

# Are You Doing E-Business, Or E-Commerce?

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by Greg Carter

Your distribution business is unique and so is your industry. In the case of my company, Electrical Marketing, it's Industrial/Electrical distribution where manufacturers and distributors have large inventories, databases and complex supplier relationships. Understanding an organization's "e-Business" versus e-commerce needs means we don't deal with plumbing supplies, automotive parts or something else.

You're not running an online store; you're running a business that is now online. E-Commerce is selling online. E-Business goes beyond technical. It takes into consideration your operations, your competitors and the marketplace. It's strategical and tactical. It also includes Business Intelligence.

As a marketing director with independent and national distributors, I hired web agencies to write code. Beyond that, we did everything "in-house". We knew our business and developed our skill sets to run the online business. Eventually I found a service provider with hands-on,

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Is your Omni-

staff experience that matched our organization's business model. This literally extended the staff's existing resources because they'd walked in our shoes.

## Channel Strategy Driving Your Customers to Shop A Competitor?

Ask These 7 Questions Before  
Hiring a Web Agency

- 1. What is their experience with (YOUR INDUSTRY HERE)?** Without having worked on staff with a company like yours, web agencies can have a significant learning curve understanding your operations, how your sales team uses a CRM sales funneling and other systems like ERPs you'll be discussing.
- 2. Does the agency talk about profitability and return on your investment?** E-business is about generating revenue and increasing profitability. If you've built an attractive web site that gets lots of traffic but isn't generating much business, pay a small fee to have your site reviewed by an e-commerce consultant with a track record of implementing e-business strategies in your industry.
- 3. Do they understand your products, services and the supply chain marketplace?** Without this experience, you can expect a learning curve and extra hand-holding requiring more of your time.
- 4. Do they have industry and product knowledge to help you develop substantive written content?** Without unique, substantive content about your products, services and solutions, you aren't much different than the next e-store. Can they help convey your subject matter expertise and differentiate you? Remember, you don't just ship boxes do you? You're a knowledge-based sales organization.
- 5. For website content, are they only providing OEM SKUs, product descriptions and product images?** Your competitors already have, or will get these digital assets too. Original written content (e.g. product reviews, instructional/educational, white papers, video) will not only differentiate you; It will place you above the competition on search engines because you are providing solutions to customers searching the web for answers. Google will show you some love!

6. **What can the agency offer beyond technical knowledge to build websites, amusing posts to social media and reports?** Do they have experience developing industrial/electrical distributor marketing strategies and executing tactics that have grown businesses like yours?
7. **Can they speak the language of supply chain distribution and quickly integrate with your IT, Sales and Marketing teams?** Or do they prefer working independently? Ideally, they'd offer cross-training to empower your team to become more self-sufficient.

*Greg Carter is owner of Electrical Marketing Group, an e-commerce consultancy exclusively serving the industrial/electrical supply chain including large distributors, independents and OEMs. He can be reached by email: netmarketing@comcast.net or by cell: 856.381.7834.*

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