

Seymour Street Newsagency

March 2003

Seymour Street Newsagency is a newsagency and Ticketmaster7 outlet and has the exclusive distributorship of newspapers in Traralgon.

The family business has been operated by the current owners since 1996. Seymour Street Newsagency has three full time employees, two casuals, four early morning staff, six drivers and 10 paper boys.

We talked to Darren Howe, managing director, at the newsagency in Seymour St, in the central business area of Traralgon in the Latrobe Valley of Gippsland, Victoria.

Who are your customers?

The general public. We are also the preferred supplier of books and stationery to most local schools.

Do you have an established customer base?

Yes.

Are you trying to attract new customers?

Yes.

Who are your competitors?

There is only one other similar outlet in Traralgon and we supply them with newspapers.

How do you use digital technology in your organisation?

We have five networked desktop computers on the newsagency system and two computers for public access to the Internet. We have also recently received another computer for our Ticketmaster7 outlet, and it is connected to the Ticketmaster7 head office by a direct Telstra line.

We use Microsoft Office. The main industry specific software we use is POS Solutions, a DOS program we run through Windows, but we do not use it for customer or financial accounts. We use QuickBooks for accounts and payroll.

We also use Exchangelt, an online newsagent distributor communication system which automatically manages all of our magazine stock. Exchangelt is a joint venture between the Australian newsagency federation and the three major magazine distributors in Australia. Magazine sales are taken straight off our tills and sent automatically to Exchangelt. Two or three days before all deliveries arrive, we receive the invoices online and can have the bar codes printed out ready for when the stock arrives.

Our drivers have mobiles. It is not a requirement we have made, but very useful nevertheless. We have an Omni telephone system and credit card and EFTPOS facilities.

We have had an ADSL broadband connection since mid 2002. Previously we had a dedicated telephone line for our Internet use. ADSL is much the same cost as our previous dial-up modem access but the ADSL service is much better. Each week we e-mail to our branch of the Bendigo Bank details of supplier payments and they batch pay them on our behalf. The bank also pays our wages as a free service

Do you use e-mail?

E-mail is used extensively in communicating with other newsagents. We do have some e-mail communication with customers and suppliers.

Do you use a regular e-mail newsletter?

No.

Case study courtesy of Digital Business Insights Pty Ltd

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Have you ever had problems with viruses?

Yes, all the time until we installed anti-virus software.

What measures do you take?

We use Norton Antivirus software.

How often do you back up your files?

Nightly.

Any other equipment?

We have a fax and a scanner available to our public Internet users and a digital camera for supplier competitions. We send digital images of special displays and get the chance to win a prize. We have four security cameras and a full glass breakage and security system with remote monitors and sensors.

Do you have a Web site?

Yes, since 2001

Do you have or are you connected to an Intranet?

No.

Do you use an Extranet?

Yes, Exchangelt and Officesmart. Officesmart is a new system currently in set up stage operated by our stationary and office supply wholesaler. They promote their products on their own Web site and customers order online through them. We check the Officesmart Extranet for any orders by customers in our locality and deliver the order to the local customers.

What is your Web site for?

The Web site has only two functional uses. It is the home page on our two public Internet access computers and allows customers to easily access common Web sites such as Yahoo and Excite. The registered domain name and hosted site allows us to secure permanent e-mail addresses.

Is this a development of your existing business or a new venture?

It was a new venture due to commencing the public Internet access.

Do you have an on-line audience?

No.

Do you host internally or externally

Externally.

Do you allow transactions on your site?

No.

Do you collect information with forms?

No.

How do you promote your site?

We don't.

Do you ask customers how to improve your site?

No.

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Do you have an existing customer database?

Yes, in Pos Solutions.

Does your Web site capture new customer information?

No.

How does your site generate revenue?

We charge customers \$3 for every 15 minutes of Internet access.

How many upgrades?

We are still on the original version.

What was your last digital project?

Our upgrade to ADSL broadband in mid 2002

Did you write a project plan before you started?

No.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

Four weeks.

Where did you go for advice?

I heard about it on the radio and talked to Telstra and our Web consultants CTC.

How did you know who to trust?

CTC is our established contractor.

Did you do the work yourself or use outside contractors?

Telstra installed broadband for us.

Were you happy with the work and help given?

Yes.

How much did it cost you?

It was insignificant.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

The new ADSL Internet connection required a firewall. Unfortunately the firewall clashes with our Extranet connection to Exchangelt. We are supposed to log into Exchangelt several times a day, but the only way we have been able to access Exchangelt since the installation of the firewall is by disconnecting shop front computers from the office computer and then logging into Exchangelt.

What advice would you give someone else?

I have already recommended ADSL to a few people.

What were the barriers within your business to your digital project?

None.

Did everyone in your business support the enterprise?

Yes.

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Do you know what technology is used in your company?

Yes.

Do you understand what it does?

Mostly.

Where can people find useful advice about the subject?

Local computer contractors. We mainly use CTC who were formerly Netspace.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

Ease of use, speed and reliability.

Are staff happy with what you have done?

Yes. Our staff are not very computer literate and prior to ADSL, they had to manually log in the public access machine for each customer. Because broadband is always connected, staff no longer have to do this task.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

Leave it to the experts as IT changes so quickly it is impossible to keep up with the latest developments. Don't put off purchasing computers and IT equipment as it will be required anyway. For example I delayed upgrading from an old 486 computer and as a result I missed out on using better software for two years. It is better to get new computers and equipment as soon as the need is recognised.

Given what you know... would you do it again?

Yes.

What are you planning to do next?

As soon as Pos Solutions finish developing their new Windows version of their software I want to be one of the first users. I want to develop our Web site in 2003 as we want local schools kids to be able to order their school text books and requirements online. We will want to be able to maintain the Web site ourselves. We may get our Web site from www.newsagent.org and will wait and see what they may have to offer.