

## “BUSINESS TIPS” – November 27, 2006

I know everyone is all geared up for the holidays and have already prepared their marketing plan for this time of year. But you may need to rethink how you market your product or service in the New Year, and even into the future. There are many ways in which to market but have you thought about a web site? Think about who your potential customers would be. We are talking about everyone on this planet! Also think about your future customers; those who have grown up in the technology age; the myspace.com'ers. They will be your target market in a few short years.

If you decide you are ready to pull yourself out of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and build a web site for your business, there are many things to consider. You need to develop the right mindset. Your web site must **DO** something. What is your goal? Is it to sell your product or service, generate leads, or support existing customers? It could be one or all three. Have this in mind when designing your web site. These choices must move you closer to your goal. If your intention is to sell product you have to define your product or product line. If you want to generate leads you have to convince customers to contact you. To support existing customers you need to define your goal: Is it to reduce costs or gain competitive advantage? For example, you could have a page specifically designed for forums, or an email newsletter, or have moderated chat rooms. These can lead to increased revenues.

A web site must look good and feel good. Color choice and logos are very important. Your site should be designed around your logo. The look and feel of your web site should communicate to your customers, “My company meets your needs. You can trust us.”

Your web site must be designed for your customers. It's not about you. Avoid industry lingo. Make product and category choices available. Use imperatives such as: “Shop now” vs. “Browse our store”, and “Find” vs. “Search”. If you use photos on your site only show happy people. Use graphics such as arrows to help guide your customers. Have your phone number apparent on every page. Include a map to your physical location. Always update your site often.

Finally, your web site should promote, promote, promote. Offer choices for your customers such as: shop in store, shop online, shop in our catalog. Other valuable tools are email newsletters, search engine optimization, and price comparison sites.

There is no limit to whom you can reach with a well designed web site. The technology is available and improving daily. Take advantage of it!

***Business Tips is provided by Mr. Paul Howard, Business Development Specialist and CBA II with Angelo State University's Small Business Development Center. For more information on this or any other topic, please contact Paul at [Paul.Howard@angelo.edu](mailto:Paul.Howard@angelo.edu) or call 942-2098.***