

# **ZERO TO ONE MILLION**

## **How I Built a Company to \$1 Million in Sales... And How You Can, Too**

**RYAN ALLIS**

**RYAN ALLIS** is co-founder and CEO of iContact Corp., a venture-capital backed marketing and online communications firm. Mr. Allis founded iContact Corp. and Virante, Inc., a Web marketing firm, while he was a student at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. iContact began operating in October 2002 and ended 2005 with \$1.3 million in sales, 22 employees and 3,600 paying customers. Mr. Allis set a goal to have a \$1 million business by his twenty-first birthday and he missed his deadline by eighteen days. By the end of 2007, iContact has \$6.8 million in sales, 75 employees and 18,000 customers.

The Web site for this book is at [www.zeromillion.com](http://www.zeromillion.com).

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**MAIN IDEA**

To take a company from just an idea to \$1 million in revenue is no small feat, but it can be done. To achieve this for your own business, there are ten basic steps to follow. In overview:

- Steps 1 - 6 are what you need to do to get ready to launch your business, the essential due diligence you'll require.
- Step 7 is to focus on your marketing and sales strategy, the true driver of growth for any business.
- Steps 8 - 10 are to then create the new infrastructure which will be required to manage your enterprise once it gets up and running and as you push on to that \$1 million in sales mark.

*"No matter where you're from, no matter who you are, no matter your access to opportunity or your background – you have the ability to become an extremely successful entrepreneur – with the right dedication, the right belief in yourself, and the right guide. My hope is that I can serve as a guide to helping you set your vision; take action, reach your goals and turn your hard work into millions."*

– Ryan Allis

**The 10-step process for building a company to \$1 million in sales**

- ▶ **1** Understand how the free market system works ..... Page 2  
To get out of the middle class and move towards getting rich, you have to understand the realities of the world of commerce. Decide on what role you will play and then play that role to the hilt to get ahead.
- ▶ **2** Determine exactly what your core motivation is ..... Page 2  
You have to figure out why you want to spend the next few years of your life working long hours to build your own company. If you don't have a good reason why, you just won't be able to stay the course.
- ▶ **3** Decide what you will sell and how you will make money ..... Page 3  
Before you start a company, figure out what you want to sell and how you expect to make money doing that. You'll refine your idea as you go along but be certain your idea is a genuine opportunity.
- ▶ **4** Write your business plan so you can get others to help ..... Pages 3 - 4  
It's worthwhile to have a business plan right from the outset, even if you are bootstrapping. It forces you to be specific. By all means change the plan as you go along but always have one.
- ▶ **5** Raise your start-up funding or go the bootstrap route ..... Page 4  
When everything is go, get started on raising the start-up funding you'll require to make it happen. Be conservative and raise about twice the amount of funding you think you will require.
- ▶ **6** Develop either a product or a new business model ..... Page 5  
To make a lot of money, you're either going to need a new product or you're going to need to create a new business model. You're either going to need to innovate or be an innovation enabler.
- ▶ **7** Build a robust marketing and sales strategy ..... Page 5  
If no one knows about you, it will be impossible to build your business. You have to have smart marketing and sales strategies in place to drive towards \$1 million in sales.
- ▶ **8** Create your online marketing strategy ..... Page 6  
If you're not marketing online in effective ways, it's going to be very difficult to reach \$1 million in sales. Learn how to position your business advantageously using online marketing tools.
- ▶ **9** Form a strong management team ..... Page 6  
To really grow quickly, you'll need to hire other people with additional skills to your own. At the very least, consider having a partner who brings complementary skills to the mix.
- ▶ **10** Build strong business systems and then scale them up ..... Pages 7 - 8  
To keep growing, keep building new systems and processes and automate as many as you can. These systems will allow you to focus your attention on building your business rather than running it.

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