



## [DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

By: DR. SHIRLEY A. WHITE  
President  
Success Images

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# Information technology: Gaining a competitive edge

In today's competitive, customer-oriented economy, it's difficult to compete without the right stuff, especially when computer and communications equipment has never been faster, better and cheaper. Affordable technology truly levels the playing field, giving any business the chance to act as competitive and professional as much bigger ones with greater resources.

## Getting started

It's an inescapable fact of business life that organizations that do not evolve and grow will stagnate and wither. A good way to ensure stagnation is to ignore new technologies that will let you operate more efficiently, reach more potential clients, and have more and better interaction with your clients.

So, how do you get started? If you are not technology savvy, you need to consider interacting with one or a combination of the following:

- Industry-related technology consultant.
- Technology vendor.
- Retail technology store.
- Colleague who has successfully implemented technology.
- Internet research.

I could probably go on, but these are the major resources that can provide you with assistance. The key is to determine what your needs are and to purchase the best hardware and software to meet those needs.

## A marketing advantage

Technology cannot make a sale for you; however, it can significantly assist you in interacting with potential

clients and your present clients, and providing them both with current and necessary information. In brainstorming to determine how technology can give you a marketing advantage, consider the following questions:

- Do your clients need around-the-clock help or information about a product or service?
- Do you travel often to service a few key clients?
- Do potential clients want to see promotional materials from your business before they agree to meet with you? Or while they are meeting with you?
- Do you have multiple representatives for various geographic regions?

➤ Are you planning on launching new products or services or upgrading existing products/services in the near future?

These are just a few questions whose answers can give you a good idea as to how you can effectively utilize technology in your business. There is an endless list of additional ways that you can effectively use technology to boost your organization's marketing advantage and professional image. You just need to do some research.

## Building a Web site

There are more than 70 million Web sites today. If you don't have a Web site for your business, it's like not having your phone number in the yellow pages.

There is a sweet side to this crusade to get on the Web. A Web page can help your business create an

image of being a top-notch organization, which may help increase the perception among potential clients that your business is credible and you and your staff are top performers. Do you currently have a Web site? If not, why not? What's holding you back?

The main hurdle to publishing a Web site is the belief that doing so is

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difficult, technically demanding work. While that might have been true a few years ago when the Web first took flight, Web page authoring is no longer the sole province of techno wizards. Plenty of easy-to-use software is on the market, and a newcomer can usually post an initial site in a matter of hours. Better still, all of this can be accomplished at very low cost. Even the smallest business can afford to be on the Web.

In the final analysis, communicating with your clients as well as your potential clients, operating your organization in an efficient and effective manner and having your staff perform at their best are all core factors to a successful and profitable business. So check out ways to effectively utilize information technology and move forward through the 21st century.

**For more information, please contact Dr. White at (225) 769-2307. □**