2 Way Comunication Essay, Research Paper

2-Way Communication

Once a company has a website, the possibilities are endless. As outlined in the previous section, a company website has the ability to reach a market of consumers or vendors that may be out of its physical reach. Not only does it have the ability to relay boundless amounts of information, but it can also provide a vehicle of communication to the rest of the world. Any person can log onto a company website and find links to electronic mail (e-mail) or bulletins, perhaps even a “chat” area, an area where individuals can speak to each other live via computer. By allowing this type of access to the public, companies can greatly expand their business.

Electronic mail is becoming the preferred vehicle of communication for almost anyone of the technological era. A company whose website provides links to e-mail instantly reduces the number of phone calls and letters into their office. Customers no longer have to wait on the phone or spend time writing letters to contact a service representative. With a fully functional company website, service representatives are “just a click away”. Customers can relay any questions, concerns, or problems through e-mail. Companies can address issues in a short time frame, therefore increasing the quality of service. Customers will receive responses faster than the conventional mail system (also known as “snail mail”) and can avoid the frustration of being on the phone for hours on end.

A company that utilizes e-mail effectively instantly realizes an increase in production. Not only can companies provide better service to current clientele, they can reach a whole new market of consumers worldwide; potential consumers have access to representatives of companies they would not have otherwise.

Aside from providing enhanced services to their clients, utilizing e-mail is an efficient way to communicate between departments and maximize intra-office correspondence. E-mails give an employer the ability to distribute messages to an unlimited number of employees without leaving his or her desk. There is no need for tangible handouts, memos, flyers, or such. There is no easier way to instantly deliver a fifty-page report to numerous recipients than by attaching the file to an e-mail message.

The greatest advantage to electronic mail is that it is virtually free. There are no envelopes or stamps required. The need for paperwork is minimized to printing a copy of the e-mail when required and filing it in its respective place. Imagine the money a company can save if it did not have to hire people to open mail or answer phones!

Electronic mail is just one form of communication available on company websites. Many also offer electronic bulletin boards, which can be used to post company reviews, job openings, and upcoming events. It is another form of electronic communication that enhances a company’s website.

Companies can provide bulletin boards as a forum where consumers can exchange ideas. Kraft Foods, Inc., the makers of Jell-O, Kool-Aid, and Maxwell House, provide an area on their website where consumers can post their own recipes to share with other website visitors. OnHealth.com provides an area in their website where visitors can solicit advice on health or family related issues from other visitors.

Companies can also benefit from using electronic bulletins. Employers can log on and view what visitors to their websites have to say. It gives them an unbiased venue into consumer concerns, accolades, and general requests. There is no better way to know how your customers feel than to receive direct feedback. Not only can employers post company information and upcoming events for their customers, but they can also post information, such as intra-office job posting, for their employees. Employees can use the bulletin board in the same way that customers do.

Many company websites also sponsor chat forums, used to bring a multitude of people together from all corners of the globe to discuss company-related issues. A chat forum is an electronic version of a conference call. Several people can log into a chat area and hold a discussion by simply keying in responses.

An advantage to holding chat forums is that companies can connect with multiple contacts at real time. Anyone who has authorization to the site can log on and view the chat without becoming an active participant. Alternatively, anyone who has authorization can also join the chat. If companies offered a chance for their customers to speak in a similar forum, they would be able to find out exactly what their concerns were.

On-Line Transactions

The Internet continues to grow at a dramatic rate, with the number of global users now estimated at 195 million – 4.64% of the world’s population. A major trend within this growth is the increase in electronic commerce, with 1999 seeing revenues from Internet shopping grow by 150% and business to consumer electronic commerce generating around $12 billion.

By 2004 analyst predict that more than 56 percent of business worldwide will be online (Rosario, 1). A website on the World Wide Web allows a company to sell its products or services to this growing market. New methods allow for secure and completely confidential transactions over the web. Maximizing the use of the Internet for completing online transactions can save a company time and money. With the rapid advances in technology, the capability to conduct all aspects of the business transaction on the Internet has emerged as a viable option to doing business in the customary method.

“Cost savings are derived through automation of administrative tasks, customer retention by knowing customers’ profiles kept on a database accessible by any employee, speed in supply procurement, and company leaders being able to make real-time decisions with windows into the whole enterprise, anywhere, anytime,” said Oracle Systems’ Michael La (Low, 12). Making our website more than just an information site, but a website that offers customers the ability to conduct real time transactions, would do just this.

The key to conducting transactions over the Internet vice more traditional methods is simplifying the customers ordering procedure. Simplification must be accomplished while still giving the customer the impression that their needs are being met. Simplification must also not sacrifice security concerns for the customers. If these conditions are met, the customer will believe that the streamlined ordering service is actually a more convenient method of conducting business.

Simplifying the ordering procedure to include everything the customer could possibly need is the first step. With all the products a company offers, as well a frequently asked questions about the company’s services, and a direct link to contacting the company for any further questions, all the needs of the customer are answered. Here is where the service portion comes in. All of the other steps are in place now the actual transactions take place.

The transaction can take place over many different formats. All these formats will have strong encryption in common. Depending on what it is the company wants to sell and whom they want to sell it to, will determine the type of software to use for this purpose. Secure Socket Layers or SSL is the backbone of any secure transaction; SSL should be used as the bottom level of security however, not alone. For the occasional customer who would choose to use his or her credit card there is Secure Electronic Transaction or SET. For business-to-business transactions where the both parties are familiar with each other, Public Key Infrastructure or PKI is an option.

Many companies at this time us Secure Socket Layers as their only means of securing transactions. This is risking tampering by online thieves and pirates. Secure Socket Layers is a basis to build upon with further encryption, for a one-time transaction it would be safe enough, but with a company doing volumes of business more security is needed, like Secure Electronic Transaction or Public Key Infrastructure.

The Secure Electronic Transaction protocol, launched in 1996, is a common technical standard designed to protect payment card purchases over the Internet (Setco, 1). Secure Electronic Transaction is not a software package, but instead an industry standard set up by leading credit card vendors, Visa and Master Card, to ensure online transactions. Secure Electronic Transaction gives credit card purchases made over the internet extra layers of security that would ensure the customers data security at all times. In fact security would be higher than that of a traditional brick and mortar business, since no actual people would see the credit card numbers.

Companies that desire more than just secure credit card transactions there are other methods of encryption for all the data they transfer, such as Public Key Infrastructure. Public Key Infrastructure would be especially beneficially for conducting business-to-business transactions. Public Key Infrastructure is essentially a digital signature that is structurally attached to an electronic document. The digital signature encases the document or file with a layer of security that follows the document. Digitally signing e-documents and files provides proof of identity of the individual who created the document and at the same time binds the document to him, thereby preventing that individual from denying association with such a document or file at any point in the future.