

This Free E-Book is brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

The Seven Pillars of eCommerce Defined

By Stuart Martin

The Seven Pillars of eCommerce Defined by Stuart Martin

A study released by research firm "Gartner Group" predicts 75% of all e-business projects will fail due to poor planning and unrealistic expectations of technology. In order for any company to conduct successful business on the Internet, a process of evaluation must be utilized. One framework to which companies often compare their business is "The Seven Pillars of E-business equation".

Pillar 1) Online Marketing has been in existence since around 1994, when the first wave of mainstream companies jumped onto the web displaying their rudimentary html pages containing product information. Still today, some companies do little more than place their information on the Internet using a pleasing layout; in hopes that someone will stumble upon their site and buy the product. Many companies have not yet reached pillar one. According to the Yankee Group, only 31% of small business and 51% of medium-sized businesses in the United States have a website.

Pillar 2) Online Ordering is the process of allowing a customer to submit order information through a company website. Online Ordering is quite easy to set up through an online web-form created in static html. When the customer clicks on "submit", the information is forwarded to a company email address. Customer follow-up and billing occurs offline through traditional business channels. Many tourism companies are at this level, receiving a request forma and even a credit card number. They think that they are now in the online business. However, all of the information has to be processed by the vendor. In reality, this is another form of fax ordering.

Pillar 3) Online Selling takes the Online Ordering process one step further whereby the customer's transaction is actually conducted online. For the ease of the customer, credit card information is recorded and through

The Seven Pillars of eCommerce Defined

traditional business channels, the company provides goods or services to the customer. Credit card information is authenticated directly online and customers are supplied with proof of payment. The vendor receives payment direct to its Merchant Bank.

The third pillar is a stage most companies cannot seem to master. It requires sophisticated database-driven websites, intensive strategic planning, a large programming and insurance budget, and a bank that allows online credit card merchant accounts.

This is where www.TravellersMall.com and its services becomes the enabler. We provide all of this capability without the individual problems that the

vendor would encounter, at a very low cost.

Pillar 4) Online fulfillment happens after the customer has been marketed to, placed an order, and the financial transaction has occurred. This step is divided into two categories:

- a) physical products that cannot be distributed over the internet;
- b) non-tangible products and services that can be delivered to the customer online.

For the travel and tourism industry the fulfillment process is the confirmation of the reservation, booking and backroom movement of the information to the Vendor Databases.

Pillar 5) Online consumption is possible with only a few types of companies. It is not synonymous with travel. The closest use would be a virtual tour of the experience and the use of travel articles to satisfy the consumer's interest for information on destinations, activities, etc.

Those selling information can actually have customers consume purchases online. For example, someone subscribing to the Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition can browse various newspaper articles online.

Pillar 6) Online Support can be offered regardless of whether the product or service is fulfilled and consumed by the customer online. Many companies have an online support process in place. Customers can email or visit a special section of the company website for support. More sophisticated database-driven company websites will allow users to track orders online and receive support information through the use of a password or other form of identification code.

Pillar 7) Online direct one-on-one marketing. Once companies have got to

The Seven Pillars of eCommerce Defined

this level of use of the Internet, they should be using their customer database and market data to continuously communicate and market their services to their customers. This requires planning and marketing management. An example of this would be an online last minute club targeting specific customers on seasonal or regional specials.

The power of being able to deliver direct marketing programs at the press of a key has enormous cost saving implications versus the more traditional mail or general advertising mediums. It makes the necessary analysis of the return on investment of these types of programs much more favorable.

As you can see, there are several important steps in the equation to selling online. When planning an e-business strategy, it is necessary to take these seven pillars of e-business into consideration. Ask yourself these questions:

How far do we want to take the e-business equation?

How far will our business model and the nature of our product offerings and services allow us to take the e-business equation?

www.Banff.com – The Canadian Rockies Internet Guide features the e-business solutions provided by www.TravellersMall.com
Visit us to streamline your e-commerce solutions today!

Stuart Martin stuartm@banff.com www.banff.com 403-609-7092 Banff, Alberta, Canada "Where every day seems like a Holiday!"

What direction do you see the net going in?

By William Suboski

What direction do you see the net going in? by William Suboski

This last year, ecommerce has been all the rage. Going back a year or so, Java applets were hot. That is, the public perception of websites was that "good" websites had ecommerce, or Java applets on them.

If we go back before the applets, say three years ago, streaming video, vivo, was the "hot" topic. There is not a lot of talk of streaming video anymore. It has been incorporated into the universe of web design, and has cooled considerably as a "hot" topic.

This is mostly because people have realized that streaming video has huge

The Seven Pillars of eCommerce Defined

bandwidth. That even 30 minutes of quality programming is quite expensive to produce, and that we already have a very effective streaming video technology filled with desultory content.

There seems to be a laypersons metric of website quality, but this metric is froth on the sea, and changes with time. The issues involved in truly measuring website quality are subtler and more long-term. A website's quality or effectiveness cannot be assessed by simply pointing to the presence or absence of a particular feature.

This past year, the media have focussed heavily on ecommerce, as a buzzword, but this buzzword is almost never defined.

If we take ecommerce as the current laypersons metric, hmmm, well, what is it? Do we mean the capacity to process purchases online, secure server and closed sales? This is great, but only part of the picture, many businesses want and need to create interest without needing to close a sale online.

If we take a wider definition of ecommerce, we might come up with something like: websites designed for easy use, whose primary purpose is commercial. Such websites frequently also allow online purchasing, but their first and foremost function is to provide product information. Some sales will close online, but many will not.

For example, several years ago, I used the Web to find a hotel near where our family reunion would be held. I saw that they had an indoor pool, and so I knew to take swim shorts in February. No money was transferred across the net, but all arrangements were made in advance of our arrival. I never did actually use the pool, but my options were more open.

I consider this to be a perfect example of ecommerce.

As web designers, we need to recognize that many ecommerce systems can be interfaced as needed to other tech, and that ecommerce as narrowly defined will only ever apply, with maximum saturation, to a segment of the market.

The high tech companies contribute to these bad metrics. Both in sales and in hiring, companies talk in terms of ASP, CGI, VBScript. To the average business person, these terms are not helpful. Quite the opposite. They create a "cognitive barrier". Jargon is useful within a specialized group, but actually impairs communication between groups.

By talking jargon to non-technical people, we actually make what we as web designers and IT architects do, harder for them to understand.

The Seven Pillars of eCommerce Defined

We can use a narrow definition of ecommerce, and we therefore have a situation in which ecommerce modules can typically be rented for \$50 a month and plugged into existing websites.

Or we can take a wider definition, one which includes customer service, product support, complaints and returns—handling, and, of course, online sales as indicated. This is not a \$50 solution, not something that can be cooked up in a day or a week.

Instead, design of an effective ecommerce solution requires care, expertise, and the experience of the client. The flow and architecture of the site, the content and emphasis, must be designed with

The industry as a whole is best served if we try to be less technically and more "user" oriented. That is, to talk not in terms of CGI, Java or JavaScript or ASP, but rather in terms of catalogues, shopping baskets, and currency converters. If we submerge the technology and instead focus on the functionality, then indeed terms such as ecommerce become far more meaningful.

But more than this, each website can then be geared to individual needs, without the expectation that a "good" website must have ecommerce, or streaming video, or feature A, or B, or C.

William Suboskisuboski@adan.kingston.net www.anja.demon.co.uk/web



This Free E-Book has been brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

[100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment](#)
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!