



### Ask an Information Officer

#### What can e-commerce do for me and my business?

By Anthony Pouw

The internet can be a significant component in your business' growth strategy by connecting you to the global market. But there is a big difference between being connected and being dynamically linked to your customers, suppliers and financial institutions. The effective application of e-commerce can grow your business in ways that will promote both connectivity and efficiency. With e-commerce, you can:

- Improve internal functions, cut down on meetings, improve the exchange of critical knowledge, eliminate red tape, and streamline communications;
- Integrate production and logistical functions with marketing and sales activities;
- Improve customer service, increase market share, and provide new methods for promotion;
- Respond more quickly to orders, and provide more responsive after sales services.

E-commerce is much more than having an internet connection, a Web site and an email account.

The intranet can permit you to

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### Business Article

#### Planning an Effective E-Commerce Web site for your Business

By Abdul Hafez

You may have heard the ancient Chinese expression, "May you live in interesting times," and deemed it a compliment at first. Well, think again! This expression was actually used as a curse because it is easier to live in times that are not so interesting, when things move along pretty much as they are expected to, as they always have.

The **World Wide Web** and **E-Commerce** have certainly made our business environment quite interesting. The Web has evolved to become a major global sales and marketing hub for consumers and businesses alike, and one thing is certain: that simply having an online presence is not enough. You have to create a Web site that will attract visitors, turn those visitors into customers, and then have them return on a regular basis. But one might ask: how exactly do you do that?

The most important factor to consider when creating an E-Commerce Web site is **content**. "Content is king" is a cliché that perfectly reflects that. When people visit your site, it will ultimately be the content that keeps them interested. But of course, in order to have them return to your Web site, you will have to provide incentive for them to do so, by regularly updating your Web site and producing periodic content such as daily tips, weekly flyers, and monthly coupons.

Here are a few examples of what your Web site could provide to attract customers and/or visitors and to keep them returning:

- Information about your products/services and your company
- Time saving answers to FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)
- Downloadable manuals, instruction sheets, assembly directions
- Periodic flyers, coupons and contests
- Product demonstrations
- A discussion or feedback form
- A blog
- Online chat support
- Information about your industry
- Testimonials
- A privacy statement de-

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## Ask an Information Officer

improve company processes such as project management, payroll, human resources, purchasing and inventory control.

And if your firm already employs electronic data interchange – the flow of critical systems and management information – the Internet can dramatically increase its reach and reduce your costs.

The Extranet can enable you to orchestrate production and delivery processes by opening your internal electronic systems to two-way traffic with your customers and suppliers.

And electronic “business modeling” can enable you to establish seamless supply chains among wholesalers, shippers, manufacturers, and designers.

Without question, E-commerce is a powerful tool. But in the end it's not the tool; it's the vision that counts. And for this, you need to understand why and how you intend to employ E-commerce in your daily operations. Start by asking yourself a few simple questions:

- What am I accomplishing by establishing a Web site?
- What are my customers' needs?
- How will I serve them better through electronic communications?
- What are my company's needs?
- How will I fulfill these more successfully with electronic communications?

For more information, please see the Canada Business E-Business

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scribing how you use consumer information collected on your site

- A history of the evolution of your products/services as well as quality controls
- Awards and major accomplishments
- Daily or weekly tips and articles
- Appropriate keywords to enhance indexing in search engines such as Google
- Links to quality Web sites that would be of interest to your visitors

Use your imagination and creativity to figure out new ways of bringing customers and/or visitors to your site, as there is still plenty of uncharted territory ahead. Who would've thought that three former employees of PayPal would go on to create a free video sharing Web site called YouTube, which was sold a little more than a year later to Google for US\$1.65 billion?

**To find out more about how your business can adopt innovative business practices and pursue new online markets, please see our E-Business Info-Guide.**

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Info-Guide and E-Commerce – Exploring Your Options documents at [www.cbcs.org](http://www.cbcs.org), or call the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre at 1-800-668-1010.

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### Our Mission

To improve the start-up, survival and growth rates of small- and medium-sized enterprises by giving business people in every part of Nova Scotia access to accurate, timely and relevant information and referrals

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## Hot Picks

The following books are available from the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre Library. These books may also be available in our resource centres, located throughout the province.

### 20 Questions to Ask Before Selling on eBay

McGrath, Lissa

eBay is the world's largest electronic marketplace, with more than 85 million Americans, and 35 million people in 14 other countries, registered. When you sell on eBay it is as if you opened a store in a city with 120 million people, except you have no rent, no employees, and are listed in the ultimate yellow pages. There are more than 1 million items listed on eBay every day, and more than 5 million people have sold something on eBay at one time or another. Approximately 600,000 people make a living selling full-time on eBay.

Lissa's book will take you through all of the essential steps to get started selling on eBay. The material is presented in an easy to understand and logical fashion. Simply follow the steps in each of the chapters, and you will be on your way to success on eBay in no time at all.

Additional Contents:

- What Equipment Do I Need to Sell on eBay?
- What Should I Sell and for How Much?
- How Will I Get Paid?
- How Can I Take Professional Photos With My Camera?
- How Do I Build Credibility as a Seller?
- How Do I Write a Compelling Title and Subtitle?
- How Do I Write an Item

Description That Sells?

- How Do I Add Pictures to My Auction?
- What About Payment, Shipping, Handling, and Sales Tax?
- How Do I Solve Problems?
- What if My Item Doesn't Sell, or the Buyer Doesn't Pay?
- My Item Sold! Now What?
- How Do I Set Up a Business for Success?

### 101 Internet Businesses You Can Start From Home

Sweeney, Susan, C.A.

If you want to break away from rigid schedules, unappreciative bosses, and soul-sapping commutes, this book is for you. Today's Internet offers the golden business opportunities of our lifetimes. Running your own e-business from home is the new American dream. But what kinds of Internet businesses work? Which one fits my needs and interests? How do I get started? You will learn the answers to these questions and countless others in *101 Internet Businesses You Can Start From Home*.

Additional Contents:

- Internet Business - The Opportunity of Our Lifetime
- Learning from the Success of Others
- Doing Business Online
- Defining What's Important to You
- 101 Profiles of Top Internet Business Concepts
- From the Ground Up - Developing a Dynamite Site
- Constructing the Framework - Search Engine Friendliness
- Generating Traffic from Search Engines and Directories
- Effective E-Mail Marketing
- The Value of Incoming Links
- Using Banner Advertising to Your Advantage
- Maximizing Your Results

With Media Relations

- Generating Online Exposure the Offline Way

### Succeeding in e-commerce

Alhadeff, Rodrigo

There are many e-commerce books in the market written by scholars who make theoretical, outdated, and complicated recommendations. For the first time there is an e-commerce book written by one of the insiders. Rodrigo Alhadeff, founder and CEO of Comersus Open Technologies, goes the extra mile to explain useful tips and secrets that will help you create and maintain a successful online store.

Additional Contents:

- Site Design, Contents and Structure
- The Shopping Cart
- Pro-Sales Item Display
- Payment Methods
- Shipping Methods
- Digital Goods Distribution
- Performance and Scaling
- Fraud Prevention
- Increasing Sales
- Security
- Technical Support
- Innovation

### Se lancer en affaires dans Internet

Duguay, Etienne; Samson, Alain

Avant d'engager les spécialistes (infographiste, programmeur, rédacteur, etc.) qui participeront à la conception et à la réalisation du site Web de votre entreprise, un travail de réflexion important attend l'entrepreneur que vous êtes. Comment comptez-vous vous servir de ce média? Quelle image comptez-vous y projeter? En d'autres mots, un site Web, c'est bien beau, mais que voulez-vous en faire précisément?

À l'aide de *Se lancer en affaires*

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## Hot Picks

dans internet, vous serez en mesure de répondre à ces questions cruciales. Vous trouverez dans cet ouvrage une démarche en cinq étapes qui vous permettra de réaliser un site Web qui collera à la personnalité de votre entreprise :

- Les concepts de base : qu'est-ce qu'Internet? Quels avantages y a-t-il à être branché?
- Les éléments qui constituent un bon site Web: page d'accueil, page des ventes, moyens d'animer votre site et d'attirer la clientèle.
- La conception de votre site sur papier, avant de faire intervenir qui que ce soit.
- Des conseils pour vos relations avec un programmeur et avec la firme qui héberge votre site.
- Les nouvelles avenues en vue d'aller encore plus loin : la sécurité, l'intranet, l'extranet, les moyens de publiciser votre site, le coût de la publicité, etc.

## Featured Website

### Student Connections

By Julie Penwarden

Are you looking for affordable, yet high-quality, Internet and computer training for your business? If so, read on to learn about Student Connections, an organization that assists over 9,000 small businesses every year.

Student Connections employs qualified post-secondary students as Business Advisors, to deliver technology training to small and medium-sized enterprises throughout Canada. This Industry Canada initiative, funded through a federal program called the Youth Employment Strategy, helps organizations adopt innovative business practices and pursue new online markets.

Does your Web site project the image you want to portray? Student Connections offers valuable, informative training to increase the effectiveness of your Web site. These services include:

#### Web site planning:

learn to build and format an effective Web site

#### Web site evaluation:

get better results from your current site

#### Online promotion:

how to market online and direct traffic to your site

#### Selling on the Internet:

how to provide online payment

#### E-business blueprint:

a review of your technology and business issues, along with recommendations

#### Internet security:

an in-depth look at viruses, browser settings, cookies, and encryption/decryption

### Distributing e-newsletters:

how to use this tool to increase customer loyalty, brand awareness, and sales

### Online business research:

online strategies, tools, and resources that will enable you to better manage your business

Student Connections also offers training and workshops that can be tailored to your specific business needs – whether you require basic computer training, or detailed e-commerce sessions and workshops. No matter what level of knowledge you require, Advisors will design a program that suits your needs.

Still not sure whether your business is ready for the Internet? Check out Student Connections' Online Testing Tools to assess your level of e-commerce knowledge.

To find out more about how your business can adopt innovative business practices and pursue new online markets, contact Abdul Hafez, the Co-ordinator for Nova Scotia, at 902-426-0566 or 1-888-807-7777, or visit [www.studentconnections.ca](http://www.studentconnections.ca).

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