

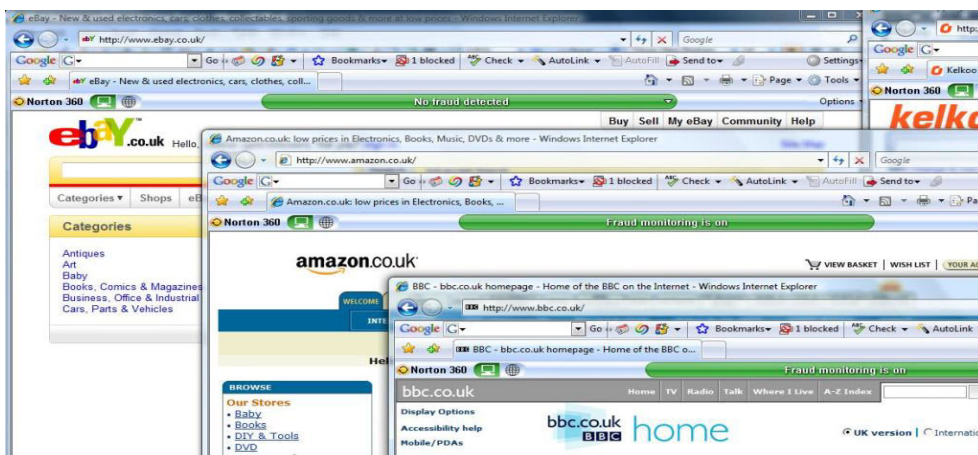
What has your web site ever done for you?

The world wide web has been with us in its commercial form for just over 10 years now!

It would be hard to deny that it is not now firmly established, in fact it has become considered a required element for any new business starting up, whatever their market or offering. This blanket acceptance has led to many missed opportunities and much wasted time and money simply because it is expected.

A commercial web site has two principle functions promotion and selling.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the increased importance of the Internet is it's immediate and interactive nature; surfers can navigate around more easily and directly, if the web site is well designed, so within a couple of clicks the viewer will have found what they were looking for. This means that in a time pressured society they can spend their valuable time doing things that are relevant to them.



Promotion

Web sites are often used as little more than an on-line brochure, in theory saving the company printing and postage costs. It is often worth considering if this on-line brochure is actually saving money when you consider the costs of building and maintaining the site including the content.

How easy is it for people visiting your site to navigate around? Even if your site isn't a sales point you should still be working on the basis of a 3 click 'purchase', visitors should take no more than 3 clicks to arrive at the information they were looking for. It can work wonders to ask others to navigate around your web site and give you feedback.

Selling

If your site is your shop, rather than competing with all the other on-line retailers it is worth developing partnerships with other businesses, effectively sharing customer data bases and lifting the profile of both companies

Some of the things that have been tried have included:

- Joint ventures with other sites
- Complimentary sales
- Cross promotions with complimentary sites
- Membership benefits:
 - Discounts
 - Special offers
 - Privileged information

These work on the basis that it is much easier to sell to your existing customers and contacts than it is to generate sales from new customers and this is more so on the Internet. This approach is focusing on developing a relationship with the visitor, respecting them as human rather than an online wallet and giving them much more than the just window shopping.



So what is your web site doing for you?

Done well, you should be seeing a return from it. However a poorly managed or neglected web site is a waste of time and money.

