

E-Commerce is Booming. Are You Benefiting?

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**E-Commerce is Booming. Are You Benefiting?**

**By Lee Benson.**

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Five years ago, people were surfing the web.

Three years ago, people started to use the Internet to buy and sell goods. Two years ago, during the 1998 holiday season, over 1 million AOL members bought at least one item online.

This gave us a small hint of how big online shopping might get.

In 1999's holiday season, e-commerce exploded in all directions, taking its toll on traditional malls and shops. This year, even stores like Kmart and Walmart are spending millions to promote online shopping, bringing more people than ever on board the shopping wave of the future.

Although all of us can see what's happening, only a small percentage of the general population is actually capitalizing on the Internet shopping revolution. E-commerce is here to stay. How long will it be before the rest of us get on board? Why haven't we joined the revolution?

For many of us, the answer to that question is that we simply don't know where to start or what to do once we begin.

Most of us probably think we need to have expertise in the world of web design and HTML, or perhaps an MBA. However, there are plenty of experts out there who specialize in building web sites and making everything work. And you don't need an MBA, all you need is a goal and a plan of action.

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To help get you started, there are some basic things you will need. First of all, you'll need a professional-looking web site with a secure shopping cart and the ability to accept credit cards. This is important, because most Internet shoppers are picky about security, and 80% of them prefer to use their credit card.

Once you have the web site, you need something to sell. Don't have any ideas? Think about the things that you have purchased online, or would like to shop for without having to physically go out and look. Household items are among the best sellers on

the Net. Furniture, small appliances, electronics, and accessories for the home are all easy to shop for online.

This time of year, toys are huge sellers, as well as anything that people traditionally like to give as gifts: clothing, jewelry, personal accessories, shoes, even gift certificates.

Now, most of us might not expect that the lion's share of online transactions come from business-to-business sales, but they do. Expert services make up a big chunk, plus information, office supplies, airline tickets, and a myriad of other things.

If you're a trying to cash in on the business-to-business market, there are a few important things you need to do.

First, start by providing free personalized advice. Once you have a good number of customers taking advantage of that, step them up to paid consulting. Along the way, you can sell related products and services.

Most people like getting information via email, but will also appreciate it if you're available by telephone as well.

Get a toll free number that shows you're serious about being available to all potential customers, and people will feel more secure knowing that you're just a phone call away.

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**E-Commerce, Earn While You Learn!**

**By Gina Novelle**

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You build it and they will come is the battle cry of Web Page Designers. Many people are hooked on this idea. Well it's not that easy or is it?

There is a way to try E-commerce before you jump in with the big dollars. During this trial period, you could learn to build your own web page, play in the retail market, and yes Earn While You Learn. Build your E-commerce business like you built your current business. Do it yourself so you don't have to rely on high dollar transit programmers. How?

Use Auction Sites as your playground. You would be surprised to learn the return you could achieve with just a little bit of knowledge. As our clients know, we don't teach anything we don't actually work in! When we decided to earn while we learned, we picked eBay. In addition to making money, we learned valuable information about E-commerce, and:

Lessons in shipping

Lessons in customer support.

Lessons in accepting online credit cards

We now have over 100 E-commerce clients with repeat clients. During our auctions, our website hits increase dramatically. So before you jump into E-commerce, first learn to walk slowly and then run. What's the cost of eBay? If you accept credit cards, and learn some tricks, the cost of listing, and credit card fees runs approximately six percent of the sales price. You can learn more about our eBay clients at [www.thirdpocket.com](http://www.thirdpocket.com), a support site for the self-employed.

Ms. Gina Novelle has been freelance writing in the computer market for years. She wrote several articles for Pinnacle Publishing from 1990-1995. She teaches businesses how to harness the power of technology to maximize efficiency and productivity. Ms. Novelle uses Enhanced Technology Methods. What is Enhanced Technology Methods? You can see her slide show at [ww.computeteaching.net](http://ww.computeteaching.net).

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