

Getting Connected: The Business of the Internet

What makes the internet special is people not technology. The following five themes incorporate all of the technical parts of putting your business on-line. They look at the whole of the commerce experience instead of creating technical silos.

Identity

Who are you? What do you do? How are you shamelessly special? Every action you take contributes to your brand. In the story about the wine company it was the person who made the sale, not the product itself. Be a person with a unique identity. Create unique email addresses. Ask your provider for options. Spend 30 minutes every day establishing your brand. Start right now: as of this moment you're going to think of yourself differently!

- www.tompeters.com
- <http://www.thewritemarket.com/branding/index.php?branding=branding&title=Branding%20Yourself%20Online%20Workshop>
- <http://www.bob-baker.com/branding/10tips.html>

Trust

Who are you? Who are they? Evaluate identities before giving your trust

1. Look at the address bar (https:// and location)
2. Look for the lock symbol.
3. Assess the credibility of the vendor

To sell your own products on-line: offer the same assurances you want as a consumer. Look for other markets to sell your products:

- www.Etsy.com
- www.eBay.ca
- www.Amazon.ca

Consider using a trusted, third-party commerce system instead of building your own from scratch:

- www.PayPal.com
- Yahoo! Stores <http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com>
- Google Checkout <https://checkout.google.com>

Community

In the beginning web sites were updated infrequently and only by a computer technician. Now web sites are created by individuals or a collaboration of individuals. e.g. www.wikipedia.org, www.facebook.com, www.myspace.com

Use social media sites to attract new attention. Take advantage of the Event listings within Facebook. Look on-line to see where your community is active. Contribute to the established community. Follow the energy. (Creating energy takes a lot of energy. If there is no on-line community established, think carefully before trying to establish your own.)

Update your Web site on a regular basis to encourage repeat visitors. Convert your print newsletter into an online "blog." Submitting new stories to your Web site on a regular basis is good for search engine rankings. Incoming links are also good for search engine rankings. Podcast are regularly updated audio stories (see

www.cbc.ca/spark). Vodcast and vlogs are regularly updated video stories (<http://tv.winelibrary.com/>).

Communication

Safeguards have been put in place to prevent people from sending bulk emails. You can send (approximately) 50 emails at once. If you have more names (yay!) you will need to use a bulk mailing system. A bulk mailer takes your email and your list of contacts and sends the messages one at a time. You can also manage these contacts on-line to prevent duplicate emails and easily add and remove people from future mailings.

Services: Yahoo! Groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com>), Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com)

Software: PHPList, Mailman (ask your Web hosting provider for more information)

Commerce

Take your business on-line by starting as an on-line consumer. Experience buying on-line and understand what you do (not) like.

Efficiency

Enter keywords into search engines to find customers and competitors related to your business. Repeat daily. Or have the search engine notify you when things of interest show up on-line. www.google.com/alerts

Finding other businesses: search for your town's name; search for your chamber of commerce; search for your competitor's name; don't forget to search for your own name too (this is an "ego-google").

Keep track of what others are doing through bookmarks (or "favorites" in Internet Explorer). Or use a news reader to help you keep track. Visit only one site for a summary of all other sites. Popular on-line news readers: www.bloglines.com and www.google.com/reader.

Efficient finances

On-line banking, on-line bill payments, exporting bank statements, importing statements into your accounting software. Ask your bank for more information about the services they offer.

Connectivity

- Dial-up – through the phone
- DSL – through the phone
- Cable – through the tv
- Wireless – over the hills
- Satellite – up in the air

Providers in our region are listed at: <http://www.greycounty.ca/broadband/providers.cfm>

Information about types of connections is available from:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broadband_Internet_access

Keep your Local Area Network (LAN) secure

1. Add/change the router's admin password
2. Enable your firewall
3. Be suspicious of suspect things
4. Create accounts that aren't administrators for every day use

5. Ask for help

Business travel and dealing with email

Email comes into your laptop through the Post Office Protocol (POP). Mail leaves your laptop with the Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP). Generally the machine that delivers mail is named: mail.yourinternetprovider.com. If you're not at home mail.yourinternetprovider.com doesn't recognize you and won't let you send mail. This is annoying. Use Gmail to send email even when you're not at home (search their help pages for SMTP). www.gmail.com.

Additional Resources

- www.snopes.com – research the latest hoax to see if it's fact or fiction
- www.urbandictionary.com – not sure what the kids are talkin' 'bout? look it up!
- <http://www.e-future.ca/alberta/ebusiness/presentations.asp> – more presentations about e-business in Canada
- www.changethis.com – the inspiration you need to take your business in a new direction