

# E-Commerce & E-Business

(How to do business on the Web)

By

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## (1) The four steps to E-”Anything”

- Build it** – The actual construction of the website, which includes the obtaining of the domain name, “painting” the HTML, and constructing the storefront.
  
- Host it** – The hardware and software required to physically place your website, and storefront, on the Internet.
  
- Promote it** – The process(s) of making your customers, prospects, and the general population of the worldwide web know your web address and what you have to offer.
  
- Run it** – The day-to-day running of your e-storefront. Not much different than running any physical business operation, just that you don’t see face-to-face all of your customers or workers.

## (2) Building the Website

### (a) You have to have a plan:

A web site is just like any other marketing effort. You must have a plan of what message you are going to convey to potential customers, while also planning how to deliver the message. It is a big mistake to create a web site without having a clear plan of both the message and the delivery mechanism. A simple list of the message items is a good first step. For example a list of the products or services offered, along with a description of the companies history, product line and how to contact or order is paramount.

For the storefront, you will need to decide which products and services make sense to offer via the web. For example, horse bridles make sense to offer since shipping is a small portion of the cost of the goods delivered to the customers. In contrast, bales of hay probably would not make sense,

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because United Parcel (or FedEx) shipping would be more than the cost of the goods being sold.

**(b) Content:**

Nothing can substitute for good content of your Website. No matter how much fancy HTML, Java, colors/fonts you utilize.. Good content will increase the traffic to your Website both from a search engine prospective as well as from your human visitors.

Consider “content” before any other issue. Do not worry first about, fonts, colors, animation, or pictures before you have “nailed” down your content. Think of a Website as a “newspaper” or “magazine”. Would anybody read a newspaper that didn’t have news and interesting articles? I think not!

**(c) Other Construction Issues:**

Some issues that you do need to consider before you begin constructing your Website.

- Dynamic Vs. Static content
- Public/Private sections of your site
- Tools used to construct the site
  - HTML Validator
  - Hot Dog
  - WebStore Builder
  - WebShop XL
  - Namo
  - FrontPage
  - Hot Metal Pro
  
- Design Techniques
  - Frames
  - Tables
  - Java Script
  - Keywords
  - Redirect/Splash screen
  - Database(s)
  - Amount of graphics
  - Meta Tags
  - Netscape Vs. IE
  - ASP vs. Static HTML

•Design Techniques to minimize (from a search engine perspective)

(1) HTML frames:

If used always provide non-frame support. Frames are a problem for some search engines and they make book marking difficult. If you use frames in your websites design, be sure to provide a “<NOFRAMES>“ section with a complete textual description of your site. Also in the NOFRAMES section provide a link to your sitemap.

(2) Meta refresh or “redirect” screens.

Most search engines have been programmed to “dislike” Meta refresh or redirect pages. These pages are viewed as “gateway” pages and not the actual site. If you must use a splash screen, program it with Java Script instead of using the Meta Refresh tag. Also place on your splash screen a link to your site map.

(3) Carefully use tables (i.e. the <TABLE> command).

Some search engines have difficulty with pages that contain tables. The more complex the table, the more difficult it is for the search engine to navigate. However, in order to design a “good” Website, tables are almost mandatory.

**(c) Shopping Cart Issues:**

How you are going to provide a shopping cart, and how you are going to process credit card orders is a central issue to e-business. Two major issues exist, they are:

•Remote or Local host

Locally Hosted (pros & cons):

- + No monthly fees
- + Total Control over content
- Trouble Shooting & Support
- Linkage to payment portal

Remotely hosted (pros & cons):

- Monthly fees (can be free monthly, but high % of sales)
- Functionality controlled by host
- Lack of total control of content
- +Integrated with payment portal

•Secure Vs. Non-Secure payment method

In todays “web scared” world, secure is the preferred method of accepting payments.

### (3) Hosting Your Website

Who & how you decide to have your Website hosted should be based on the following three issues:

- Services** – What software and hardware do you require, and then match them against what your host can/will provide.
- Experience** - Experience is the required combination of time and knowledge in the field of study.
- Platform** – Is the server based on Microsoft software (NT or Windows 2000) or is it based on Unix/Linux. The majority of tools and expertise available are for Microsoft software.

The first question you must ask yourself is “are you going to try and host the site yourself or use a service to host your site for you”? Unless you have the expertise in hardware, necessary Internet connection (T1 line), and necessary software, then answer will almost always be using a service! Therefore the following list of items should be examined by anybody chosen to host your site:

#### **Services:**

- E-mail
  - Multiple e-addresses
  - Mailing Lists
  - Forwarding of E-mail
  - Web access to your E-mail
- Web design/update/content
- Reports
  - Webtrends
  - Promotion to search engines
  - Search Engine Rankings
  - Counters
  - Webstat
- Firewalls & security
  - Software
  - Hardware
  - Virus detection
  - Passwords
- Experience**

You should look for somebody who is:

  - Honest with you about their experience

- Knows agriculture (why teach somebody something they should already know)
- Has been hosting sites for a while
- Can provide agriculture related links and content advice

#### **(4) Promotion to the world**

Unlike the baseball field in “Field of Dreams”, simply by building it, they will not come... You must promote your site before you will have visitors, and then business will follow.

##### **(a) Search Engine Registration/Announcements:**

85%<sup>1</sup> of the visitors to your site will have found you via a search engine (or directory 58%). Since the majority of the search engines will not have found you via web crawling, you will need to register or notify the search engine that you have a site. There are three method of getting registered with the search engines. Each is listed below with some comments.

##### **(1) Hand registration:**

Hand registration is where you visit each search engine (for example AltaVista, Yahoo, or Northern Light) and manually completed the registration form at that site. This process can take at least 15 minutes per search engine. For specialty search engines like AgInfo.Com, AgFind.Com, AngusCattle.Com, etc. hand registration is a must.

##### **(2) Software:**

For the majority of search engines and directories, the search engine submission software can provide a cost effective, simple method of getting your web site registered and recognized by the search engines. For about \$90 you can purchase software that will submit your Website to over 100,000 search engines around the world. This software will also keep track of when you last submitted and assist in evaluating your Website. For more information visit [www.CyberspaceHQ.Com](http://www.CyberspaceHQ.Com)

##### **(3) Services:**

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<sup>1</sup> Georgia Tech Survey

There are available services that will submit you web site to the search engines. Some of these services are free. Here is a partial list of “free” submission services:

<http://submitit.bcentral.com/sitrial.htm> (10 search engines)  
<http://www.submitexpress.com/> (40 search engines)  
<http://www.scrubtheweb.com/abs/submit/> (30 search engines)  
<http://www.uswebsites.com/submit/> (25 search engines)

These sites (when not in free mode) and others charge fees ranging from \$10 to \$100 per year. These services also supposedly provide assistance in tuning your Website for maximal search engine placement.

**(b) Traditional Methods:**

The web is not totally, and probably will not totally ever, replacing traditional advertising. But with this said, you must include your e-mail and Website addresses in all of your traditional advertising mediums. For example If you were to place an advertisement in the local paper, be sure to indicate the current prices and availability can be found on the web site.

**(c) E-mail:**

You should, if your e-mail package supports it, utilize a signature file. This is where at the bottom of every message you send, automatically several lines with your name, company name, e-mail address and web address are placed. This helps promote people contacting you after the initial contact or reply to an e-mail has been placed. It is also very useful where your message gets forwarded to another person....

**(d) Business Card, Stationary, etc.:**

Update all of your business cards, stationary, invoices, etc. to reflect your current e-mail address and Website location.

## **(5) Getting Help**

**(a) Books:**

Getting Hits: The Definitive Guide to Promoting Your Website; Don Sellers; PeachPit Press; ISBN: 0-201-68815-8

Increase Your Web Traffic In A Weekend; William R. Stanek; Prima Publishing; ISBN: 0-7615-2313-8

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101 Ways to Promote Your Web Site; Susan Sweeney, C.A.; Maximum Press; ISBN: 1-885068-45-X

**(b) Web Sites:**

E-Commerce & E-Business information sites:

<http://www.communityb2b.com>

<http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/e-business/glossary/>

<http://www-3.ibm.com/e-business/doc/content/glossary/>

<http://www.suliscommunication.com/language/ecommerce/>

<http://www.computerworld.com/managementtopics/ebusiness/glossary/>

<http://www.treasury.pncbank.com/ecommerce/glossary.html/>

Payment portal information site:

<http://www.mbankcard.com>

The Webmaster's Guide to Search Engines and Directories:

<http://calafia.com/webmasters/>

Search Engine Tutorial:

[http://www.digital-cafe.com/~webmaster/nw01\\_05.htm](http://www.digital-cafe.com/~webmaster/nw01_05.htm)

Keyword tracking site: Wordtracker.com

<http://www.wordtracker.com>

Search Engine Submission Sites:

<http://submitit.bcentral.com/sitrial.htm> (10 search engines)

<http://www.submitexpress.com/> (40 search engines)

<http://www.scrubtheweb.com/abs/submit/> (30 search engines)

<http://www.uswebsites.com/submit/> (25 search engines)

**(c) Software:**

**WebShop XL**

Boomerang Software, Inc.

90 Concord Ave.

Belmont, MA 02478

Tel: (617) 489-3000

Fax: (617) 489-1489

<http://www.boomerangsoftware.com>

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