



Get this season's must-have accessory

Home	Strategy	Money	People	Sales	Technology	Operations	SEARCH <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="GO"/>
----------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------	------------------------	-----------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	---	-----------------------------------

- [Business Clinic](#)
- [Masterclasses](#)
- [Member Benefits](#)
- [Our Partners](#)
- [Talk Back](#)
- [Weekly Archive](#)

BUSINESS CLUB MEMBER COMMUNITY

- FREE SEMINARS**
- [Boosting Sales with Business Intelligence](#)
 - [Business Technology](#)
 - [Marketing](#)

BUSINESS SUCCESS INTERNET TELEVISION

- COMPETITIONS**
- [Win tickets to a London Business Forum event](#)
 - [Win a table for 10 with VIP hospitality at the Royal Windsor Horse Show](#)

BUSINESS UTILITIES PRICE COMPARISON

- BENEFITS**
- [Member Benefits](#)
 - [Buy or Sell Businesses](#)
 - [Club Bookshop](#)
 - [Club Community](#)
 - [Hotel Discounts](#)
 - [Telegraph Books](#)

YOUR QUESTIONS BUSINESS CLINIC

- AWARDS**
- [British Small Business Champions](#)
 - [Chamber Awards](#)
 - [Queen's Awards](#)

YOUR BUSINESS NEWS AND ADVICE

- EVENTS**
- [British Chambers of Commerce Conference](#)
 - [Henley Management School Events](#)
 - [London Business](#)

BUSINESS NEWS [ness](#) • [BP slashes jobs as profit falls 20pc](#) • [Hedge fund Polar warms to I](#)

Doing nothing is no longer an option

UK Online offers advice for small businesses on keeping pace with the internet.

There can be few people in business today who do not use the internet in some form in their everyday activities, either for work or leisure. This 'network of networks', as the internet is often called, has undergone explosive growth in recent years. There are now more than 1.1 billion people worldwide – about 18 per cent of the global population – with some form of internet access. And this figure is set to rise.

According to UK Online research, two thirds of small businesses – defined as those with 1-10 employees – do not yet have an internet connection at all; just over half do not have a company website; almost one in five are still using slow 'dial up' connections, rather than much faster broadband and one in five are not taking basic security precautions, such as using anti-virus software.

So are you making the most of what the internet has to offer you and your business? As one of UK Online customer, Catherine Rouse, who owns a fancy dress business in Essex points out: "These days, email rivals even face-to-face communication therefore ecommerce is vital to the success of a business. In fact, we are using email as both a marketing and customer communication tool."

Doing nothing is no longer an option. Sooner or later every small firm will need to start to explore the internet and application choices if they haven't done so already. First of all you need to understand what you want out of your internet strategy. Ofcom, the communications regulator, has come up with the following three types of role that communications technology can play in smaller businesses, depending on how important they believe it to be:

- **driver** – technology can change the shape of the business through its role in product development, brand image, and creating sales opportunities and unique selling points
- **enabler** – technology is an essential vehicle for making the business more efficient by managing customer relationships, minimising errors and helping to secure market position
- **utility** – technology is a basic tool for communication, helping with office administration and communications inside and outside the company

It's important to get your foot on the internet ladder, but for anyone taking their first step it is usually wise to introduce technology in stages. The worst approach is to rush in with, say, a costly website that does not match the current ability of the company to service, or which adds little value. It is also common to find that the intended use of new technology does not materialise, and another surfaces – say, an emphasis on customer service rather than generating new sales.

For smaller companies, there are several areas to explore immediately that will help stabilise your use of technology, establish which applications are important to you and provide a good platform to develop more ambitious plans.

- **internet provision** – are you using a consumer supplier for your business? Whether you have the internet or not, it is important to consider using a business grade broadband service to guarantee better access speeds and availability, especially for customer support
- **email** – establishing a company email server, either hosted or inhouse, provides a secure, professional platform for the most vital internet service
- **website** – even a basic site signals your presence on the internet and provides a platform for developing a more sophisticated 'shop window'
- **customer data** – a client database is the building block of any business, but making best use of it depends on how well it is organised. Data can now be collected and maintained in low-cost email and contact management packages that will greatly help in both sales and service
- **access and mobility** – for companies that have several staff, some of whom may be mobile professionals, providing a network for sharing internet access and customer data, and access while out and about, is crucial

Above all, the most important factor is attitude and determination not to get left

OUR PARTNERS

— Be Life Confident —

The world's local bank

simply closer

SEARCH

AXA

Forum Events

World PR
Conference &
Festival 2008

behind in the internet age – this year, next year and in the years to come.

For further advice and information take look at the UK Online internet guide developed in partnership with the Institute of Directors at ukonline.net/pocketbook



[» Return to Previous Page](#)

[About us](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#)

A vertical banner advertisement. At the top, it says "PC WORLD Business" in a blue and yellow box. Below that, "in association with" in black text. Then "SmartPlan For Business" in a blue and yellow box. The main text reads "The smart way to" in a large, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the banner is a photograph of a woman in a white shirt sitting at a desk with a computer monitor and keyboard, smiling.