

## Advantage to Building Databases Online

There are many reasons to think about building a database online. Knowing what the trade-offs are will make the decision even easier. If you are doing some comparative shopping, now's the time to take a closer look.

First of all, databases provide a vital service in filtering data, both existing data as well as data that come from users (often referred to as user-generated information). **Filtering reduces sheer volume** and contains for us what would otherwise be just one more source for information overload. As information providers, you'll need to ask, "Is this the sort of information that users will want to receive in this way versus available alternatives?" and "are there sufficient internal resources to maintain the service to justify the initial effort and expense?")

Next, databases are revolutionary to the degree that both to access them and to change content is **fast, easy and for many tasks, now greatly simplified**. For instance, there is the option to build "html on the fly." Users fill in forms and the cgi script sends this form data into your database and later the result of the query in the form of dynamically-generated web pages. What's not to like? This eliminates the need to hand code data changes and **frees the staff for other things**. Search capabilities also contribute to access speed, creating a more direct route to what you're seeking, e.g., mining a particular database for instance. And the platform independence of the internet makes databases accessible by anyone, anywhere. No kidding his saves time!

Databases, believe it or not, are also **creative**. How so? They can become **your product catalog** as easily as they can store and promote your company's top 100 great **story collections** or whatever company collections are deemed valuable when put in a form that interested clientele can make use of.

Databases can be **customized** in special ways. You can index your information to give users a customer-specific way to access information. You can integrate your database with your organization's home page. You can spin off **specialized databases or reports** depending on customer interest. You can offer **group access from remote sites**, or orient your

directory or service to single users, wherever the demand lies. You even get **a say in how the data displays—as pictures, pdf's, dynamically-generated charts**, etc. You can **send customized email** based on the data entered into a database form.

Databases are kind of like a product all by themselves. You can **track involvement**, helping you to keep in regular contact with those who support your business while letting customers know their input is valuable to the process.

Database usage is **resource-smart**. Using them makes it possible to make strategic use of existing materials, to **remotely access and update** pages through a password-protected gateway, easily answering customer queries without having to worry about finding that damn paper. The records of what customers really want are right there, well-defined since they fill out the forms themselves.

Conclusion? If you **build from the good** (you already have some worthy resources for sharing) **expect better** (expect to make databases responsive to particular audiences), **you'll make great!**