

# Web has made lasting impact on business conduct

BY GAYLASCHAEFER  
FOR FLORIDA TODAY

Susan Adkins and Nora Marek of Melbourne recently opened a business staging homes for quicker sale.

While five or 10 years ago the pair would have needed to set up a shop somewhere, the two women have found success by marketing their business solely from the Internet and running it from home.

"We are a home based business and service," Marek said. "A store location was not cost effective. The Internet gave us huge visibility and validity and a great marketing opportunity. People sought us out." The Internet has changed forever the way that Americans, and businesspeople across the world, do business.

Providing a service to their clients at the home for sale, the

owners of Home Staging of Melbourne are able to work from home by e-mail and phone, but still have something of an address to promote themselves from with class and professionalism.

The address just happens to be on the Internet instead of their local Main Street, keeping costs down so prices can remain competitive as they build a name for themselves.

No longer is an office staffed from 9 to 5 needed to offer clients a place to browse brochures and sales pitches as the super-slick interactive Web site has revolutionized businesses that do not have other need for a formal office to work from.

"Traditionally, travel agents did have store fronts and the overhead of running an office, (but since) agents do most work either over the phone or on-

line when working with customers and the travel suppliers, a home office is more practical and cost effective," said Leanne Olmscheid, owner of an online travel agency franchise in Brevard County, All About Honeymoons and Travel.

"Our average customer is a first-marriage couple between 24- to 29-years-old, or 'Echo Boomers,'" Olmscheid said. "This Echo Boomer group does everything on the Internet. They communicate via email and like to multi-task to get things done so that doesn't take time to stop by to visit the travel agent."

Jason Breitfeller, owner of BreitIdeas, Inc., a business management consulting firm focused on providing expertise in Strategic Planning, Project Management, Small Business Consulting, and Proposal Preparation, has discovered that even for the

corporate executive world, there is no longer a need for the big office with a view.

"I work out of my house. However most of my implementation activities happen at the client's site," said the business leader who does 99.9 percent of his work via the Internet, email and Blackberry.

"My favorite thing about the wireless world is the fact that I can answer client questions in real-time via Blackberry email while climbing the Swiss Family Robinson Tree house at Disney World with my kids. The ability to multi-task family with work via Web-enabled tools really makes life much more fulfilling."

Professionals at all levels have heralded the 24-hour business world that blurs the lines between office and home by way of email and cell phones as both a blessing and a curse.

"Some people say that this

adds unneeded stress into what are supposed to be vacation or relaxing activities. However, my take on that is the fact that if I did not have access via Web-enabled tools, I would probably not participate in as many family activities," Breitfeller, a father of four- and six-year-old sons said.

Before opening his company a year and a half ago, Breitfeller ran the Research and Development group focused on homeland security for L-3 Communications in Orlando.

"I would leave the house at 5 a.m. and return at 9 or 10 p.m., six days a week," he said. "Today, I can go to school functions, play golf and do other fun stuff and not have to feel guilty about not being in a physical office working."

The freedom to work whenever and wherever, Breitfeller said, is due to the ability to maintain real-time contact with the

people via the tools of the Web. From corporate level management consulting to home design, the Internet has transformed the lives of entrepreneurs in ways unimaginable a generation ago.

"Our services are provided at the homeowner's location, so that is why it is so financially wonderful to have a Web site because it has allowed all sorts of businesses to start without the up-front costs of store fronts," Marek said.

"Your Web page boasts all about your skill levels and prices. It is your one stop choice, without having to call and wait for someone and then take notes about prices. Just print the Web page. It is truly a win-win situation."

"I once worked for a gentleman who always told us, 'None of us is as smart as all of us,'" Breitfeller said. "The Web amplifies the 'all of us' to include a global perspective." ■