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# Business Opportunities

## A Web Strategy for Growing Businesses

by Elaine Lennox

(NAPSA)—Going the extra mile to please the customer is just good business practice. Whether it is staying open later, delivering a purchase faster or helping a customer locate a hard-to-find item, successful small and medium-sized businesses know it's important to help meet the customer's needs.

Many growing businesses are applying this strategy to the Web, teaming with IBM and its business partners on customer-friendly e-commerce sites that combine the best of online retailing with value-added service.

In 2001, total retail sales over the Web totaled \$32.6 billion, up more than 19 percent from the previous year. People and companies are increasingly using the Internet to make purchases. Growing businesses that want to thrive in today's economy cannot ignore the Internet as a powerful new addition to their sales force.

Lillian Vernon Corporation, a leading national catalog and online retailer, recently launched a sophisticated new site, [www.lillianvernon.com](http://www.lillianvernon.com), that features all of its 6,000 products from its eight catalog titles, up from the 1,500 previously available. From personalized gift baskets to doormats to lint shavers, [www.lillianvernon.com](http://www.lillianvernon.com) offers faster, easier online shopping and quicker delivery.

To grow its online sales, attract new customers, and reduce processing costs, the company turned to IBM and a business partner to design and implement their new site. IBM software, WebSphere Commerce Version 5.1, helped to create a fast, flexible and user-friendly e-commerce site that effectively drives Web traffic, while IBM database product DB2, provides a scal-



### How to add the Internet to your sales force: build a better Web site.

able and reliable way to manage inventory, customer data, and product information.

As a result, Lillian Vernon's online sales increased by more than 30 percent last holiday season compared to the previous holiday season.

Another retailer with a different clientele but the same commitment to value-added customer service also benefited from the expertise and reliability of IBM technology. Located in the heart of Napa Valley, NextWine ([www.nextwine.com](http://www.nextwine.com)) has built an online community for wine enthusiasts to share information.

To meet its need for rapid implementation and proven expertise, NextWine chose Trifecta Technologies, an IBM business partner specializing in commerce applications. The company's strategy of starting small and reaching the market quickly has paid off, with monthly sales growing by 12.5 percent in less than six months.

For growing businesses such as Lillian Vernon and NextWine, the latest technology has helped give customers the full benefit of automation and personalization. IBM expertise lets businesses focus on what they do best.

• *Elaine Lennox is director of marketing, small and medium business, IBM.*