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Article Summary:
Why you need to integrate your website and your back office system to achieve success.

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Why You Must Integrate Your Website With Your Back Office System

By: Dan Kaplan

Many companies agree that a website is a very strong sales vehicle resulting in increased sales. However, after investing a substantial amount of money in building an elaborate Website, the disappointment settles in when they begin to realize that their website does not produce the results they hoped for, and that it does not match their needs and expectations. What people fail to realize is the fact that having a beautiful Website does not guarantee an increase in sales, and will not improve efficiency or customer relationship management effectiveness. Yes, I will agree you must have an attractive, professional looking website, otherwise you will immediately lose credibility with your prospects. However, your website also needs to be:

1. **Informative** - Your website must speak to your prospect's needs, wants, desires, and address their concerns. If your website is not informative, and if it does not sell to your prospects, then you are dramatically reducing your chances of closing the sale.

2. **Traffic directive** - Your website should lead clients easily through the sales funnel. If you do not have an easy navigation system, and if your sales prospects are getting lost - they will easily become frustrated. Frustrated prospects do not become happy customers.

3. **Marketable** - Sales are rarely completed upon the first introduction, whether it is in person, over the phone or on the Internet. You have to gain your prospect's attention and keep their attention. For example, I continually update my site, and add new articles and case studies to entice prospects to visit my website often. You may want to add an e-newsletter, or a special report, or offer a free e-Book, or e-Course as a lead generating strategy to capture your prospect's contact information. Once you have their information, you can then email them or snail mail them, or make follow up phone calls that will eventually close the sale.

A Fourth Factor That Is Frequently Overlooked

Since 1980, Dan Kaplan has worked with corporate executives to improve purchasing, increase warehouse and distribution efficiencies, and implement software solutions that result in substantial savings and productivity improvements. To lower your operating costs, reduce your warehousing and distribution business's quote generation process from 3 weeks to 3 hours and invoice cycle from months to

Not meeting the goals mentioned in the above paragraphs, can lead to not achieving the results anticipated. But a successfully designed and marketed Website that results in a substantial sales increase can also create business disruption when the e-commerce system is not integrated in "real time" to the "back office" system.

For example, I recently received an inquiry about our ERP software solution from the president of a small fastening company who had read my previous article "how to choose the right software for your company" which was published in a popular trade magazine. When speaking with her, she told me that she recently "turned off" her website despite the fact it was extremely successful in producing a substantial amount of new sales. The reason for "turning off" the website was that the "back office" system did not produce the proper inventory status information.

Not having this data resulted in severe business disruptions. Realizing that she would lose customers and her company's high rating on the web, the president decided to "turn off" the website until she could find suitable new "back office" software for her company. As a result of the high level of stress created by the business disruptions, many of her staff members decided to leave the company, increasing her business disruptions.

Another Example Of How A So-Called Successful Website Can Create Unnecessary Business Disruptions: Recently, three presidents of very successful electronics e-commerce companies told me they have excellent e-business retail stores that enabled them to grow their businesses substantially. When I asked them how good their inventory control is in the warehouse, they all admitted that this was one area that required great improvement as:

1. Misplaced inventory was "collecting dust" and was not found until the next physical count took place in the warehouse. Quite often, when the misplaced inventory when found, it was obsolete. The inventory that could have been sold became excess inventory since new inventory was ordered while it was misplaced.

2. Incorrect shipments resulted in a high rate of returns, and double freight bills.

3. Credit issued for returned inventory resulted in additional workload for the accounting department results in the loss of vendor early payment discounts.

**Make Your Website A Success With An Integrated Computer System**
While selling on the Web can be a very powerful tool, as you can see, it can also be a "double-edged sword" resulting in

severe business disruptions. With an integrated computer system, the Web, the "back office, and the warehouse information will be updated in a "real time" mode without the danger of data being corrupted or lost. An automated warehouse will insure shipment accuracy, prevent inventory from being misplaced, and the company Website will always reflect an accurate count of the inventory available in the warehouse. This will your company's customer relationship management effectiveness and encourage customers to become recurring clients.

If your website is attractive, informative, marketable, and if it has traffic direction and a integrated computer system in place, it will then enable your company to go to the "next level." You will then only be limited by your imagination and your budget. The question is, "What is your destination?"

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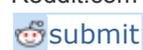
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