

What is the Internet & Email & How Can it Help Me?

The Internet is the name given to the large network of computers worldwide that provides information to computer users all around the world.

Email is electronic mail. Put simply email, unlike traditional mail delivered by the postman (now nicknamed snail mail!), is sent from your computer and is received by the recipient within seconds. .

In the days of environmental awareness e-mail and the internet have been embraced by organisations globally for the many benefits it brings including:

- reduced paper usage
- electronic record keeping
- automation of processes
- responsiveness to consumer needs
- efficiency in delivery of information

Getting access to email can be overwhelming for new users, however there are many cost effective ways to connect to the Internet and send emails. Here are some ideas of where to go or what to do depending on your knowledge and skill level:

1. If you have never used the internet before, it is worthwhile gathering an understanding of what it does and what it can do for you. The best places to start are your local library or bookshop for books on the Internet, or call your local Council or Learning centre to find out if they run courses. Such courses can often be quite cheap and in some cases free of charge. I would certainly suggest this before you go any further, otherwise it is like getting into a car but not knowing how to drive!
2. If you don't have a computer but want to send emails, try visiting your local library. These days they all have at least a few computers with internet access. Like the local council, they often run training sessions that have a small or no charge.
3. If you already have a computer with internet access you can create an email address for yourself. Many computer websites such as <http://www.yahoo.com.au> have free email accounts.

So now you have a bit of an idea of what email and the internet is, I hear you asking, how can it help me?

For small business owners, the Internet is a great tool for:

- Gathering information on new products, services or happenings in your industry
- Listing your details for potential customers – these days, many people search the internet for information on local organisations or tradespeople that meet their needs. Like the local yellow pages, the internet is fast becoming a tool to find local goods and services.
- Selling your products or services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, via your own web site.

Email is great for small business because:

- You can send information to people day or night and it is immediately delivered – you can never miss the electronic mail man....
- Allows you to keep a record of email quotations sent and with appropriate software diarise reminders to follow up.
- Shows that you are a progressive business that is in touch with the way business is changing.

Donna Hanson specialises in computer and technology related education for home, business and corporate computer users. Her company Prime Solutions Training & Consulting provides customised computer training solutions and resources to assist in helping users understand and increase their knowledge of computer related technology.

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