Nonverbal Website Intelligence

The

5

Invisible Forces
Behind Effective
Online Marketing

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Nonverbal Website Intelligence
The 5 Invisible Forces Behind Effective Online Marketing

Inside this report, I'm going to explain to you how you can influence people on your website with what I call Nonverbal Website Intelligence.

Before we get started, I want you to know that these tactics will work across the board – from professional blogging... to small local businesses... to Fortune 100 companies.

How do I know these strategies work?

Because I've spent the last 5 years studying how people react when they hit websites, and I've discovered these proven nonverbal methods that influence people online.

Long story short, by the time you're done reading this report, you'll know these 5 key elements and how to use them to improve your website instantly.

Now let's dig in.

What is Nonverbal Website Intelligence?

You're creating lots of content to communicate with your audience online. This is more-or-less the equivalent of verbal communication.

But, as with person-to-person interaction, there's another form of communication that takes place online. And as you probably guessed, it's nonverbal communication.

If you ignore this form of communication, you risk losing visitors, sales, and subscribers.

Every decision you make on your site communicates a message to your audience – even tiny seemingly trivial choices send a message.

For example, if you stumble on a minimalist tips website with a cluttered sidebar, how would you view their content? I'd probably say something like this:

"Heck, they can't keep their own stuff in check, how can they teach me anything?"

Or, as another example, what if you want to buy something from a website and you have to wait several minutes for it to load? What if you repeatedly have loading issues? How would you feel about that online store? Pretty negatively, right?

You may notice a trend here...

I'm talking about how small details make big differences. It's not just about your content or your brand, it's about these details that can make or break your website.

So, how do you learn how to control these small details?

Well, to master them, you must learn what I call Nonverbal Website Intelligence, which in reality, is a fancy way to say "learn how people think online."

The Foundation of Nonverbal Website Intelligence

After reading tons of books, testing thousands of ideas, and learning from some of the best mentors, I've whittled down Nonverbal Website Intelligence into 5 key items:

1. Enlightening Images
2. Effortless Navigation
3. Soothing Typography
4. Engagement Evidence
5. Instant Access

In the remaining pages of this report, you'll learn how you can get each item working on your website with my easy-to-implement tips.

Sure, some of them may be more time intensive than others, but people who are serious about their website shouldn't stress. It's worth it.

Oh, and don't worry… Everything in this report will be easy-to-implement for new website owners and experienced web developers alike.

#1 Enlightening Images

Images are an essential element of engaging websites. They communicate feelings, fuel imagination, and immerse people in the story you're sharing.

Oh, and did I mention, aside from your headline, they're one of the first things people see when they load your page?

You get it – images are powerful. But let's face it, not all of us can afford the time or money to pay a photographer top dollar to take the perfect picture. So, what can we do?

First, you can find an image that's good enough and then you can enhance it with Nonverbal Website Intelligence.

Images act as a GPS device that guides your visitors in a specific direction. When you know how to fine-tune this device, you can make even mediocre images into amazing beacons that shine on the path you want visitors to travel.

Before I tell you how to enhance your images, you may need help finding an image.

Personally, I'm a big fan of IStockPhoto, but if you're looking for free images, I suggest you read Skelliewag's tutorial on how to find Flickr images.

So, let's assume you have an image now. Here's how you can enhance it:

A. Line of Sight

Imagine you're walking down an empty city block and you spot someone curiously looking up at the sky. Would you quickly glance up to see what has their attention?

Probably. People, almost innately, follow the gaze of other people. Now you're wondering, what does this have to do with websites?

Let's say you're going to use a picture of a person on your website. Keeping line of sight in mind, you should direct their gaze the direction where you want your visitors to look.

Guess what happens? People will follow the gaze of the person in the picture because a human gaze is like a big red arrow pointing in a specific direction.

I know this may seem silly, but these little things add up, so, make sure your pictures of people look where you want your visitors to look.

Here's an example:

source: http://chemistry.com

B. Captions

You already know how much attention images get on your site. After the image, the next piece of content that grabs a lot of reader attention is the image caption.

As a matter of fact, in *Ca$hvertising* by Drew Eric Whitman, he said that captions often have 200% higher readership than any copy other than the all-powerful headline.

For example, take a minute and think about how you read a newspaper. You pick it up, spot the headline, see the picture, and instantly read the caption. It's how people read.

The strange thing is, most people leave captions off of their images. This is a SIN. Why would you avoid using one of the most well-read pieces of content on your website?

So, you may not have a professional photographer taking pictures for you, but don't let that hold you back. You can use the caption to help your readers instantly understand your idea.

Or, from a sales perspective, you can use the caption to highlight one of the key benefits of your product. You know they're going to read it, so take advantage of it.

#2 Effortless Navigation

When people visit your site, they're trying to find something. It could be content, contact information, or anything else your site may offer.

And, how do people find what they want? Your website's navigation.

You may think you have this in check, but there are vital pieces of Nonverbal Website Intelligence that help your visitors find what they want in a more natural, effortless way.

Before I jump into the details, let me set the stage...

There are three types of people on the web: the searchers, the browsers, and the people who are a mixture of both. If you want your website to reach its full potential, you must cater to all three.

Luckily, the searchers are easy. If you include a search form and return accurate results, they'll be happy.

The remaining two groups are where Nonverbal Website Intelligence helps you drastically. So, let's dive in:

A. Active Commands

If you want to direct your Browsers to a specific page, you should use active commands because they work better than passive statements. Now, you may be thinking… doesn't this qualify as verbal?

Yes, but it's not the *substance* of your primary communication. And the way you phrase your navigational text has a powerful "under-the-radar" psychological effect.

For example, let's say you have a choice between one of the following options. Which one do you think attracts the most clicks?

1. I'm on Twitter
2. Follow me on twitter
3. You should follow me on twitter
4. You should follow me on twitter here

If you guessed option 4, you'd be right. However, if you didn't, let me explain.

This example was a real-life case study. On Which Test Won, Anne Holland wrote about this split test performed by Dustin Curtis.

The funny thing is, Dustin's audience is web savvy. You would think active commands like "click here" would be lost on them because they know what they're doing, but that wasn't the case. The active command drastically improved performance.

More specifically, option 4 came in with 12.81% click through, whereas option 3 came in at 10.09% click through, or, in other words, option 4 out performed option 3 by 27%.

(The other two options on the other hand weren't contenders. If you want to see the complete results, check out Which Test Won here)

Now, the question is, when should you use active commands? Well, for starters, you don't want to overload your site with active commands because too many will come across as overly authoritarian and lose effectiveness.

Instead, you should use focused active commands to promote *what you really want your visitors to do* on each page. For example, you may want to highlight your subscription box, Twitter profile, or product pages.

B. Editorial Cross-Links

When you write an article, you should link to other related pages throughout your content. Aside from being a search engine optimization best practice and a smart way to annotate your articles with supporting evidence, it's also a key way to get browsing visitors to stay on your site longer.

Why do editorial links work?

When you include links "inside" your content, it's hard for browsers to miss. These editorial links help pique curiosity and gets them to click to more articles, which further builds your value and authority and prompt more subscriptions.

C. One Page, One Goal

If you want your Browsers / Searchers to take some form of action, you need a clearly defined goal for each of your pages. To accomplish this effectively, you should have one goal per page.

Chances are, you've probably heard of *analysis paralysis*. That's when people over think a decision and fail to take any action at all.

When you have more than one goal per page, you risk creating a paralyzed mindset for browsers. Instead of browsing, they'll leave without making any clicks or taking any action.

What goal should you have for each page?

Well, there are three key website pages: Home Page, Interior Content, and Category/Archive pages. To maximize their usefulness, each one should have a different goal.

1. **Home Page** – People who hit your home page are generally trying to figure out what you're all about. With a publishing model, it's your freshest content. In e-commerce, it's likely your products and information that supports a buying decision.

2. **Interior Content** – Since the majority of your traffic will hit interior content pages and posts (due to links and search results), the sole purpose is to turn random visitors into regular visitors. You do this by highlighting related content (editorial links) and by asking for email / rss signups. Note that one of the highest converting spots on interior pages is right before the article begins and right after it ends.

3. **Category / Archive / Tag Pages** – Like the home page, the sole purpose of these sections of your site should be to highlight the content within each category. Additionally, you may want to explain what each category is all about to help the browser understand what they're browsing through.

D. Uncluttered Sidebars

Your sidebar is one of the most important sections on your website because people will see it throughout the entire site. The problem is too many people overload their sidebars with widgets, badges, tag clouds, tweet feeds, recent comments, and whatever else their heart desires.

As you would guess, this creates visual clutter, which is both exhausting and stressful for Browsers, and contributes to analysis paralysis. To avoid this, you must de-clutter your sidebars. Ditch most of the widgets, badges, and other non-essential nonsense and focus on what truly matters to achieve your goals.

What's essential?

This varies based on your site, but the song remains the same. Once you get people to visit, you want to maintain their attention over time. You can do this by sending them to other pieces of content or by asking for a subscription.

While I agree that Facebook and Twitter feeds add interaction to your site, why would you send your hard-earned traffic to someone else? You earned it, you should keep it.

Now I'm not telling you to skip Twitter or Facebook. For some people, these are massive sources of traffic. And that's the point – the effective use of social networking is to primarily drive people to your site *from* Facebook and Twitter, not *to* them.

Now you must be wondering, "What should I include in my sidebars?"

Like earlier, I'll assume you're a blogger, so here are three things you should focus on:

• **Resource Pages** – If you've been blogging for an extended period of time, chances are you built up some resource pages. You should include links to them in your sidebar because your readers will find them valuable. Plus, this is great for SEO.

• **Subscription Options** – Remember, you want to convert random browsing into extended attention. To accomplish this, you must give them a quick and easy way to get your content regularly. This can be email subscription, RSS, or even a Bookmark Me button.

• **Popular Posts / Articles** – Testing shows that this section of the sidebar often gets a lot of click action by Browsers. And that makes sense. If it's popular, it must be good. Plus, since they're already popular, it will encourage people to continue to promote them because, well... they're popular (more about that in section #5 - Engagement Evidence).

E. A Short Path to Important Content

From a website navigation perspective, you want your most important content to be easily accessible by visitors hitting almost any page of your site. If you create the resource pages and link them in your sidebar like I talked about earlier, you'll accomplish this easily.

What does this have to do with "Nonverbal Website Intelligence," you ask. Well, let me tell you.

When you promote resource pages about specific topics, it allows you to send subconscious signals about your brand to your Browsers / Searchers. The accessibility to your core content will let new visitors, no matter what day they visit your site, know exactly what you stand for in an intuitive "at a glance" way that that reinforces perceived value in the mind.

Remember... when it comes to Nonverbal Website Intelligence, perception is reality. The principles of effortless navigation are highly persuasive, so make sure your site benefits from them.

#3 Soothing Typography

People are accustomed to great typography thanks to decades of big-media textual content like newspapers and books. So, if you're producing web content, you must meet these ingrained psychological expectations or risk losing visitors and customers before they finish reading two sentences.

And this is why typography is the 3rd element of Nonverbal Website Intelligence.

Now I could talk about line heights, letter spacing, and other jargon like that, but it won't make much sense to many of you (or me). It's better to leave that stuff to professionals because it takes years to learn and master.

Instead, I'll teach you how typography communicates with people "under the radar."

For example, there's a perfect font for increasing website readability and I'll tell you what it is. There's also a font that gets customers thinking "high prices," and I'll tell you about that too!

Before we continue, that jargon stuff I mentioned earlier is vital for website usability. If you use the [Thesis Theme for WordPress](#), it's taken care of "out of the box."

If you don't, you should hire a professional designer who's spent years learning the perfect way to present text.

Ready? Let's get into it!

A. The Perfect, Most Readable Font

People who visit your website are doing so via many different types of computers. Some may be using a PC with a 15" monitor while others may be using a 27" iMac.

Keeping that in mind, what's the best font to ensure that everyone can read your content without any problems?

If you're using smaller than 12px for font size, the generally accepted standard is Verdana. Research has shown that it's the most readable font.

However, if you're using larger than 12 px for font size, the generally accepted standard is Arial.

While these are good rules of thumb, I do have to make one comment. The research that came up with these conclusions was conducted in the early 2000s.

And, as you already know, much has changed. For example, people are using higher resolution, larger computer screens.

So, after talking with Chris Pearson (he's a type-design nut, which is why Thesis has pinpoint font controls and mathematically-precise typography) he thinks new research, when conducted, will find different conclusions.

Both Arial and Verdana are what you call sans-serif font faces, which means they don't have little feet on the letters like the ones in this report.

Originally, sans-serif fonts were preferred on the web because they were easier to read on smaller monitors with low resolution. Serif font faces, on the other hand, were harder to read because the feet obscured how the letters looked.

However, with improved computer screens, this may no longer be the case and new design theory has emerged that suggests serif font faces may be preferable for long lines of text.

The serif on the bottom of each letter creates horizontal flow on sentences. Some designers believe this encourages people to continue reading and finish content.

Personally, I think each argument has compelling evidence. To make the best decision, I would fire up your stats program and look at your visitors' computer specs.

If you notice higher resolution monitors, you could safely pick Serif font faces. If you notice low resolution, you should pick sans serif. Or, better yet, split-test both fonts and see what works best.

B. Choose Simple Fonts (Almost Always)

If you want people to take some form of action, you should use a simple, easy-to-read font. It's more readable and people will estimate that it takes less time to complete.

How much less time?

Almost 50%. To elaborate, researchers Hyunjin Song and Norbet Schwartz discovered this unusual trend when they tested it on two groups of people.

To one group, they gave directions in an easy-to-read font, and to the other group, they gave directions in a hard-to-read script font.

The results were astounding. People who received the simple font estimated that it would take 8.2 minutes to complete the directions whereas people who received the complex font estimated that it would take 15.1 minutes to complete.

Unreal right? So, the key take away is this: if you want people to do something, use a simple font. (To read more about the study, click here).

C. The One Exception When Fancy Fonts Work

Remember the two researchers Hyunjin Song and Norbet Schwartz? Well, as part of their research, they discovered that fancy fonts work in this scenario:

If you are selling a high-priced product, fancy fonts suggest more effort went into creating it. Since the font is difficult to read, people assume it's difficult to make.

How did Song and Schwartz come to this conclusion?

During a research experiment, Song and Schwartz presented research participants with a menu item printed in either a simple font or a fancy font. Compared to those who received the simple font, people who received the hard-to-read font believed the chef preparing the meal had more skill.

Strange, right?

The key takeaway is this: *if people must concentrate more to read your product's description, they'll often think more work went into creating the product.*

(To read more about this study, click here).

D. Break the Left Margin

Have you ever watched a presidential speech? If yes, you probably spotted the secret service people on the stage scanning the crowd. What exactly are they looking for?

According to Joe Navarro, in *Louder than Words*, the secret service is looking for what the they call "A Face in the Crowd."

And what's "A Face in the Crowd," you ask?

Body language research shows that people watching a speech share similar facial expressions. However, when someone has other intentions other than watching the speech, they often have a markedly different face and stick out like a sore thumb.

Now what does this have to do with Nonverbal Website Intelligence?

The people visiting your website are like secret service agents. They scan through your website looking for something that grabs their attention, or, in other words, they look for the "Face in the Crowd."

Now, chances are, you see where I'm going here. You want your typography to be a cohesive crowd. Nothing should stick out. The letters should start at the left margin.

However, if you want to create that "Face in the Crowd" to grab attention, one of the best ways to do that is to violate the left margin. Make something stick out a little bit more than it should and people will notice it almost immediately.

Here's an example:

Do you see how the bag of money hangs off of the right margin? Everything is as expected and uniform at the right margin, until you see that icon. What happens next? Your attention is instantly drawn to the Free E-Course. Imagine what subscription conversions are like!

You can easily do similar things with your typography as well. Typically, website text lines up on a left margin. You could begin the first line of paragraphs a little bit more to the left (called a "hanging indent" in typography circles), or begin paragraphs with a large stylized initial letter (called a "paragraph ornament").

Both of these typographical tricks attract attention by breaking the left margin. And that's just two more great way to grab a reader's valuable attention.

#4 Engagement Evidence

If you want people to share your content and buy your products, you should expressly provide prominent *evidence of existing engagement* to encourage even more engagement. It sounds circular, but it's true due to a powerful aspect of human nature – what social psychologists call *social proof*.

People tend to do things they see other people do in new or novel situations because they naturally assume other people are more informed than they are. Therefore, people look for "evidence of engagement" before they engage.

For years, online marketers have known about the power of social proof and have used it on their websites – just think about how you often see customer reviews, testimonials, and stated numbers of people visiting websites / buying products.

But before you implement these "magic bullets," there are a few things you must learn about social proof as evidence of engagement. So, keep reading.

1. Eliminate Negative Engagement Evidence

If you're a website owner, chances are you're using social buttons like a retweet button and Facebook share button. While these buttons make it easier for your audience to share your content, if it's not being used, is it worth keeping on your website?

Yes, but be careful.

Remember, people tend to look for and act according to evidence of what other people are doing. If you show 0 retweets, chances are, no one or not many will retweet it because no one else did.

Let's get into specifics. Where can we see negative engagement evidence online?

Retweet Buttons – With the popularization of Twitter, retweet buttons are everywhere. If your retweet button typically shows less than 10 retweets, I'd consider using a retweet button without a counter.

Twitter Followers – If you have a low Twitter follower count, don't display it in your sidebar. People will unfairly think it's not worth it to follow you. In the next section, I'll show you how to add a positive spin to this.

Blog Comments – Everyone blogs and most blogs have blog comments. However, if you show off that you have zero comments on blog posts, chances are, people will think your blog is dead. So, if you're launching a new blog, consider disabling blog comment counts until you build up an audience.

Facebook Like Buttons – As with the Retweet button, Facebook sharing is popular. However, if you're not getting any Facebook Likes, you're better off including a Facebook Like button that doesn't keep a public count.

Facebook Fan Pages – Everyone wants a fan page nowadays. The problem is, when you promote your Fan page on your sidebar and you have less than 1,000 fans, it looks like you're unpopular. You don't want to actively display this because random people will, once again, unfairly judge you.

Feedburner Counters – Most bloggers use Feedburner for their RSS. If you have less than 1,000 RSS readers, consider hiding how many people subscribe to your blog until you cross that magic line into 4-figure influence.

Negative Reviews – If you have an option to review your product, and the reviews are overwhelmingly negative, it's better off that you don't show them. Now, I know this sounds shady, but we're talking about negative social proof here. As a businessperson, you should work to improve your product based on those reviews, because there's no amount of Nonverbal Website Intelligence that can make a bad product into a great or even good one.

2. Highlight Positive Engagement Evidence

Makes sense, right? If you have positive social proof available, make sure people can see it. You may think this sounds self-congratulatory, but it does wonders for convincing random people to buy or continue to visit your site without having to overtly brag or boast.

As with negative social proof, let me show you some specific examples:

Positive Testimonials – Has anyone ever emailed you a compliment about your website? Probably. You should ask them if it's okay to display their email on your site as some positive engagement evidence.

Large numbers of people – If you're running a website, your audience may be larger than you think. As an example, look at this screenshot:

Here, you'll notice that Naomi from Ittybiz chooses to highlight her total monthly unique visitors. The reason being, 24,002 sounds better than other metrics.

The key takeaway is that whatever you choose to highlight, make sure it's the best thing possible. If your monthly visitor count sounds better than daily, use it. If your Twitter followers sound better than RSS, don't be afraid to promote that either.

#5 Instant Access

Your blog leaves an impression on people before they see a single word of your content. Yes, really!

Before the substance of your content can be evaluated, the first impression you make is this:

Fast site load times = positive.

Slow site load times = negative.

Think about this for one second...

If you're running an offline business, do you want the door to jam as customers try to come in? If you run a newsstand, do you cover the magazines with a heavy black tarp that you'll only slowly remove while the customer waits on the sidewalk?

Absolutely not!

The funny thing is, you may think this sounds trivial because of widespread use of broadband internet connections, but it's a vital piece of Nonverbal Website Intelligence.

Why?

People HATE waiting for websites to load... even if it's just a few seconds. And the worst part? People are unforgiving!

To elaborate, a Gomez study showed that 78% of web visitors would abandon your site for a competitor after repeated issues with load time, with 30% leaving after one issue.
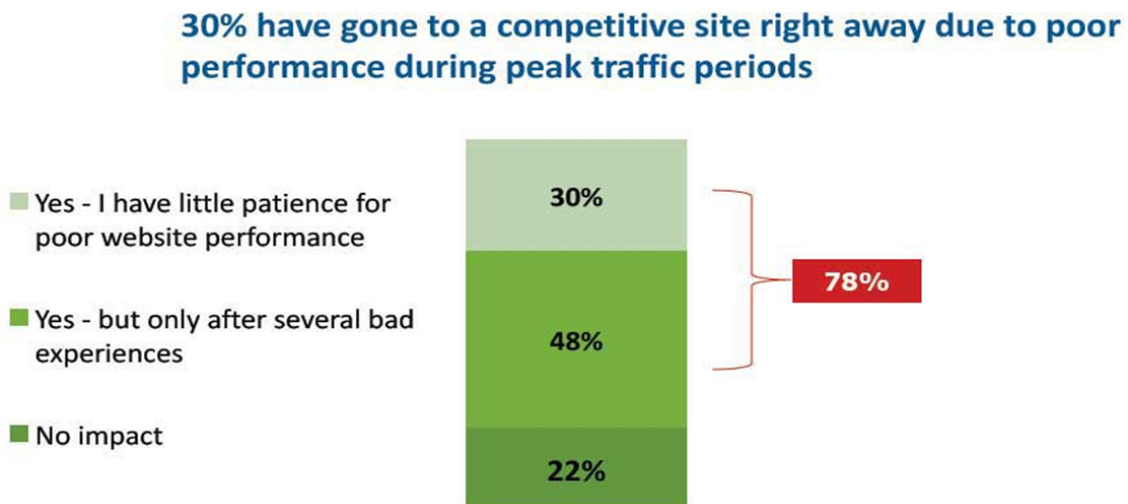

Figure 1: source: http://www.gomez.com

To Further Stress the Importance of Fast Load Times…

Not only do you stand to frustrate your customers, you also stand to annoy the traffic fire hose known as Google.

A few months back, Google revealed they penalize websites with slow load times in their search engine results. And it makes sense, right? Why would they frustrate their searchers with slow sites?

Now if you're anything like me, you're probably thinking, "Enough! I get it. Fast load times are important, but how do I speed up my site?"

How to Speed Up Your Wordpress Website

For starters, the code stuff is going to be too technical for most people (including me). So let's stick to the best practices that anyone can implement.

Step 1: Eliminate Unnecessary Plugins

When most people get started with Wordpress, they tend to get plugin happy. They often think, "I need all of this functionality to grow a popular website."

The problem is, plugins won't grow your audience. A fast-loading website that doesn't piss off your visitors will. Trust me!

Think long and hard about which plugins are absolutely essential to what you're trying to accomplish. Then eliminate everything that isn't essential.

Step 2: Reduce Image Sizes

With widespread use of broadband internet, images are commonplace (and essential) on websites.

The problem is, larger-than-necessary images create server load because of the large file size.

To avoid this, you must minimize the file size of each image. Here are three great links that will help you:

- Tutorial: [How to Optimize a Picture for the Web](#)
- Tool: [Dynamic Drive's Online Image Optimizer](#)
- Tool Box: [8 Tools for Image Optimization](#)

Step 3: Keep Your Code Clean

Many times the HTML markup of your content will get muddled up with useless code, primarily due to wysiwyg editors and cutting and pasting copy from Microsoft Word. Removing the junk will not only speed up your load time, but makes your pages validate cleaner for SEO purposes.

Plus, the underlying code of your website framework must be properly coded and clean. Poorly-coded websites and blogs kill load times and prevent search engine spiders from properly evaluating your content for indexing and ranking.

Finally, make sure the PHP elements of your site are efficiently accessing your database to perform functions. WordPress in particular can be notoriously bad about inefficiently calling on the database in search of the correct function, which slows load times and site performance.

Step 4: The Complete Guide to Speeding Up Website Load Times

Recently, Willie Jackson, a speed optimization expert, prepared an article for the official DIYthemes blog, which shows you, in detail, how you can speed up your website. I highly recommend you read his article from start to finish. If nothing else, you'll learn exactly what you need to ask your web host or tech guy with regards to your website's speed.

[Performance Unleashed: How to Optimize Websites for Speed](#)

"Hey, Wait a Minute…"

You made it! You've reached the end of my first report.

If you found this report helpful, you'll be happy to know that when down-loading this report, you signed up to receive FREE updates.

Now you may be wondering, "What free updates?"

Over the next few months, we'll create tons of valuable content that will teach you how to improve your website, including:

- Free Training Seminars
- High-Quality Workbooks and Reports
- Live Webinars
- Informative, How-To Blog Articles
- And Various Other Teaching Materials

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me, Derek Halpern, personally on Twitter. I'll gladly answer any questions you may have!

Click Here to Talk to Me On Twitter