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## Take it up a notch

*Web site strategies to take your business to the next level*

by Dan Kaplan

Many companies agree that a Web site is an important tool that can result in increased sales. However, after investing a substantial amount of money to build an elaborate Web site, disappointment settles in when executives begin to realize their Web site does not produce the results they hoped for, and does not match their needs and expectations. What people fail to realize is that having a beautiful Web site doesn't guarantee an increase in sales, and will not improve efficiency or customer relationship management effectiveness. Yes, I agree you must have an attractive, professional looking Web site, otherwise you will immediately lose credibility with your prospects. However, your Web site also needs to be:

- 1) **Informative** – Your Web site must speak to your prospect's needs, wants and desires, plus address their concerns. If your Web site is not informative, and if it does not sell to your prospects, you are dramatically reducing your chances of closing the sale.
- 2) **Traffic directive** – Your Web site 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 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. If you go to [www.smcddata.com](http://www.smcddata.com), you will notice that I continually update my site, and add new articles and case studies to entice prospects to visit my Web site 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 e-mail them or snail-mail them, or make follow-up phone calls that will eventually close the sale.

### A frequently overlooked factor

Not meeting the goals mentioned in the above paragraphs can lead to not achieving the results anticipated. But a successfully designed and marketed Web site 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.

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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 *Progressive Distributor*. She told me she recently turned off her Web site despite the fact it was extremely successful in producing a substantial amount of new sales. The reason for turning off the site was that the back office system did not produce the proper inventory status information.

Not having this data resulted in severe business disruptions. Realizing she would lose customers and her company's high rating on the Web, the president decided to turn off the site 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.

### **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 this was one area that required great improvement.

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 was 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, which resulted in the loss of vendor early payment discounts.

### **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 warehouse information will be updated in a real time mode without the danger of data being corrupted or lost. An automated warehouse will ensure shipment accuracy, prevent inventory from being misplaced, and the company Web site will always reflect an accurate count of the inventory available in the warehouse. This will enhance your company's customer relationship management effectiveness and encourage customers to become recurring clients.

If your Web site is attractive, informative, marketable, and has traffic direction and an integrated computer system in place, it will then enable your company to go to the next level.

*Dan Kaplan works 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 three weeks to three hours and invoice cycle from months to one day, go to [www.smcddata.com](http://www.smcddata.com).*

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