



twenty ways

WE ALL KNOW how quickly business is moving over to the World Wide Web. Whatever your products or services, you cannot afford to be left out. It provides a real opportunity to **cut the cost** of running your business, to **increase orders** you get from existing and new customers and **gain advantage** over your competitors. Here are twenty low or no-cost, easy-to-apply suggestions that you can begin to use this week to help you become more successful.

If you haven't already looked at the @UK website at www.ukplc.net, we strongly recommend you do so, as a practical way to achieve all these benefits. If you are already a member of the @UK network, use this guide to help your business even more.



About @UK PLC

@UK PLC is dedicated to getting suppliers trading online. Currently working with a large number of councils, hospitals and other purchasing organisations across the UK, it provides low cost trading websites for suppliers of any size.



1. Cut the cost of invoicing

Most customers now have an e-mail address – make sure your business knows what that is. If you have a trading website from @UK you can invoice your customers online through the @UK network at NO extra cost. Cut out the cost of postage, envelopes and compliment slips. Customers, especially in the public sector like councils and hospitals, are also beginning to promise to pay on time every time if you invoice this way.

2. Sell services as well as goods

You can still use online methods even if your customers usually ask you to quote for work. No matter what service you provide it is much more accurate this way, as you have a record of exactly what they asked for and how you replied.

RECO Engineering

George Mantle formed Reco forty years ago as a 'hands on' engineering fabrication company. He has operated out of an industrial unit in West Silvertown for the last 10 years, but only came to online ordering very recently.

"This means that my council and big company clients can now request quotes from, and send orders to my company straight from their computer systems. We are already beginning to see benefits for a very modest outlay indeed."



www.recoengineering.co.uk

3. Cut out the cost of customer errors

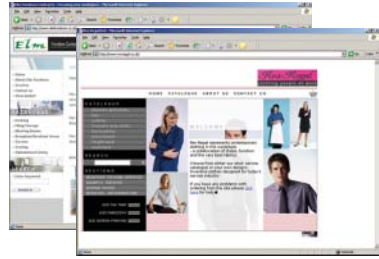
If you can "catalogue" your goods or services and have customers order them, they can see clearly what is in their basket and how much that totals. Many common errors are virtually eliminated (eg customers ordering 144 boxes of something that comes in 144's!). The system can also prompt for e.g. input of a size or colour or fabric where this is relevant.

4. Get yourself a well-designed TRADING website that makes customers aware of all you do

There is little point in having a website that tells prospects how lovely you are if they cannot order from you. Now you can take customer orders without having to have a staff member in and by the phone all day, which reduces your costs significantly. The following are examples of @UK members who have had trading websites set up by @UK at very modest prices – from just £48 per year – and who have generated more sales with new and existing customers as a result:

A sample of some of the websites designed and hosted by @UK PLC

www.rexregal.co.uk
www.woodstockit.com
www.thewinekeller.co.uk
www.frankrpratt.co.uk
www.elmfurniture.co.uk
www.inkjetcartridgesplus.co.uk



Please go to the helpful section on page 10 of this booklet 'What sort of website do you need?'. Use this to assess the best solution for your particular business.

5. Reduce costs with an online catalogue

Having a catalogue online means you do not have to send out a paper version to customers who only use you very occasionally, greatly reducing the money spent on printing and postage. You can also add special offers, and amend prices and products whenever you like with your onscreen catalogue – not having to wait perhaps a whole year till reprint time for the paper version. You will probably want to keep sending a paper version to worthwhile customers for some time. If they are a school, council etc using the @UK buying system, they will often carry on looking at a paper version, but get the benefits of speed and accuracy by 'quick ordering' your catalogue codes straight into their screen.

QUICK ORDER

Please use this facility to order by **catalogue code or part no:**

Roop Asian Bridal Hire

Rupinder Lotay is a wife and mother of two who works in the banking industry, but she decided she wanted to run her own business. She saw a need to provide bridal and evening wear to busy professional women like herself. At a



workshop at the East Ham Learning Line centre she realised that a trading website could be set up quickly and at low cost – less than £100 pa. via @UK PLC. She is already beginning to receive regular commissions and said “I never would have thought that we could set up a company and begin trading online in less than 3 months.”

www.roopbridal.com

6. One connection to your customers

You still need to act, even if you have a trading website able to take online orders already. Your website still needs to be connected to your customers' financial systems, so that orders and payments can flow backwards and forwards. By connecting once to the @UK network, your customer connections can be done for you at no further cost. If you already have a trading website, contact @UK and we will be happy to advise on your particular situation (and see the chart on page 10).

7. Get yourself a good web address if you have not got one already

This costs from just £2.50+VAT per year (go to www.ukplc.net). Test what's available that is short, memorable and ideally tells prospects exactly what you do. For example www.wesupplywindows.co.uk would be ideal if that's what you sell. So would www.thetimbermerchant.com. Look at least at the .co.uk and .com options and take both if you can, to keep others away. You can then 'point' your new web address at your existing or new trading website.

8. Shout your web address from the hill tops

Phone numbers can be hard to remember but people remember snappy website names. Put your web address on your letter head, your press advertising, on the side of your van, even in your office windows if next to the road.

9. Think about new markets

One of the biggest of these is the public sector which is worth hundreds of billions of pounds. This includes councils, schools, hospitals, universities, central government departments, fire services, care homes etc. All these huge prospects are under instruction to buy online in future. If you have goods or services they want, and the public service buys just about everything imaginable, then being able to supply online could be just that little extra edge you need. Write or e-mail to local public sector prospects. Tell them you now have a trading website and can take orders/send invoices this way.



£14.5 billion was spent online in the UK in 2004
Source: IMRG Index for UK e-retail market, Jan 2005



10. Allow your existing customers to order more, more often

With a trading website, you are now open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Tell your customers! Telephone, e-mail or post them details of your new web address. Explain to them why it is so much quicker and easier to order online.

If you normally serve them by way of an account, tell them that you have already set them up with an online account – it's easy to do and costs you nothing!



11. Go for new account prospects

If you believe they will be acceptable payers, then contact new prospect companies saying that you are now available to take orders online and that you have set them up with an online account already. Remember it's only a moment's work to take their online account off again if there are any issues later.

12. Give your valued customers something back

Now that you have saved money because you do not have so much order processing and paperwork to do, and your customer error rate is lower and you do not have to post invoices etc, you can pass some of this saving back to your customers. Gain competitive advantage this way, and tempt them to buy more. As well as being able to offer each of your key customers a personalised price list only they see, there are also other clever ways you can offer promotions and other incentives – see www.ukplc.net/offers.

13. Take payment from consumers

If your offering is suitable for individuals (or could be amended to gain valuable new business) then you will need the facility to accept card payment @UK PLC can offer you a cheap and immediate solution for you to do this.

14. Offer as many product options as possible

There are two ways to do this online. Either treat each option as a separate product and show each, or show just one product but have your site automatically ask which option the customer wants as they complete the order. For instance, you may sell curtains in a whole range of colours, fabrics and sizes. The more options you show, the more you may sell, but there will come a point where the customer suffers 'overload' so for example the choice of size would almost certainly be by a prompt during ordering.

15. Help prospects to find you

Being on the @UK network will automatically help you move up the ranking of 'finds' on Google etc. You will also of course be present on the @UK site search and can be prominent on the buying 'portals' of any of your public sector or larger company customers who also use @UK (let us know who they are by e-mailing Genevieve.toal@ukplc.net).

16. Increase staff effectiveness

Make sure any field or office staff you have are fully aware of your trading website and how it works. That way they can encourage existing customers to order 24/7 and move on to gaining new business.



17. Create online partnerships

If you sell (gates) but not (fences) then your customer may well need both. Agree with a fence supplier that you will offer a 'click through' to his website if he does the same for you. Both sides win, and the customer sees this as a useful service.

18. Get in the local press

By setting yourself up online, you can get yourself into the local press – especially if you provide a good photo of yourself/other staff at a screen etc (easy with a digital camera). Smaller companies trading online are still news – especially if you have gained interesting new business as a result.

Frank Pratt Timber Merchants

Frank Pratt is a traditional family-run firm of timber merchants and joiners serving the construction trade and local authorities in East London. Their local authority (London Borough of Newham)



is one of the leading local authorities in the UK as regards e-procurement, and strongly encouraged the company to become e-enabled for Internet trading. Having no existing website, Frank Pratt & Co invited @UK PLC® to create a full trading site for their company, able to handle the full range of both standard product lines and requests for bespoke work from Boroughs such as Newham. Christian Pratt says “We have been taken through a considerable learning curve in a very short space of time. From having never even dreamed of being an online company we are now happily able to take orders and requests for quote. This is without doubt the way forward for all UK companies. We are very grateful for the support of @UK PLC staff who have always been extremely patient and helpful.

(As a result of their activity Frank Pratt Timber merchants was featured in an article in the Guardian newspaper on small companies taking advantage of e-commerce)

www.frpratt.co.uk

19. Keep your website up to date

Make sure you announce any new business wins, new product offerings etc on the home page of your site, so that your customers and prospects see you as a successful, well-regarded company they are safe to deal with.

20. Keep your products up to date and well-described

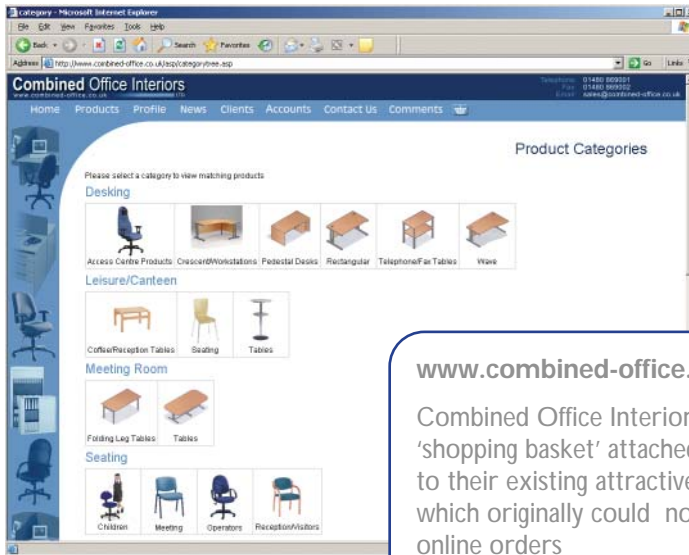
Ensure that any new items you have are featured (for a short while) on the home page and then lots of useful, motivational text is added in the product description. For example, which would interest you more:

“A new mower in our range”

or

“This new mower is the very first on sale in Britain that gets itself out of the shed and cuts the lawn while you are away on holiday.”

(Whatever you say about your new line has to be true though!)



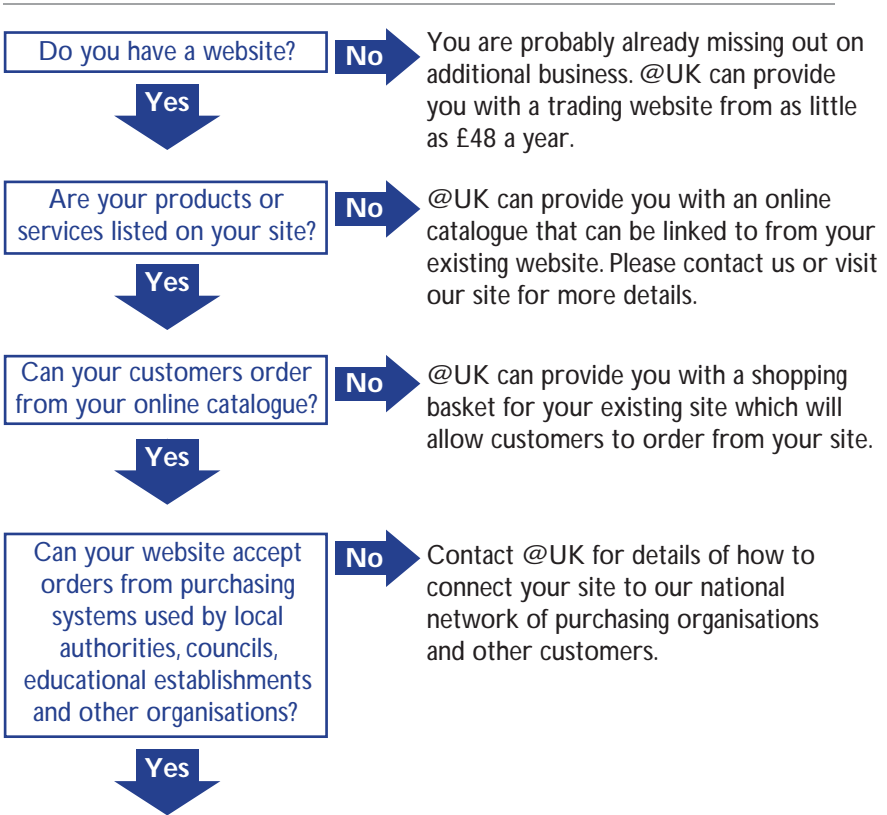
www.combined-office.co.uk

Combined Office Interiors had a 'shopping basket' attached by @UK to their existing attractive website, which originally could not accept online orders (see page 10)

next steps

an action plan for you and your business

We've put together a chart to help you find your way through to successful trading online. Simply answer the questions below to see what your next step should be.



Well done! You're already well placed to take advantage of government eProcurement initiatives. You can still increase your customer base by linking your site to @UK – we have a large national network of purchasing organisations and an international customer base that you could be missing out on if you don't have a listing with @UK. Please contact us for details of how we can help.

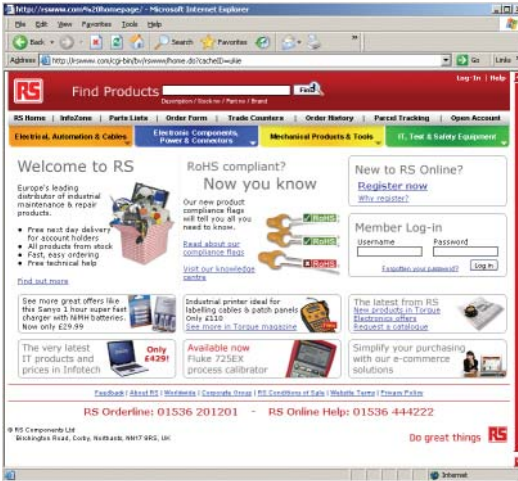
Congratulations!

If you have successfully followed our tips, then you are well on the way to making money from the web.

More information about trading websites can be found on the main @UK PLC website. If you would like to contact us directly, our advisors will be happy to talk you through the options available to help you save money.



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rswww.com

RS Components is just one of the many large companies which also use the @UK network to reach public sector customers.