

# How to make your web site profitable using ASP solutions

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## Introduction

This free eBook gives you the inside knowledge on how to benefit from the revolution that is reshaping e-commerce for all size businesses. It's called the ASP revolution.

Just as you have been renting access to the Internet for years, you can now rent access to leading edge infrastructure in virtually every key area of e-commerce.

Discover how easy and inexpensive it is for your business to use ASP solutions to help you generate web profits.

This eBook presents 27 ASP solution categories that form the basic building blocks of any profitable web business. Each ASP solution category is explained, giving you enough information to make an informed decision on whether to find out more or trial the solutions. Then, you will be directed to <http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html> where you will find an easy-use directory of the ASP solution providers.

The knowledge from this eBook is designed for web entrepreneurs, webmasters, marketing managers and owners of small to medium sized businesses. The eBook does not focus on enterprise level B2B ASP solutions, although some solution categories presented are relevant for all size businesses.

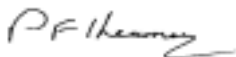
This eBook has been authored by Peter Kearney of [www.ecompublishing.com](http://www.ecompublishing.com). Peter is an experienced web entrepreneur, author, consultant and educator of e-commerce.

When you visit [www.ecompublishing.com](http://www.ecompublishing.com), join the 1000's who have become subscribers to eCom News. It's a free monthly email newsletter. In it you will find: expert tips on building and maintaining transactional web sites; the latest information on new ASP solutions and Internet marketing techniques and tips

At [www.ecompublishing.com](http://www.ecompublishing.com), you will also find a great range of eBooks you can download in seconds. These are designed to give you more in-depth coaching on how to profit from e-commerce. Two have been authored by Peter Kearney, "Customer focused web strategies" and "eTransactions explained".

Resale rights are not given on this eBook. You are welcome to hand it to your friends for free. To brand this eBook for your site users, email to [ebrand@ecompublishing.com](mailto:ebrand@ecompublishing.com)

Happy reading.



## What are the key features determining a profitable web site?

As you can see from the features listed below, profitable e-commerce requires a lot more than a good product or service. The features are not listed in order of importance. To have all these features is the ideal and no doubt some readers will come up with other features.

When you read through the next sections on ASP solutions and examine all the solutions at [www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html](http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html), you will discover that a significant number of the features shown below are addressed by the inherent advantages of using ASP solutions.

- Short lead-time in launching an e-commerce initiative.
- Minimize up-front capital costs before revenue generation, with infrastructure costs staged with business growth.
- Capacity to test your concept without prohibitively high up-front costs.
- Capacity to monitor progress of any concept used for e-commerce and fine tune.
- Maximum use of automation to reduce administrative time and cost.
- Use of personalised communication to increase visitor to customer conversion
- A good product or service.
- Reasonable margins on your product
- Reliable IT infrastructure and minimizing of the ongoing costs of maintaining it.
- Scalable IT infrastructure.
- Use of leading edge technology
- Available support and well trained staff
- Well designed web site that is easy to use
- Useful content on your web site.
- Effective transaction systems that make the buying process simple.
- Capacity to quickly build relationships with site users and. Use of low cost email and automated systems to manage.
- Continuous experimentation with perfecting online marketing methods.
- Maximum use of low cost and pay-on-performance marketing channels on the web
- Fast establishment of strategic online marketing relationships
- Fast and reliable product or service delivery
- Effective integration with your internal systems (if required)
- Systems in place recognising that security is a very important issue for your business, your customers and site users.

## What is an ASP solution?

The ASP (Application Service Provider) concept is simple—software applications supplied as a service. Customers have long been able to buy monthly access to the Internet and other services. The ASP owns the software license and rents access to the application to its customers for a monthly fee.

Before the Internet, this was impractical because there was no low-cost delivery mechanism enabling a software provider to leverage infrastructure to multiple users economically.

The software market has evolved dramatically over the last 20 years to one increasingly dominated by packaged applications. Despite the advantages of adopting packaged applications, many businesses have not been able to buy and install these products primarily due to their high cost.

This cost barrier has created the opportunity for ASP solutions to evolve, ie, rental access to "packaged applications". ASPs can also solve two other major friction points of IT:

1. The difficulty in recruiting and maintaining in-house IT human resources to install and maintain software;
2. The high cost of building and maintaining IT infrastructure necessary to support the application.

Many packaged applications have been transformed in the last few years to make them web ready. This revolution is growing at a rapid rate within the software industry.

This eBook deals mostly with purebreed ASP's. These are typically accessed via a Web browser. These ASPs generally have a limited service organization and provide most support functions online.

## What are the benefits of using ASP solutions?

- *Predictable costs and lower up-front investment.* ASPs typically price their offerings using monthly fees. Because of the lower up-front costs, companies can get into a more sophisticated software product than if purchased outright. The license cost and ongoing maintenance and connectivity costs are normally part of the monthly fee.
- *Faster time to market.* ASPs can generally deliver software to a client more rapidly than in-house resources or an external systems integrator. There are two reasons for this. One is the fact that ASPs typically do not provide a deep level of customization. The second reason is the ASP is putting the software on its own hardware, a configuration it is familiar with.
- *Turnkey solutions.* ASPs bundle software, hardware, and systems development, integration, and management into one offering.
- *Ability to scale rapidly.* The company can generally rely on high-end architecture built to scale, thereby achieving rapidly diminishing marginal costs.
- *Easier upgrade cycles.* ASPs do not typically perform a high level of software customization, upgrades to a customer's applications can be done more easily.
- *Minimize the IT human resource headache.* ASPs can leverage IT professionals across multiple clients. ASPs help to free up internal staff to work on more mission-critical processes and systems.
- *A viable solution to a mobile, distributed work force.* Firms are increasingly coping with a work force that is very distributed and often mobile. An ASP can allow a firm to provide employees with access to all relevant applications simply through a browser.
- *Improve focus on core competencies.* Most organizations spend a tremendous amount of time and money on IT systems, which are generally not its reason for existence or core competency. ASPs may or may not reduce the cost of IT, but they will allow for increased focus on a firm's core competencies.

## What are the risks of using ASP solutions?

- *The ASP solution is too generic for your business.* It does not fit with your business processes. Suggest having a close look at your business processes to improve them. Consider integrating the ASP solution with your business processes or looking for another ASP closer to your needs.
- *The Solution providers systems do not match their sale pitch.* Make sure you ask for reference sites before you sign up with an ASP. Don't sign any long contracts and view Service Level Agreements (SLA). Communicate your issues to the ASP, most are willing to continuously improve their systems. If you get no satisfaction move.
- *ASP support is not strong.* Communicate with your ASP, generally they are very willing to help. Have understanding of the SLA before you sign.
- *Your ASP is in another time zone* - This can become an issue if you need a lot of phone support, but a good ASP platform will have already anticipated this problem by providing online support documentation, low cost online chat and possibly 24/7 access. Make sure you are very clear on support issues when you sign up.
- *Security of your mission critical data* - This is always a risk in using systems outside of your business that you can control. The reality is that security is one of the most important issues for an ASP. Any security leaks mean the end of their business. Ask your ASP about their security procedures before you sign up.
- *Rental access charges add up over time* - Your business model must be revenue focused to support rental payments. If you don't meet your rental charges the service will be cut off.

Service is the name of the game in the world of ASP. The winners will be the ASP's with superior service. As a user, it's never been easier to jump ship to another supplier. ASP's beware.

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## Table of ASP solution categories

<b>Hosting and development</b> Chat solutions, Digital delivery systems, Email list hosting, Forum solutions, Site hosting, Online survey tools and Store program ASP	<b>Transactions</b> Affiliate sales processors, Accept cards with no merchant account, Merchant account acquirer, Multi currency payment provider, Offshore incorporation, Online check processing, Phone sales support and Recurring billing solutions,
<b>Online Marketing</b> Affiliate marketing, Budget eCRM, Classified advertising, Email list rental, Email marketing, Marketing monitoring, Online press release, Search engine marketing, Strategic linking and Viral Marketing	<b>Site Maintenance</b> Computer support, Search engine monitoring, Site Monitoring, Site maintenance,

Each of the solution categories are explained concisely in tables below giving the following:

- Description
- How does it help your site
- Integration issues with your site
- How to use
- Pricing models

The content in these tables has been designed to save you time. The tables are not meant to be exhaustive descriptions of each ASP solution category, however you will find they provide enough information for you to make an informed decision on whether you should find out more or trial the solutions.

Each table points to [www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html](http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html), which has an easy to use directory of ASP solution providers for each ASP solution category. I suggest that once you read and understand the ASP solution/s that suit your needs, go to the site and test them, many have low cost or free trial periods.

Other categories will be added in time to the web site directory. If you are a supplier of a quality ASP solution that helps web businesses to be profitable, please email to [asp@ecompublishing.com](mailto:asp@ecompublishing.com) and describe your service.

## Hosting and Development

<b>Hosting and Development</b> <i>Online Chat Solutions</i>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	A Chat Room is a common meeting place on the Internet where people can interact with each other. It enables a business to organize events or service customers with instant conversations, one-to-one or with a group of people. It also enables site visitors to begin talking (or chatting) with each other about common interests, issues or just to share ideas!
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	A Chat Room creates community and gives your site visitors a place they enjoy returning to again and again. It gives you the opportunity to learn what your customers are talking about. Returning visitors means more opportunities to generate revenue from your site.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Very fast to install on your site. Fully hosted, no downloads. You simply cut and paste a few lines of code onto your Web site so it looks like it's on your site.
<b>How to use</b>	An effective chat room for business purposes requires some form of moderation by a person. For customer response chat, you should aim for 24/7 response, if you expect your customers to come from other time zones. This can be outsourced. If not outsourced, recommend that to answer questions, advise chat users they can expect immediate response at certain times of the day only.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Free access may be available with external advertising and limited functionality and numbers of concurrent users. No external advertising, fully brandable to your business, extra functionality & concurrent users means you pay, usually on a low monthly basis, free set up common.

<b>Hosting and Development</b> <i>Digital product delivery</i>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Suitable for sites selling multiple digital products, ie software and information. Delivery system would normally be part of a modularised store program system.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Makes it fast and easy for customers to buy your digital products and protects your business from fraudulent downloads. Enables easy tracking of customers, via integration to your e-commerce and communication systems triggered by the sale.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Easy integration, if part of your store platform. Must be integrated with your shopping cart, real time payments system for credit card sales and download locations, which should be generated either dynamically by the system or for limited time frames, so the download location cannot be fraudulently re-used.
<b>How to use</b>	Easy to set up, all you do is load up your digital products and the system does the rest. Set up whilst building your store, using an integrated store platform.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Low or free set up with a low monthly charge for using or built into a feature package by store platform ASP.

<b>Development and Marketing</b> <i>Email list hosting and Email Marketing</i>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Enables building and managing of your own email lists collected from your site and other sources. These services host your email lists securely, provide the collection mechanism on your site to build profiled lists, the tools to send customised messages to your lists and tracking of messages to your lists.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Allows you to build one of your most valuable assets, your mailing list. Enables: easy distribution of online newsletters (a key tool for building relationships with site users), easy profiling of site visitors, automated distribution of email messages to profiled lists, monitoring of the success of email marketing activities to your own lists.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Very fast to install on your site. Fully hosted with no downloads. You simply cut and paste a few lines of code onto your Web site. Your existing lists can be easily uploaded.
<b>How to use</b>	All existing lists should be uploaded onto platform. Web site has mailing list sign up prompts in as many places as possible. Offer something to your site visitors in exchange for joining the mailing list. Educate your staff to gather and place email details for all contacts onto the platform. Create different lists representing important areas of your business, eg, customers, members, suppliers and staff.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Free monthly access and nil set up may be available for small lists. As list subscriber numbers go up, a monthly fee is charged based on a range of subscriber numbers.

<b>Hosting and Development</b> <i>- Web site hosting</i>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Large range of options with web site hosting packages. Fundamentally it provides your site with computer infrastructure, support and 24 hour high-speed access to the Internet.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Large cost savings in having your site hosted, compared to on your own web server. Fast time to market, web server already configured and waiting. Usually 24 hour monitoring. High speed access to the Internet. Easy and low cost hardware and bandwidth upgrades if your site is getting large traffic. High security levels.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Your new web host may only host your web pages. Other ASP solution providers may host your shopping cart, mailing list, eCRM, forum and other interactive features. Integration issues depend entirely on the options you take up with your web host. It is vital that you test your new site offline at the new location before redelegating your domain.
<b>How to use</b>	Set up is generally easy. Once you sign up, your site is uploaded onto the new web host server. When you have interactive components on your site involving hosted databases that link into your internal systems, planning work required ensuring compatibility.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Low set up and monthly fee. Some charge on downloads from your site.

Hosting and Development - <i>Discussion Forum Solutions</i>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	A discussion forum or message board is a common meeting place on the Internet where people can interact with each other. Forums are subject specific. The forum enables site users to ask questions to the business and to other site users. Messages are listed on the forum in categories and any person can reply by completing a form. It's free to post and reply to messages. A moderator is required to view messages before they are posted on the forum for public view.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Discussion forums are an excellent way to spark conversation on your site and archive feedback and discussions by your visitors. The forum creates community and gives your site visitors a place they enjoy returning to again and again. Returning visitors means more opportunities to generate revenue from your site.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Very fast to install on your site. Fully hosted, no downloads. You simply cut and paste a few lines of code onto your Web site.
<b>How to use</b>	Forums are fully customizable with colors, fonts and logos to easily blend into your current Web site design. It's vital that the forums have a person moderating them and the policy about appropriate postings is strictly maintained.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Free access available with external advertising. With no external advertising, fully brandable to your business, pay a low monthly fee, normally free set up.

Hosting and Development - <i>Online survey/web poll</i>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Completely outsourced tool that can be used to survey your customers and site visitors. Some solutions enable the poll to be included within an HTML email. Results of the poll are updated automatically and can be accessed via a web browser by the merchant.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Enables you to obtain fast feedback about your site, new product, service delivery or membership.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Very fast to install on your site. Fully hosted, no downloads. You simply cut and paste a few lines of code onto your Web site so it looks like its on your site
<b>How to use</b>	You create the survey and either promote it by email to your mailing list or have the form in an obvious location on your site. Offer some form of benefit to the person completing the survey.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Free access may be available with external advertising. No external advertising, fully brandable to your business and extra functionality means you pay, usually on a low monthly basis, free set up common.

<b>Hosting and Development Store program ASP</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Provides a fully hosted, outsourced e-commerce platform that may include some or all of the following: shopping cart, catalogue, secure shopping, autoresponders to manage customer and site users communication, advertisement tracking, freight integration, pop up window wizards for marketing, web site templates, mailing list management, customer database management, affiliate tracking, integration with real time payment gateways, upsell modes, supports coupon sales and multi currency presentation.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Fast time to market for your site. No need for expensive hardware or highly trained programmers. Platforms are generally maintained and upgraded regularly, so you get the benefits of updates and high levels of support. Access leading edge technology on a pay as you go basis
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Integration with your site depends on which options you take up. For example, with a shopping cart, integration involves little more than a link from your catalogue. For add tracking, all your promotions must flow through ASP provider server, this is a simple process.
<b>How to use</b>	You build your site on the platform or link to it from your existing web site. Platforms are usually modularised with very explicit instructions on how to build, making it fast and easy for site builders of any experience level. Once the platform is required to be integrated into your internal systems, programming assistance is required
<b>Pricing models</b>	Free access may be available for a limited amount of time or with limited functionality. A common pricing model is a monthly or quarterly payment with different versions of the access based on the level of functionality required.

## Online Marketing

<b>Online marketing - Affiliate marketing</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Affiliate marketing management can be carried out using software built into your ASP store platform. Effective management of an affiliate program involves marketing for affiliates, easy sign up procedures, online training, sales tracking (with complete integration into your e-commerce platform), reporting, collection and distribution of payments to affiliates. This can be quite a task with a lot of affiliates. A management alternative is to outsource all administrative functions to a third party network called an Affiliate Marketing Processor.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Allows your site to engage and effectively manage 1000's of sellers of your products or services around the web, who only get paid on results, ie when a sale occurs.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	To manage your program, your affiliate platform must be integrated into your store platform, so that orders and affiliates can be tracked. If you use an Affiliate processor, your shopping cart is linked to the Processor server, which is a simple process.
<b>How to use</b>	Once your affiliate marketing infrastructure is established, you market for affiliates, train them online, provide marketing materials to them, regularly communicate via email and then wait for sales. Your system will enable affiliates to track their sales results. It will also provide the merchant with tracking information to make payments and engage in selective support for more active affiliates.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Built into the store program platform you use which would be a monthly deal as an extra module. With an Affiliate processor, payment involves a small set up and a percentage of sales, maybe up to 20%.

<b>Online Marketing Budget eCRM and vCRM</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Electronic customer and visitor relationship management. Outsourced infrastructure handling one or more of the following: automated email messaging, call management, contact management, sales team support, lead and opportunity management and sales management.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Establishing a corporate memory by building an information asset Obtaining broader customer penetration by networking and tracking opportunities. Improving internal communications by connecting your sales team, reducing sales costs by putting information rich sales/marketing/service tools in sales peoples' hands and increasing revenue through better follow-up and tracking of business.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Fully hosted web based applications that you can access from your browser. Provides sophisticated backend functionality to automate many aspects of the online and offline sales process. For larger businesses that interact with customers and site users from many touch points, integration with internal system requires considerable programming
<b>How to use</b>	Existing customer contact information can be easily imported into the platform to begin with. All customer transactions and customer communications should then flow through the platform so that it will keep up to date.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Monthly subscription with a small or no set up cost. For more complex integration significant programming may be required.

<b>Online Marketing - Classified Advertising</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Infrastructure enabling easy identification of a large range of online and offline locations accepting classified advertisement and then automating the posting of classified advertisements to those sources. Many of these sources accept free advertisements.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	This low cost form of advertising was used effectively many years before the Internet arrived. It can generate traffic for your site and potential customers. The automated infrastructure saves a large amount of time on what can be a very time consuming process if done manually.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	No integration needed at all, completely outsourced. Essential that your web pages offer what you are promoting in classified advertisements.
<b>How to use</b>	Draft the advertisements and get help if you don't have experience with this. Then trial a number of advertisements and keep these rolling. In time, you will see the benefits. Best to track advertisements. This can be done use add tracking on your site. See "Marketing monitoring" services below.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Low annual subscription

<b>Online Marketing - Marketing monitoring</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	These services track the effectiveness of your advertisements. They also provide you with the tools to effectively organize and automate the management of your ad campaigns.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	By directly monitoring traffic and customer conversions as a result of advertisements, you can easily measure your ROI on advertisements. This knowledge enables you to trial marketing activities and then focus your efforts on the advertisements yielding the best results.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Totally outsourced. Unique tracking URL is generated for each site promotion. Simple linking of these URL's on your site via the service provider required. Further simple code is placed on your web site confirmation pages of transactions, enabling matching of sales to traffic by the service provider systems.
<b>How to use</b>	Every advertisement or marketing activity must be given a unique URL. This URL can have your own domain on it. The person clicking on the link in the advertisement appears to be taken directly to your site but they are, in fact, being taken through the marketing monitoring provider servers. Cookies and tracking codes on your confirmation pages enable analysis of traffic results from campaigns.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Low or free set up with a low monthly charge for using or built into a feature package by a service provider.

<b>Online Marketing - Email List rental</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Outsourced infrastructure for sending email messages to an opt-in targeted email list. Service provider acquires opt-in lists and sells you access to list. All you need is the message. They do the emailing.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	By emailing to targeted lists, you can generate traffic and potential customers. Using a highly qualified list can yield click throughs of between 5-15%. Much higher than 1% for a banner advertisement.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	No integration required other than having your web pages updated to reflect what you are selling in the email message.
<b>How to use</b>	Choose one or more lists and ensure they fit the service or product you are selling. If geographic location of the customer is important to the saleability of your product, then make sure the list is from your geographic area. Create a message and send it to the list vendor. Test a number of messages to part of the list before a big mail out.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Nil set up, list sold on a per email address basis with a minimum order to get started.

<b>Online Marketing - Online press release</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Outsourced infrastructure for sending media announcements to journalists of online and offline media outlets relating to any subject. The objective is to get a free story about your announcement. The service will usually provide a range of tools or knowledge to help you draft your media release. Journalist lists may be categorised into interest areas and geographic locations (if relevant).
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Generates low cost traffic for your site. If a big reader, viewer or listener media outlet displays your release, your potential for traffic is huge.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	No integration required other than having your web pages updated to reflect what you are promoting.
<b>How to use</b>	Since journalists are bombarded with releases each day, there are some fundamental ground rules you need to meet before a journalist will consider your release. These are discussed on the service provider sites. Create you release, choose the list and send.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Some news services have free releases to untargeted lists of media outlets. It's extremely unlikely this will have any value but you could be lucky. Its best to pay for a targeted list on a per announcement basis

Online Marketing - <i>Search engine marketing</i>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Outsourced service handling optimization of your web pages for search engine ranking and posting of optimized pages to multiple search engines and directories
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Using search engines effectively as part of your marketing armoury is vital. 85% of web users go to search engines to find products and services. Regular postings of optimized pages helps your site to get high rankings and this delivers low cost targeted traffic. Using automated systems can save you a lot of time.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Once you have been given advice on how to optimize your web pages for search engines, code must be placed on your web pages.
<b>How to use</b>	Establishing you're most relevant and effective key words and phrases is a vital part of preparing your pages for search engine optimization. Key words and site description are then placed in meta tags on your web pages. You can use automated software for the creation of the code for the metatags. Once completed, your pages are updated and then submitted via the automated search engine posting services.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Many submission services are free, but beware, many search engines ignore these. Paid submission services are generally low cost and paid on a monthly basis and are more recognised by search engines as they tend to individually tailor their submissions for each search engine. Optimization services can be automated for the initial assessment and this step is quite often free. Metatag code generators may be packaged into a submission service. Advice on redesign of your pages for optimization can also be a fee-based specialist consulting service.

Online Marketing - <i>Strategic Linking</i>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	This involves automating the process of managing the placement of these links in your web page template, regularly checking they are active links and ensuring link positioning is always on a reciprocal basis.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Generates free targeted traffic for your site.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Very fast to install on your site. Fully hosted, no downloads. You simply cut and paste a few lines of code onto your Web site so it looks like its on your site
<b>How to use</b>	You find the most relevant link sites that are not competitive but are visited by people who like what you have to offer. Links are placed into a form on the service provider site and hosted in your page template. Links can be categorised and automating checking is made regularly on active links and reciprocal positioning.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Low monthly subscription

<p>Online Marketing - <i>Viral marketing</i></p>	<p>See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers</p>
<p><b>Description</b></p>	<p>Encouragement of word of mouth promotion of your site (a viral recommendation) is one of the most powerful forms of marketing you can utilize on the web. Infrastructure needs to be established on your site to encourage viral marketing. This infrastructure automates the capacity for your site visitors to easily refer your site to their friends. This infrastructure can form part of an outsourced store platform.</p>
<p><b>How does it help your site?</b></p>	<p>Traffic from personal referral usually has potential for high conversion rate into customers. Traffic generation is low cost and this method leverages the relationships you have with people and has the capacity to generate large jumps in traffic very quickly .</p>
<p><b>Integration with your site</b></p>	<p>Integration is quite simple. Your site must have a form to collect names and an automated mailing function to send messages.</p>
<p><b>How to use</b></p>	<p>Use an outsourced service that hosts your forms (you can build them yourself but some store program ASP's include this as part of their package). Its best to have a free offer for the people you are asking to refer your site (referrers) and this could be triggered by submission of the form they send with their email contacts (referree's). Always collect first name and email address, no more. The platform then sends a message from the referrer to the referree's about your site. The referee's then make a decision to visit your site and buy your products or go on your mailing list. A word of warning about spam. Never use the email addresses of the referee's until they have voluntarily gone onto your list after visiting your site.</p>
<p><b>Pricing models</b></p>	<p>Part of low monthly access fee, if within a store program ASP package</p>

## Online Transactions

<b>Online Transactions - Merchant account establishment</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	A merchant account enables your web site to accept credit cards. To accept them in real time, you will also need connection to payment gateway. Merchant account acquirers help you to secure a merchant account for your business. They may also organise infrastructure for processing of real time transactions. In the USA, acquirers act as agents of many banks. In many countries of the world, you must go directly to a bank.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	It is essential to provide credit card acceptance on your web site for any direct sales site. Using a merchant account acquirer reduces the time taken to secure merchant accounts and helps you to get the best deal.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Once you get a merchant account for your business, your merchant ID is issued. If you intend to process real time transactions, integration is required between your shopping cart and the payment gateway.
<b>How to use</b>	Depending on your country of residence, make an application either through an agent or directly to the bank. Always best to be set up for real time transactions, which means you need a payment gateway supplier as well. Once your merchant account is issued, carry out the web site integration. Many store programs have multiple payment gateways already configured into their shopping cart, so setting up your merchant ID on your platform is usually easy. Sales proceeds usually transferred into to your bank account within 24 hours of the transaction
<b>Pricing models</b>	Low to free set up cost. Discount fee of 1.5%-5% on transactions. Monthly merchant account fee. Payment gateway fees can be a mixture of flat fee or % of transaction, plus a monthly management fee.

<b>Online Transactions - Multi currency provider</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Services enabling merchants to accept real time payments on their web sites (credit cards, debit cards and online checks) in up to 100 currencies. Some multi-currency solutions require residency in the country of issuing banks but others offer the transaction platform after a due diligence on the applicant only. Access to a payment gateway is included as part of the service and major providers have their gateways integrated into common web store platforms.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Enables your site to be truly global by offering multiple currencies. This can improve your sales conversion rate.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Payment gateway integrated with your store platform. Integration of multi-currency transactions with multi-lingual content.
<b>How to use</b>	Make an application online. This usually involves sending quite a bit of information on your business to the provider. Some providers require residency in the location of their issuing bank and others have no issue about residency, which is a big bonus for merchants wanting trade in multiple currencies. Proceeds from transaction are sent to merchant by cheque or bank transfer normally bi-monthly. Some providers enable merchants to have dynamic pricing on their site based on customer currency and exchange rate at the time of the transaction.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Set up cost, monthly fee and transaction charges are common. Some providers charge extra for additional currencies.

<b>Online Transactions - Accept cards with no merchant account</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Outsourced payment solution enabling a merchant to accept payments by credit card without having a merchant account. Many suppliers will make this service available for merchants selling digital goods only.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Having the capacity to accept payments on your site means you have a vital ingredient of e-commerce done. These services overcome the challenge of merchants in many countries of it being difficult to get a merchant account to trade over the Internet or difficult to trade in \$US (the predominant currency of the web) if you not a USA resident.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	If you are selling multiple products, the transaction clearing system must be integrated with your shopping cart. For individual products, your sales pages must be integrated with the transaction system. This is a usually a simple matter of placing code on your pages.
<b>How to use</b>	Signing up is easy with generally no validation checks. Next step requires you to put your merchant code on your sales pages or shopping cart. Then start selling products. The provider will bill your customer's cards. The provider will pay you by bank transfer or check. Payments can sometimes take up to one month to arrive and further stretched if you have foreign currency check to bank. Bank transfers are faster.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Low or free sign up. Then a transaction fee which is generally quite high (up to 15%, though there are exceptions with very low fees) compared to having your own merchant account. Some providers charge a small monthly administration fee. Some, but not all providers that have bank transfers, charge a bank transfer fee.

<b>Online Transactions - Offshore incorporation</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Service providers facilitating incorporation and management of your business outside of your home country.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Although these service providers are not true ASP solutions, using them can enable your business to access ASP solutions for online transactions and web site hosting that may not be available in your home country.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Integration issues exist from a technical perspective only if the service enables establishment of transaction and/or hosting facilities. A variety of complex management & taxation issues exist in effectively using offshore incorp services. These are not in the scope of this eBook.
<b>How to use</b>	Make application online and pay
<b>Pricing models</b>	Setup and monthly management cost.

<i>Online Transactions - Online check processing</i>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Enables merchants to process checks on their web sites. Customers fill out a check form on the site and the merchant prints this and banks it. Software application is usually part of a hosted payment service.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Gives another payment option to your visitors and may help some make the buying decision, especially if they don't have a credit card.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Normally part of payment processor service, no integration necessary, other than insuring the form is customised to your web site.
<b>How to use</b>	Generally, banking of electronic checks, ie ones that do not have a physical signature on them, is only acceptable for merchants with an USA bank account. However some payment solution providers package this into their outsourced service for international merchants
<b>Pricing models</b>	Low or free set up cost with a transaction charge up to 5%. For international merchants without USA bank account transaction charge may be up to 20%.

<i>Online Transactions - Recurring billing solutions</i>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Automated service from an Internet payment solution provider or store program ASP, enabling a merchant to bill a customer's credit card on a recurring basis. Commonly used for subscription services. Requires secure storage of the customer's credit card details for re-billing.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Using a recurring billing service provides another payment option, ie, a small monthly payment rather than one big payment, and may help your visitor to make the buy decision. Handling recurring billing manually is labour intensive. Automated services save a lot of time in management and are far more secure than manual systems.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	Your web store must be integrated with payment processor's or store program ASP systems. Must have real time payment gateway as part of your payment solution. If the recurring billing is a fixed amount, then minimal integration is required as the re-billing occurs on the processor's systems. If the recurring payment changes because it is dependent on what happens in the merchant's systems, then significant integration programming may be required.
<b>How to use</b>	Establish via arrangement with payment processor or store program ASP. Ensure your web pages clearly explain the recurring billing solution and emphasize that the customer's credit card details will be securely stored by a trusted third party. Give customer an easy way to terminate the billing.
<b>Pricing models</b>	For fixed recurring billings, there would be a small set up cost and a low monthly access fee to the platform. Each transaction would incur the normal transaction charge from payment processor. For changing recurring billings, programming costs for establishment would be required, then monthly access fees and transaction charges.

<p><b>Online Transactions - Phone sales support</b></p>	<p>See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers</p>
<p><b>Description</b></p>	<p>A totally outsourced service, where the Internet payment solution provider accepts phone orders on behalf of your business on a 24/7 basis. This type of phone support only covers answers to your site visitor's questions about how to pay before completing the transaction. It does not cover specific questions about your products. You may choose to outsource this function to a call centre.</p>
<p><b>How does it help your site?</b></p>	<p>Provides another payment option for your customers, making it easier to close a sale. Provides human support for the customer. Takes away the management responsibility of manning a phone on a 24/7 basis, particularly relevant for web businesses with a global customer base.</p>
<p><b>Integration with your site</b></p>	<p>Phone sales support people will have access to your payment screen over the web. Minimal integration required for this, however this is very much dependant on how complicated your sale process is and if you expect your phone support to handle product questions rather than simply questions about how the customer can pay.</p>
<p><b>How to use</b></p>	<p>Establish arrangements with Internet payment provider. Ensure your web site clearly demonstrates that you offer this service. Sales will most likely be by credit card, so the results of the transaction will then flow through the normal systems. If phone sales support must answer product questions, then you must provide online product information.</p>
<p><b>Pricing models</b></p>	<p>With phone sales support for transactions only, setup cost will be minimal and the provider will charge a high transaction fee, which may be up to 20%. Obviously it is in your interest to make it as easy as possible for your customers to pay by credit card direct and not use this service, but you will find some customers will feel more comfortable with phone. For outsourced phone product support, set up costs may be significant dependant on the quality of your online product material. High transaction charges will apply.</p>

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## Site Maintenance

<b>Site Maintenance - Computer support</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	24/7 online help services for a large range of software programs and computer hardware platforms. Help access via online chat facility and email. Remote diagnostic services also available. Ideal for any sized business, but particularly small business.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Software and hardware problems create downtime. Hiring consultants to troubleshoot at your business can be expensive. These services can save you time and money and being web based with 24/7 usability, they can be accessed from any time zone.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	No integration required
<b>How to use</b>	Join as a member. Send your questions via chat or email. Service can also be applied on a remote diagnostic basis where service provider logs into your systems
<b>Pricing models</b>	Free trial periods then a low monthly subscription for web based help. Phone support available at extra cost.

<b>Site Maintenance - Search engine monitoring</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Automated monitoring of your ranking on designated search engines. Monitoring services often packaged with other automated services such as key word and meta tag generators and auto URL submission.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Provides you with the knowledge of your search engine positioning. With knowledge you can act to improve your ranking.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	No integration required
<b>How to use</b>	Enter your URL's into the ASP service. It will then do the checking and produce a report for you. With that knowledge you can take action to improve your positioning with a variety of automated tools.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Low yearly fee.

<b>Site Maintenance - Site monitoring</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Monitors up time of your web site by regularly checking your web server. Checks may be done as often as every 15 minutes with reports sent to site owners by email and pagers so that immediate action can be taken
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	Down time on your site will cause you to loose customers. These services provide you with the confidence of knowing when your web site is up and if it is not, then a course of action can be taken quickly. Keeps your web host honest.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	No integration required
<b>How to use</b>	Simply provide your web host server details and the ASP does the rest.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Some services are free that check weekly. A increasing monthly fee charged where checking frequency reaches daily, hourly and in minutes

<b>Site Maintenance - Site tools</b>	See <a href="http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html">www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html</a> for suppliers
<b>Description</b>	Totally outsourced with some or all of the following services: find errors in your HTML code, incorrect spelling, bad links, check browser compatibility and check page load. Once errors are found, a report is produced as well as repair of your pages on a copy of your pages. This can then be uploaded to your site.
<b>How does it help your site?</b>	A web site without errors gives your visitor a feeling of confidence and belief in your professionalism. This adds another important brick in the wall of getting them to become your customer.
<b>Integration with your site</b>	The system uses robot software to check your site, if your web page is set up to exclude all robots, make sure you enable it for these services. No other integration issues.
<b>How to use</b>	After signing up, give the service your URL. You can get all your pages checked or only some. The ASP system does the checking within minutes and produces a report with your with repaired pages. As a regular maintenance procedure you may choose to run all your new pages through this service.
<b>Pricing models</b>	Pay a low yearly subscription for one URL with certain numbers of web pages on the site, say 100. For more pages the yearly fee goes up.

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## Conclusion

If you have made it this far, you will have learnt a lot about the ASP revolution. It's part of the ever changing face of e-commerce, that keeps many web entrepreneurs up at night.

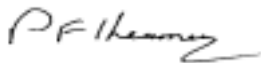
As one of my wisest teachers has said many times " Don't *try* to do anything, do it."

To access a large directory of ASP solutions, go to [www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html](http://www.ecompublishing.com/esolutions.html)  
To keep updated on the changing world of ASP solutions and how to operate transaction based web sites, subscribe to eCom News at [www.ecompublishing.com](http://www.ecompublishing.com)

Visit [www.ecompublishing.com](http://www.ecompublishing.com) and you will find a great range of eBooks you can download in seconds. Two of the books have been written by myself. They are; "Customer focused web strategies" and "eTransactions explained". My biography is shown on the [ecompublishing.com](http://ecompublishing.com) web site. To contact me directly, email [pfk@ecompublishing.com](mailto:pfk@ecompublishing.com)

Thank you and good luck in your e-commerce endeavours.

Regards



Peter Kearney

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