

# Should I Set Up a Web Page For My Retail Business?

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Do you have a web page? If you don't, you probably have thought about setting one up but for various reasons you took a pass. Maybe you thought it was too much trouble. Maybe you thought you had to do online retailing (or e-retailing) on the page, and your business is not set up to do that. Maybe you just don't know how to get started. Regardless, we encourage you to have some type of online presence, and a web page is a great way to get started. In fact, a web page can become a 'portal', or entry point, for other online activities that you might wish to undertake.

Your customers look to the Internet for the information they need to make purchase decisions; even if they plan to buy locally, they use the Internet to find what choices they have, what others are saying about their choices, and where the products and services they want are available locally. The Internet has replaced the Yellow Pages for many consumers. For example, if I want to know where the closest 24-hour pharmacy is to my house, I'll use a search engine like Google to find it online. So even if your site does nothing more than list your address and phone number, it can pay off by just letting people know where you are and how to get a hold of you.

## Other Benefits of a Web Presence Include:

- You'll be on an even playing field with competitors. Just for fun, do a Google search for your direct competitors. Do they have a web site? If they do, you should too.
- You'll reach new customers. As previously mentioned, many people will use search engines such as google.com, yahoo.com or cuil.com to find locations of retailers close to their homes or workplaces. If you don't have a website, you won't become part of those customers' consideration sets.
- You'll build your brand. Every store has a brand, and your online presence can help build the elements of the brand. This is especially helpful if you offer services. The website for the Chikara Salon, for example, (<http://web.mac.com/mkcourtney/Chikara/Haircuts.html>) includes the salon's philosophy on beauty, and can help set it apart from competing salons.

## Of course, there are some key things to think about before you make the commitment:

- What are the start up costs, and does this fit with your budget? In order to have an online site, you will need to:
  - Purchase a domain name (the web address that will read something like <http://www.YOURSTORENAME.com>)
  - Pay for the address for at least a year,
  - Pay for a site to host the address. The host site will be the electronic storage place for your website. Visit our resource links at the Grabbing Green website for a list of hosting services in this area. At a minimum, your start up costs could be in the several hundred dollar range to get your website going.
- Who will design the site? You may want to hire a designer to create your site for you, which will add to the costs of starting your site. Some hosting sites, though, provide easy-to-use templates that you could use that are available for free. You'll find this information at the resource section at [grabbinggreen.com](http://grabbinggreen.com).

- How often will you update the site, that is, provide new content to the site? Web sites are dynamic. Even if you're not selling goods at the site, you need to update and refresh your site every so often. You'll need someone who is committed to do this on a regular basis. Luckily, you can often find a local high school or college student who is eager to make a little extra money who can update your site for you.

**If you do set up a website for your store, here are some things to consider including:**

- Website purpose. Be clear what the purpose of the site is: if you are offering products for sale, state that upfront. If you're offering a limited number of products, make that clear too. The site for a local drugstore called Hiron (www.hiron.com) clearly states that you can refill prescriptions and order photos at the site.
- Content that rarely needs updating.
  - Include basic information on what you sell and/or what services you provide. Some of this product info may be available from your suppliers in a way that is to easily to add to your site. Check out the website for a local chain of grocery stores, the New Seasons Market, to see how they present product information (www.newseasonsmarket.com).
  - Other basic content includes your store address, your phone number, your store hours, and a map on how to get to the store
- Alert visitors to specials: either what is on special today, or what will be on special in the next few weeks to tease them to come to the store.
- Interactivity. One huge value of a website is that you can start dialogues with your customers. Be sure to have at least one feedback mechanism on your website. Examples of feedback mechanisms include:
  - Link to your email address
  - Fill in form so people can provide you information
  - Sign up link for store newsletters.
- Word of mouth instigator: include a link on your website to visitors can tell friends about the site.

If you have other ideas on how to make a great retail web site, let us know! We'd love to hear how it works for you. And for more small business success building ideas visit: <http://www.GrabbingGreen.com/home/about> .

**Learn More:** There are more ideas in our book, Building Buzz to Beat the Big Boys, available at the [www.grabbinggreen.com](http://www.grabbinggreen.com) website.

**Discuss with us:** We'd love to hear how you've used these suggestions and how successful they were for your business. Come participate in our community forum at [www.grabbinggreen.com](http://www.grabbinggreen.com) and share your experiences with other small businesses!

**Free Resources:** Links identified in this mini guide as well as other resources are available in the Resources section on the [www.grabbinggreen.com](http://www.grabbinggreen.com) website.

**Additional Mini-Guides:** More mini-guides will be added every month to the Resources section. Some may relate to this topic and provide helpful information. Each guide will cross reference other guides you might want to look at as well.