

## The Digital and Cultural Divide

### *Does a small business need a website?*

Paterson Community Technology Center ([CTC](#)) in conjunction with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development ([HUD](#)) is working with the local community to help small businesses bridge the digital divide in Paterson, New Jersey and “*help the silk city become the cyber city*”.

As we all know these are tough economic times, in 2007 the Small Business Association [reports](#) “*Two-thirds of new employer establishments survive at least two years, 44 percent survive at least four years, and 31 percent survive at least seven years.*” In 2009, times are even worse.



So with this high rate of failure, local Paterson business owners have two questions to ask: “Will a website help my business and how will it bring in local customers?” The fact is, even if you have been in business for seven or more years a website is a very valuable marketing tool in these financially unstable times. Why? Just look at a 2003 [report](#) by the U.S. Census Bureau which stated: “*The proportion of households with Internet access more than tripled between 1997 (the first year data were collected on this topic) and 2003—growing from 18 percent to 55 percent*”. Today, the amount is even higher due to a significant drop in computer prices and the high availability of broadband internet access. So with a computer in most homes, along with access to the internet, your business can be brought into these houses with just a few clicks.

You also know as a local business owner, Paterson is a mixed community with a growing Hispanic<sup>1</sup> population [reported](#) at 74,774 (over 50%) in 2000 by the federal government. You may think this community is not computer oriented, but it is! Marketing analyst company [e-Marketer](#) reported: “*in general, Hispanics are heavy users of all digital media...*” Lisa E. Phillips, senior analyst at e-Marketer [says](#): “*Hispanics embrace new technology more rapidly than non-Hispanic whites and share it very freely with friends and family*”.

<sup>1</sup> Hispanic is a term created by the U.S. federal government in the early 1970s in an attempt to provide a common denominator to a large, but diverse, population with connection to the Spanish language or culture from a Spanish-speaking country. The term *Latino* is increasingly gaining acceptance among Hispanics, and the term reflects the origin of the population in Latin America.

You may also think that having an ad in the phone book is enough. A phone book ad is a good start but, a recent WebVisible and Nielsen [study](#) stated “86% of those surveyed say they have used the Internet to find a local business, an increase from the 70% that responded affirmatively a year ago.” And why is that? Because the Internet is generally preferred over the yellow pages, because it is a faster and more up to date means of finding local businesses than using the phone book.

Let’s compare the two:

## Website vs. Yellow Pages

Yellow Pages cons:

- you are limited with ad size
- you cannot change your ad once it is printed
- you don’t know how many people looked at your ad
- your ad is surrounded by competitors
- your ad is limited to local areas



Website Pros:

- your whole website is an ad
- you can update and change it as needed
- reports can be made to see who and what pages were visited
- you can build new *local* business and get your competition's customers as well
- your website is not just local, but regional, and even global
- with proper design it will grow with your business
- you can have a search engine to help customers find specific items or services you provide
- you can purchase highly targeted, cost-effective ads related to your business such as Google Ads, etc.

So do you really need a website? Just ask yourself this question: “How many times do I really use the Yellow Pages?” Today, the internet is the Yellow Pages. As you see, most people have a computer or access to one and use it to search for local businesses so a website is a very valuable marketing tool to boost customer calls and travel to your “brick and mortar” business. Remember, you don’t need to sell online but you do need a website to let potential customers know your business is there!