

Business AnswersSM

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Winning on the Web: How to Test the Waters

Concerned about the cost of setting up a full-blown Web site for your company—and what the return may be? Take a test run. There are several ways you can try selling online—including ads, auctions, and group purchasing sites—without spending a lot of money. Here's a summary:

■ **Classified Web ads.** One of the easiest ways to test the Web is to place an ad in the online classifieds. Many of these services are free. For instance, Yahoo!, one of the most popular sites, allows you to select a category for your ad and use online forms to enter your ad information. Also, almost every newspaper has an online presence, with a classifieds section. You can use these electronic versions just as you would your local paper.

■ **Online auctions.** The most well known sales model for e-commerce is the online auction. No one predicted that eBay, for example, would be one of the Internet's biggest successes (it now attracts 1.5 million visitors a day). Besides at least a dozen Web-based auctions that have debuted since eBay's launch in 1995, the list has grown to include traditional auction houses like Sotheby's and large sites like Amazon.com.

Emarketplaces, such as onvia.com, offer businesses a new way to connect with customers. In addition to auctions and its "Purchase Now emarketplace," the site offers a Request for Quote service, an online exchange that connects small-business buyers and sellers across a wide variety of business services.

■ **Cybermall.** One of the most popular ways to test run e-commerce is to list your company with an online mall. Some malls allow you to list individual items, while others offer the opportunity to use their templates to create your own Web page, which is then hosted on their site.



■ **Building Web presence.** Many small businesses have developed Web stores using templates and pre-built pages. Sprint and other vendors offer such turnkey solutions to Web-site development, making it easy and affordable. Sprint's solution allows customers to quickly and inexpensively create and maintain a customized Web site with real-time online financial transactions. The Sprint eCommerce BusinessBuilderSM is designed not only to save time and money—but also to give peace of mind. Easy setup. Easy maintenance and administration. A professional, customized look. No hardware/software decisions. No extensive programming. Reliable security.

All of these options allow you to explore online selling. Once you've tested the waters of Web-based sales, you should be able to determine where you want to position your company online and how much you are willing to invest to develop a full-blown e-commerce site. ■

info source

www.sprint.com/businessbuilder
www.internetauctionlist.com
www.classifieds.yahoo.com

hot companies

Retailers Lead Top 10 Start-ups

The boom in the economy has triggered a parallel boom in new enterprises. Based on a recent study by County Data Corp., a division of American Business Information, in Omaha, here's a ranking of the top 10 start-up categories, representing a total of 238,964 business launches in 1999. (Figures in parentheses represent number of new entities.)

1. Retail store (37,122)
2. General contracting* (33,067)
3. Construction* (32,320)
4. Computer services* (27,114)
5. Business consulting* (23,170)
6. Restaurant (21,644)
7. Cleaning services* (17,134)
8. Landscape contracting (17,025)
9. Real estate* (16,290)
10. Auto repair and service (14,078)

* Also ranks among the top 10 home-based business start-ups

in this issue

- Future finance: Three steps to getting a fix on your capital needs
- DSL: Tap the Net 100 times faster
- Biz Buzz: Kirk Wize creates a winning mix of music and motors
- 10 ways to fire up your staff
- Opting for outsourcing
- Are you putting the Web to work?
- Where to find tech support



Think FAST and Get FastConnectSM DSL Now

Want to spend more time cultivating customers and brainstorming product ideas, and less time waiting for Internet connections and downloading files? You can get high-speed Internet access that lets you receive information over the Internet 100 times faster than you can with traditional dial-up technology.

A Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) will also boost your business productivity by letting you use the Internet, send faxes, or talk on the phone—all at the same time, on one high-speed digital line. There's no need to add additional lines!

info source

www.sprint.com/dsl4biz

Sprint FastConnectSM DSL technology lets you send and receive files via a secure dedicated Internet connection—unlike cable services. And the benefits don't stop there. Sprint FastConnectSM DSL has other business-class options such as static IP and a multiuser option that lets multiple users share one line.

Signing up for Sprint FastConnectSM DSL is easy, and with our limited-time offer, you'll receive FREE equipment (with select line speeds) and no-cost installation and activation (after rebate). Contact your Sprint sales representative today for more details, or call toll-free 1-800-456-5010!



finance

Need Money? Plan Beyond the Present

When raising capital, many small-business owners operate under the assumption that whatever they can raise, they can use. But there's a better way—a plan that projects your company's future capital needs. Here are three guidelines:

■ **Focus on what you need, not on what you believe you can raise.** If your plan makes compromises and isn't realistic, you'll lose credibility.

■ **Think in terms of stages of growth and the capital requirements for each.** Consider raising money on an as-needed basis. Be conservative in your approach and think of raising your

capital relative to the growth stages of your business, instead of all up front.

■ **Identify the best source of funding for each stage of growth.** If you envision a series of big-ticket equipment purchases, don't finance them item by item. Approach banks or non-institutional lenders that will allow you to move from equipment financing to a general credit-line arrangement as you build a track record. ■

info source

- See "Money Talk," at: www.sprint.com/businessanswers
- *Managing by the Numbers*, by Kremer, Rizzuto, and Case (Perseus)

Biz Buzz

Kirk Wise Mixes Music and Motors

From owning a country-music radio station in Carlisle, Pa., to singing the national anthem at sports events, Kirk Wise is the consummate entrepreneur and music man. He uses Sprint telecommunications for all his business endeavors. Wise counts on Sprint to keep him connected with a primary revenue source, the station's advertisers. He considers marketing the 1,000-watt independent station to advertisers his greatest business challenge and takes advantage of long-distance packages to save money on calls. Wise also counts on Sprint technical troubleshooting at the radio tower site to make sure his station's



"Sprint is always there for us," says Kirk Wise. "I'm a 100% satisfied customer."

audience is always able to tune in. "That's what's nice about what Sprint is doing," he says. "It really helps small-business owners like me."

Along with Wise Broadcasting, the former college music major is the proprietor of Wise Motorsports, a company that sponsors a drag-strip truck and a dirt-track car in NASCAR events.

Wise bought the radio station (WI10-AM 1000) in 1995, after 16 years as a third-generation dealership owner. Past president of the Carlisle Car Dealers' Association, he now works part-time as the general manager of a Chrysler-Jeep dealership as a favor to former colleagues. ■

Fax your business question or story and you could be featured in the next Biz Buzz: 1-913-345-6683.

PHOTO: ED WHEELER; ILLUSTRATION: HEIDI STEVENS

10 Focal Points for Firing Up Your Staff

Where does motivation start? From within—what we value, whom we value, and how we communicate *what* we value to *whom* we value. The bottom line is that to motivate others, you need to know what motivates you. Why? Because if you aren't sure you're motivated, how can you expect to inspire someone else to perform?

Here's a quick "Top 10 Punch List" of motivation questions critical to growing your business:

1. What motivates you personally?
2. What motivates others?
3. How do the goals of your organization align with what motivates others?
4. How effectively do the rewards you offer address what others value?
5. Where do your people see themselves in one, two, three, and five years?
6. Where do your people see your organization one, two, three, and five years from now?



7. If your people were put in charge of the organization or their department for a day, what would they change?
8. How high a stake do you believe others have in your enterprise?
9. Why do you say that?

10. What "values" are you and others communicating daily in the workplace (e.g., integrity, quality)?

Using the 10-point punch list and your company values as a framework, here's a four-step action plan for motivating your employees:

1. Clearly define what motivates you.
2. Clearly understand what motivates others (ask them).
3. Continually provide and develop highly valued incentives and rewards.
4. Communicate your company's values in your actions as well as words. ■

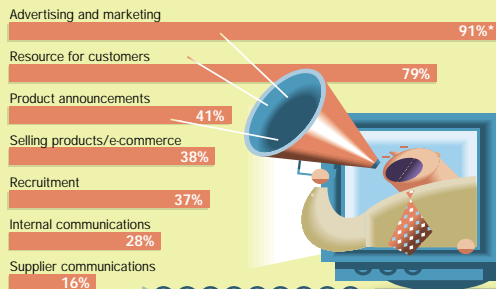
— *Chris DeVany, president, Pinnacle Performance Improvement Worldwide* (www.ppiw.com)

info source

Additional articles are available at www.sprint.com/businessanswers

- "Personnel Best"
- "The Best of the Small-Business Web"
- "What Shoppers Want"

How Small Businesses Use the Web



* Percent of respondents (265 small companies with home pages)

Source: Inc. Business Resources

Cybersites

Opting for Outsourcing

Need to farm out functions that you don't have the resources to manage yourself? Chances are there's a Web site that can meet your needs—at less cost than doing it yourself or relying on a local vendor. Here's a sampling of sites you can tap for help:

■ Multifunction management.

DigitalWork (www.digitalwork.com) offers a selection of 40 online services for small companies—from writing press releases to collecting bad debts to recruiting employees. The user-friendly site encourages you to "select a business task," and you take it from there.



■ Payroll management.

PayMaxx (www.powerpayroll.com) handles the payroll process for companies with fewer than 50 employees. It also takes care of direct deposits and filing taxes.

■ Benefits management.

Online Benefits (www.online-benefits.com) creates benefits-information centers that range from postings of benefit policies to cost-modeling programs employees can use to calculate retirement accounts.

■ File backup.

Attrieva Corp. (www.driveway.com) provides automatic file backup over the Internet every night. Files created or modified during the day are scanned for viruses, compressed for space, encrypted for security, and sent to secure storage facilities.

■ Travel.

TheTrip.com (www.thetrip.com) helps companies create travel policies, makes all travel arrangements for employees, and sends monthly reports on where travel dollars are spent and by whom. ■



spotcheck

Are You Putting the Web to Work?

Compare your company's Web experiences to those of other small businesses across the country by taking a moment to answer the questions below.

Responses will be summarized in the next issue of *BusinessAnswers*. The first 50 respondents will receive a free copy of *Inc.*'s best-seller, *Tips & Tactics for Marketing on the Internet*, compliments of Sprint. Deadline for responses: **September 1, 2000**.

Please fax this form to: **1-800-354-9947** (It's toll-free!), or visit our Web site at: www.sprint.com/businessanswerssurvey

For a chance to receive *Inc.*'s *Tips & Tactics for Marketing on the Internet*, please jot down the following:

Your name: _____ Phone: _____
Company: _____ Fax: _____
Address: _____ E-mail: _____
_____ Do not have e-mail address

Type of business: _____

Number of full-time employees: Now _____ One year ago _____

1. Does your company have a Web site? Yes No

(If no, please answer "a" below and fax this form to 1-800-354-9947.)

a) If you do not have a Web site, do you plan to post one in 2000? Yes No

b) If you have a Web site, in what year was it first posted? _____

c) What is your URL? www. _____

2. How much did it cost to develop your Web site (from concept to posting)?

Less than \$5,000 \$5,000-\$9,999 \$10,000-\$14,999 \$15,000+

3. How often do you update your site?

Daily Weekly Biweekly Monthly Other _____

4. How much does it cost per month to maintain your Web site? \$ _____

5. What is your Web site's primary function? (Check one.)

Advertising/marketing (increase visibility) Resource for customers (information)

Generate leads Communications (e-mail, etc.)

E-commerce (transact sales) Other _____

6. Approximately how many visitors per month does your Web site attract? _____

Don't know

tech support

Baffled by Bits and Bytes?

Looking for expertise to help automate your office? Try these organizations:

- **Independent Computer Consultants Association (ICCA)** (St. Louis, 314-892-1675 or 800-774-4222) is a national trade group with 1,500 members, most of whom have at least 10 years of experience and will do an initial consultation free. To find a member in your area, tap into ICCA's Web site (www.icca.org).
- **Information Technology Association of America (ITAA)** (Arlington, Va., 703-522-5055) has 400 direct and 11,000 affiliate members, all involved in information technology (www.itaa.org).
- **National Association of Computer Consultant Businesses (NACCB)** (Alexandria, Va., 703-838-2050) can be a good source of high-tech temps (www.naccb.org). ■



From the last issue of the *BusinessAnswers*SM newsletter—

Announcing the Winner of Sprint's PalmPilot Sweepstakes

Les J. Holthaus, President
Holthaus Motors, Inc.
Osage City, Kansas

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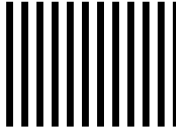
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- Taking My Business to the Next Level
- A New Business Idea That Just Seems to Click
- High-Speed Internet Access

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