

When a website is part of an integrated marketing strategy

 By [Richard Clarke](#)

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Many companies think that a presence on the Net is a waste of time and money. Most of them went into the online thing without thinking through the implications and challenges of what is still not a totally understood marketing medium.

The first thing that should be considered before embarking on this marketing journey is whether a substantial amount of the target market have access to and regularly surf the Net.

This sounds obvious, but many people make the mistake of thinking that the customers will come to them if they simply build an online presence.

The next step is building a sustainable site. This is harder than it seems as people have plenty of choice online and are also constrained by time and cost so a site must deliver content, convenience and accessibility.

With the Net being overloaded and not exactly new news, it pays to spend some time on research with employees as well as customers. Can you deliver value to a customer online? If not forget it.

The human factor is also an incredibly important aspect of succeeding online. Computers don't operate by themselves and people that work with them and therefore with customers online have to buy in to a medium where speed is critical when dealing with complaints and queries.

These steps in building an online presence are not exhaustive but as a starting point they can give a guideline as to whether it should even be a consideration.

Remember WOM (Word of mouth), well it also works online and at warp speed. In his book *Business @the speed of thought*, published in 1999, Bill Gates talked at length about information flow and his thoughts on the Net are instructive.

"Word of mouth is the most powerful means by which any product or company builds a reputation, and the Internet is a medium made for word of mouth. If a customer doesn't like a product or the way a vendor has treated him, he's likely to email all his friends or post a message on a heavily trafficked bulletin board."

A website is also not a stand alone tool and should form part of an integrated marketing strategy. It has reach and immediacy that other marketing forms lack but if it does not deliver and reinforce the existing positive marketing strategies it will only cost money.

ABOUT RICHARD CLARKE

Richard Clarke founded Just Ideas, an ideas factory and implementation unit. He specialises in spotting opportunities, building ideas and watching them fly. Richard is also a freelance writer.

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