

19 Reasons for Having a Website

At one time perhaps it was difficult to understand how a web site would help your business. Now that's changed – today more and more people are looking for products, services and business information on the web every hour of every day.

1. Your competitors are already on the Web.

They're attracting the people who could be **YOUR** customers! What frustration, because you know that your products and services are superior to those of your competitors!

2. Your customers and potential customers are already searching the Web

Even as you read this there will be someone on the Web looking for a business like yours.

More and more people are using the Internet to purchase products and as a means of gathering initial information about products and services. The attraction to this medium is that the customer is relaxed because he can read and research the information at his own pace and without any "hovering salesmen". It is quite feasible that the surfer will visit a number of sites before he decides on his final choice of product. You need to be certain that you are one of the sites that he has visited if you are to stand a chance of gaining his business. If you have no web site, you have no chance.

3. A website makes it easy for people to refer new customers to you.

For many businesses, referrals are a crucial source of new customers. Having a website makes it easy to encourage referrals, because customers can simply send friends and business contacts to your site. Website addresses are easier to remember than phone numbers. Plus, giving people multiple ways of contacting you makes it more likely that they will do so.

4. Your web site will promote your business 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Even when you're sleeping your web site can be working for you.

But so is *The Yellow Pages* – so why have a web site too? Yellow Pages is generally only available on a local basis; not to mention the fact that unless you can afford a very large advertisement the information you can present is very limited.

Your web site can be viewed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. If you are selling your products internationally then this is a major advantage as visitors in North America and South America can, for example, view your products or services while you are asleep! An email enquiry will be waiting for you when you get up in the morning!

But even if your business is restricted to the US, you will be amazed at how many people research for products and services at the weekend and in the evening. They are busy business people and very often this is the best time for them to concentrate on researching for a new product or service.

As of April 2002, there are roughly 165.8 million people online in the US alone. Some of them are looking for your products and services. With a website, you open yourself up to a world of opportunity in reaching people who might not otherwise find you. With the click of a mouse, anyone can get to your company's website 24/7.

5. Your customers can buy your products and pay for them while sitting at their computers.

It is estimated that it costs 8 times more to sell a product from a shop than from the Internet.

Selling online has to be one of the most cost efficient means of doing business. Night or day, you can do business with a customer in any part of the world, and his payment is made directly into your bank account -without you even knowing! All you need to do is to print off and process the orders. Of course if you have a product that can be sent via the Internet (such as software, documents, written material) you don't even need to do this.

6. A website increases the value of your advertising.

You can have pages and pages of information about your company and your products or services – in much more detail than you'd ever be able to pay for in more traditional media.

You can put an enormous amount of information onto your website.

Adding your website address to all your advertisements, business cards, and company literature is a great way to draw potential customers to your company. Providing a website gives people a way to act on your message whenever they hear about you or see an ad for your company. Going to a website is easier than writing, visiting a store, or even making a phone call. Customers get the information at their convenience and don't have to wait for a salesperson to help them. Also, it's often more comfortable to visit a website, because there is no obligation. Visitors don't feel pressured.

7. You can change the information on your website whenever you want.

You must have been in a situation where your prices have changed or your products have changed, so your catalogue/price list/product literature/marketing literature becomes out of date. Not only is all your existing literature now worthless, but you also need to make a substantial investment in order to produce new updated material.

With a web site, these problems are minimal. I have a client whose web site can be updated with new prices and information in as little as 15 minutes. The cost to him is 15 minutes of his time - negligible compared to the cost of redesigning, reprinting and redistributing sales literature.

8. Your website can reach potential customers locally, nationally or worldwide – at no extra cost to you.

In fact you can adapt your website to the needs of your business.

There is absolutely no doubt that the Internet is the answer to the small businessman's prayer. For the first time you have at your disposal the whole world market for whatever product or service you happen to provide. In fact the more niche your product, the more successful you will be with your Internet business.

You can take your products to totally new markets. You may have been restricted to selling your products to customers who passed by your shop in your local high street. Or perhaps you may have been able to expand beyond that limited marketplace by doing targeted (and expensive) advertising in specific magazines. However, for the first time you'll be able to take your product across the world.

9. Your website can save you a lot of money.

1. Lower printing costs because you need much less printed letters and brochures.
2. Lower postage costs for the same reason –email becomes a major (and much cheaper) distribution method.
3. Lower advertising costs because your web site lasts longer and produces greater results than adverts.
4. Lower wage costs because your web site can be like an extra person with the automated processes it can carry out.

10. Your website can work like a kind of robot,

Sending information to customers, replying to emails and even making sales – day and night.

You can reply to your customers or potential customers automatically without you having to get involved at all. With simple devices called "auto responders" you're able to set it all up whereby specific targeted replies are sent out to different people, night or day.

11. A Website Increases your Credibility.

Your customers cannot tell whether you employ 100 staff or none.

As a small businessman you have the opportunity to present yourself to the marketplace just as effectively and professionally as a multi-million dollar company. Just because you're smaller doesn't mean that you cannot now compete with the big boys! You can establish credibility in a variety of ways, such as putting useful information on your website, or making files available to download.

Your website has a powerful impact on a potential customer's confidence in you. A professional design, well-written copy, helpful product information, and good contact info can tremendously increase trust in your company. It lets people know you're knowledgeable and up-to-date. If you take the time to develop a good-quality site with helpful information, visitors will have no choice but to be impressed.

12. Your web site can help you give improved customer service.

Providing information visitors can access. For example there can be a list of 'Frequently Asked Questions' about your service or product.

This is an area that is often overlooked by web site owners. The simplest example of this is putting up a FAQ page (frequently asked questions) on your web site. Not only is this very helpful to customers because it provides instant answers to their "frequently asked" questions, but it also saves you and your employees considerable management time in not having to answer a string of e-mails/phone calls/faxes. What this usually means is when you do receive that e-mail/phone call/fax it is an actual order rather than an inquiry!

You can make information readily available to your customers. For example, new information has suddenly become available concerning your products. Put it on your website and communicate via e-mail to your customers -- it's that easy!

How about a Free downloadable sheet with helpful tips. Your visitors will love it!

13. You can test out new services or products instantly.

It's much less expensive to send emails to your list of current customers and contacts. They can then visit your web site for more detailed information.

What a glorious, simple and inexpensive way of testing out new ideas! Simply put up a new web page setting out the relevant information, and send an e-mail to your database of existing (and relevant) customers, and ask for their views.

Market research. You can acquire very quick customer feedback from a large audience with an online form that could be filled out in seconds – providing valuable information to you, with minimal inconvenience to your customer.

14. A website is a powerful sales tool.

Selling your products through an online store is often a killer way to expand your business. You have a perpetual, easily-accessed storefront--one that costs a fraction of a brick and mortar store and can reach many more people. Effective sales copy can do an incredible job of hooking visitors on your products and compelling them to click that "buy" button.

Even if you can't sell your services directly over the internet, a website is still a powerful asset. It's a primer that you use to convince visitors of why they need your services. You get them salivating to buy, then invite them to contact you through your site.

15. You can send details of new offers by email to your current customers and contacts,

Again referring readers to your web site.

You have some stock that is running out of date and you wish to sell it at a reduced price. Or you have received limited stock of a particular product that is of high appeal to a relatively small number of people. It really doesn't matter what sort of "deal" you have, provided it is presented professionally you can e-mail your database of customers and past enquirers -- all within a matter of seconds! I know a small hotel that sends out an email with forthcoming events to its database of 700+ past enquirers. It takes about 15 minutes to do the whole mailing and costs nothing. The result is that these 'potential customers' are constantly reminded of the hotel and a given percentage phone up and book at a later date.

16. You can combine email marketing with your web site.

With e-mail you can advertise your website. There is no quicker way of getting your sales messages in front of a prospective customer who can be looking at your web site within 2 seconds of opening your mail!

You can collect e-mail addresses of people who visit your site and have expressed an interest in your products or services. You can then use this list to send information on 'deals' you are running or to pass on any other useful information.

17. A website helps you stay in contact with potential customers.

There are frequently people who are interested in what you have to offer, but they might not be ready to buy right now. You need to stay in contact with them so that you immediately come to mind when they ARE ready. A website is a great way to facilitate this. You can use your website to collect email addresses from visitors. Then you can periodically send out promotional emails or a newsletter. Staying in contact keeps your company fresh in visitors' minds.

18. You can use your web site to provide information on a regular basis to your company employees.

You can keep the information secret if you wish by making it accessible only to people who know the password.

19. Your website can keep a track of how many people visit.

This is the proof of the pudding. With most advertisements you will never know how many people read your offers.

Isn't technology wonderful! With a web site produced and marketed by SCD Services, we will be able to tell you exactly how many people have visited your web site, where those people came from, which search term they used in which search engine, which pages they visited on your web site, how long they spent on your web site. What other advertising medium issues this sort of valuable feedback on your selling and marketing material?

Well, there you have it--19 Reasons for Having a Website. Do you want to leave this opportunity to your competitors? Surely not! Each day you wait, you're letting them establish themselves online as THE resource in your field. Stop giving them that advantage!