

# An Ebusiness Vision

By Alexea Grech

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While at an ebusiness conference last week, the audience was asked, "How many of you in this room have a web site?" All hands went up. The next question, "How many of your businesses truly benefit from your web site?" I could barely count 10 hands within the full room.

I was amazed at this response. How could 400 managers admit their site had no business case? Why were they not doing anything about it? In the coffee break as I was talking to some of the attendees, they admitted they had rushed into developing a website because "you had to have a site and fast".

Most businesses have a web site - few are benefiting strategically from it.

## The Vision

"Home, About Us, Products & Services, Contact Us" Does this sound familiar? It is important to have an overview of the company, products and services as well as a contact page, however results from a simple brochure online site are minimal.

The first step towards achieving success online is defining and implementing an ebusiness strategy and web site concept. As a marketing and ebusiness professional, you must consider "How can our business benefit online?"

If you are in the Financial Services sector you may be able to use your web site to offer your customers added value online services, such as personalised portfolios. You could also cross-sell related products. In Recruitment you can use your site to attract international recruits and business partners. If you are an exporter you may be able to target international markets you could not afford to target through traditional channels previously. If you are in travel you can target and sell to a worldwide target market.

Whether you're targeting new international markets, looking for business partners, or offering your customers added value services online - there are online opportunities for every business.

## Ebusiness Opportunities

I recently worked with a company whose business survived purely on "existing customer relationships". They had a web site, but it simply had technical information, product specifications and contact details - they dealt with all customers over the phone and fax. The manager had given

up hope of achieving online success and claimed there were "no opportunities online in this industry".

An independent evaluation of the company's ebusiness potential was carried out. As part of this evaluation, the team examined how the business worked internally, the processes, the target market, the potential market internationally, how to simplify the service for customers and communicating the essential information clearly. The industry, competitors and customers were all analysed as part of developing their ebusiness strategy.

Within a year their business has doubled and the majority of their business comes from the web. It took 6 months to implement the strategy, but how did they succeed? What are the secrets of achieving online success?

The site was recreated from scratch so that it was customer focused rather than based on industry technical specifications that the consumers did not understand or need. Instead it offered simple and clear overviews which guided the customer through the process to a user friendly order form enabling customers to conclude their business.

A database was developed to give customers immediate personalised advice based on their needs.

The company developed a culture internally to ensure that web orders were serviced quickly and efficiently. A policy of dealing with emails within 15 minutes was implemented.

The site was redeveloped using distinctive design that was attractive and easy to navigate. This catapulted them ahead of all competitors in the industry.

By offering clear, concise information and online advice, as well as targeting international customers, the business also started using its web site as a strategic tool to acquire and service customers. Marketing the site was a success because it was developed from a customer perspective - it was distinctive, simple, easy to use and customer focused and as a result the orders and business enquiries quickly gathered pace.

#### Benefiting from your ebusiness strategy

If you want to join those who benefit from a successful ebusiness strategy, stop and think about the following:

Have you got a vision for you company online?

How are other players in the industry utilising their sites?

What are competitors offering customers?

What added value services are you offering?

Why should customers come back to your site?

Have you communicated to the different user groups you want to attract?

Have you undertaken usability testing?

Are you attracting the right traffic to your site?

Defining a successful ebusiness strategy is the first step towards achieving success online. It is a task that must be undertaken by business development and marketing professionals. Many businesses hand it over to their IT department or expect their programmers to define their ebusiness strategy as well as implementing it. If your company is guilty of this, do something about it now, or you are likely to reside with the majority of companies that do not achieve business benefit from their web site.

[http://www.nmsglobal.com/resources/ebusiness\\_vision.asp](http://www.nmsglobal.com/resources/ebusiness_vision.asp)

Alexea Grech is co-founder of Newmedia Marketing Solutions (<http://www.nmsglobal.com>) Alexea provides engaging presentations at business events worldwide and has spoken about ebusiness, internet marketing, business innovation and key success factors for entrepreneurs. Events include BBC TV, Internet Marketing Conference, Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), MBA speaker invitations and US Golden Globe Web Awards.

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