

Small Business Missing The Mark Online



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Author: [Business Link London](#)

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London's small to medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are not reaching their full online potential – and many have no web presence at all, according to a recent poll by Business Link in London.

Almost half (45.4%) of the 500 London entrepreneurs polled admit that they do not have a business website, with the majority (62.6%) stating that their business does not need one. The manufacturing industry topped the list of businesses without a website. However, over half (53.3%) the retail, catering and leisure businesses participating also lack websites.

Tony Cattermole, Business Adviser from Business Link in London says: "The results prove that there is a digital divide among London's SMEs - those that embrace the Internet as an important component of their business and those that think they can do without. That mindset could hamper their road to recovery. Websites are a cost-effective way of generating sales, reaching customers and launching new products and services.

"A client of mine runs a car garage in London. He didn't think a website was necessary, despite needing to increase sales and reach new customers. However, upon my advice, a quick search on the Internet made him realise that no garages in his area had an online presence – giving him the potential to capture 100% of the online market. Going online has become second nature to many customers which is why small businesses are potentially missing out.

“Having a website so customers can find you is the first step, but many businesses can also benefit from selling online.”

Research from Google shows that online sales account for 17p of every pound spent in the UK. Google also reports that online retail sales grew 14% over the last.

According to the Business Link in London poll, women entrepreneurs are leading the way for those that do have websites, in comparison to their male counterparts (58.2% vs. 50%) and this is a trend that has accelerated in the last two years.

However, even SMEs that have an online presence may not be reaching their full potential. Many of these businesses are admitting that increasing sales and promoting goods and services are not key priorities for them. 50% of the business owners had used a professional to create their website and almost half (46.6%) do not plan on making any changes to their website.

“Websites should not be static – they need to constantly evolve to reflect changes in customers’ needs, the economy and business competitors. The ultimate goal is to meet the ever changing needs of your customers”, adds Mr Cattermole.

Business Link in London is urging any small business to come to us for advice and [business support](#), whether they need to start from scratch or make their website more effective. We are a free and impartial business advisory service providing support to small businesses in London through our online guides and toolkits, Business Advisers, workshops and seminars.

For further information on how Business Link in London can help you call 0845 6000 787 or visit: www.businesslink.gov.uk/london

Contact Details: Jessica Singh – Senior PR & Communications Executive
T: 0207 111 0372
E: jessica.singh@blondon.co.uk

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