



## Embracing the online sale

**W**hen you're a small business owner, nothing is more important than sales. It goes without saying that revenue is the lifeblood of business.

So why do most business websites focus only on marketing products and services, and not taking the next step of closing the sale? Maybe it's time to start collecting payments online instead of just generating leads. With a few simple changes, your website could be paying for itself.

The typical lifecycle of a company website begins as an online brochure, directing potential customers to contact the company for more information. Adding the ability to capture sales leads through the use of html forms is the next step in website evolution. For companies selling products, adding a shopping cart can turn prospective customers into paying customers. But when it comes to companies that sell services, where the price is not known ahead of time, lead capture is

often the stalling point in their website progression. What most companies don't consider is the ability to use online payment systems to allow customers the ability to pay their invoices online.

Adding payment options to your website can range from simple modifications to in-depth software development. In the past, figuring it out was a lesson in patience and persistence. Today, adding simple payment options to your website has never been easier.

### PayPal.com

Gaining a start as a way to pay for eBay purchases, PayPal has become the most widely used payment system on the Internet today. Because PayPal allows a business to take credit cards without setting up a merchant account, it is a service many businesses use when first implementing online payments.

A good starting point with PayPal is the Website Payments Standard service. With no set-up charges or monthly fees — and no programming skills required — it's an easy way to start accepting credit cards. All you need to do is set up a business PayPal account, then link it to one of your bank accounts as a funding source. My suggestion is to set up a separate bank account just for your PayPal transactions. That way, reconciling your transactions will be simple and straightforward.

Once your account is set up, you can use "Buy Now" and "Add to Cart" buttons. Just use the easy button wizard to generate the HTML code, then cut and paste the HTML onto your web pages next to the services you're selling. With PayPal, you can even create and email invoices to your customers for your goods and services, or create a specialized version of a "Donate" button to have your customers send you payments along with their account number.

To receive payments online, all it takes is a little bit of planning. If you can integrate web orders into your back office fulfillment process, additional revenue could be right around the corner. And who couldn't use a little more revenue these days?

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