

# INTEGRATED

---

People are finding the internet more valuable than a newspaper, TV, radio or the phone book. It's the most important thing to happen to human evolution since the invention of fire. By developing an internet presence for your enterprise, you gain a valuable link to those that are connected to the world wide web. Across town or world wide, your product or service can be presented to a the growing world of internet users. Your presence can even help you control and evolve your business.

## ON-LINE ADVANTAGES

- Perpetual Presentation - your products can be presented "24/7"
- Product Comparison - visitors can leisurely browse your product line, comparing features, benefits and prices. Advanced users can bookmark the pages, visit your competitors, and make educated decisions.
- Many Commerce Options - think "outside the box", web based commerce is more than product sales. · Knowledge Base Presentation.
- Customer Service · Scheduling · Request for Proposal, Information or Quote

Thousands of new web sites are created daily by businesses and inspired entrepreneurs. The majority of these sites will contain serious design flaws, yet the domain is "In- Production" and on the web. These flaws are costing visitors, reputations and profits. Some of those flaws are:

### 1) Slow Loading Pages

I conducted a survey of 50 different web sites chosen at random. I have a broadband connection for really fast downloads. Twenty-six (26) of those site's home page took longer than one minute to load. The longest wait took over three (3) minutes to fully load. Only eight of these sites loaded in ten seconds or less. Design your site considering the average web surfer is not a very patient sort. If your page takes longer than 20 seconds to load then your visitors have probably left before all your graphics have appeared. Some statistics indicate that "wait-willingness" might be as little as 16 seconds at most sites. What causes a slow loading web site? · Too many words for a single screen · Too many pictures, fonts, effects, poorly packaged features · Too many scripts and too much complicated code

### 2) Broken Links and Missing Information

Out of those 50 pages visited, half had an error. When a visitor is confronted with a page that has a broken or missing image, lacks important navigation aids, or makes the phone number, email address or location of the company impossible to find, they probably will leave and find someone they can have more confidence in. Funny "empty" boxes you see on a web page is bad code, a graphic that is lost or a page that is missing something. Making a strong statement with a web site is vital, because you don't want a visitor to your site think maybe you are just as sloppy with your product or customer service. It's amazing that a firm that may have spent decades building a loyal customer base, has an impressive facility, and qualified people, will forget to mention these most important business ingredients on their web site.

### 3) Web Commerce "Never Mind"

It's a commonly reported fact that over 60 percent of all e-commerce quits before completing a sales transaction. Here's the reason :

- Are you willing to give out credit card information over the web ?
- Are you happy with the results if you've purchased products over the web ?
- Are you comfortable with the sites handling of vital personal information ?
- Are you always responding to alerts when you're online ?
- Do you know what that means ? Know what a "cookie" is ?

Most business with physical locations have enough problems with credit card transactions, it could be a while before everyone is totally "sold" on e-commerce. What if your product doesn't fit in a shopping cart ? If you're selling steel, you can't use the same approach as jelly. Disney© pumped \$20 million into eToys©.com, which failed. Billions have been ventured and lost. Could it be it was a hair-brained idea to try to sell widgets world-wide when people can go to the mall ? A critical mind should weight the advantages and costs associated with migrating existing sales on-line. There are strong benefits and real opportunities getting sales on-line, and thousands of horror stories!

### How do you correct web site errors ?

**1) DO SOME RESEARCH** - visit at least a dozen sites, randomly found domains. You could do a search on no particular subject, pick a few from the first 3 pages, some from the 10th page of possibilities, and some from the very last page. Make notes about: length of time to load, number of graphics per page, navigation style (how do you move about the site), redundant info, and unique approaches to a similar need you have. List the likes and don't likes, and even if you found the colors pleasing.

**2) ANALYZE THE COMPETITION** - With random web site information gathered, then do the same thing on a search engine, only look for your specific idea, product or service. What does your competition do on their web presence ? Are they all doing exactly the same type of web site ? Do they make mistakes you've noted ? Does their site have the "likes" you came up with in your research ? Determine what do you need to do to remain equal with your competitor, but, more importantly, what will you have to do to offer better for your visitors ?

**3) DESIGN TO A SPECIFICATION** - The results of what you have gathered so far and what you plan to offer is your design specification. Draw it up on paper, build from the top down. Decide early if you are building a Fortune 500 site, letting your brother do it "for free", just need some informational pages, a static site, or if you're serious about offering your product, skill or service online (there are lots of ways to complete a sale, the ultimate objective). With a budget and researched objective, you can begin. During the gestation of your site, both in building initially, and maintaining it, remember: Time Is Money. How many hundreds of thousands does it take to run Amazon.com© monthly ? How much does Ford©, Sony© or Wal-Mart© spend a day on their sites ? If you want to build something big and spectacular, you better be well funded. HBO© paid 1 million, The Gap© paid \$250K, some bigger auto dealers spend \$25k to \$50k, even more! But a basic web site can be built that provides entry level web commerce in the \$750 to \$2,500 range.

**4) KEEP YOUR PRESENTED MATERIAL SPECIFIC** - Consider the the visitors information path, make them click deeper into your site. Provide small packages of information, that has to

be followed to another page. Provide the visitor on every page with an easy Request / Order / Next / Home links to manage the travel. Try hard to keep graphics, pictures, and effects to a minimum. Provide plenty of Contact / Information / Maps / About, etc. Generally speaking you should keep your web site as black or dark colored type, with a white or pastel background, using the default type. You want to use both hyper links and graphics to steer customer navigation. Stay away from complicated code and scripts. Always provide options to leave the page under your control, but easy to the visitor. If they have to leave, keep them on your site. Everybody talks about "hits", you are looking for pages viewed by one visitor to be high (a user), not just visits. Everybody likes some animations, fun stuff and unique content or effects, if not overdone.

**5) SHOW YOUR CREDIBILITY** - In theory the beauty of the electronic commerce is that the marketing process can be completely automated, allowing the owner to sit at home and simply collect payments for their products and services. In reality, people still like a personal touch. They want to know who they are working with. Without it they will question the integrity of products and services. How can you improve people's perceptions of your integrity? Provide:

**· Your Name · Your Email Address and Snail Mail Address · Your Phone Number · Your Fax Number · Your State of Incorporation or other owner information · Images of your physical location, staff, vehicles · All credentials, licenses and professional organizations.**

Ensure there is content that the visitor expects or important information that the viewer would definitely want to see (like the phone number with the area code)

### **Are you sure you need real web e-commerce ?**

Not everyone needs totally automated electronic commerce. Some products are almost impossible to sell without a tour or inspection, and not all businesses need to be able to offer their wares to people in Montana. Considering that the majority of all established retail sales likely have been from within a ten mile radius of their location, a firm must consider if their product line warrants being placed for sale on-line. If you are a distributor of electric products you have over 250,000 products to offer. Even a pizza shop would have dozens of combinations of pizza, not including the sub's and salads ! And a clothing store sells socks and underwear besides fine sweaters and suits. Which are you going to spend money on to place on-line ? Unless you have the best price in the world, nobody is going to buy something over the web that they can get at the shopping center. Unless your item is so unique that no one else in the world offers anything like it, it's still going to take marketing, advertising and an effort to move products world wide. But, it is the stuff dreams are made of . . .

Assuming you are going beyond a static, company presentation of services only site, some of the options available for web commerce are:

- **ELECTRONIC PRODUCT CATALOGS**
- **ELECTRONIC SHOPPING CARTS**
- **ELECTRONIC COMMERCE APPLICATIONS**

### **ELECTRONIC PRODUCT CATALOG**

( showcase your product or service )

The design and implementation of non-commerce enabled pages for your business can get your product line "on-line" easily. Your existing product catalog and marketing literature is formatted for the web, presented in a logical manner, and typically developed with REQUEST

INFO / QUOTE applications. Lowest cost option to build and maintain. Good "no-threat" technique to showcase your product or service.

## **ELECTRONIC SHOPPING CART**

( credit card based sales of your products )

Enables visitors to select items and check-out. Some are not secure, some make errors in math, but necessary in some commerce applications. Higher start-up costs and monthly fees. Special registration and origination fees often apply. Requires secure credit card processing. FACT: The majority of users will exit before the sale is complete.

## **ELECTRONIC COMMERCE APPLICATIONS**

( tailored for your specific products and customers )

Can be as simple as downloadable order forms, or complex customised order applications. Especially useful for static products. Also ideal for repetitive orders with existing customers. If your customer has your product catalog now, this is the ticket. Can also be used to supplement physical location retail sales operations, seasonal items, and employed in remote services applications. More expensive to set up initially, but less expensive monthly. May not require credit card info on-line, transaction can be completed by existing staff, and can also lead to impulse buying at a retail location. Can turn visitors into repetitive customers, and simplify existing customers ordering, possibly increasing sales.

**Dollar for Dollar - electronic commerce applications are the best form of e-commerce, the safest, and most likely model to succeed for the average business or entrepreneur looking to migrate their products, whether they have existing operations in a physical location or are a start-up with a unique product or service.**

**w w w . I H S n e t . c o m**

( originator of this content )

© IHS March 2006 v6