

# TOOLKIT

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FOR GROWING YOUR ONLINE BUSINESS

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**BY SYED BALKHI**

When growing a business, **time is money**.

Leveraging the right set of tools make you more efficient and more productive.

I am often asked about the tools I use to manage and grow my online business.

Here is the list of tools I use for different aspects of my online business.

**Note:** Not all tools that I use are free.

I pay for certain tools and services because they make me more efficient. Instead of looking at them as costs, I look at them as investments.

A tool box stuffed with necessary tools is crucial for your success in building an online business.

**Disclosure:** Some of the links below are affiliate links, and **at no additional cost to you**, I will receive a small commission if you decide to make a purchase. Regardless, I only recommend products or services I use personally and believe will add value to my readers not because of the small commissions.

**PLATFORM**



# WordPress



WordPress is a free content management system that I use to build all of my websites.

I have written a pretty detailed article on [why you should use WordPress?](#)

A lot of the tools that I will recommend later in this toolkit were built specifically for WordPress powered websites.



HOSTING + PERFORMANCE

# Bluehost



[Bluehost](#) is one of the oldest web hosts around the web (started in 1996). I use them for hosting my smaller websites.

They are an official WordPress.org recommended hosting provider.

Bluehost's shared hosting is a great place to start for beginners.



# Pagely



[Pagely](#) is the largest managed WordPress hosting platform. I use them to host all of my eCommerce websites.

Their server architecture is powered by Amazon Cloud which allows you to have the same best-in-class performance, redundancy, scalability, and security that is available to the biggest brands in the world without having to deal with any technical details.

# MaxCDN



[MaxCDN](#) is my top CDN (Content Delivery Network) choice.

They accelerate your site giving you an edge in SEO and User Experience.

Since 2010, I have come to know the folks behind the company on a personal basis.

They are great folks who value their customer service to the highest extent.



SECURITY

# Sucuri



[Sucuri](#) is a website security service with web monitoring and malware cleanup.

Having helped numerous people, I can honestly say that Sucuri is hands down the best and most cost effective in the industry.

It's much better to find that your site is hacked from a monitoring service rather than from your users or worst from Google when they blacklist your website.

# VaultPress



[VaultPress](#) is a WordPress backup solution that creates real-time backups of your entire site.

The best security you can have for your site is having most up to date backups.

VaultPress is the most hassle free solution, and I use it on all my sites. They have saved me quite a few times.

# THEMES



# StudioPress



[StudioPress](#) is a theme company behind the popular Genesis framework.

They have tons of great premium themes available for businesses at an affordable price.

If you're looking for well-coded, beautiful themes, then I'd highly recommend them.

# Get Noticed



Get Noticed is a premium theme by my friend Michael Hyatt that is built to help you create your personal brand.

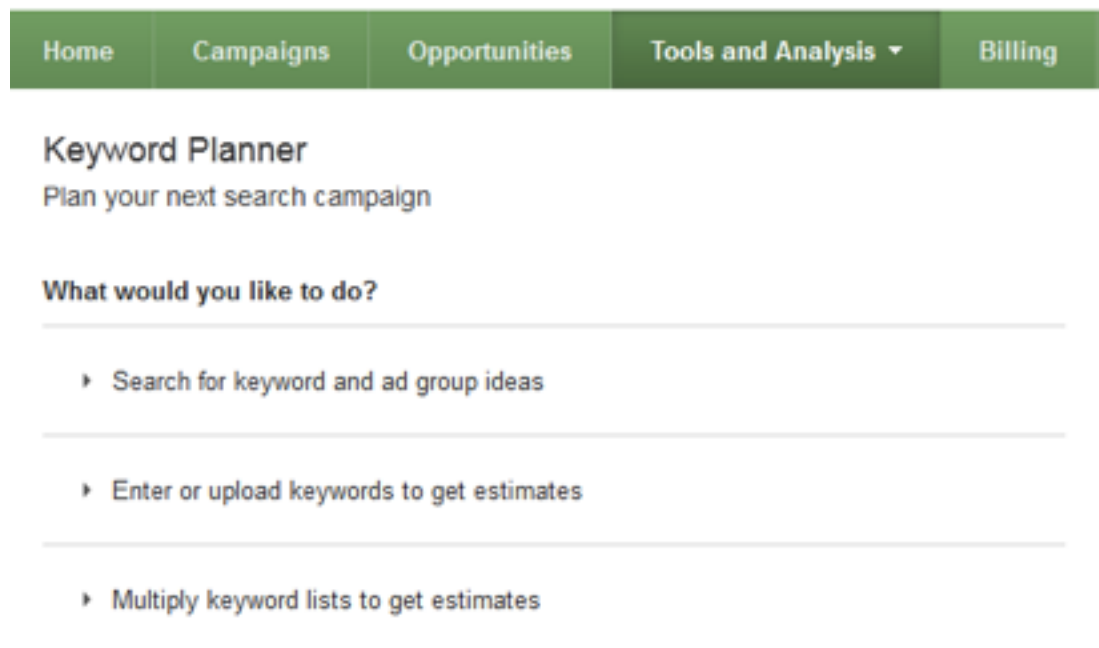
I'm using a customized version of GetNoticed theme on my personal blog.





**WRITING**

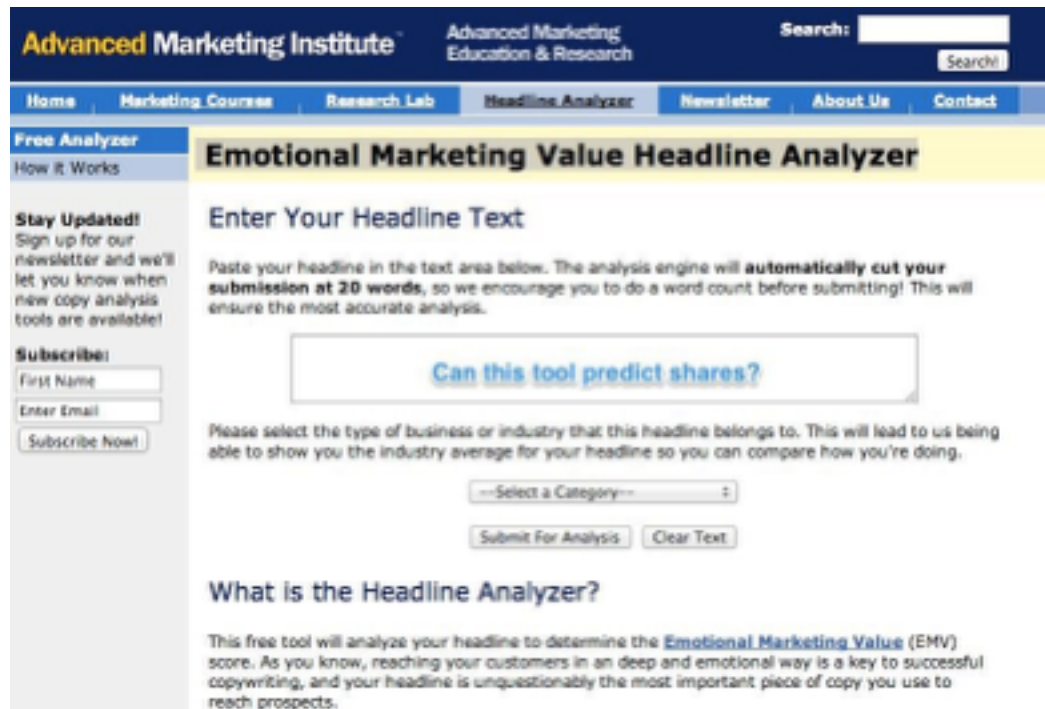
# Google Keyword Planner



Google's keyword planner tool gives you an estimate of search volume for keywords. Using this tool you can identify keywords worth writing about.

You can also find long tail keywords with high search volume that can help you customize your post content and titles. This will allow you to easily rank your posts for these keywords.

# EMV Headline Analyzer



The screenshot shows the website for the Advanced Marketing Institute's EMV Headline Analyzer. The header includes the institute's name, a search bar, and navigation links for Home, Marketing Courses, Research Lab, Headline Analyzer, Newsletter, About Us, and Contact. The main content area is titled "Emotional Marketing Value Headline Analyzer" and prompts the user to "Enter Your Headline Text". It includes a text input field with a sample headline "Can this tool predict shares?", a dropdown menu to "Select a Category", and buttons for "Submit For Analysis" and "Clear Text". A sidebar on the left contains a "Free Analyzer" section, a "Stay Updated!" newsletter sign-up, and a "Subscribe!" form with fields for "First Name" and "Enter Email". A footer section titled "What is the Headline Analyzer?" explains the tool's purpose.

Advanced Marketing Institute<sup>™</sup> Advanced Marketing Education & Research Search:  Search!

Home Marketing Courses Research Lab **Headline Analyzer** Newsletter About Us Contact

**Free Analyzer**  
How It Works

**Stay Updated!**  
Sign up for our newsletter and we'll let you know when new copy analysis tools are available!

**Subscribe!**  
First Name   
Enter Email

**Emotional Marketing Value Headline Analyzer**

**Enter Your Headline Text**

Paste your headline in the text area below. The analysis engine will **automatically cut your submission at 20 words**, so we encourage you to do a word count before submitting! This will ensure the most accurate analysis.

Please select the type of business or industry that this headline belongs to. This will lead to us being able to show you the industry average for your headline so you can compare how you're doing.

**What is the Headline Analyzer?**

This free tool will analyze your headline to determine the [Emotional Marketing Value \(EMV\)](#) score. As you know, reaching your customers in an deep and emotional way is a key to successful copywriting, and your headline is unquestionably the most important piece of copy you use to reach prospects.

[Emotional Market Value headline analyzer](#)

tool checks your post titles, headings, and headlines for emotional impact.

Studies have shown that users find headlines with higher EMV much more appealing.

I use this to test my headlines and call of actions.

# After the Deadline



After the deadline allows you to check your WordPress posts and pages for grammar and spelling mistakes.

Instead of using the WordPress plugin, I use the Browser extension, so it works on all websites.

# EditFlow



[Edit Flow](#) is an editorial plugin for WordPress that allows me to streamline my editorial workflow and increase productivity.

It has an editorial calendar, in-post communication with authors, and much more.

I highly recommend using it on your site.



# SEO

# WP SEO by Yoast



WordPress SEO  
*by Yoast*

I use [WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin](#) to improve the on-page SEO of my site.

It also allows me to create XML Sitemaps and makes sure that the right image shows up for all of my Facebook statuses.

# HitTail



[HitTail](#) is a tracking software that track your website search data for under-performing long tail keywords.

It basically tells me which articles I should focus on to easily boost my search engine rankings.



# E-COMMERCE & LEAD GENERATION



# OptinMonster



[OptinMonster](#) is the best lead-generation plugin for WordPress.

I built this plugin, and I use it to grow my email list.

It has helped me increase my subscribers by 600%.

# Gravity Forms



[Gravity Forms](#) is the contact form plugin that I use on all my sites.

It's extremely easy to use because of its drag-drop interface.

You can create payment forms, donation forms, and much more.

# Easy Digital Downloads



[Easy Digital Downloads](#) is my choice of WordPress eCommerce plugin.

I use this plugin to power all of my online stores.

If you're looking to sell digital products, then this is the best plugin in the market.

# MailChimp



[MailChimp](#) is my preferred email marketing software. I use it to send millions of emails every year.

It's very easy to use, and by offers the most extensibility.

It is also the strongest integration partner for OptinMonster.



**SOCIAL MEDIA**

# Buffer



[Buffer](#) is my favorite status sharing service.

It allows you to share a status message simultaneously on your Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn profiles.

The cool part about Buffer is it's auto-scheduling ability which helps me streamline my workflow in combination with [BulkBuffer](#).

# HootSuite



[HootSuite](#) is a social media management tool that allows me to manage all my social accounts.

I use it along with my social media team to engage with our various communities.





PRODUCTIVITY

# Asana



[Asana](#) is a project management tool that promises to free your team from the shackles of email.



It puts conversations and tasks together so that you can get things done without switching back and forth between email and actual tasks.



# Time Doctor



[Time Doctor](#) is a productivity tool that allows me to monitor how I spend my time while working.

It tracks my behavior, shows time spent on websites, social media, applications, and idle time.

It's also great for time-tracking hourly employees and contractors.

# Evernote



[Evernote](#) is hands down the best app to take notes, create to-do lists, schedule appointments, saving bookmarks, and more.

This is my go-to app as I travel a lot. Also because I believe if you don't write it down, you'll forget it.

If you haven't used Evernote, give it a shot. You will not regret it.

# 8 Foot White Board



Whether it's presentation planning, strategy outline, or designing, I constantly find myself writing on my white board because it gives me the space and the freedom to move around and draw out whatever I need.

I highly recommend it if you have the space. I currently use an [8 foot wide white board](#).



COMMUNICATION

# Last Pass



**LastPass** \*\*\*\*

[LastPass](#) is a password management tool that I use.

It allows me to use strong passwords which is very important.

The functionality that I absolutely love is the ability to share passwords with my team members without having them actually knowing the password.

# Slack



[Slack](#) makes team communication simpler.

It's a group chat software that allows you to share files, documents, and code.

I use it because it acts like group text messaging with my team. It's a dream come true for remote-team communication.



# Skype



[Skype](#) is the software I use for video meetings with my company.

On a daily basis, I'm working with a team of editors, designers, developers, and support staff. For me, Skype is a must have tool for quick video calls, screen-share calls, and collaboration.

# Help Scout



[HelpScout](#) is a great customer service application that I love using.

As my site has grown, my contact form inquiries goes through multiple people.

HelpScout allows us to properly assist our customers and blog readers.

It has canned-responses, notes, smart workflows, and more.

# Gmail



Gmail the premier email service from Google needs no description.

I use the Google Apps suite for my company emails, sharing files, calendar, etc.

I highly recommend using Gmail over most other email services.



ANALYTICS + MONITORING

# Google Analytics

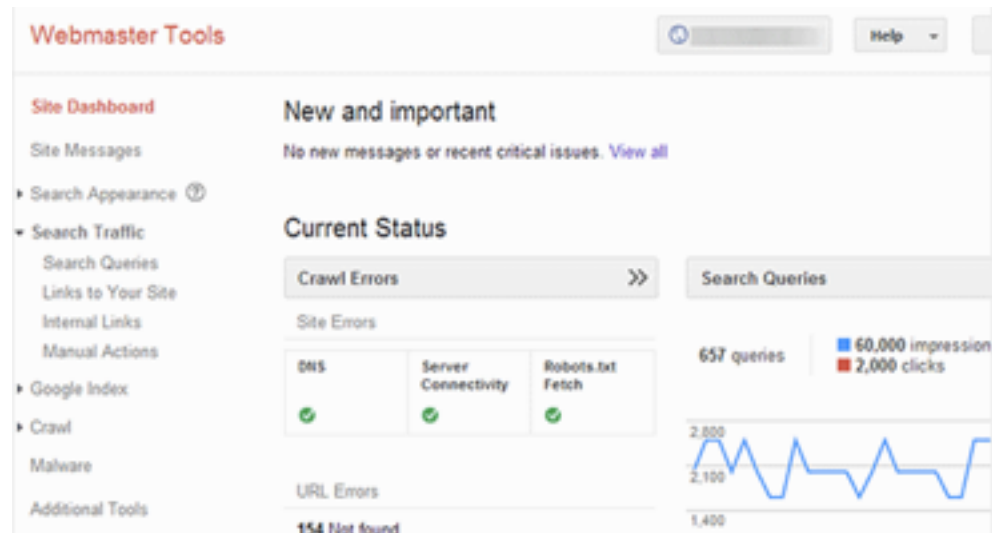


[Google Analytics](#) is an excellent free web analytics tool.

It shows us who visits our website, where they come from, and how they interact with our content.

If you're working in WordPress, WPBeginner can show you [how to set up Google Analytics](#).

# Google Webmaster Tools



[Google Webmaster Tools](#) allows me to check how Google sees my website.

Since Google is the largest traffic source for most websites, I always want to learn different ways to improve my rankings.

# Raven Tools



[RavenTools](#) is a suite of tools and utilities for professional marketers.

I use RavenTools to analyze my website ranking in details and improve my marketing campaigns.

# Pingdom

pingdom

[Pingdom](#) is a popular website uptime monitoring service.

Since my business is online (24x7), I want to know if something goes wrong.

Pingdom's mobile app alerts me when my website goes down or something strange happens.





PRESENTATION

# Keynote



One of my favorite features of my Macbook is Keynote.

I use Keynote extensively and design all of my presentations in Keynote for the simple reason that it works and works well.

# Photoshop



When presenting in front of a crowd, quality images are key. For my presentations, I use images to convey my key points, and for that I use Photoshop.

# Professional Presenter R800



This is probably the best tangible presentation tool out there. The [Logitech R800](#) not only advances slides like a typical clicker, but also manages presentation time by showing a timer and vibrating to remind you of the time.



**VIDEOS**

# Pad Prompter



[Pad Prompter](#) is a handy tool for my home-studio. It allows me to use my iPad as a teleprompter when making short-videos.

It's extremely easy to setup and gives you the professional video feel.

# Teleprompt+



Now on it's third version, [Teleprompt +](#) is where I organize my scripts for videos when using the Pad Prompter.

This makes an excellent teleprompter.

# Rode Podcaster



The [Rode Podcaster](#) is the best USB mic out there. I use it for myself and for all of our YouTube Videos over at List25.

I can surely get a better mic, but it would require me to setup a mixer and make things more complicated.

This is easy and fast.



# Camtasia



[Camtasia](#) is a my preferred choice for screen recording software.

It's available for Windows and Mac.

Extremely useful for sites where you need to do walk-through videos for users.

It also allows you to easily edit your videos, add graphics, animations, sounds, etc.

# Canon T3i



The Canon T3i is the camera I use to record short videos and take still pictures. While my T3i has been discontinued, you can find a similar camera in the [Canon T5](#).

# Sony UWP-V1



When I need to film outside of the office, I rely on two sets of Sony microphones. The first, the UWP-V1 is a simple setup that gives me top quality sound.

Unfortunately, the V1 has been discontinued, but Amazon has a [similar set available](#).

# Sony ECM-AW3



My second portable microphone is the [ECM-AW3 by Sony](#). While it's not as easy to hide as the UWP-VI, it still produces great sound even when recording in loud places (like Niagara Falls or when you're driving).



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

# Audible



When you're as busy as I am, you want to keep learning ,but you often don't have the time it takes to read a book.

For that reason I started using [Audible](#) to download the books I'd like to read and listen to them when I'm driving or flying.

By far the best decision I made.

AudioBooks rock!

# Feedly



I use [Feedly](#) to keep myself up to date with the latest news and trends.

If you're not doing this already, then you should be as this is an integral part of a blogger's daily work routine.

Feedly is the best way to read all your favorite blogs and news in one place.

# Let's Connect

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