

Benefits Of Ecommerce - Is It Right For You?

You don't want to get into ecommerce just because it looks good. Like any business decision it needs to promise some real benefits before you invest.

There's a lot of people out there who will tell you that the Internet and ecommerce can do a lot of really cool things. And the truth is that they really can. But does that mean that you should try it? There may be a lot of flashing lights, bright colours, and bells and whistles. Your competitors might be really into it. But unless you can get some real benefits out of ecommerce, then why would you?

Before embarking on any ecommerce or Internet related project, ask yourself the following questions:

- * Will it help me sell more?
- * Will it reduce my expenditures in some way?
- * Will it free up my time, so that I can spend more time on the beach? (or whatever your favourite activity is).

You need to answer yes to one or more of the above questions before it's worth it, don't you think? There really is no point in having a web site, or paying your suppliers electronically, or whatever, unless you are going to get some real benefit out of it after taking into consideration the cost.

When we say ecommerce, we don't just mean the traditional idea of selling things over the net. The term ecommerce, literally meaning electronic commerce, means any form of commerce or business that is done electronically. This can range from electronic payments, to electronic payroll, to better use of email, marketing your business on the Internet, better use of SMS messaging, and more - right through to the better known kind of ecommerce of selling your products over the Internet.

The truth is, that just about every business can benefit from ecommerce in some way. The question is to what degree. An even more important consideration is how much it may cost to set up the system and how long it will take you to recoup that cost in one or more of the three ways noted above. Like any business decision, the cost of ecommerce should never outweigh it's benefits.

For those people who want to investigate whether ecommerce would benefit their business and how to implement the necessary systems, there is assistance from the government available to help. Funding is available under the Small Business Improvement Program which means that eligible small businesses in regional areas can receive up to 65%, or up to \$5000, towards the cost of what's called an "Ecommerce Strategic Plan".

An Ecommerce Strategic Plan is a comprehensive plan, much like a normal business or marketing plan, that outlines how your business can improve through the use of Internet technology. The plan is provided by a business that has expertise in that area, and includes a strategy on how to implement any suggestions that are raised.