Growing Your Small Business

## Ten Steps For Building An Effective Web Site For Your Small Business

(NAPSA)—Experts say the Web has greatly leveled the economic playing field between big and small businesses.

That may be because well conceived Web sites let companies qualify sales leads, efficiently share information with prospects, customers and partners and present polished, professional images to the outside world—regardless of their size. Unlike a brochure, Web sites can easily be updated to promote a company's latest product, sale or program.

The good news is that Web professionals say an effective Web site can be a virtual breeze to build. Just follow ten steps:

1. Take control of the process. Those who know a business best should take the most active roles in designing its site. Recently, do-it-yourself Web building services such as Homestead Professional have helped make a complex process more simple. Such services have made it possible for business owners with limited technical knowledge to build professional looking sites—without hiring a costly Web designer or learning complicated software—in a matter of hours. *Tip:* Business owners who choose to design their sites using service provided templates should be sure the template reflects what makes their businesses special (many templates do not).

2. Understand the costs before starting. There are three main components of getting a Web site started: design, hosting and Web site address registration. Business owners may be able to
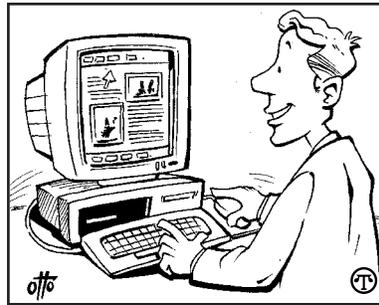
Clear, well-designed Web pages can help small businesses compete with larger companies.

make their sites more economical if they use services that can consolidate these components for them.

3. Get a customized Web address. Customized Web addresses can help show customers that a company is serious about doing business. Most online Web building services let businesses buy addresses or domain names for their sites. *Tip:* Services that include Web site addresses with their monthly fees can save businesses time and money.

4. Make Web sites a two-way communication tool. It's a good idea for business owners to use Web services that let them interact with customers through polls or e-mail newsletter lists. This can make customers feel more connected to a company.

5. Create consistent, easy to download home pages. Companies can give visitors faster access to their sites if large images and sharp photos are kept off their home pages. In addition, each

page of a site should provide consistent navigation and a link back to the home page.

6. Submit the site to search engines and Web directories to drive traffic. Listing a site is one of the simplest and most effective ways to drive traffic (customers) to a home page.

7. Give customers a reason to come back. The most successful business sites on the Web frequently update their home pages (about once a week). *Tip:* Some small businesses make the mistake of building a site that is hard to change. Companies should consider online services that let them easily update their sites.

8. Know where traffic comes from. Some online services offer built-in tracking features that give information about how many users visit a site and how they find it. This information can help business owners drive more traffic to their sites.

9. Keep site copies short and to the point. Main pages should be written with short, sentences and paragraphs. More detailed information should be available as well, but not on the main page.

10. Share a company's Web address. Companies with their Web address incorporated into their corporate and promotional materials are often more easily accessible online for customers, partners and prospects.

For more information on Web pages, visit www.professional.homestead.com.