

## Introducing Small Businesses To Life Online

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(NAPSA)—A growing number of small businesses are finding the Internet can make a big difference in how they do their business.

Seventy-one percent of small businesses—those with 25 employees or fewer—have Internet access, according to Dun & Bradstreet's 2002 *Small Business Survey*. However, only a third of them use the Internet as a way to attract new customers or sell new products or services.

Some small business owners have avoided using the Internet because they don't know where to start or they are intimidated by what they think they have to learn to master it.

However, it doesn't have to be that way. Experts say one of the best ways for a small business to get started online is to use the Internet in simple ways at first.

This would include such steps as having a Web site, communicating with customers through e-mail or using the Internet to get a clearer idea of who your customers are and how to market to them.

For example, the J&B Flower Farms of Florida is a grower and supplier of fresh-cut flowers. While their customer base is small, they do large volume sales with a few large retail chains.

They wanted to use the Internet to create a stronger corporate brand relationship with customers. That meant using e-mail to communicate with buyers and developing a Web site to be used as an information resource.



**With help from experts, a small business, such as the J&B Flower Farm, can have a Web site up and running in two weeks.**

Fortunately, organizations, such as the National Federation of Business (NFIB), are helping companies such as this one achieve their goals.

For example, the NFIB offers its 600,000 members access to an Internet package from Website Pros that includes site design and maintenance, online marketing and hosting from IBM—all for a fee that's less than the cost of leasing a photocopier.

As a result, the J&B Flower Farms had their Web site up and running in two weeks.

When it comes to small businesses using the Internet, partnerships can make the difference. In this case the NFIB, Website Pros and IBM helped a small business to blossom online.

To learn more, visit the Web site at [www.ibm.com/smallbusiness](http://www.ibm.com/smallbusiness).