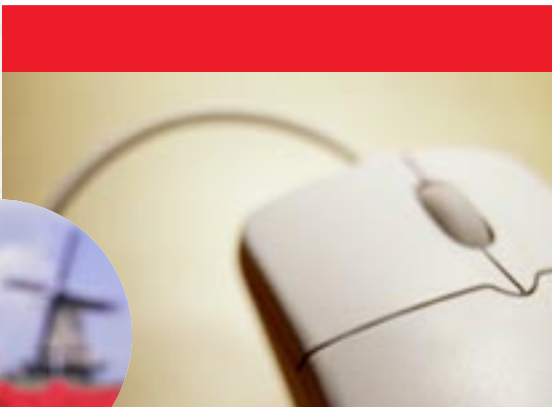
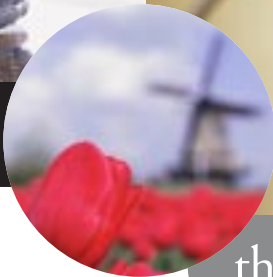


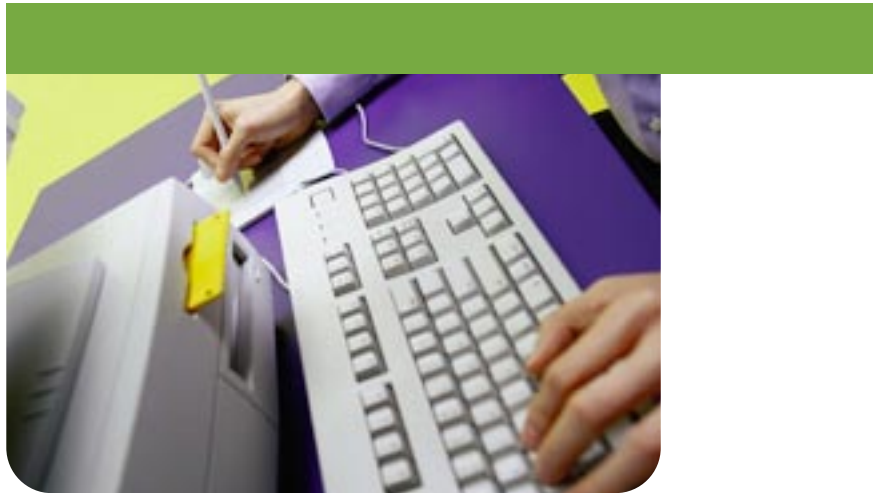
How to Market Your Web Site



Build a strong site ...



then spread the word!



Without a doubt, the Internet is changing the way we do business

Travel is one of the largest online commerce categories, with projected bookings of \$26.5 billion in 2002.¹ There's no time like *today* to start building an online presence for your travel agency — particularly in light of announcements that several major airlines are eliminating base commissions for tickets sold in the United States and Canada.

When it comes to researching and shopping for travel online, consumers are more net-savvy than

ever. However, moving online is just the first step. **You must build and market your online presence as aggressively as you do your offline presence.**

Here, we suggest ways to build and promote your Web site. Our goal is to assist you in retaining existing customers, acquiring new ones, and integrating your offline and online presences to ensure your site is successful.

As with your offline presence, start by creating a marketing plan. This will enable you to stay on track and help measure your success.

Your Internet marketing plan should include sections such as understanding customers and the environment; building a strong foundation; designing your site to suit your customers' needs and your objectives; raising the visibility of your site; getting the word out about your site; measuring the results; and turning shoppers into buyers.

"We are crossing a technology threshold that will forever change the way we learn, work, socialize and shop. It will affect us in ways far more pervasive than most people recognize."

— *Bill Gates,
Chairman,
Microsoft*



¹ According to PhoCusWright, a travel industry research company.

1 Understand your customers and the environment

Consumer Buy-In

Many of your existing customers are shopping online. Moving some, or all, of your business online will enable you to retain their business. You can transfer your knowledge of them from the traditional agency to the online world to offer better service and enhance your relationship.

To adapt strategies for successful online marketing, an understanding of the unique characteristics of the online marketplace and the online consumer is essential. **Your ultimate objective is to motivate the consumer to buy.**

Online shopping can be described as an alternative to offline shopping, not a simulation of the offline world. The online world has a whole new set of rules for social interaction and selling. Consumer behavior in the online marketplace is in some ways different than behavior in the physical marketplace.



In a recent study, Forrester found that the overriding reason North American travellers book online is that they have the ability to book whenever and from wherever they want. Consumers with greater Internet and travelling experience also tend to “shop around” more. These travellers are won over by the Web’s convenience and lower fares.

In addition, 69 percent of leisure travellers (North America) have booked on more than one Web site. While 33 percent bought travel on just one site in the past year, 20 percent spread their purchases over five or more sites.



2 Build a strong foundation



Just as a house needs a good, solid foundation, so too does your site.

A foundation does not create a home on its own, however. What creates a home is that personal feel — the color scheme of the interior, the layout of furniture and your say about who gets which bedroom! The same can be said about a Web site. You need to take the time to design and decorate it.

Choosing a Name

Shakespeare once wrote, “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” That, however, was before the Internet age when online names are very important.

As a traditional agency, you have the advantage that your customers know your name. So it would make an ideal domain address. For example, if your company name is “123 Travel,” your domain name could be www.123travel.com.

To check whether the domain address you want is available, simply enter the address into your browser. If your agency name is unavailable with a “.com” ending, consider using an alternative, such as “.net” or “.biz.” If those options are also not available, choose a domain name that is distinctive, memorable and easy to spell.

Registration

The next step is to register your domain name. You have a choice of a variety of registration services with different pricing structures. Here are a few examples:

- www.networksolutions.com
- www.register.com
- www.verio.com/products/hosting/dnr/

InterNIC (www.internic.net) is a Web site that provides information regarding Internet domain name registration services. It is updated frequently and allows you to search through its directory of registration services. You can search alphabetically, by location or by the language the services support.

Web Site Hosting

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Web hosting companies connect your site to the Internet. For a monthly fee, they manage and maintain your site and provide technical support. You have hundreds of ISPs from which to choose.

The following tips will ensure you find one that suits your needs as an eCommerce provider.

- **24-hour technical support.** Ensure that your ISP offers 24-hour support.
- **Storage space.** As you grow online, so does your hard disk storage space. Your ISP should be able to grow with you.

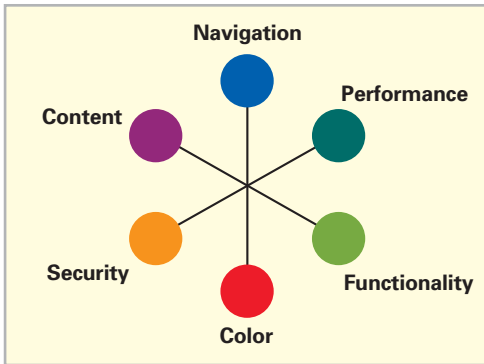
- **E-mail accounts.** Your ISP should be able to provide e-mail addresses that match your domain address.
- **Security.** Ensure your ISP can provide adequate security. For more information on security, see page 7.

Web site hosting prices vary; some providers charge a monthly fee, while others charge a monthly fee plus an initial set-up fee. Yahoo! Website Services (<http://website.yahoo.com>) offers two packages, depending on the size of hard disk space and number of e-mail addresses needed. The basic is \$11.95 per month with a \$15 set-up fee while the “Plus” package is \$19.95 per month with a \$25 initial set-up fee. As part of Yahoo!’s Web Site Services package, they offer free domain registration.²

Internet website hosting .com (www.internet-website-hosting.com) offers Web hosting packages from \$17 with no set-up fee to \$400 with a \$100 set-up fee.² The cost depends on your requirements (e.g., amount of disk storage, number of mailboxes, etc.).

While these prices are quoted in U.S. dollars, they are representative of Web hosting services internationally.²

² As of June 2002.

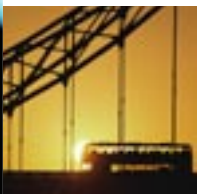
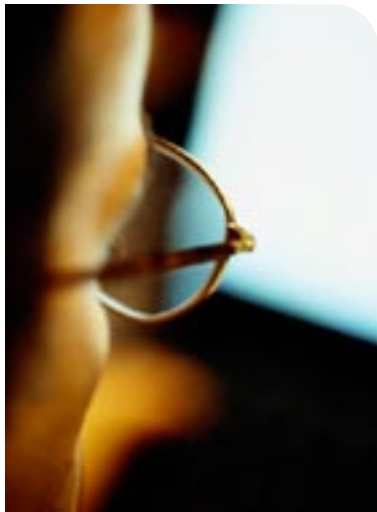


3 Design your site to suit your customers' needs and your objectives

—● Navigation

Feng Shui teaches us to study our living spaces — home, office, work areas — to find interruptions or obstacles to chi (energy) flow. The offline shopping experience is influenced by many external factors, including the senses. Consumers react to color, sound, light, scent, texture and the general “Feng Shui” of a shop.

In the real shopping world, the agency designers’ objective is to ensure that customers experience a “flow” when in the travel agency. The ambience of the shop encourages and directs the consumers to “flow” toward purchasing travel.



Treat your online shop the way you would your offline.	
Shop (Offline)	Internet (Online)
Front door	Home page
Interior design	Navigation, background, text, color
Brochures	Content and pictures/graphics
Personal service	Booking engine, functionality, loyalty programs, e-mail follow-up, easy access to travel agency contact information

Similarly, the online marketplace must have an ambience that will optimize the shopping opportunity. However, it must be established by other means, including navigation and the written words or wording.

Your home page is your online front door. Coherent navigation is important. Most sites adhere to a hierarchical navigation route, grouping topics together. In his article “The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our

Capacity for Processing Information,” George Miller, a renowned psychologist, found that as humans, our short-term memory imposes limitations on the amount of information that we are able to receive, process and remember. It is limited to seven pieces of information at any given time.

By organizing information into several dimensions or a sequence, we manage to break the informational bottleneck. To help guide people through your site, try to keep your navigational menu to seven sections or less.

This site incorporates a left-hand side navigation menu.



Left-hand side navigation menus are the most popular and allow your customers to connect to their required locations. However, many travel industry Web sites have top-page menus, so it's a question of what best suits you and your customers.

If your pages are long and your customers need to scroll down, make it easy for them to move around on your site by offering them a menu at the bottom of the page. Successful eCommerce Web sites, such as www.cheaptickets.com, have incorporated multiple navigation systems on their Web sites.

A site map is also an important feature to have on your home page. A site map is a page of links that displays the layout of your site and will assist your customers in finding the information they require.

Avoid dead links (links that don't work), which display the dreaded "404 Not Found" message. Check and recheck all the links on your site on a regular basis.

Color

When it comes to color, simplicity is key. White or off-white backgrounds with dark fonts are best for reading text. Many people try to differentiate their site by reversing this order to a dark background with lighter fonts. However, that format is often quite hard to read and doesn't print well. That's differentiation for the wrong reasons!

Remember, your customer might want to print content from your Web site or the booking confirmation, and a dark background with a light font may not be readable when printed. Research shows that black on white and blue on white are the top two most legible screen combinations.

Content

Relevant content catches attention and engages consumers.

The tone of the online shopping experience is set by the written words or content. These words must be clear, effective, concise and precise, and have a personal tone. The online consumer is a person, after all, and needs reassurance that another person is behind the Web site.

Keeping your content simple is key. Having too much information on your site will make it difficult for your customers to focus. Keep your content updated and relevant — if it becomes dated or never changes, consumers will go elsewhere. Putting your latest special offers on your home page is a simple way to ensure that your site is constantly updated.

Simple content such as photos of your customers' travels with a brief description or recommendation, travel industry news, advice from aviation authorities on security and airport procedures, and special offers work together to keep your site relevant and new while adding value to your customers' browsing experience.

Also, you may want to add a "customer spotlight" column to your site. What a great way to honor those very important clients you have been serving throughout the years!

All of the aforementioned suggestions carry another bonus — they may draw your customers' friends, family members and colleagues to your site, thus increasing your overall target audience!



This site incorporates a top-page navigation menu.

An interesting example of content use is www.travelwize.com. It has a lot of information that empowers customers, including links to all the major U.S. airports and travel FAQs discussing everything from luggage restrictions to baggage claim issues.

A recent study by Jupiter Media Metrix found that 24 percent of buyers said better product presentation would motivate them to increase their shopping online. This research found that once browsers become buyers, better product presentation is more significant in their decision-making process.

Increasingly, mainstream online buyers are seeking better organization and presentation of products as they explore more online categories and spend more time and money online.

—● Performance

Since many of your customers may be surfing using a dial-up connection, your site should not be time-consuming to download.

The last thing that you want to do is frustrate your customers while they strum their fingers waiting for the hourglass to disappear off the screen.

Avoid heavy graphics with lots of color, as this will only serve to increase download time. While complex, cool graphics are impressive, performance and speed will impress your customers more.

Surfers can be time-conscious. The number of clicks to purchase travel should be no more than five.

Remember, your competition is only one click away.

—● Functionality

Most cool features can be incorporated into your site, but ask yourself if they should be. Always keep your target customer in mind. For example, offering your customers a chat room has no value if your customers don't want one.

The use of features that are truly needed, such as hotel mapping services that enable your customers to find the most ideally located hotel, may give you a competitive edge and encourage more people to shop with you.

Research best practices to incorporate "industry standard" functionality, such as flight, car rental and hotel online booking capabilities, different class of service offerings, multiple payment options, e-mail confirmation of bookings, and flight information that enables travellers to check gate and flight arrival and departure information. Research your competitors' sites to see what compelling features they offer, and make sure you offer similar or more robust features.

—● Security

Assuring your customers that your site is safe to purchase on is essential. Include a privacy and security statement on your site. Technology will also enable you to secure your site.

Credit card verification technology is a must, as is ensuring your site is

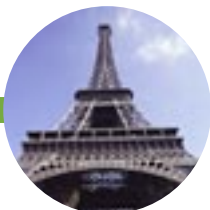


Implement functionality that will create loyalty between you and your customer:

- Traveller profiles that allow you to target your customers with specific offers
- Seat maps so your customers can choose their seats on the plane
- Itinerary, gate and security information, like *Sabre® Virtually There®* and *Virtually There Travel Bulletin Central*
- Fare messenger service through which registered travellers can opt to receive e-mails about flight price fluctuations and promotions based on criteria they choose
- Loyalty programs that reward your customers for booking through your site

protected with an SSL (Secure Socket Layer) ID. SSL is a protocol that manages the security of a message transmission on the Internet.

In addition, leverage your offline brand to increase customers' sense of security. The Internet is faceless but your customers know and trust you. They are more likely to give their credit card details online to somebody they know.



4 Raise your visibility

Creating and designing your site is only half the battle. You need to bring people to it. Here are some ways to promote your site.

Search Engine Optimization

Optimizing your search engine ranking is one of the most effective ways to drive consumers to your Web site. Search engine optimization is a process of designing a site for higher search engine rankings. An understanding of ranking analysis is important so that you can address site optimization in the design stage.

Identify Key Words

Meta tags are html commands that help search engines identify your key words. Meta tags contain your keywords and help engines categorize your Web site. The use of meta tags will raise your visibility in some search engines.

Here is what a meta tag looks like:

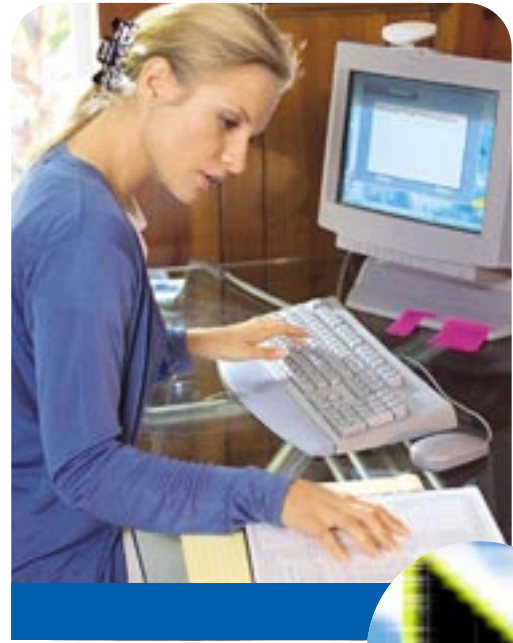
```
Syntax <META name=
"description" content=
"We specialize in adventure
excursions."> <META
name="keywords"
content="excursions, Los
Angeles, day trips, skiing."
```

Based on a survey by Iconocast, meta tags are the most common method used to improve site rankings, followed by fine-tuning page titles. When creating your key words, think not only of nouns or common words such as "travel," but of all the benefits that you offer. Think about your customer base — do they come to you for holidays to relax, adventure holidays, packages or skiing? Thinking this way will help you generate the right key words.

Include Reciprocal Links

Reciprocal linking occurs when another site references or links to your site from their site. According to an Iconocast survey, reciprocal linking is gaining in significance because search engines like Google elevate sites in their ranking based on the number of in-bound links.

If you have affiliation with other companies that have an online presence, talk to them about reciprocal linking. It will add value to your online store, increase opportunities to bring traffic to your site and raise your profile in Google. And it's usually very inexpensive if not free!



Submit Your Listing

You can submit listings two ways: manually or through automated submission services. Register individually with the major search engines. The top search engines include Google, Yahoo!, MSN, Lycos and Altavista.

Then use an automated submission service for listing with smaller engines. Most of the automated submission services require a fee. For example, Microsoft Small Business Solutions (www.submit-it.com) offers a service starting at \$49 and increases to \$99 for more features.³

Some of the players like Yahoo! and LookSmart offer faster processing for a fee. An iProspect.com survey revealed that Fortune 100 companies improved their overall rankings by 126 percent by optimizing search engine processes, proving that more marketers are aware of the growing importance of search engines.



³ As of June 2002.

5 Get the word out!

Word of Modem

A recent Jupiter study highlights viral e-marketing as one of the most popular ways to drive online consumers to a site. Viral marketing is the industry term for word of mouth. It can be via e-mail or person-to-person. A Jupiter survey found that 45 percent of Web traffic was generated based on recommendations from others.

A quote on www.cheapfares.com, where customers can enter their testimonials online, says it all about customer service:

“OK, you’re GREAT! I didn’t expect such good customer care from a ‘cheap’ ticketing site! ... Thank you so very much for being there when we needed a GOOD company with even BETTER PEOPLE.”

That person is likely to recommend cheapfares.com to at least four friends. That’s the essence of viral marketing.



Offline advertising helps drive online behavior. Use traditional print media to your online advantage. In existing advertisements, include your URL. When you send an e-mail, include your URL in your signature.

Find ways to be a part of a consumer’s day-to-day activities. For example, put your Web site address on your ticket jackets and give your customers gifts, such as baggage tags, with your Web address and contact details displayed prominently.

Banner Advertising

Banner ads are graphical images that can be animated to allow further interaction for site visitors. Once someone clicks on the banner, they are connected to either your Web site or a “landing” page targeted specifically at those people. This allows you to reach different customer segments with specific messages. Of course, you can also rent out advertising space on your Web site.

Some Internet booking engines provide space for banner ads to be placed on the search and booking pages. You can opt to promote your own services here, or you can earn revenue from selling this space to partner companies. To download a free copy of “Online Travel Advertising,” a recent PhoCus-Wright report (March 2002), go to <http://www.phocuswright.com/research/content/wp322.pdf>.



Circularity of Marketing

Marketing your Web site is a circular process. Good Web design gives visitors confidence when using your Web site. After successfully understanding and attracting online consumers, you want to keep them.

You will also want to continue to enhance your relationships with existing customers. Online marketing enables two-way communication that allows you to listen to your customers — both existing and new — and deliver a personalized service to them.

Let your customers know that you have heard them. Your e-mail response must be no later than two days and preferably within 24 hours or the next working day. Be sure to have a telephone number prominently displayed. Good customer service can be one of your unique selling points.

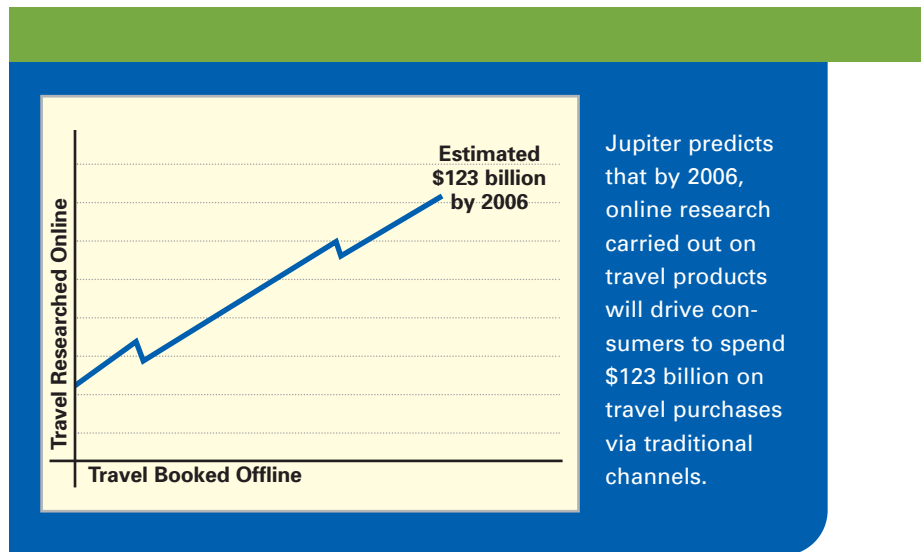
6 Measure your results

Personalization

Your Web site enables you to personalize your offerings and target the right customers. Most booking engines offer a travel profile facility that allows you to capture your customers' e-mail addresses. If you use this information in a very targeted marketing campaign like Amazon.com does, your customers will not consider your e-mail "junk e-mail."

International financial advisory services company Lazard Freres found that 72 percent of all people open their e-mail first thing. Imagine the rewards that you can reap by sending a customer who has booked a ski trip an e-mail first thing in the morning offering a ski pass at a discounted rate. Good e-mail campaigns regularly achieve response rates of up to 20 percent, as opposed to 1 to 2 percent for traditional direct mail.

You have the advantage. PhoCusWright found that more than 80 percent of online travellers feel local travel agencies provide reliable personal service.



Measurement

Ken Cassar of Sharper Image, a U.S.-based specialty retailer, summarized the measurement of online retailing when he said: "The profit of the Web site shouldn't be the goal of a bricks-and-mortar retailer's site; it should just be one measure they track."

Sharper Image uses a clever example of measuring online purchases. They use different item numbers for their products on the Internet. This way, they can track the purchases that are researched online but "bought" offline via their

call centers. So, if a customer quotes the Internet product code, the Internet is credited with part of that sale. Using those measures, they have attributed 10 percent of their purchases to the Internet.⁴

The influence of the Web reaches beyond the online channel and into traditional offline channels. As the online population grows and more travel products become available online, the Internet's impact on travel purchases made off-line will grow significantly.

⁴ According to the Sept. 3, 2001, issue of The New York Times.

7 Turn shoppers into buyers

Look-to-Book Ratio

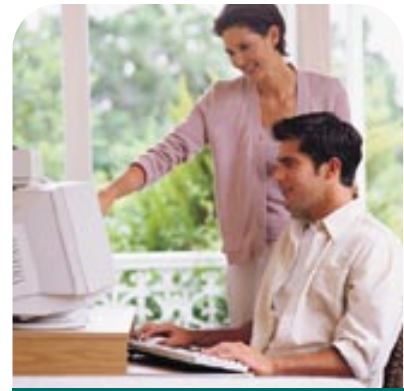
Shopping cart abandonment is an issue that many online retailers face. Recent studies indicate that the main reasons for shopping cart abandonment are:

- Poor site design
- Consumers changing their mind at the last minute
- Concern over high shipping and handling costs
- Concern that orders will be processed incorrectly

A study released by Bizrate.com and the NPD Group (December 2001) showed that 75 percent of online consumers have abandoned shopping carts in the past three months. When asked why they abandoned the cart, 31 percent said they simply changed their minds. Another 24 percent said the shipping and handling costs were too expensive. According to a report by Datamonitor, 69.4 percent of all potential online transactions in 2001 were abandoned.

Customers will abandon shopping carts for various reasons — trial and error, playing around on the site, or wishful shopping. Your online presence is more than just a shopping cart, it's a place for your customers to browse online and then shop offline if they so desire.

Your Web site is a place where you can maintain and build relationships with your customers, both existing and new. Be sure to respond to orders quickly with confirmation e-mails so that client confidence grows. Above all, your site enables you to deliver services to your customers, no matter where your customers are or when they need your services.



Our goal is to help you succeed with your Web site. For more information or to discover how Sabre can help, please contact marketing.res@sabre.com. Or for more information regarding the Sabre® .Res Internet booking engine, visit www.sabre.com.

You can decrease your customers' likelihood of abandoning your shopping cart and increase your look-to-book ratio if you follow a few simple steps:

- 1 Good site design is a must — most importantly, ensure it's **easy to navigate**, with a **simple design** that isn't cluttered with too much content.
- 2 **Personalize** your site to reflect your offline presence.
- 3 Maintain your Web site — keep it **interesting** and **new** — while maintaining familiarity with regular features.
- 4 Ensure it is **easy to use** — for both researching and purchasing.
- 5 Avoid using too many **graphics**. These take time to download, and your competition is only a second away.
- 6 A good rule of thumb is to not exceed five **clicks to purchase**.
- 7 Implement **value-added features** that your customers want and will use.
- 8 Ensure your site is **secure**.
- 9 **Promote** your site both online and offline.
- 10 Listen to your **customers' feedback** and use it.





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