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Secondary Benefits of an Online Presence

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Many times when a company sets up its web site, goals are listed only in terms of the number of visits (for ad sales purpose) or in actual dollar sales. While it's true that everything comes down to sales volume, there may be additional benefits that your online presence is providing, all of which help add to your bottom line. In today's Workshop, Jeffrey Moses lists five benefits that you may not have thought about in terms of financial savings, but that can make a tremendous difference to profitability over the course of a year.

1. INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY OF SALES PERSONNEL

Prior to a company establishing a web site, its sales staff usually needs to explain everything to potential new customers. Questions need to be answered, brochures need to be mailed or overnighted, phone calls need to be made --all of which take time and effort. But when a company develops a web site that effectively describes all products and services and shows the solidity and integrity of the company, customers often require only a few phone calls before they are ready to buy. This translates directly into "achieving more while doing less" -- a goal of any marketing tool.

2. DIRECT REDUCTION OF COSTS

As a result of a sales staff's increased productivity, many marketing expenses can be reduced by a good web site. Cost reductions are the result of:

- Fewer and shorter long-distance calls and faxes,
- Reduced overnight deliveries and mailings,
- Reduced need for designing and printing of brochures and other sales materials, and
- The possibility of replacing a high percentage of phone calls with E-mails.

All of the above points are especially pertinent for reducing expenses when handling overseas customers.

3. EASE OF ADDING NEW PRODUCTS

When a company's marketing materials include only written brochures, sell sheets, flyers, etc., it's costly and time consuming to add new products. Often, companies need to completely re-design and re-print brochures when adding just a single new item.

But with a web site, all that's required is to add a new page, and to refer customers to it. Information about all products can be much more extensive than when using printed brochures because there is, practically speaking, no limit to space on a web site. Every aspect of product and service can be set forth in detail -- including model features and prices, servicing, warranties, etc. The cost of this is miniscule compared to the cost of creating new written

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material.

4. REDUCED CUSTOMER SUPPORT COSTS

Without a web site, a company is forced to handle all customer inquiries and complaints via phone, fax or letter. This often requires numerous dedicated personnel and may even entail round-the-clock availability of technical staff. But a company can use part of its web site specifically for taking care of product questions. Many companies encourage customers to E-mail, rather than call. This allows employees to respond at their convenience, and enables them to gather all required information before responding.

For more information on this, please see the former Workshop "Encourage Customers to Contact You by E-Mail: It Could Save Your Company Time and Money."

5. TWENTY-FOUR HOUR PRESENCE CAN HELP A COMPANY'S MARKETING ADDRESS A WIDER AUDIENCE

Many web browsers today prefer to shop or gather information in the evenings and on weekends -- the very times that a company's sales staff may not be available. A web site, quite literally, is available for access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. And being "open" all the time doesn't cost a penny more. This can allow a company to reach a wider market than if its sales personnel simply sat at their desks calling prospective customers during regular business hours.

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