

Companies are beginning to realise the full value of the internet

The realisation that small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) can win business online means that a growing number of firms are turning to the internet to launch marketing campaigns, it has been claimed.

According to E-consultancy, an online publisher of best practise internet marketing reports, research and how-to guides, more and more SMEs believe an internet presence is key to securing new business.

"The percentage of SMEs marketing themselves over the internet has been growing steadily because business owners have increasingly recognised the potential to win business this way as a result of their own use of the internet as consumers," confirmed Linus Gregoriadis, the firm's head of research.

"No matter what the sector, companies are missing a trick if they don't have any kind of online marketing capabilities. Even if they can't make the actual purchase online, people use the internet to research the products or services they are looking for, and to see whether a company is credible or not."

Mr Gregoriadis went on to offer some advice to [small businesses](#) hoping to optimise their internet capabilities. He believes that understanding the target audience is crucial if firms are to successfully market themselves online.

"This should be treated as an ongoing process so that segmentation and targeting gets better all the time," he said

"For example, companies need to ensure that their emails are relevant and timely for the recipient. Additionally, it is getting easier for companies to collect online feedback from their customers so they can continually improve their offering."

Research conducted by E-commerce found that companies spend an average of 13 per cent of their website design budgets on usability. However, a number of obstacles to development were discovered, with time issues facing 56 per cent of online marketers, while a lack of internal resources, an insufficient budget and a sceptical company culture were also cited as stumbling blocks.

Mr Gregoriadis was also at pains to point out that in order to maximise company exposure firms should not simply focus on online marketing campaigns.

"[It shouldn't be said] that traditional forms of marketing such as direct mail cannot play an important role. The main thing is to ensure that there is an integrated approach to different types of marketing," he confirmed.

There were around 4.5 million business enterprises in the UK operational at the start of 2006, up by 2.9 per cent on 2005 levels.

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