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## The benefits of an effective website

### Create cost-savings and efficiencies

In the film, *Jerry McGuire*, Tom Cruise, playing the title role, is forced by his only remaining star player to shout out the now famous demand, "Show me the money!" Many website owners have the same demand of their website, often fuelled by unsubstantiated claims by those that would build the site for them. Certainly, some website owners do see the money in terms of increased sales and uptake of services, but perhaps less obvious, yet no less beneficial, is the ability of a website, properly designed and maintained, to minimise day-to-day costs and save staff time.

For this to occur, however, it is crucial that the design, maintenance regime, content and functionality on the site are geared towards those things that will drive cost-savings and efficiencies. The provision on the website of answers to frequently asked questions, online forms, self opt-in/opt-out mailing lists, customer databases that enable email-outs and self-updating of contact details, e-commerce solutions and downloadable files such as annual reports and fact sheets, will all contribute to cost-savings – all of this and more are dealt with in later chapters of this book.

The following list presents some of the cost-centres and time-blackholes typical to most organisations. It explains for each how your website could be used to reduce the associated costs and save time:

- ◆ customer relationship management – reduces the cost of keeping in touch with customers (eg send e-newsletters), gains instant feedback from customers via polls and surveys, facilitates two-way communication and personalisation
- ◆ bypassing the middle-person – depending on the basis of your organisation's structure and distribution models, by doing business with your customers directly all over the world you may obviate the need to pay commissions, agents fees and discounts to third parties – eg bed and breakfast owners who accept bookings directly online via their own site can avoid paying commission to a travel agent
- ◆ re-keying data – if online forms are provided staff will not have to re-key data, interpret poorly written forms and poor quality faxes, freeing them to undertake activities that will improve your business
- ◆ publishing/printing – reduces the cost of outsourcing to printers and graphic designers for brochures, annual reports etc
- ◆ photocopying for internal use – publishing internal documents, quality manuals etc online rather than via hard-copy reduces photocopier through-put, the need for more or larger photocopiers and saves staff time photocopying
- ◆ faxing – a Frequently Asked Questions section and the provision of forms and information on your website reduces the cost and time involved in receiving and sending faxes
- ◆ postage and handling – distributing information online saves expense and time
- ◆ telephone – reduces staff time on the telephone with customers by referring them to the website and some telephone enquirers will be better informed and therefore will take less time on the phone