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eCommerce, Communications and the Global Internet Community.

By Michael Bloch

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In our increasingly online world, cyberspace is still experiencing "gold fever", but there have been and will be many casualties. Only the innovative, responsive, financially sound and flexible will survive. Many new markets are joining the world of eCommerce; over the last 6 months I have seen a remarkable increase in visitors to my site from countries such as India. This trends means more visitors to our sites perhaps; but it definitely means more competition between web developers, etailers and other service providers.

India will be extraordinarily competitive in web development, due largely to favourable exchange rates. In Australia, our struggling dollar still favours us in securing work with U.S companies, but not to the same degree. I can see that the Internet will play a considerable role in the valuation of our currencies in the future.

Up until now, the Internet has been very focused on the U.S. By 2003, the Asia Pacific region will catch up and overtake in regards to Internet usage. While we are all busy submitting our sites to the U.S and U.K search engines, have we considered their Indian or Taiwanese counterparts? There are literally thousands of Asia-Pacific search engines and indices. Some of them will grow to be major players in the next five years.

The Western world tends to forget that we are a minority. Only about eight percent of the earth's population speaks English as the primary language. As countries such as India, Korea, Taiwan and perhaps even China open up, we will need to adapt to this change. The big players can afford to have their pages translated into different languages. For those of us without the budget, perhaps even a simple greeting in a variety of languages on our pages would encourage a visitor with limited English abilities to explore our sites. If you are going to translate your site, ensure that the person undertaking the translation really knows their stuff, as a single word misinterpreted can turn a welcome into a curse. The proper use of images and other visual cues can also assist in relaying information more effectively than English text.

One of the other ways we, the smaller companies, can welcome these newcomers without spending a cent is to drop our xenophobic reactions to "foreigners". There are no "foreigners" as the Internet is now more than ever a global community. Instead of fearing these new arrivals stealing our bread and butter, we should be seeking to establish alliances with them. We should be striving to learn a little about the culture of the emerging electronic economies. This will assist us in using the correct protocols during business dealings.

As web masters, we receive many communications via email from our "foreign" visitors. Some of these emails are, in our way of thinking, poorly worded. As an example I received a note the other day that didn't have the usual signature line of "Regards" or "Sincerely", but had one word at the bottom of the message – "Waiting". Many of our visitors to whom English is a second language struggle with email writing, sometimes appearing rude to us. Perhaps we become impatient with this and devalue the

communication or ignore it.

Bad move... both from a human and business point of view.

Nothing angers me more than to have an email unanswered. I am sure most others feel the same. I have written to a large U.S Internet presence four times in the last month, without a response. It's a shame, not for me, but for them.... I was a customer with a sizeable amount of money to spend. I'll go elsewhere.... and remember my dealings with the other company... for years.

In traditional business we are taught that an unhappy customer will tell 10 others about their experience. In ebusiness, an unhappy customer can tell tens of thousands through newsgroup postings – that's well worth keeping in mind.

When we do receive communications from someone and it's apparent that they may have troubles with our language, take the time to try and understand what it is they require. This may entail several notes back and forth, but it will be worth the effort in the long run.

From the "warm and fuzzy" (human) point of view; the Internet has allowed us as a species to communicate in real time with any other part of the planet. We are no longer dependant on government propaganda to shape our views of a particular country; we can hear it directly from the people. This is a real privilege, and we tend to forget it is.

The Internet has formed the basis of my living for some time now, but equally as important, I have gained a greater knowledge of our world and more importantly – of what it is to be a human. I believe The Internet as a whole, not government or individuals, will be the driving force behind mankind finally seeing past skin colour and creed to recognise "the person".

Related Article: <http://www.tamingthebeast.net/articles/visitorfeedback.htm>

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Michael is an Australian Information Technologies trainer and web developer. Many other free web design, ecommerce development and Internet articles, tutorials, tools and resources are available from his award winning site; Taming the Beast.net (<http://www.tamingthebeast.net>)

Ecommerce Stores

By Mark Lawson

The Internet opens up so many opportunities for a company to exist and to expand their operations worldwide. It opens up a global marketplace in which people from all over the world can buy and sell goods and services from the comforts of their own homes. The Internet opens up so much opportunity that more and more conventional stores are becoming e-tailors. Everyday more and more ecommerce stores are appearing on the Internet in all countries. If everyone is doing it, then why aren't you?

Discount Domains is well known in the field of domains and web hosting and we now offer discount web design services. We offer services for static ecommerce stores as well as the dynamic ones. Ecommerce is the process of shopping for what you want to buy and paying for it on the Internet and an ecommerce store allows customers to do just that. An ecommerce store costs less then the average person might think it would, it can run as little as £1k to get up and running depending upon the features that are needed. It reduces the cost of operations in many ways.

First off, it reduces some paperwork because the customer enters everything themselves. Instead of an employee writing down or typing the customer's basic information, the customer enters all of the details themselves. Secondly, it saves on time. An ecommerce store provides convenience for the company and the customer. It can provide a customer with everything they need in front of them to shop around and to make the purchase including whether or not the item they want is in stock. A customer can do this anytime of the day without needing an employee to show them around the store. Thirdly, an ecommerce store could save on overhead. If a company has an ecommerce store instead of an actual physical location then the company can save on things such as rent, inventory costs, some telephone services, electric, and heating services. The company can manage their store from anywhere in the world.

Most people today are using the Internet and having an ecommerce store will take your products and services right into their homes and businesses. An ecommerce store will save many expenses. This savings can be put towards other things that your company needs. Your store will also act as advertisement for new products and services that you want to offer in the future. Based upon the

orders that you receive on your ecommerce store, you can decide which products and services to discontinue based upon sales or lack of sales. Your store will help you process orders using credit cards, pay pal, and other payment methods. Your ecommerce store will also bring you new customers you may not have reached with your traditional physical store. The possibilities with an ecommerce store are endless.

We want everyone to find your store so we will design it with this in mind. Discount Domains understands search engines and we build sites that are search engine friendly. We have many designs to choose from and your store will be an original design. We build sites and ecommerce stores that are user friendly as well. Your store will be easy to navigate so that your customers will keep coming back to buy more products and services. We want your customers to go through your store with little or no problems. We will design you a professional ecommerce store according to your wants and needs. Your customers will be able to find you when they need to find you at anytime of the day or night because you will be open 24 hours a day. Your store will never sleep.

Mark is a webmaster with Discount Domains a leading UK web design house. Please feel free to

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