

Interactive Basics



Most organizations benefit from a presence on the World Wide Web. However, many sites fall short because they lack the correct balance of marketing savvy and necessary technology. Companies succeed when they take advantage of the unique characteristics of this interactive medium.

Each medium (print, broadcast or online) delivers its own strengths and weaknesses. Video, for example, is best used to demonstrate products. In many ways, the Web taps the strengths of other media (e.g., video can be “streamed”), but its highest and best use is its ability to allow visitors to interact with content.

1. Make sites echo and support organizational goals. Goals come first (growth, image, cost-savings, etc.) and then the appropriate technology identified to support the effort. Your company’s “look,” “feel” and key messages should be maintained on the Web.

2. Identify uses of the site. Which of the following meet your needs:

- Sell products directly (business-to-business or business-to-consumer).
- Respond more quickly to client and prospect requests (allow self-service?).
- Limit printing bills, postage and delivery expenses.
- Reduce the cost of copying frequently requested documents.
- Recruit and retain employees.
- Respond to media, customer, employee or investor requests.
- Aid customer convenience with after-hours or remote location service.
- Reduce staff expense (customers can pay bills, obtain information, etc).
- Promote a “leading edge” company image.
- Distribute information (including databases) securely via an in-house “intranet” or to employees in the field, or telecommuters.

3. What shall be used for content? You already have most of what you need. Existing brochures, forms, reports, manuals, applications and other material are readily adapted for the Web. Not only do you save money, but you maintain valuable consistency and repetition of your messages.

4. Promote your site. Use some of these ideas to ensure traffic to your pages:

- Consider search engine enhancements or advertising.
- Add notes to invoices.
- Issue news releases.
- Secure links from other sites (your trade association, for example).
- Send postcards or other announcements.

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