

Look Before You Leap!

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By John M. Grover

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You would never take a football team into a game without a "game plan", and it's only a game. So why would you embark your company on something as important to its future existence as an e-business initiative without a clear cut "game plan" or strategy? Yet recent studies show that almost 60 percent of businesses that were doing e-business were doing so without having a clearly articulated and well-documented e-business strategy. It doesn't have to be elaborate, just well thought out.

To paraphrase what the Cheshire cat told Alice in Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventure in Wonderland, "If you don't know where you are going, it doesn't matter which way you go." Your e-business strategy is your road map to a successful e-business implementation project. Just throwing up a site is not enough, you must give it a strategic place in your company's long range business plan in order to make your investment pay off. If you don't do it right, someone else will and it will be even more difficult to catch up.

There is a lot more to e-business than a web site

Unfortunately, all too often, companies think of their corporate web site and applications that communicate with customers and trading partners online as their e-business strategy. For the most part these sites are just extensions of their current business model. The companies have given little or no thought to leveraging the Internet to offer entirely new products and services, transfer processes online, or exploit new markets. The web site and the Internet should be thought of as an enabling technology and not a strategy in and of itself.

How often have you visited the web site of a company that you have always respected, only to find that your experience there left a lot to be desired?

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A poorly thought-out web site can quickly turn off customers that have taken years to attract and nurture. Your competition is only a click away, so why do so many companies pay so little attention to getting it right? A lot of very good business men and women are just too busy with day-to-day operations and allow themselves to be drawn in to a "quick fix" or an "economy approach", without realizing just how important this world-wide exposure is for their business. Local reputations can be lost in an instant on a world stage because someone just didn't think it through.

Part of the reason for this lack of an e-business strategy is that many well intended business owners and managers don't seem to realize, that now, more than ever, they need a strategy to ensure that their e-business efforts and

overall business goals and objectives are aligned and met.

The wave of the future

The B2C bubble burst and now evidence seems to point to the fact that B2B has not taken off as earlier expected. But is this really a business failing or just a timing issue? Only the truly naïve would fail to face up to the fact that in the end most business transactions will be handled online. It is just a matter of when and how soon your business will get on board (or your competition's).

As more and more consumers begin and continue to buy online, it is evident that the problem has been with viable e-business models, not the concept. Selling products and services online and foolish business models are two different issues and no reason to be left behind as businesses begin to get it right.

How to get there from here

It is no time to panic, but it is time for businesses, small and large alike, to begin (if they have not already done so) thinking about their e-business strategies. And those companies who have made a less-than-successful attempt at an e-business initiative, should revisit their planning process and evaluate their earlier effort. (Develop a good strategy now and try to salvage as much as possible, but learn from your earlier mistakes.)

If your customers and suppliers are in the development stages of e-business application systems, you don't want to be left in the dark when they are looking for compatible customers and suppliers themselves. Now is the time to plan, not when you are required to comply or take your business elsewhere. By beginning the strategic planning cycle early, you can plan to

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implement systems in smaller more manageable increments. Smaller more manageable steps also means that your development efforts will be more flexible and easy to adjust as newer technologies or strategies become desirable.

In order to survive in the long term, you are going to have to come to grips with how you are going to purchase supplies and sell your products and services in an online environment. You might as well begin the thought and planning process right now, before it is an emergency.

Companies that wish to embark on successful e-business initiatives must first make sure that these projects align with their long range business plans and goals (and often these have also not been well thought out and articulated.) And you have a business to run. So don't be afraid to seek help. But remember, before you hire your cousin's whiz-kid to develop a whiz-bang web site, you need the direction a well thought out e-business strategy can provide.

Mr. Grover specializes in assisting small and medium sized businesses address the challenges they face when entering the realm of e-business or refocusing an earlier attempt, with strategy development and implementation planning and support. He can be reached at jgrover@millenniumplus.com or <http://www.millenniumplus.com>

Quantum Leap (DVD) Review

By Britt Gillette

Despite its short run (March 1989 – May 1993), Quantum Leap is nevertheless one of the more memorable dramatic series in television history. Although the show borrows from a concept employed in other realms, such as Highway To Heaven (with its theme of a mysterious force interceding to transform a single life), it adds a unique twist by utilizing elements of science fiction. Created by Donald P. Bellisario (creator of Magnum, P.I., JAG, and countless other hit shows), Quantum Leap developed a loyal cult following, making its short network run all the more difficult to understand...

Quantum Leap stars Scott Bakula as Dr. Samuel "Sam" Beckett, a cutting-edge experimental researcher in the field of physics. Developing a theory that an individual can travel throughout the span of his life, Beckett builds the Quantum Leap Accelerator and uses himself as the test subject. But rather than traveling within his own lifetime, Beckett finds himself mysteriously transported into the lives of various individuals, each of whom faces a problem Beckett must rectify (thus changing history for the better). When he does, he can make his next "quantum leap" (which he hopes will restore him to his pre-experiment self). Aiding Beckett on his various missions is Rear Admiral Albert "Al" Calavicci (Dean Stockwell), one of the quantum leap experiment observers who periodically appears as a hologram in order to communicate with Beckett. With each new episode, Beckett finds himself in a new body, facing new circumstances, with a new mission he must decipher and complete if he ever hopes

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to return home...

The Quantum Leap DVD features a number of action-packed episodes including the series premiere "Genesis" in which the audience first learns of Project Quantum Leap (PQL) and witnesses Dr. Beckett's leap into the particle accelerator. Beckett is transported into the body of an Air Force test pilot and a minor league baseball player, learning from Al's hologram what he must do with each man's life. The episode ends with Beckett transported into the body of a school teacher right in the middle of class... Other notable episodes from Season 1 include "Star-Crossed" in which Sam prevents a college co-ed from ruining her life while giving her professor a second chance at making his marriage work, and "The Color of Truth" in which Sam is transported into the life of a black chauffeur in 1955, where he faces the virulent affects of discrimination and racism...

Below is a list of episodes included on the Quantum Leap (Season 1) DVD:

Episode 1 (Genesis: Part 1 – September 13, 1956) Air Date: 03-26-1989 Episode 2 (Genesis: Part 2 – September 13, 1956) Air Date: 03-26-1989 Episode 3 (Star-Crossed – June 15, 1972) Air Date: 03-31-1989 Episode 4 (The Right Hand of God – October 24, 1974) Air Date: 04-07-1989 Episode 5 (How the Tess was Won – August 5, 1956) Air Date: 04-14-1989 Episode 6 (Double Identity – November 8, 1965) Air Date: 04-21-1989 Episode 7 (The Color of Truth – August 8, 1955) Air Date: 05-03-1989 Episode 8 (Kamikazi Kid – June 6, 1961) Air Date: 05-10-1989 Episode 9 (Play It Again Seymour – April 14, 1953) Air Date: 05-17-1989

Britt Gillette is author of The DVD Report (

), a blog where you can find

more reviews like this one.

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