

# A Tale of Two Retailers

Michael Bloom looks at the difference technology can make to how you run your day-to-day business. The emphasis is on the practical; as well as the time and effort saved with the right approach.

## ALAN

**Alan is aware that business on the internet is growing at over 30% a year. Since he has already done all the hard work of sourcing and purchasing his stock, he decides that he wants part of that year-on-year growth. Why limit himself to just his local high street, why not open a second “shop” offering what he already has to a far wider audience?**

So Alan purchases a website to increase his turnover and profit. After a degree of to-ing and fro-ing the site is ready and Alan starts to enter his stock onto the site.

This however turns out to be easier said than done. Initially he thinks about stock taking all the shop but this would take too much time, and be out of date by the time he had entered it all; so he stock checks just ten products and enters these. But since most of these come in many sizes and many colours just one product may need 30 or 40 different entries. With so many variations per product it takes from 20 - 60 minutes to enter each product, but after a day's work all ten items are on the site.

Two weeks of head-down work later and he has over 100 products on the site. It all seems to have paid off when orders begin to trickle in via the web. Very soon however the stock availability he entered on his website is out of date and Alan has made web sales for product he no longer has. Numerous web clients are very unhappy when he calls to apologise; many clients are lost, probably forever. Money has to be refunded, this hurts. He immediately stops creating new web products and starts stock checking and then correcting the website.

A few days of work later Alan discovers that the more web products he enters the more work accumulates around stock checking and website revision of stock availability. Alan never manages to get more than 200 products onto the site, and whilst making some sales has alienated quite a few clients.

It's been loads of work and he doesn't dare think about starting all over again when the new season's stock arrives.



**David's web customer base starts to grow and a fair number return frequently as he is reliable and does not let them down. Not only that but his shop runs better because he's completely on top of his stock and sales position.**

## DAVID

**David is aware that business on the internet is growing at over 30% a year. Since he has already done all the hard work of sourcing and purchasing his stock, he decides that he wants part of that year-on-year growth. Why limit himself to just his local high street, why not open a second “shop” offering what he already has to a far wider audience?**

David realises that it's far harder to keep a website running than it is to initially build it. He decides that the first stage of his web project is to ensure he knows his stock availability at any one moment in time, so he sources and installs a specialist stock management system.

This makes it easy to track items by size and colour, and as it takes only a minute or two to enter each product (with all its sizes and colours) he very soon has a few hundred items in his system. He commissions his website and after a degree of to-ing and fro-ing the site is ready. It has been built to link with his stock management system.

By this stage, and with comparatively little effort, David has entered 500 - 1000 products onto his stock system. Some products are marked for inclusion on the website and others for exclusion from the website; some readily available products instruct the website to always show as “in stock”, even if they are not immediately on hand at the shop.

David calls his stock management company at 10am one day and tells them to activate the web link. By 10.30am the link is active and 750 products are available on the site - they are always correct. When the stock system registers a change it is immediately reflected on the web system, new items entered into the stock system appear on his website as if by magic.

David's web customer base starts to grow and a fair number return frequently as he is reliable and does not let them down. Not only that but his shop runs better because he's completely on top of his stock and sales position.

It's all routine stuff for David now. New stock will go onto his stock system as it arrives, and will automatically flow through to his website. As the new season begins he anticipates another increase in turnover and profit.

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