

Small Business On The Web

Consumers Are Online; Small Businesses Should Be, Too

(NAPSA)—There was a time when local businesses relied on customer referrals and the Yellow Pages to be visible. Nowadays, as consumers turn to Web searches to find products and services, it's more important than ever for small businesses to have a Web presence.

According to a recent DoubleClick Touchpoints IV survey, 18 percent of respondents said they were most influenced in their decision to buy a new product or service as a result of research they conducted on the Web. That is a greater percentage than for those who cited seeing the product or service offering in a brick-and-mortar store or hearing of it through word of mouth, the next two most influential factors.

For local retailers, a Web presence is important to remain competitive and fuel growth. Forrester Research Inc. projects that by 2011, online sales will account for 9 percent of all general sales, and some retail segments, including apparel and computers, are expected to double sales during the next five years. But how do you get started if you're not equipped with a help desk and finances for Web site design and development?

Microsoft Corp. makes it easy for small-business owners to get online with an Internet-based service called Microsoft Office Live (www.officelive.com). It offers small businesses a domain name, e-mail accounts and the tools to easily build and host a Web site—all for free with an Office Live Basics package.

"I'm saving approximately \$1,200 a year by doing my own Web site with Office Live," said Brenda Derrow of the Sequoia Lodge in California. "And believe



Small-business owners can now take advantage of affordable tools and services to easily build their Web presence.

me, if I can do a Web site, anybody can, because I've had no computer experience."

Many small-business owners believe they are already missing out by not having an online presence. Yet for many small companies, cost, complexity and having the time to maintain a Web site often stand in the way of getting online.

Still, some small businesses may be reluctant to take the plunge on their own. So Microsoft joined with Best Buy to provide access to experts trained to address the technology needs of small-business owners. Customers can walk into a Best Buy, speak to a consultant about Office Live and decide which of the services are right for them. Small businesses can also take advantage of Best Buy's Geek Squad 24-Hour Computer Support Task Force, which sorts out any Web site issues and answers technology questions.

With this all-in-one solution, expanding the reach of your small business on the Web is now easier than ever. For more information, visit a Best Buy store or www.officeliveoffers.com/bestbuy.