

# WHITE PAPER

## THE BUSINESS CASE FOR A CORPORATE WEBSITE

There are many good reasons for developing a corporate website; many of those reasons are the same that apply for any advertising venture. The more people know about who you are and what you offer, the greater the likelihood they'll want to buy from, work with, or invest in you. There are no limits to the amount or kind of information that you can feature on your website. The methods at your disposal of communicating information are staggering. No other method of advertising your company or the products and services it offers is as constantly visible. Because more companies of every size and type are developing websites each day, it is to the point that not having a web presence, no matter how token, reflects poorly on your business.

You've heard that the bubble has burst. You're sure everything "e" is just some passing fad. You think of the Internet as a research tool, extra news channel, or an expensive and potentially dangerous toy. And you're quite certain that there's no point in putting your business online.

As a matter of fact, even if your company has nothing to do with computers or communications, there are many good reasons for developing a corporate website.

## Show and tell

Many of those reasons are the same that apply for any advertising venture. The more people know about who you are and what you offer, the greater the likelihood they'll want to buy from, work with, or invest in you.

Even the most bare-bones, visually unappealing websites include the following critical facts about their venture.

- Mission statement
- Products and services provided
- Address
- Hours of operation
- Contact information

In most cases, a webpage would be worth the modest outlay if it included only this bare minimum of content. If nothing else, think of all the time saved answering phone queries about when you close, or the best route to take to get to your offices?

In fact, many companies find it beneficial to compile a list of the questions (with answers, of course) that they are most frequently asked – an FAQ. This type of resource is omnipresent on the Internet because it saves both the questioner and the questionee time, trouble, and even possible embarrassment.

But there are no limits to the amount or kind of information that you can feature on your website. Product descriptions, service outlines, and corporate overviews can be fully comprehensive, and can include not only text and illustrations, but sound, animations, movie clips, and other multimedia formats. The methods at your disposal of communicating information are staggering.

## Twenty-four seven

No other method of advertising your company or the products and services it offers is as constantly visible as a professional website. Radio and television spots last for thirty seconds or less, and often fade from your audience's minds by the time the next one comes on. Ads in print publications technically last as long as the paper they're printed on, but are effectively visible only as long as the issue stays on newsstands.

As far as round-the-clock exposure goes, only a billboard rivals a corporate web presence. And anyone can see the ways in which a website is superior to a billboard.

- A website is dynamic, and can be updated at your discretion.
- A website is more capacious. There is no limit to the amount of content you can include.
- A website lasts for not a week or two, but, like a diamond, forever. (Well, as long as your business does.)
- A website can reach an inestimably larger audience.
- A website can target audiences, so that visitors who find you are actually looking for what you're offering – not just breezily passing by.

## Sheer volume

As Nua Internet Surveys writes ([http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how\\_many\\_online/](http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how_many_online/)), "The art of estimating how many are online throughout the world is an inexact one at best." But by "observing many of the published surveys over the last two years," they arrived at a conservative educated guess as to how many people are online worldwide as of September, 2002. The number they arrived at was 605.60 million. And one fact that is not being disputed is that the number is constantly growing.

Statistics can be impressive, but also misleading. Don't think this means that your website is guaranteed to be seen by 600 million people, or even a fraction of that figure. Nor should you think that a web presence is the only way these particular 600 million can be reached. Most people are plugged into various, overlapping media outlets.

Nevertheless, even if the above figure were significantly smaller, the mere possibility of reaching so many people by one relatively inexpensive means is almost too good to be true. There's no denying it – the Internet is an immensely powerful communication tool. That's why so many people are online.

In the early days, of course, Internet surfing was notoriously sluggish. But this was because web design was still in its infancy – many pages were bogged down with huge graphics – and because Internet service provider technology was just getting started, too. Accessing the Internet gets faster everyday, while webpages gets sleeker and more streamlined, too.

## Instantaneity

There can be little doubt that communication via the Internet is the fastest in the world. How else but through snail mail could you distribute the latest beta version of your software, your complete and unabridged annual report, or a clip from your latest film? And we all know how slow that alternative can be. In fact, we tend to take the Internet, and the power it imparts, for granted these days. But as a business with products and services to offer, you probably can't afford to ignore a medium that allows for virtually instantaneous communication.

Once your website goes live, that's it: users around the world can access it immediately. The same goes for site updates, news, even press releases. Your information gets out right away.

And this instantaneity allows for a precision that other media cannot handle. You know that your billboard is going to appear "sometime next month," that your ad in the newspaper will debut "either Wednesday or Thursday," that your commercial will air "sometime between 8:30 and 10:00 a week from Sunday." But when it comes to your corporate website, you can dictate when time-sensitive content is to be posted – with down-to-the-minute accuracy.

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## Target practice

One of the greatest things about the Internet explosion is the voice that it has given to minorities. Information exchange is effected democratically in cyberspace; no one is denied the right to express his or her opinion.

This has allowed innumerable online communities to be founded. Every worldview, ideology, and idiosyncrasy is accounted for somewhere out there on the World Wide Web.

Many such minority communities are also target audiences unto themselves. No matter how narrow, specialized, or even bizarre your company's focus, you can be sure that there is someone out there who is looking for exactly what you're offering. (Some of the truly outlandish items that are offered – and bought! – on eBay.com should be proof enough of that.)

But passively hoping that customers will happen to pass by your offices one day, or stumble across your Yellow Pages ad, or hear about you from a friend, is a sure way to go out of business. Far better is to actively hew out your niche on the Internet, and thereby allow those particular seekers to find what they're looking for – namely, you.

## Inside and out

Not only potential customers benefit from the content provided on your website. You can also use your site as a portal to information that is of specific use to employees, partners, and affiliates. That way, people within your organization, as well as without, can be kept up-to-date on the latest developments, no matter where in the world they are. A corporate website can replace paper memos, long-distance conference calls, and expensive courier services.

A website is thus not just a valuable advertising tool – not just a fancy, electronic billboard – but a powerful and far-reaching database, bulletin board, and information management instrument.

## Keeping up with the Joneses

Maybe the competition doesn't have an online presence yet, either. But there can be no guarantee that they won't have one soon, or aren't developing one at this very moment. The same benefits of

maintaining a corporate website apply to the other guy, too.

More companies of every size and type are putting up homepages each day. It's actually to the point where not having a web presence, no matter how token, reflects poorly on your business. If you haven't got a domain name, customers and investors alike are liable to view your operation with suspicion. Cultivating a web presence has become S.O.P., and this fact alone makes a corporate website for your concern *de rigueur*.

Cultivating a web  
**presence** has become  
standard **operating**  
**procedure**



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