

Online vs. Offline Buying

WHY PEOPLE BUY ONLINE:

- ◆ **Speed and convenience**
- ◆ **Vast product selection**
- ◆ **It's easy to compare prices and save**
- ◆ **Search capabilities**
- ◆ **No driving and parking, or crowds**

WHY PEOPLE *DON'T* BUY ONLINE:

- ◆ **Product is easily available locally**
- ◆ **Doubts about reliability of seller or shipper**
- ◆ **Security, fraud, and privacy issues**
- ◆ **Shipping costs are too high**
- ◆ **Inability to sample, try on, taste, or test product**
- ◆ **Return and warranty issues (trust)**

Benefits of Being Online

- ◆ **Provides business and product info to global markets**
- ◆ **Increases consumer awareness of your product**
- ◆ **Improves customer service by providing online product tips, instructions, and links to helpful sites**
- ◆ **Gives prospective customers one more way to contact you**
- ◆ **Networking, partnering, and bootstrapping opportunities**

Building Your Own Website: Pros and Cons

Advantages:

- ◆ **Your company learns site-building skills**
- ◆ **You can update your site instantly**
- ◆ **Site maintenance costs may be lower**

Disadvantages:

- ◆ **Time spent learning skills distracts from core business tasks**
- ◆ **Time spent maintaining site distracts from core business tasks**
- ◆ **Cost of site-building tools, and possible training**
- ◆ **Site may not have a professional look, and may take longer to develop**

Hiring a Web Designer: Pros and Cons

Advantages:

- ◆ You don't have to learn new skills
- ◆ Costs are upfront and known
- ◆ No time wasted on site-building
- ◆ Site can be built quickly
- ◆ Professional look

Disadvantages:

- ◆ You must rely on outside help
- ◆ Higher expenses
- ◆ It may take longer to update site
- ◆ Site maintenance costs will be higher in the long run

Selling Through an E-Commerce Host: Pros and Cons

Advantages:

- ◆ **Usually very easy**
- ◆ **No time wasted on site-building**
- ◆ **E-commerce functions already in place, with appropriate security**
- ◆ **Some hosts may have consumer trust, and offer problem-resolution services**
- ◆ **Professional look**

Disadvantages:

- ◆ **Higher charges (per month, per transaction, by traffic volume, etc.)**
- ◆ **Some hosts have uniform look and provide fewer opportunities for branding**
- ◆ **“One size fits all” format may not suit your business**

Issues to Address When Planning Your Site

- ◆ What business tasks do you need to do online?
- ◆ Do your customers buy online?
- ◆ What information do your customers need?
- ◆ How quickly do you need a functioning site?
- ◆ How much can you budget for site creation and maintenance?
- ◆ How will you market your site?
- ◆ Are you prepared to sell internationally, or will you only sell in the USA?
- ◆ How often will your site get updated?

Website Tips

- ✓ **Clean design, and fast-loading pages**
- ✓ **Accept as many forms of payment as possible**
- ✓ **Avoid backorders**
- ✓ **Send an e-mail confirmation for all orders**
- ✓ **Offer many shipping options, including express mail**
- ✓ **Include shipping info for foreign consumers**
- ✓ **Make sure site fits brand identity**
- ✓ **Optimize for search-engine placement**