



EXECUTIVE BRIEF CASE GUIDE: Building a Business Case For Your WebSite



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Introduction

Website The Internet is changing the very foundation of private and business life--and the World Wide Web is a key factor in this revolution. Establishing E-mail, and a Website can be one of the most important business moves you make. Because of the enormous potential and investment involved, it is crucial that you proceed carefully. This Briefcase Guide discusses the importance of cohesive Website planning, effective implementation and ongoing refinement in tapping the full potential of the Web. It presents a six-step process to ensure that your Website meets your business objectives, now and in the future.

Executive Summary

The Internet and corporate Intranets, particularly the World Wide Web, are changing the way we do business. These networks empower people to get the information they need, quickly and easily, regardless of its physical location. In addition, they provide a high level of interaction between people and information, so the information delivered can be custom-tailored to meet the needs of each individual. As a result, the Internet and Intranets are growing at an unparalleled rate, and bringing about a revolution in business and communication.

Today, approximately 400,000 Websites are in operation, and more are being added daily--not only on the Internet, but also on private Intranets. In fact, at the beginning of 1996, nearly 25 percent of Fortune 1000 companies had already implemented Web servers on their Intranets, and 40 percent more were planning to establish them.

Implementing a Website may be one of the most important moves your company makes. Websites, with their nearly universal reach and highly-interactive nature, present opportunities that are not available through other means. Through Websites, organizations can increase revenues, decrease costs and build tighter relationships with their customers, employees and business partners.

But Websites can require substantial investments to create and maintain. Website spending by companies ranges from hundreds of dollars for small companies to millions of dollars for large companies. Whether you are considering a Website for the Internet or your Intranet, its important that you plan and implement it carefully. Only in this way will you realize the full potential of your site and gain a handsome return on your investment.

Planning and building a Website requires expertise in a wide variety of new areas, including Web technologies, the unique aspects of the Web as a medium and the Internet resources available, such as Web search engines and Web advertising, to help you generate traffic to your site. To get on the Web quickly, without sacrificing the effectiveness or quality of your Website, you may want to seek assistance from outside organizations that specialize in Web planning, deployment and refinement.

This Guide describes the explosive growth of Web technology and its potential. It also presents a six-step, business-oriented process for planning, deploying and maintaining an effective Website. These steps provide an overview of the factors you need to consider in incorporating the power of the Web into your business. Use these steps as a guide to help you tap the full potential of the Web and make it an integral part of your overall business strategy.

Background

Web technology makes possible exciting new business models for marketing, communications, commerce, publishing, advertising, client/server applications, telephony, business process optimization, entertainment and eventually broadcasting. With a Website, an organization can reach a worldwide audience of literally millions of people, quickly and effectively. Because the Web is interactive, it can custom-tailor the information it delivers to each person for maximum impact. That's why organizations and individuals are implementing Web sites at an astonishing rate.

Today, an estimated 2.7 billion public websites are in operation. ActivMedia predicts that web site expenditures will reach nearly \$22.5 billion by 2001. The Yankee Group estimates that annual Web site spending by companies with less than 100 employees ranges from \$45,000 to \$125,000. For companies with between 100 and 500 employees, that range increases to \$750,000 to \$1.1 million. For companies with more than 500 employees, annual Web site spending is estimated to range between \$250,000 and \$4 million.

The potential audience on the Internet is also enormous. IDC estimates more than 104 million Americans now use the Internet, 90 million of whom started using it in 1999. International Data Corporation (IDC) predicts that in 2005, there will be 194 million Internet users. The Web is a particularly attractive medium because it reaches consumers as well as business users.

Today, 40 percent of computer users in America's businesses are connected to the Internet compared to 30 percent of home users. IDC expects the percentage of both to more than double by the year 2005, increasing to 95 percent of home and 95 percent of business computer users connected.

- There are an estimated 2.7 billion web sites in operation today.
- Web site expenditures will reach nearly \$22.5 billion by 2001.
- 31 percent of today's Web-based businesses are profitable.
- IDC estimates that there will be 194 million Internet users in America alone in 2005.
- 40 percent of business computer users and 30 percent of home users are already connected to the Internet.

A Business-Oriented Approach To Effective Web Sites

Because of the attractive potential of Web technology--such as its worldwide reach and ability to interact with users--and the apparent ease of building sites, many organizations are rushing headlong to establish Internet and Intranet Websites. But many are taking a haphazard approach, resulting in wasted money and, more significantly, lost opportunity. Forrester Research found that one of the most common mistakes companies make when implementing Website is not having a clear vision or purpose for the sites.

websites can represent a significant investment in time and resources. That's why, whether you are considering a Web site for the public Internet or your corporate Intranet, it's important that you pursue a well thought-out process in planning, implementing and monitoring your site.

The following sections of this paper present a business-oriented approach to planning, deploying and refining your Website. By addressing the factors identified in this process, you can take full advantage of the power of Websites to maintain a competitive edge. There are six fundamental steps in the process:

- Step 1: Understand the medium
- Step 2: Plan your Web site-Define your goals
- Step 3: Deploy your Web site
- Step 4: Market your Web site
- Step 5: Analyze the results
- Step 6: Refine and maintain your Web site

These steps are presented individually in the following sections:

Step 1: Understand The Medium

Before you can realize the full benefits of a Web site, you need to understand the capabilities of the Web and the exciting possibilities unleashed by these capabilities. There are three stages to reaching this understanding: lay the foundation; understand the possibilities of Internet Websites; and understand the possibilities of Intranet Websites.

Lay the Foundation

In laying the foundation, it is important to consider three factors. First, understand the nature of the Internet and corporate Intranet in particular the nature of the Web as a unique and dynamic medium. The Web has aspects that are similar to other media: it can be used to disseminate information, to target specific audiences and to generate direct response. It also has many aspects that are new and different from other media.

One of the most important differences of the Web as a medium is its interactive nature. That makes it much more personal. According to an article in the September 23, 1996 issue of Business Week, "The successful Web players are not simply replacing existing businesses in the new online medium, they are taking full advantage of the unique, interactive nature of the Internet." This applies equally to Internet and Intranet Websites. To exploit interaction fully, you need to become aware of the dynamics of users' interaction with Websites.

The second factor to consider in laying the foundation is to understand your competitors' Web presence. This includes an understanding of the brands and products they are emphasizing, their promotional plans and main messages, their target audience and how they are reaching these targets.

The Web itself provides a rich source of competitive information. Many of your competitors probably post a wealth of information about themselves on the Web. You can use this information to learn their products and positioning. You can also evaluate their Web expertise by the quality and functionality of their Websites.

The third factor to consider in laying the foundation is to understand the flexibility and responsiveness made possible by the Web. The Web provides an exciting opportunity to experiment and learn. Unlike more static media, you can quickly incorporate new ideas

into your site and observe the effects of changes to content, organization and navigation. According to the Business Week article cited earlier, "The successful Web trailblazers exhibit the ability to adapt, to scrap what's not working and improvise a new business plan on the fly."

Understand the Possibilities of Internet Websites

After you have laid the foundation for learning, you can familiarize yourself with the potential of Internet Websites. Remember, the Internet extends your reach to a worldwide audience, and it allows you to interact with that audience. The possibilities are exciting:

- **Reach new audiences.** The Web provides a new and unique opportunity to reach audiences that have been impossible or hard to reach with traditional media. For example, the 18 to 34 year-old audience represents an estimated 40 percent of Internet Web surfers. Not only can you reach new audiences, you can also present richer messages than with other media. That's because the Web's multimedia capabilities can include audio, video and animation.
- **Sell products and services.** A recent report by Forrester indicates that consumers are eager to buy products online. The report predicts that \$518 million worth of goods will be sold online in 1996 alone, and will increase to \$6.6 billion by the year 2000. Many companies use the Web as an additional sales channel that augments their existing, traditional channels. Through the Web, these companies are exposing their products and services to new audiences that are not available to their traditional channels. Large as well as small businesses are taking advantage of the Web. Dell Computer, for example, opened its Web store in July 1996. The company expects to sell \$20 to \$30 million worth of PCs per quarter from that site.
- **Enhance brand awareness.** A Website can deliver a richer brand identity than other media. You can augment traditional text and graphics with more engaging multimedia, including animation, audio and video. More importantly, Web technology helps you develop more individualized relationships with your customers by enabling you to deliver information that is custom-tailored to each customer. As a result, you can generate brand awareness that has increased personal meaning to each customer.
- **Increase customer satisfaction.** Because of its extensive reach and high level of interaction, a Web site can help you provide better service, better information, better support, and develop a closer relationship with your customers.
- **Disseminate information.** Through your Internet Website you can provide easy access to information about your products, services and company. This helps you move customers more quickly to the next step in the sales cycle.
- **Receive feedback.** Solicit feedback from Website visitors. Customers are more apt to respond because it's so easy and anonymous. They simply enter the information requested on a questionnaire or survey page and click a button to send it to you.
- **Automate business processes.** Automate a variety of business processes by re-deploying them to a Website. Federal Express, for example, permits customers to check the status of their packages on a Website. As a result, up-to-date information is readily available to customers without the cost of additional support personnel.

Understand the Possibilities of Intranet Web Sites

Intranet Web sites can plug in to your existing network infrastructure. As a result, they leverage your network investment. Because they operate over your existing network, Intranet Web sites are easier to secure than those on the Internet. Like Web sites on the Internet, Intranet Web sites present a number of possibilities that can revolutionize the way you do business:

- **Automate business processes.** Automate a variety of internal business processes on your Web site for increased efficiency. For example, many organizations are using Intranet Web sites to automate the distribution and administration of internal documents, including policies and procedures, benefit selections, financial information, telephone lists and job postings. Electronic distribution eliminates the high cost of updating and distributing paper documents every time an update occurs.
- **Redeploy client/server solutions.** By redeploying client/server solutions to Web sites, you provide universal access to information without the need to install and manage specialized client software. Users can access the information they need through their standard Web browsers. Many organizations are already redeploying client/server applications in human resources, accounting, sales management and executive information services onto their Intranet Web sites. These Web-based applications are considerably less expensive to maintain and manage than traditional client/server solutions.
- **Disseminate information.** Through your Intranet Web site you can disseminate internal information to employees and even to business partners, such as suppliers and contractors. You can use your Web site to present information in new and engaging ways, so your employees will be more apt to access the information. Your business partners will also appreciate being kept "in the loop."
- **Facilitate a collaborative culture.** Because important information flows more freely through Intranet Web sites, it is easier for your employees to become more engaged, involved and interactive-within their own departments and workgroups as well as with other departments and workgroups.
- **Increase employee satisfaction.** Use your Web site to keep employees informed and solicit their feedback on matters that are important to them. As a result, you'll build closer relationships with them.
- **Receive feedback.** Because of its ease of interaction, a Web site can help you obtain valuable feedback from your employees and business partners. Use this information to improve service and support to these people who are so important to your business.

Step 2: Plan Your Web Site

After you have developed an understanding of the Internet and Intranet, you are ready for the next step—planning your Website. This is, perhaps, the most important step because it establishes the basis for your Website business plan. In the planning step, you determine the opportunities the Web presents to your organization and then define your objectives accordingly. It is important to develop your Website business plan within the context of your overall business plan. Be sure to address two major issues

Important issues to consider in planning:

- Plan your site within the context of your overall business strategy.
- Define your goals.
- Identify opportunities to increase revenue.
- Identify opportunities to decrease costs.
- Define your target audience.
- Establish and monitor objectives.
- How does the Web site support your existing business objectives?
- Does the Web present new opportunities that are not currently available to you? These should be integrated into your overall business plan.

Look for opportunities to increase revenue and decrease costs. In defining your objectives, it is important to determine your target audience, and to build in the means to monitor your progress in accomplishing your objectives.

Identify Opportunities to Increase Revenue

The Web presents a variety of ways to increase revenue:

- **Enhance brand awareness.** Because of its multimedia capability, the web can help you increase brand awareness through richer, more engaging brand identity.
- **Enhance product awareness.** Increase the awareness of your product to a specific target audience.
- **Boost lead generation.** Take advantage of the interactive nature of the web to capture leads.
- **Speed lead response.** Because you get leads immediately, you can respond faster, while the customer is still "hot."
- **Reach new customers.** Because of its worldwide reach, the Web helps you reach customers who may not be available through other media.
- **Add a new sales channel.** Add online sales that are incremental to those of your traditional off-line channels such as retail and direct mail.
- **Increase sales through existing channels.** In addition to providing a new sales channel, the Web can also boost sales through your existing channels by increasing product and brand awareness.
- **Improved customer service and support.** The Web presents opportunities to increase revenue indirectly through enhanced customer service and support.

The metrics you establish for monitoring should be objective and measurable. Use them to evaluate the effectiveness of your site in meeting the objectives you have established. Are you reaching your intended audience? What incremental sales are attributable to the site? What cost savings have you realized by automating business processes on a Website? Are you finding increased employee satisfaction because of improved information flow through your Intranet site? Is your overhead reduced because of lower printing costs (external or internal) or lower sales costs?

The metrics you establish for monitoring should be objective and measurable. Use them.

Identify Opportunities to Decrease Costs

You can use both Internet and Intranet Websites to reduce costs and improve productivity in external and internal business processes:

- **Reduce support costs.** It is often cheaper, easier and more effective to support customers over the Internet than through more traditional methods such as telephone support. In addition, corporations can support employees and business partners over their corporate Intranets, keeping them informed and soliciting their feedback.
- **Reduce sales costs.** Sales over the Internet typically require less overhead and less sales support than traditional sales channels. A Website can reduce dependence on more expensive sales channels, including retail.
- **Reduce inventory costs.** A Website can help you reduce inventory costs by shortening sales cycles. In addition, the Web can help you reduce inventory costs by shortening supply cycles from your vendors.
- **Reduce materials costs.** Save paper production, printing and distribution costs by disseminating information electronically over the Internet or Intranet. For example, you can publish annual reports, distribute marketing materials and present customer support tips on your Internet Website. An Intranet Website can lower the cost of delivering internal manuals and forms.

Define Your Target Audience and Their Motivations

The Web gives you the ability to reach audiences that are out of the reach of other media. But reaching your audience is only part of the task. It is essential that your Website be carefully tailored to your target audience. Just as with any other medium, you need to know your audience to take full advantage of the Web. Ask yourself the following questions about your target audience:

- **Who are they.** Are they consumers, business customers, business partners, government organizations, or your own employees? What are their demographics? • What are their qualifications?. What is their level of familiarity with computers? Are they 'netheads?' Are they technically oriented? Are they consumers?
- **How will they access your Website?** Will they use network or dial-up connections? What is their typical modem speed? What kind of browsers will they use? These factors influence the content of your site. For example, if your target audience typically uses dial-up connections, you should not include graphics that will require long download times.

Establish and Monitor Objectives

Once you have an understanding of how the Web fits your business, you can establish your objectives. You should define these objectives in the context of your overall business objectives. Only in this way can you tap the synergy between the Web and other tools available to you. In particular, you need to establish the role of your Website in your overall marketing mix.

You also need to set up methods and metrics to monitor and evaluate your Website on a continuing basis. The site can provide feedback in two ways: It can collect data automatically, such as the number of visits to each page and the paths visitors take through the site. You can also solicit feedback from visitors through questionnaires and survey forms on your site.

The metrics you establish for monitoring should be objective and measurable. Use them to evaluate the effectiveness of your site in meeting the objectives you have established. Are you reaching your intended audience? What incremental sales are attributable to the site? What cost savings have you realized by automating business processes on a Website? Are you finding increased employee satisfaction because of improved information flow through your Intranet site? Is your overhead reduced because of lower printing costs (external or internal) or lower sales costs?

Step 3: Deploy Your Website

After you have completed the understanding and planning steps, its time to deploy your site. In deploying your site, take into account the following factors:

- **Design your site from a usability perspective and not merely from an aesthetic perspective.** Rather than just looking for an award-winning, "cool" site, consider the site visitors. Make the site easy to navigate. And don't scare visitors away or frustrate them with a multitude of snazzy graphics that take forever to load.
- **Build in the means to monitor and continually evaluate your Website.** Treat your site just as you would any other business tool.
- **Take advantage of the highly interactive nature of the Web.** Solicit visitor information.

What You'll Need

There are a staggering number of Web-related tools for creating and posting Websites, and new tools are appearing every day. The cost of evaluating, purchasing, integrating, learning and using these tools can be significant. And it often requires expertise in graphical arts programs such as Photoshop, Fireworks, and new scripting languages such as HTML. In addition, if you want to enhance your Website and include such capabilities as soliciting feedback, you'll need expertise in other, more complex programming languages such as Active Server Pages (ASP), C++, Java, Shockwave and CGI Script.

Your site should be accessible and easy to navigate, so visitors can quickly move from page to page. A well-designed site requires expertise in the unique interactive aspects of the Web medium.

Fortunately, there are organizations that specialize in Website planning, design, construction, deployment, monitoring and maintenance. These Web professionals can provide you with the expertise you need to create and deploy an effective Website.

Many organizations are already turning to Web professionals for assistance. IDC and Network World jointly conduct an annual survey called the Network World 500. In this survey, they interview 500 organizations that are among the leading networking users in the United States. These are companies with more than 1,000 employees, multiple sites with internetworked LANs and WANs and annual networking expenditures of more than \$5 million.

The 1996 survey reveals that 23.1 percent of these companies are using outside firms for installation and maintenance of their Web server hardware and software, and 22.1 percent are using outside services for their Website content design and maintenance. Smaller companies, with 100 to 1,000 employees, are outsourcing at an even greater rate.

Integrate Your Objectives

Before building your site, you should determine how your site can help you accomplish your business goals and objectives. View your site as your target audience would, that is, don't look at the Web site in isolation but rather in the context of your overall business plan. Understand how your Internet objectives relate to your physical world objectives. Understand the role of each element within your marketing mix, and leverage the strengths of each.

Try to make it all work together. Support each marketing objective across multiple media where possible. For example, cross-promote among media. Strive for synergy and consistency. Even though the individual messages may vary to leverage the unique strengths of each medium, the overall flavor should be consistent across media.

Build Your Site

After you have integrated your objectives, it's time to build your site. Using the three-phased approach outlined below will help you get on the Web quickly without jeopardizing quality or effectiveness. It will also provide a valuable learning environment, enabling you to adjust your business model to get maximum leverage from your Web site as you gain experience.

- **First, repurpose existing materials to the Web site in a compelling manner.** This does not mean merely copying existing paper documents to the Web server. It means adapting existing materials for online use. Adding a table of contents that provides hypertext links to document sections facilitates navigation considerably. Adding links within and across documents further simplifies navigation. Keep it simple and intuitive for the visitors coming to the site.
- **Second, begin moving appropriate business processes to Web sites.** Consider both external and internal processes for deployment on the Internet and Intranet. Increase the geographical impact of your Web site. Take advantage of the Web's potential to engage target audiences. You may even begin conducting basic commerce operations over the Internet and Intranet during this phase. Some processes may require that you integrate the Internet with your Intranet. As you increase the number of processes you deploy, the more your customers, vendors and employees will view your Web site as a viable place to conduct business. The result you'll improve access and service to your customers, suppliers and employees, and tighten your relationships with them. And you'll increase revenues and reduce costs at the same time.
- **Third, grow and evolve your Web site.** Create active content that can be customized for each visitor. Think of your Web site as a full business entity--with its own goals, objectives and strategies. Above all, continue to update your site's content as often as economically possible. Your site will become a strong adjunct to many of your organization's business activities and will soon be considered as mission-critical by the various groups with which you interact.

Step 4: Market Your Web Site

Merely implementing a Website, no matter how "cool," does not ensure that your intended audience will visit it. Even when they do visit it, it does not ensure that they will return. As a result of the large number of Websites already on the Internet, your site can get lost in the shuffle unless it is properly promoted as an extension to your current marketing efforts or business processes. Even with internal Intranets, promotion is essential to ensure that your target audience is aware of them and uses them to their fullest capability.

You need to engage in active marketing to draw an audience to your site and keep them coming back. There are a variety of ways to market and promote your Website, many using the Web itself.

Leverage Existing Marketing Resources

You can generate Web traffic by extending your traditional marketing programs. This may be as simple as adding your Website URL to your existing marketing collateral, press releases, advertisements, on-hold messages and product packaging. Once you've caught a customer's eye through traditional marketing activities, let them know that more extensive information is available on your Website. That helps you build qualified site visitors who are interested in your content. Also include areas that tie in to your latest non-Web marketing activities and promotions.

List With Online Information And Directory Resources

Several types of online resources help Net surfers find information on topics of interest, including companies that provide the products and services they are looking for. You should list your site with as many appropriate resources as possible. Unfortunately, thousands of resources are available, making comprehensive coverage difficult. Online resources fall into four categories:

- **Search engines.** These sites utilize indexing software agents, often called robots or spiders, that continually "crawl" the Web. They visit virtually every site in search of new or updated pages. When an agent visits a site, it records the full text of every page and visits all external links. Agents revisit sites periodically to refresh their databases.
- **Directories.** Unlike search engines, directories do not employ indexing software agents. Instead they require you to register your Website with them. Directories are usually subdivided into categories, so you need to submit your site under appropriate headings. Listing your site in as many relevant directories as possible helps to ensure that visitors find your site when they are searching.
- **Announcement sites.** The explosion of sites being added to the Web has resulted in the establishment of announcement sites that track all new Websites. These sites announce different types of new Internet documents-such as new Web pages, new articles and new resources. Announcements are posted for only a short period of time. When they remove a document from their "What's New" section, however, most announcement sites archive it so users can continue to access it.

- **Award site and cool site guides.** These guides are becoming a popular source for finding interesting and useful Website. Guides post and rate only a small percentage of the sites submitted to them, and typically select only one new site per day. You should ensure that the people who maintain award and cool site lists are aware of your site. Make sure your site is "rate-worthy" before submitting it for rating. Being selected as an award site or cool site attracts high traffic-but only for a short time.

Advertise On Other Web Sites

Web advertising is maturing as a marketing strategy and is now being brokered by existing and new agencies. Advertising on targeted Websites can help you build traffic for your Website.

As with other media, message, location and timing are critical components of a successful banner advertising campaign. Targeting the right audience with the right message provides a greater return than a high number of impressions to an untargeted audience.

Promote Your Intranet Web Site Internally

Your Intranet Website will be effective only if your employees and business partners are aware of it and use it. That's why you need to promote your Website internally. There are a number of methods you can use to promote your site, including:

- Feature the Website in employee newsletters.
- Distribute flyers or posters promoting the site.
- Post site information on company bulletin boards. Encourage managers to talk up the site to their subordinates and at company meetings.
- Conduct promotional programs such as internal contests based on some aspect of Website use.
- Conduct training sessions on using the site.
- Keep your business partners informed about your Website.

Get Help From Outside Sources

As in building a Website, marketing and promoting a site requires specialized expertise. Fortunately, there are a number of firms available to help you promote and market your site. These firms offer a variety of services, including:

- Website submission to top search engines and directories.
- Search engine triggering analysis and query result improvement.
- Nomination to appropriate award, new announcement and review sites.
- Arrangement of strategic links with related Websites.
- Press release submission.
- Competitive research and evaluation.
- Interactive, banner type Web advertisements.
- Web advertisement placement strategy.

Some firms offer specialized services. For example, there are Website promotion firms that employ automated tools to register Websites electronically with search engines and directories. These firms typically offer a free service to submit a site's URL to the top general search engines and simple directories. They also offer extended tools that register a site at a considerably larger number of resources, and they can target specific topics or geographic locations. Other firms offer Website marketing and consulting packages that include a combination of services.

Step 5: Analyze The Results

It is important to monitor and evaluate your Website continually to ensure that it's meeting objectives. In the planning stage, you determined what data you would gather and what metrics you would employ to analyze that data. Based on the data and metrics, you can analyze your Website on a variety of dimensions depending on your needs.

There are two primary purposes for analysis. One is to evaluate the effectiveness of your site and compare it to your traditional marketing programs and business processes. The second purpose is to provide information to help you continually evolve and tune your site. Remember to evaluate Web results in the overall context of your business strategies to determine if the results meet your business objectives. In analyzing your site, look at the data you gather online, including:

- **Number of site visits and specific page visits per day.** How large an audience are you reaching? Which pages are most popular? Which pages are least popular?
- **Visitor paths through the site.** How do users typically travel through your site? Which paths are most often taken?
- **Solicited online feedback.** Look at information gathered from solicited online responses, such as questionnaires, that are posted on your Website. This valuable information can help you optimize your site to the needs of your customers.
- **Visits derived from ad banners.** Analyze how well banners are working. Determine which banners are producing the most visits, and which are producing the most qualified visitors.

Also, look at other data, such as:

- **Solicited offline feedback:** Analyze feedback from sources other than your Website. For example, look at customers' responses to questions asked by offline sales personnel, such as "Where did you hear about our product or company?"
- **Testimonial and anecdotal information.** Take advantage of unsolicited information as well as solicited information.
- **Incremental revenue.** Look for added revenue that is directly or indirectly attributable to your Website.
- **Cost savings.** Look for cost savings that are directly or indirectly attributable to your Website.

Use the information you gather to compare the results of your Website programs to those of your non-Web programs. You also need to compare the quality of the results for each of these types of programs.

Step 6: Refine And Maintain Your Web Site

The Web is the most dynamic medium available today. As a result, it's important to establish a philosophy of changing and evolving your site continually to keep it fresh, at maximum effectiveness and in tune with your overall business strategies.

You should establish a process that enables you to refine and update your Web site on a continuing basis. The process should include the following components:

- **Leverage interaction to improve your site.** You will continue to get feedback on your site. Use this feedback to help you modify your site. Establish an iterative process to keep your Website optimized. Take advantage of the dynamic and interactive nature of the Web to provide a learning experience for your organization. Experiment and monitor the results. Make changes and watch their effect. An iterative process enables you to involve visitors in bringing your site up to its optimum potential and keeping it that way.
- **Review site marketing strategies.** Evaluate results in the context of your marketing strategies and determine if the results are on- or off-track. Do this for both Website and non-Website tactics.
- **Review business strategies.** Reconcile your Website strategy in the context of your overall business strategy. If you find the site is not meeting certain business objectives, re-evaluate your Web business plan in light of these shortcomings. Establish a process for continually refining your Website objectives in light of new information. The process should also include updating the role your Website plays in your overall business plan.
- **Stay in tune with technology.** As technology advances, you need to evolve your Website when appropriate in the context of your objectives.

Conclusions

A Website can revolutionize the way you do business. It can help you increase revenues, decrease costs and build tighter relationships with customers, employees and business partners. As you gain experience with your Website, you can continue to integrate it with your business, taking advantage of its unparalleled reach and high level of interaction to increase your competitive edge.

Establishing and maintaining a Website can represent a significant investment. To realize maximum return on that investment, you'll need to plan your site carefully, design it to take full advantage of the Web's unique capabilities, market it effectively and refine it continually. This requires expertise in a variety of areas, many of which are new to your organization.

Fortunately, there are a number of firms specializing in helping organizations like yours to plan, create, deploy, market and evolve Websites. With the help of these firms, you can get on the Web not only quickly, but also effectively. You'll realize immediate benefits, and gain strategic advantage. By establishing a Website now, you'll position your organization to tap the rapidly expanding potential of one of the most exciting mediums to appear on the business scene.

About AbsoluteBusiness

AbsoluteBusiness is a professional services firm that provides companies with a single source for successful Internet and Intranet solutions.

AbsoluteBusiness, enables businesses to reduce the complexity and cost associated with building a presence on the Web. AbsoluteBusiness's strategy is to offer best-in-class professional services from which businesses of all sizes can obtain high-quality, consistent, Internet and Intranet Website solutions, including needs analysis, consulting, development, hosting, site marketing, maintenance, and education.

The company has also established strategic alliances with IBM, Colo.com, Savvis, PSINet, Brand Finance, Microsoft, Cisco Systems, and other "Best of Breed" Internet technology companies to provide a combination of Web expertise that is unparalleled in the industry.

To find out how AbsoluteBusiness can help you bring your business to the Internet/Intranet, telephone 414.278.7474, or visit www.absolutebusiness.net