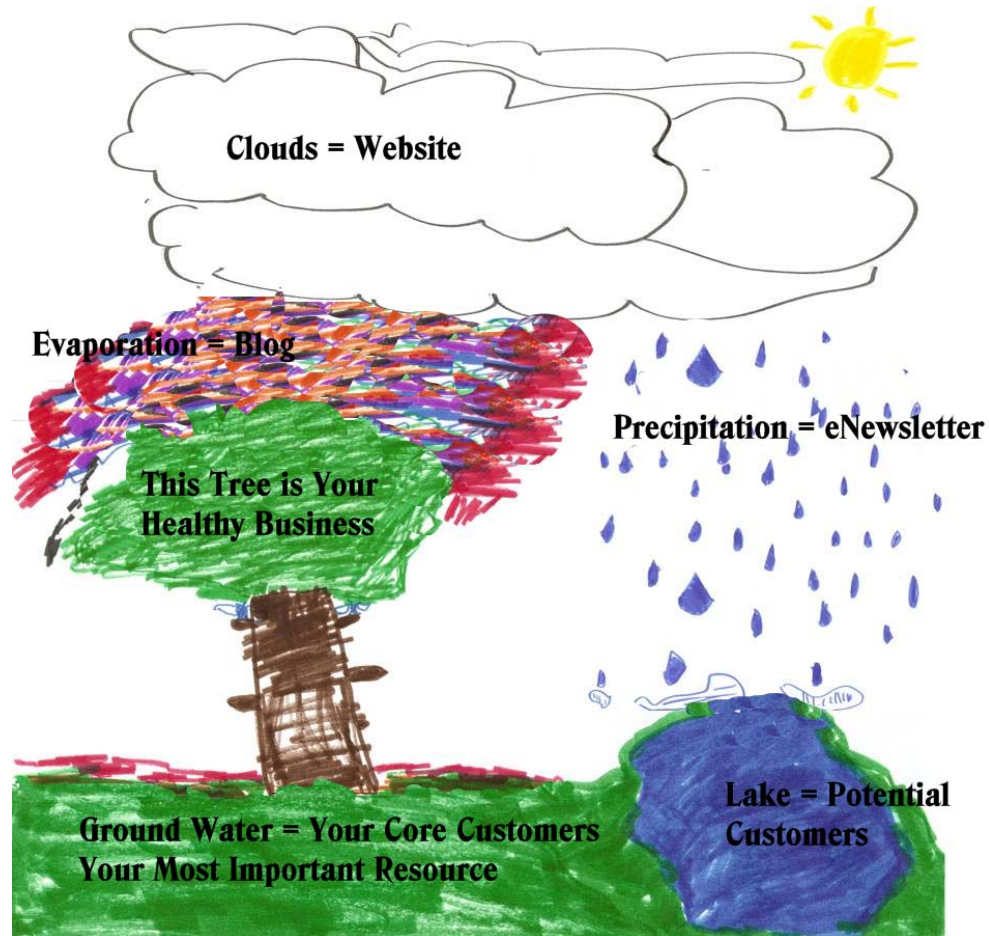


Let It Rain: How Understanding the Water Cycle Leads to a Steady Stream of Customers



Your business needs customers like a tree needs water. Without customers, your business won't survive. The only way to get water in nature is through the water cycle. It's also a great model for how to build and keep **long-lasting and profitable customer relationships that lead to greater success and greater profits.**

The water cycle business model is a circle comprised of a tree, evaporation, clouds, precipitation and water in the ground and lakes.

A Tree = Your Business

Pretend for a moment that your business is a beautiful oak tree, full of life. Your business is watered and fed through its roots and you need water (customers) for your business to survive. You have two types of customers:



- Groundwater: You probably have an existing base of people you know, who have already used your services. These customers work with you because they like you and are pleased with your service. This groundwater is the most important asset of your business because you've already built trust with these people. It's much easier to sell your services to people who already like you and want to work with you ([precipitation](#)).
- Lakes and oceans: There is also a huge pool of people whom you don't know—potential customers. You want to reach this group, too, and turn them into groundwater customers.

The question is, “What is the best and most cost-efficient way to reach potential customers and feed your existing customers?” Use the power of the internet to create a steady stream of customers that feeds your business growth.

Evaporation = A Blog

Evaporation represents actively marketing to draw interest to your company and to begin the getting-to-know-you process. One marketing tool to consider for this purpose is the business blog. Like evaporation feeds water vapor to the clouds, a blog can feed traffic to your website ([clouds](#)). It has the power to introduce strangers and acquaintances to your website and your company. People link to your great content and are able to leave comments, creating a sense of connection and community. For that reason, search engines (like Google) love blogs.

1. You use your expertise to answer business questions you get asked every day. Your blog reflects your personality, your voice and what has made you successful in your business.
2. People search for relevant information about your area of expertise and find your blog because it's chock-full of content related to what they want to know. Because of its great content, people (lakes and oceans people, i.e. potential customers) link to and comment on your blog.
3. Because your blog is linked to your website, people visit your website, building relevant traffic that drives your website ranking higher in the search engines. And a storm is a-brewing, baby!

Another option is for your blog to *be* your website. Then when people link to your blog, they've linked directly to your website. This method also keeps the content on your website growing and keeps it fresh.

Please heed my word of warning. A blog is a lot of work. You have to regularly post, research keywords and information, and consistently deliver great content.



Successful blogs are published at least several times a week. **You MUST commit to your blog or it just won't work.** You can't just plant a garden, never take care of it, and expect it to bear fruit.

In fact, if you don't publish the blog regularly it's likely to backfire. People often won't return to a website if they visit because of the blog and it hasn't been updated for a while. You can either write the blog yourself, get someone on your staff to write it, or hire a good writer. You'll need to commit either time or your money to make your blog a profitable and successful tool.

If you can't do that, skip this step. Evaporation can happen through other means including networking, advertising, cold calling, plain old word-of-mouth, an eNewsletter, etc. A blog just has the potential to reach a more targeted and desirable audience and engage them with your business.

Clouds = Your Website

In today's business environment, you **MUST** have a website. A website does two important things. It allows people you've casually met to check you out, and it allows people you haven't met to find your services and start getting to know you.

Like your blog, your website needs to be a reflection of your business ideals, interests, expertise and **your personal voice.** It needs to tie in with the personality you reveal and develop in your blog. People don't hire you because of your great credentials; people hire you because they make some sort of connection with you.

The voice you use on your website should be the same voice you use in your one-on-one meetings over coffee, the same voice that's used in your blog and the same voice you use in your eNewsletter. The question you have to answer is, "Who is the real me and what do my current clients value in their relationship with me?" That real you needs to show up consistently in order to generate more groundwater (more loyal customers who become friends).

Precipitation = Publish an eNewsletter

Now we come to one of the most important aspects of the cycle. **You need to spend most of your marketing time and budget fostering the relationships you already have.** You've heard of rainmakers? Rainmakers are key people who bring in business. I say skip the rainmaker and just bring on the rain. An eNewsletter can do that.

An eNewsletter starts with the **premise, fact and reality** (in other words, don't miss this) that your most valuable business asset is the relationships you already have. An eNewsletter is a great tool to reach the people that you know. With an eNewsletter you can project your voice and communicate with your list of



customer-friends like you are having coffee with them at your local coffee shop. These are the sources that can feed your business every day. This is your groundwater.

As an added benefit, an eNewsletter also reaches the pool of potential customers (lakes and oceans). Back to the water cycle: When rain falls and it lands on the ground, some of it is absorbed into the ground, becoming groundwater. But some rain runs off into lakes and oceans. Your eNewsletter has the same effect. As you authentically communicate with your groundwater customers, some of the rain runs off and reaches potential lake and ocean customers through referrals. People who value your eNewsletter will forward it to others. A well-written eNewsletter can become a viral marketing tool to draw people in to your business.

Bottom Line

To market online, to create the water cycle, **you must have a website (clouds)**. Without a website, all you've got is a desert where your online marketing strategy will wither and die.

Blogs and eNewsletters are two sides of the same coin.

- Blogs (evaporation) are great for drawing new traffic to your website and keeping your website fresh and relevant.
- An eNewsletter (precipitation) pushes your voice out to your best resource—your existing relationships—and reaches a pool of potential new customers.

If you can only choose one of those strategies, choose the eNewsletter.

Reaching your groundwater customers is far more important, more cost effective and more likely to succeed than reaching total strangers.

Tying the whole cycle together is your authentic voice. The whole point of the online cycle is to make your voice heard by existing and potential customers in order to feed your business.

You've planted your business tree and you've watched it grow. This online strategy will insure that your business gets a steady stream of customers and continues to thrive.

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