasingly important in the eyes of governing bodies like the FTC).

The incentive you are offering should be very high value (ideally something that is being sold, or at least could be sold), and that compliments the purchase being made.

Example - As part of my website-building training materials I usually recommend [Hostgator](#) as a good starter web-hosting company to go with (I myself have multiple Hostgator accounts as I type this, and I've used them for many years now). As an incentive for those interested in signing up using my [affiliate link](#) (yep, full-disclosure, that is indeed my affiliate link - lol), I now offer assistance relating to getting a WordPress website started.

I am more than happy to walk you through the installation process (or do it completely for you), help you decide on a domain name, and to change your "nameserver" settings if need be, help you get set up with recommended WordPress plugins, help you choose a "theme" (template) etc.

This add-on offer serves as a valuable incentive for those just getting started with website creation, and it obviously ties in directly with the product being purchased. In a sense, it's like Hostgator is paying me to help you get started, so it's definitely win/win.

[NOTE: In case you are wondering, YES, this is still an offer I have available if you are keen to get a website going, and happen to be in the market for web-hosting. [Drop me a line](#) any time if you would like to discuss this further.]



## **Advertising Revenue**

Another "virtual" approach that can add some income to your bottom-line is website advertising. First and foremost let me make it clear that, in all likelihood, this is NOT going to provide you with enough income on its own - but it *can* be a decent source of extra income.

### **What Is Website Advertising?**

Basically, what I'm referring to here is any form ads you place on your website (or elsewhere - we'll chat a bit about YouTube ads in a bit) that then earn you income, whether based on "clicks", "impressions", or some sort of flat rate per unit time (eg. someone pays you \$50/mo to display their banner on your website).

Of course there are loads of different options here, but for the sake of simplicity I'm only going to talk about one very common example - known as Google AdSense, and I won't even be going into too much detail about it (there is a wealth of information online - and my goal here is really just to introduce the idea and explain the advantages and disadvantages).

When you sign up for the Google AdSense program (you will need a website that receives some traffic, or a YouTube channel that gets a decent number of video views) you can then create various types of ads to place on your site (works somewhat differently with YouTube - they basically decide what ads appear over your videos).

Apart from all the color/format options you can play around with, there are 3 main types of ads: 1) text ads, 2) image ads, and 3) ad links. All of these ad formats display ads that people have paid for using the "front end" of the entire system, known as Google Adwords (which, incidentally, isn't a bad advertising method to try out for your business - just make sure you do some research first!).

Once you have created a particular style of ad you want to display on your site, you then copy the specific code (which contains info that links the ads to your own AdSense account so you get credited for clicks etc) and insert it where you want it on the site. If you are a WordPress (website building platform) user, thankfully there are some plugins that can make this even easier (eg Ad Injection).

Naturally, as you continue to build up your website (or YouTube channel) and get more and more traffic, you end up getting more and more clicks on your ads (and I'm pretty sure even the value of the clicks can go up as you become more of an

authority)

[IMPORTANT NOTE - Whatever you do, make sure you **DON'T EVER** click your own ads, tell friends and family to click your ads, or even hint at it in your website content. As you might guess, Google seriously frowns upon this practice - and they have incredibly sophisticated software to determine whether or not clicks are fraudulent.]

How much you earn per click can depend on a range of different factors. One of the main ones is the market you are serving the ads for. In the case of competitive niches, where people are fighting tooth and nail for good ad placement position in the Google Adwords system, advertisers are literally paying multiple dollars PER CLICK - sometimes MANY dollars per click - which means that the folks displaying those ads can earn a decent amount as well (Google doesn't publish its exact sharing percentages - but it's thought to be somewhere around 50% of what the actual advertiser pays).

Obviously, in smaller markets...say perhaps something like...worm farming (lol), the earnings per click will be lower (usually less than \$1 per click). But it can still add up if you've got a reasonably popular website.

### **Who Is This Well-Suited For?**

This is a typical "it depends" situation to be honest. In a lot of ways I think of website advertising as being well suited for those just getting started - i.e. those who don't yet have their own products to sell, and aren't yet ready to promote affiliate products.

When I first started up the Red Worm Composting website, my only source of revenue was from Google AdSense ads. Gradually I started removing them from the website in favor of my own "ads" (we'll talk a bit more about this in a minute)...before eventually coming full circle and getting more serious about AdSense again.

Generally speaking, website advertising is well-suited for those who enjoy (and perhaps who are "good at") producing a wealth of online content. If, for example, your main focus in life is educating and inspiring others, and you have zero interest in messing around with starting an actual business, creating your own products, promoting affiliate offers etc, having advertising on your website could at least help you earn *something* for your efforts.

## Who Is It Not Well-Suited For?

In general, website advertising isn't going to be all that rewarding if you don't have any real desire to create a lot of content for your website (and then continue adding *more* content over time).

More specifically, it's not nearly as well-suited for those who have very focused small-business websites. In fact I would go so far as to say...

**"Don't put AdSense (and other ads) on narrowly-focused websites, where your primary aim is to get visitors to make a purchase, sign up for an email list etc."**

In essence, you are distracting visitors from doing what you want them to do! Aside from that, it very often looks completely out of place (especially when website owners don't even make an attempt to use complimentary colors etc for their ads).

## Some Gray Area

The gray area occurs with websites that have a "business" component (products for sale) along with an educational component. As alluded to earlier, Red Worm Composting is a prime example of this. Early on it made good sense (no pun intended - lol) to put up some ads so I could at least earn *something!* But as I began to add my own products to the site I decided that it made a lot more sense to direct people towards my own offerings, rather than sending them away from the site for basically "pennies per click".

### ***"But CAN you have your cake and eat it too?"***

More recently I decided to take a break from blogging on the RWC website (I could give you a reminder lesson about the fact that the site continued to "work" for me even though I wasn't "working" on it...but I'll spare you! haha) so I could put most of my focus on other projects (namely the WFA) and, on a whim, I decided to try out AdSense again.

I haven't done a detailed analysis by *any* means, but the long and the short of it is that the amount of extra income that has come in as a result of the advertising is almost certainly more than has been "lost" by sending people off the site.

Again, this is where the whole "platform" idea comes into play. Once you have a large community of people who know and appreciate your work - especially once you have

multiple communication channels to reach them (eg email list, Facebook group etc) - they are going to keep going back to the site anyway.

If you haven't yet built your site up to that point, and you DO have some important products to sell/promote - you may not want to distract your visitors with ads.

Aesthetics and the potential impact of advertising on your overall brand is a whole 'nuther area ripe for discussion...but it's time to move on here.

I will say this - do what makes you feel comfortable AND what makes economic sense. If in doubt, either test it or just don't do it!

## **A Word Or Two About YouTube Ads**

This is yet another serious topic unto itself - and something I actually know very little about. BUT, if you happen to be a prolific video creator this is definitely worthy of your consideration.

I'm sure many of you reading are familiar with John Kohler. Even if the name doesn't ring a bell, I'd be surprised if the vast majority of readers haven't at least stumbled across one or more of John's video while perusing topics related to composting, eco-gardening, home food production etc.

Here is a link to his YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/growingyourgreens/>

The man is a video-production MACHINE! He likely has hundreds of videos by now - with many millions of total video views. As I type this he has 327,000+ subscribers!

Honestly, my recommendation is NOT to put all your eggs in one basket (especially when that basket is owned by Google - haha) quite to this extent. It's an awesome platform he has built, but it's important to remember that it is on someone else's web property. Regardless, this is a great (inspiring) example to refer to. And it actually looks like he now has at least one of his own websites going as well.

I honestly have no clue what John earns from the advertisements that appear in his videos, but if I had to guess I'd say it's a LOT! And he may have private deals with businesses to promote their products in his videos as well – I'm really not sure.

NO, I'm not suggesting that everyone should run out and try to do something similar,

but if you happen to love making videos, especially if you already have an established YT channel, this could be a decent way to earn \$\$ from advertising.

And probably even MORE importantly, it's also a fantastic way to promote anything else you are involved in (as long as you are providing viewers with HIGH VALUE content like John has been).

Ok - nuff said about advertising! :-)

## **Information Products**

As the name implies, information products are purchased/consumed primarily for the information they contain. Many assume an info product is something you sell. While this is often true (and while I DO highly recommend creating some that you can sell), it could be argued that there is just as much potential in creating high-value, *free* info products (what I like to refer to as "freemium" info products).

In fact, I already shared some freemium info product ideas with you in the affiliate marketing section!

[NOTE: Since we are mainly discussing "virtual" revenue generation in this section, it should be assumed that I am primarily referring to digital information products here. Although, as I will touch on a little later, there are some nice automated solutions for selling physical info products as well]

## **Some Misguided Notions About Info Products (And My Rebuttals! lol)**

*"There is no market for them. All the information you need can already be found for free on the internet."*

It's TRUE - the internet has an incredible wealth of information - even loads of high quality information - and it's becoming increasingly easy to find it! But there is a very important thing to remember - much of this great information is all over the place, and it takes a great deal of time and effort to piece it all together (and this assumes you are experienced enough to know what's "good quality" and what's not).

Most of us don't have time for this!! I will happily pay someone for good quality, organized information on a specific topic I want to learn more about - and many MANY others feel the same way! Sure, there are always going to be people who refuse

to pay for information - and that's their choice - but unfortunately, in a lot of cases these people just aren't putting enough value on their own time.

On a similar note...

*"I already have lots of lots of top notch information on my website. Why would anyone pay me for an info product that contains basically the same information?"*

Believe it or not, there are plenty of cases of people doing *literally* that (and succeeding)! Pat Flynn of "Smart Passive Income" fame, got his start with information marketing when he created a website with all his study notes for the LEED ("Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) exam, and then compiled the exact same information into an eBook (an info product that continues to generate a 5-figure yearly income stream even now, years later)!

I myself have purchased a Seth Godin (marketing mentor of mine) physical book, called "Small Is The New Big" that was nothing but a compilation of his blog posts (that related to the overall theme of the book).

I'm not suggesting that this is necessarily how you should create an information product - I simply want to make it clear that there is a LOT of value in organizing and compiling information on a particular in-demand topic. People appreciate when you save them time, and they are willing hand over their hard-earned dollars to prove it.

*"There's too much work involved!"*

Certain types of info products *do* require a very serious, focused time/effort commitment - there's no doubt about it! But it tends to be concentrated all at the very beginning of the info marketing process. Once your product is finished (and you have promotion/selling systems in place), there is actually very little in the way of "work". There might be some updates, and of course some customer service/support - but over the long-haul, the amount of work involved is actually *far* less than any sort of job or business where you are trading hours for dollars!

All that being said, it's also important to note that info products don't need to be super-involved. Don't fall into the trap of assuming that you need to create a 500 page encyclopedia in order to have a "hot seller" on your hands. In fact...

[**HOT TIP**] - Remember how I mentioned that people appreciate when you save them time? Well, guess what? When you create a high-quality, laser-focused product that is

very easily consumed, people will *love* you for it! So, again, don't assume that the "best" info products are the ones with hundreds of pages, 50 video modules etc etc - often the *opposite* is actually true!]

Bottom-line - my "tough love" advice is that if you're not willing to put some REAL time and effort (aka "work") into your business, it might be best just to focus on your hobbies instead.

*"What's the point? Customers will just share them with their friends anyway."*

It's true, with digital info products there is a far greater chance of customers passing them around - in some cases even posting them on websites where others can download them for free. Needless to say, this is a practice us info product creators are not thrilled about!

But if you put more focus on creating something really high-quality, with information you know people are after - rather than obsessing about thieves - I promise it's not something that's going to ruin your business.

There are still *lots* of good, honest people out there who are more than happy to support you and your work. I've literally had people tell me they were given a copy of one of my info products, yet they still went ahead and bought their own copy from me.

[Once again, as you might guess - this all ties in with building a strong online platform]

It's also important to point out that there are various ways to secure your info products. But again, I would encourage you NOT to obsess over this! It's far better to put most of your time/energy into creating great products!

*"I'm not an "expert" - I can't create a good info product."*

This is nasty misconception that seems to rear its ugly head in just about every aspect of content creation, platform-building etc. A lot of people just can't seem to accept the fact that they still have plenty to offer (and plenty of potential) even when they have limited experience.

We're not talking about creating an ultimate "For Dummies" vermicomposting (etc)

encyclopedia here. And apart from that, an info product doesn't even need to be based on your OWN information.

I talked earlier about the "roving reporter" and "research gatherer" angles for content creation. Well needless to say these can work very well for information products as well. Rounding up experts on a particular in-demand topic, conducting short interviews (written or audio - maybe even both!) and then compiling them to make an info product is an excellent approach. Even just conducting a lot of personal research and sharing that would have a lot of value.

**Strategic Partnerships** - On a somewhat similar note to the interview idea, if you can find an "expert" - ideally with complimentary strengths/knowledge/resources - you could potentially team up with them to create something together. Example #1 - I connected with design/building expert Joe Denial, and we ended up creating the [VermBin Series Plans Package](#) together. Example #2 - I teamed up with large-scale worm farming pro George Mingin to create "Professional Worm Growing Secrets".

In both cases, I didn't have enough knowledge/experience to create either of their products (at least not with the same exact focus or quality of information) - but by combining strengths/resources with these gentlemen, the projects came together very nicely.

*"The technology involved is way too complicated and/or expensive."*

In this day and age, this is just complete nonsense. Even compared to when I first got started online (2004), the assortment of amazing tools - many of them completely free - available to the average person is completely mind-boggling.

Whether you want to create, reports, eBooks, audio/video courses, full-fledged membership sites - or anything in between - it is quite easy to do (especially when you compare it to developing and launching your own physical products or a brick-and-mortar business in general), and with relatively little expense - especially when you consider the potential return on investment.

As I've touched on already, there's no need to go too crazy right out of the starting gates either. Creating something like a free report, to help build up an email list or promote products, is as easy as firing up your word processing software, typing (maybe adding some images), then converting it into a PDF file. [Open Office](#) is an excellent (100% free) alternative to Microsoft Office – and it's what I myself use and love. Google Docs is like another good option (not sure if they let you convert to PDF).



*"I sell physical products. I don't need info products."*

Info products can actually be a great addition to a physical products business. If you sell worms, for example, you could have an inexpensive guide (or video series etc) that teaches people how to vermicompost properly and offer that as an add-on.

"Freemium" reports and guides are actually an excellent way to educate people about, and thus "pre-sell", your physical products – kind of like an effective, non-pushy salesperson who is helping you around the clock.

What's great about adding info products to your arsenal is that they can "work" for you online while you are *literally* working offline (filling orders etc). I love the feeling of spending a day hauling horse manure, packing up orders for shipment (etc, etc), and then firing up my computer to find multiple info product sales notifications (or physical product sales that have resulted from free reports).

*"I spent a year creating a stunning, 450 page 'A-Z' gardening encyclopedia eBook and only sold a few copies! Info products don't sell!"*

As alluded to earlier, one of the major mistakes people make is the assumption that an info product needs to be some sort of "definitive", "EVERYTHING you need to know about..." type of guide/course.

Another major error can happen when you ASSume you know what topic "lots of people" want to learn about. Often it is a topic (or topics) WE are really interested in, but not necessarily something a huge number of other people are already looking for.

I've been guilty of both of these (probably multiple times). One quick example - a number of years ago, I created a DIY compost tumbler package that involved a strategic partnership with someone who already had a related product. I THOUGHT it would be a hot seller with my vermicomposting crowd, since tumblers can be great for "pre-composting" materials for worm beds - but I never actually sent out any 'feelers' ahead of time to see if anyone had an interest.

Long-story-short, when all was said and done I had sold less than 15 copies.

Sounds like a huge failure, right? Well the beauty of these "failures" is that they can still be hugely valuable in other ways. That same tumbler package was eventually added as a bonus for my [VermBin Series Package](#) (and still is at time of writing).

With something like the "450 page 'A-Z' gardening eBook" (used in my example misconception), the sky is the limit in terms of what you could do with this material. It could be chopped up and used to create free reports, blog posts, or any number of other types of content. Countless possibilities!

Bottom-line, keep things as narrowly focused as you can (especially early on), and make sure to pick topics that people actually want to learn about.

## **Info Product Complexity/Involvement Scale**

As mentioned already, info products can be as simple or as complex as you want to make them. Naturally (in my mind anyway) it makes the most sense to start up on the simple end and then to work your way up. Here is a pretty basic list of some common info product types, essentially in order of difficulty (from easy to more difficult/involved).

Fact sheets, infographics, free reports  
E-mail series & mini-courses  
eBooks  
Audio/Video Courses  
Online Memberships

[NOTE: The level of difficulty will *totally* depend on the person involved. For example, I couldn't create an infographic to save my life – lol – so I'd probably be more in my comfort zone putting together a report, or even a course or membership. I simply included this list to provide some perspective]

One of the great things about starting small is that it will help you build momentum!

Pop Quiz Time!

**What do you think is more valuable?...**

**...a finished 30 page report you can sell for \$7 (or give away free to help you build an email list, promote your business, affiliate offers etc), or a *partially* finished video course you can charge \$47 for once finished and launched?**

I'm sure you know the answer to that.

Get a handful of smaller, focused projects finished, and you could even combine them

into a bigger (more valuable) package later on if you wanted to. And you'll be amazed how much of a confidence boost you can get from the completion of even one simple product.

## **Gumroad – The Info Product Creator's Best Friend?**

If you are at ALL interested in any of this “info product” stuff I've been tossing your way (and I'm guessing you might be since you are still reading - lol), I highly recommend familiarizing yourself with an online selling/promotion platform known as [Gumroad](#).

If you plan on getting serious with paid info products I recommend the “pro” version (costs \$10/mo to start), but even the free version packs a pretty serious punch. It basically combines multiple tools you would normally need to pay for separately.

Let's say you create a free report called “A Beginner's Guide to Choosing a Worm Bin” that provides an in-depth (and honest) review of various types of worm bins, along with some recommendations and links to your own product pages (assuming you are selling worm bins) or another merchant via affiliate links.

Sure, something like this could just be posted on your website - potentially shared on Facebook etc - and you could do just fine with it (especially if it is really well done). But if you host it on Gumroad, all those who sign up to receive access to the report will basically be added to an e-mail list.

[NOTE: Apart from a website, an e-mail list is absolutely one of the most valuable online business assets you can build as part of your platform. It provides you with an excellent way to build an audience of followers that you can keep in touch with on a regular basis. Naturally, this can also be a great promotional tool for your business (just make sure you are continuing to offer lots of VALUE as well).]

You could even set up an automated email sequence containing similar content as is contained in the report - but in more bite-sized chunks - gradually leading people towards your own products (or products you are promoting) while educating them at the same time.

Once the pro version of Gumroad was released (late 2015) they cut back on the features of the free version. Now, instead of being able to create unlimited autoresponder series - what they call “workflows” - and unlimited update emails, you can only have a single work-flow, and I think 4 or 5 update emails per month.

BUT, you can set up as many free accounts as you want (you just need a distinct email address for each one). So, assuming you don't feel like upgrading to the pro version, my recommendation would be to create an account for each info product you are creating. This way you can have an email series that goes along with each, and the option to send out a handful of update emails each month as well.

## **'1-2-3' Website Creation**

As I've been harping on, one of the most important – yet often most neglected – steps in building a successful worm farming business is developing a strong online presence or “platform”. Naturally, at the heart of this platform is usually some form of website.

Unfortunately website creation tends to be a really scary idea for a lot of people – and that helps to explain why so many drag their feet when it comes to getting a site up and running.

The two major assumptions (which could more accurately be referred to as “myths”) are: 1) you need to hire an expensive “web designer” to make it happen or 2) you need to be super tech- and design-savvy in order to actually create one for yourself.

Now, I'm not going to start blowing smoke up you-know-where and try to tell you that all you need to do to make your own website is think about rainbows and unicorns while clicking a few buttons.

Yes, it does indeed take some time and effort, and yes there can be a learning curve involved. But the bottom-line is that it is *much* easier to at least get the ball rolling than most people think, and the benefits of taking control of the process (instead of being completely dependent on others) *far* outweigh any time invested and stress that may result from the process.

Heck, I'm not even trying to claim that you need to do everything yourself – but what's fantastic is that when you get a solid grasp on the fundamentals of website creation, you are in a much better position to effectively outsource the tasks you don't feel comfortable attempting yourself!

Sadly, the internet is a breeding ground for countless tech-savvy people who are more

than willing to separate clueless folks from their hard-earned money in the name of (supposedly) getting them up and running with their own website.

Please don't let yourself fall victim to these sorts of shenanigans!

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Let's now look at what I refer to as the '1-2-3' Website process. As the name implies, there are only 3 main components/steps you need to have a live, 'self-hosted' (a term I will explain in a few minutes) website.

## **“OK - So What Do I Need To Get Started?!”**

Well, the good news is that you DON'T need to drop \$100's for some sort of fancy website design software and the fancy courses needed to actually learn how to use it. :-)

These days the #1 go-to platform (and in this case I mean “software platform”) for website creation is an open-source gem known as WordPress. It is completely free to use, and more powerful and flexible than you can imagine.

Yes, there are other options out there – and some of them work well – but after more than a decade in the online game (and having watched WordPress grow from a very basic blogging platform to the website-building-machine it is today), I wouldn't even consider using anything else.

Assuming you go this route, there are literally only two other things you need in order to get a website up and running: 1) a domain name, and 2) a web hosting package.

## **Domain Names**

For the benefit of the uninitiated among you, a domain name is basically the unique name/address associated with your website. It consists of two parts: 1) the name itself, and 2) the domain name “extension”.

Let's look an example:

<http://www.WormFarmingAlliance.com>

What you see there is the full website address (also known as “URL”).

The domain name is WormFarmingAlliance.com – with “.com” as the extension. Other examples of extensions are “.net” and “.org”, among countless others.

There can only be ONE of each domain for a given extension (for obvious reasons). So, because I own WormFarmingAlliance.com, no one else can register it for as long as I own it.

I highly recommend looking for a domain name for which the “.com” is available, since this tends to be the extension most people associate with the web. Let's say you have your heart set on the name: BuffaloBillsWormsNThings, but the .com version is already owned by someone else. Simply registering the “.net” version isn't usually the best approach – ESPECIALLY if the owner of the .com has a well developed website with a similar focus.

Remember, your domain name is an important part of your overall brand, so you want as much control over it as you can get.

One exception worth mentioning might be country-specific extensions. If you plan to market solely to people in your own country (talking primarily about countries apart from USA), it's not going to be as big a deal if the .com version of your desired domain is taken. eg my Canadian site is WormComposting.ca, yet the .com version of the name is owned by someone else.

## **Web Hosting**

In basic terms, a web hosting account is like a remote hard drive to store all the files, databases etc associated with your websites PLUS some form of control panel that allows you to access and work with the files/databases, along with plenty of other cool tools.

A starter web hosting package from a reputable provider will typically cost between \$3 and \$20 USD per month. How much exactly, will depend on the provider, the package you select, and the payment plan you choose (typically if you commit to longer periods it will cost you less than for month-to-month payments).

Some people will naturally wonder about all the various “free” options out there. These days there are countless ways to get some form of “webpage” published on the web without paying anything.

While many of these options are great for quick and dirty sites, or simply as a tool for

testing the waters a bit – I definitely do NOT endorse this approach as a long-term strategy.

Probably the BIGGEST advantage of a self-hosted website (what I've been talking about here) can be summed up in two words...

### Ownership & Control

When your pages are hosted on someone else's website/platform (eg Facebook, Blogger, Typepad etc etc) THEY get to make the rules, and when it comes down to it, THEY are the ones who technically own your pages. They could literally pull the plug on you at any time.

This isn't such a big deal for "fun", or at least less-serious website projects. But when it comes to your business, you owe it to yourself to take much more of a long-term view of things.

A self-hosted website is a legitimate business asset that you have complete control over!

NOTE: I should also caution you regarding many of these "all-in-one" types of platforms and packages that seem to make website-creation look so easy and hassle-free. You just pay some amount (can be pretty cheap or even "free" to help lure people in) and you are "all set" with "everything you need to create an awesome "website". The problem is if/when you decide you have outgrown these platforms and want to move elsewhere. OR when you realize that some very basic (but important) functionality, like the ability to create a blog for example, isn't even included in the starter package – you actually have to pay more just to get it.

Which brings us to the next important consideration...

### Functionality

With a self-hosted WordPress website, the sky is the limit in terms of the sort of functionality available. YES, in some cases you may need to invest in special "plugins" and "themes" to create the exact type of site you want – but this is almost always not mandatory (since there are so many great plugins and themes available for free).

The problem with some of these other proprietary platforms is that the user community isn't nearly as large, and no one outside of the parent company is allowed to create plugins, extensions etc. So you are 100% dependent on the company itself

to meet your needs. And even if they can, it will often cost you more money.

**Recommended Starter Hosting** – As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, if you happen to be looking for a good starter hosting package, I recommend [Hostgator](#). After multiple bad hosting experiences early on (even with highly recommended providers), I ended up trying Hostgator and I've been using them ever since (likely close to a decade, if not longer, that I've been with them now\*). They have good pricing, great up-time, and solid support.

I recommend “shared” hosting with unlimited “add-on” domains (their “Baby” plan is a good choice for this) – this way you can create/host as many sites as you want. It might surprise you to learn that I don't actually recommend their “WordPress Hosting”. It is needlessly expensive – and while they claim it is optimized for WordPress websites, I beg to differ. The regular accounts using cPanel better for WP sites in my humble opinion.

Once again, if you DO decide to sign up for Hostgator via my [affiliate link](#), please [get in touch](#), since I am more than happy to help you get everything set up and to get the ball rolling with your new site.

\*[NOTE: More recently I have signed up a “fancier” account with another provider for some of my higher traffic sites – but again, keep in mind that Hostgator has served me well for many years, and I still do use them for smaller sites.]

## **Final Thoughts**

I know I keep beating you over the head with this “platform” concept - and it's for good reason. The more time and effort you dedicate to developing a strong online platform, the larger your audience will grow, the more influence you can have...and the greater your positive impact!

And of course, this will naturally help you grow your business (generate more revenue) as well.

When you can combine PASSION, a sense of PURPOSE, and PROFITS (especially once it approaches a “full-time” equivalent), it's the most satisfying feeling you can imagine. I'd love to see a lot more people head down this path.



The key with all of this 'web stuff' is to get something started as soon as you can, and then to just keep at it. As touched on, it really does have a way of building on itself (gaining momentum) over time.

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If you would like to learn more about websites and "platform building" I recommend you sign up for my [K.I.S.S. Websites e-mail list](#) (just click that link or, if you can't for whatever reason, simply email me and I will help you get on the list).

I am in the process of putting together some free training that delves into the topic of website creation/promotion in more detail. I am also (at time of writing) getting ready to launch a new membership site focused solely on helping passionate people build or further develop their own 'purpose-driven' online platform. And I will definitely keep everyone posted about that via the email lists mentioned in this guide.

# Wrapping Up

Congratulations! You've made it (almost) to the end of "What You Need To Know About Making Money With Worms" - unless of course the "Wrapping Up" title looked *so* compelling in the table of contents that you just couldn't resist checking it out right away! lol

I sincerely hope you got something out of this guide (since a lot went into it).

I'm gonna go out on a limb and assume that since you were drawn to it in the first place, you have at least a passing interest in the possibility of starting up some form of green business venture, even if not an actual worm farming business. As you can probably tell by now, I am *very* enthusiastic about helping people head down this path. As cheesy (maybe idealistic) as it might seem, I strongly believe that every single one of us should be doing "work" we *love*, and that allows us to have a positive impact on others (and the world in general).

I'm not suggesting that you drop everything you are doing, shirk all your present responsibilities, and simply "follow your heart" until everything magically falls into place.

Quite the opposite in fact.

I suggest that you start with something small and focused, and then gradually let things *grow* from there.

As I touched on at the end of the last chapter, you just need to:

## **Start**

and then

## **Keep Going**

Sounds utterly simplistic, I know, but you would be amazed by the number of people that fail to make something happen simply because they drop the ball in one of these two areas.

As far as "starting" goes, I know all too well how scary/confusing this can be, especially when we're not quite sure WHAT it is exactly that we want to start.

***"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now."***

~ Chinese Proverb

The last thing we want to do is make a "wrong" move, or go down the "wrong" path, but I can tell you from experience that this is just part of the process, and not something you should let get in the way of taking action.

Stop dreaming, or endlessly "planning" and start DOING!

Even if you dedicate a mere 30 minutes a day, and *you stick with it*, I'm confident you will be blown away by what you can accomplish! It's been said that we over-estimate what we can do in a day, or even a week (I hear that! lol) but UNDER-estimate what we can do in a year (a decade etc).

I myself have stumbled and struggled, and have made (and continue to make) more mistakes than you can possibly imagine, but what has made all the difference is the fact that I've just kept pushing ahead, bit by bit.

## **The (Not So) Glamorous Life Of Solopreneurs**

Being "independent of the man", "free from the rat race" etc tends to be over-glorified, especially in the case of web-based businesses (where silly terms such as "the laptop lifestyle" tend to get tossed around a lot).

As much as I *love* the flexibility, the freedom and the deep satisfaction that comes from "getting paid" to do something meaningful (that I also happen to be very passionate about), I want to make it clear that this type of business can require a lot of dedication, focused effort, and patience.

And just generally, I want to make it clear that it's not all "fun and games".

For some, it might feel downright lonely, even terrifying at times.

One of the things that can make a HUGE difference (apart from slowly building things up over time, as touched on already) is getting connected with others on a similar path. When you're involved in a supportive community of people who you can commiserate with, get encouragement from – even mentoring – it can really add some important stability (sanity? Lol) to the process, not to mention help you avoid a lot of

pitfalls, and decrease your learning curve.

I can very clearly remember back to when I first got my start online. After spending some months trying to figure things out on my own, I just happened to join a mentoring group for online entrepreneurs. As it turns out, that was literally the ONE thing that kept me from giving up (and it eventually led me to finding success)!

Simply knowing that there were real, everyday people on the same path as me (many of them already finding a lot of success), was a hugely powerful motivator to keep me pushing ahead.

It was that experience, and the lack of this type of group for worm biz folk that led me to create the Worm Farming Alliance in early 2011 (after its precursor, the RWC Inner Circle, launched in 2009). As you may recall, the first year and a half of my “real world” worm biz was an absolute *nightmare*! Largely because I just didn't know what I was doing (in spite of all my reading on the topic), and I didn't really have anyone to turn to for help.

All I can say is thank-goodness I'm stubborn and (kinda) learn from my mistakes! ;-)

## **The WFA Wants YOU (And Why You Should Care)!**

Earlier I shared my “secrets” about using “freemium” products to offer extreme value while gently nudging people towards high-quality paid products.

Guess I kinda let the cat out of the bag as far as some of my own motivations go.

*Oops!*

Ok, I'm mostly goofing around, but...

YES, it's true – I would absolutely be ecstatic if some of you reading would consider joining in the fun by getting involved in the Worm Farming Alliance.

The WFA's strength, and massive potential, lies primarily in its (growing) community of like-minded individuals. Something I've really tried to hammer home is that all of us each brings a unique set of skills, knowledge and expertise to the table – regardless of where we happen to be on our worm farming journey. So when we work together, and help one another out amazing things can happen!

I'm very proud of the fact that we've built the sort of community where 'newbies' and 'seasoned veterans' alike can feel completely welcome, and can both feel like they are getting something out of the interactions (and out of the membership in general).

If you have any interest in starting up some form of worm farming business or just generally taking your worm farming efforts to the next level, I highly recommend you give the WFA a chance.

I switched over to a very low monthly subscription fee - \$7.97/mo - (with no other upfront costs), specifically so people could try it out and see if it's a good fit for them.

But again, I am definitely not here to beat you over the head with this. If you want delve a bit deeper, you can learn more here:

### [What Makes The WFA So Special?](#)

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## **Final Thoughts**

Whatever you decide to do on your worm farming journey (and life journey in general), I sincerely hope you follow your heart, lock in on the things you are most passionate about, and find ways to make an impact on the lives of others.

I know I am biased, but it definitely feels like there is a growing movement of people who are *ready for change*, and ready to live life on their own terms. No longer happy to simply sit back and let others dictate what we do, and how we do it.

I hope you feel it too, and that you are excited about the possibilities!

Until our paths cross again – I wish you all the best on your journey.

Yours in worm farming,

Bentley "Compost Guy" Christie

