

# Solutions to Common Web Site Errors

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E-commerce sales by small businesses are increasing rapidly and could double, triple or more during the next five years. Web sites are no longer a novelty; they are a necessity for small firms, solo operators and home businesses of almost any type.

Meanwhile, customers have become vastly more Internet savvy than they were just a few years ago. They feel more comfortable buying online and they expect Web sites to be clear, crisp, informative and highly functional. Small businesses that don't deliver higher levels of Web sophistication risk being left behind.

A good starting point is avoiding errors that often doom Web sites to mediocrity. It's not a matter of making your site complicated. Today, the "less is more" axiom applies and often spells the difference between a Web site that delivers for your small business, and one that doesn't.

Don't neglect your site. If you want the Internet to help build your business, make your Web site a top priority in your daily operations. If your products, services, prices, location, hours, contact information and marketing messages change, make the updates immediately. Outdated information frustrates customers. Place your contact information in a prominent location. Many potential customers visit Web sites merely for basic contact details.

Flashing images, scrolling text and blinking buttons may have seemed clever and high-tech when first introduced, but now they are simply annoying. Dump them in favor of graphics that enhance your site usability. Avoid the temptation of cute bells and whistles. Make a fast-loading site a top priority.

And set up a system for tracking your site activity. Don't be in the dark about what's happening on your site. Simple and inexpensive Web analytic tools can point to areas that need improvement. Two top sources for Web analysis tools are WebTrends.com and SiteCatalyst.com. Visit the sites and check out the free trial offers.

To learn more about ecommerce for small business, contact SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business." SCORE is a nonprofit organization of more than 10,500 volunteer business counselors who provide free, confidential business counseling and training workshops to small business owners. Call the Greater Woodinville Chamber of Commerce at (425) 481-8300, or 1-800/634-0245 for the SCORE chapter nearest you, or find a counselor online at [www.score.org](http://www.score.org).