

## The Web App Advantage

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*Have you ever heard the term “web app” and wondered what that entails? In this article, I’ll tell you all about web apps and, more importantly, how web apps can benefit you and your business.*

In the most general terms, a web application, or “web app” for short, is an application that’s used on the World Wide Web. Web apps are much like the applications on your computer’s hard drive and many of them perform similar functions. For example, Google bills its Docs web app (docs.google.com) as a “web based word processor and spreadsheet.” Want to type a letter or balance your checkbook? Simply open your favorite web browser, head to the appropriate website, and you’ve got all the tools you need to do the job right on the internet.

So, now that you know what a web app is, you probably have a few questions. To be honest, when I first learned about this technology, my first question was “why would I want to use a word processor on a website?” After all, I’ve got a perfectly good, in fact a *much better*, word processor on my own computer. Or, what if I don’t have internet access, then what? And the list goes on...

About now, you might be saying to yourself, “but I thought this article was about the *advantages* of web-apps!” Truth be told, I’m not a huge fan of web apps of the type that I’ve just described. While there are developments on the horizon that will likely address some of the concerns that many people, including myself, have with the current crop of web apps, they just don’t make sense for most users. However, there is another type of web app that *does* make sense, especially if you’re a business owner—and that’s the type of web app that I’m going to be discussing in this article.

For starters, let’s assume that your business has a website—that’s probably a safe assumption for most businesses today. I’m even going to assume that you’ve taken the time to put together some great content for your site (if not, you may want to read this article). Still, your website just isn’t bringing in customers the way you think it should. Perhaps your site is suffering the same fate as many small business websites—it simply doesn’t give your prospective customers the type of experience that they want.

For example, when a customer calls your business, do you (or your sales people) simply read off a list of the benefits of your products and/or services along with a list of the associated prices? Of course not!<sup>1</sup> Instead, you (or your sales people) probably try

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<sup>1</sup> I really should say, “I *hope* not.” I have heard some *very* poor telemarketing sales pitches that do exactly what I mentioned.

to determine what the prospective customers is looking for and then tailor the sales pitch on that basis. Unfortunately, many websites essentially follow the earlier approach.

If you expect your website to generate quality leads and/or sales, your website needs to provide prospective customers with relevant information in an contextual, easy-to-use format. Remember, most people have relatively short attention spans. If you make your visitors pour through mountains of text or fill out long forms with information that doesn't apply to their situation, there's a good chance that your prospects will simply look elsewhere.

Unfortunately, if you're running a small business, you probably don't have a dedicated person, much less an entire staff of people, in charge of designing and maintaining your website. So, how do you provide your customers with easy access to the information information that they want from your website? That's where web apps come in.

Take Siteomite.com's InstantQuote as an example. Just by adding a few lines of code to your existing website, you can provide your potential customers with real-time, detailed price and availability quotes for your event-based services. There's no complicated configuration or installation of scripts on your webserver, no need to make sure that your web host supports certain specialized technologies, and no development cost. With Siteomite.com's InstantQuote, you can integrate a flexible, robust, and polished set of tools into your website in just minutes.

Beyond the aforementioned advantages, many web apps also often provide a maintenance-free solution for your website. Since web apps can live on a separate server, updates are often completely automatic and require no assistance from you. Now that's a time saver!

Ultimately, web apps can be a great way to add professional, and more importantly useful, functionality to your existing website without the time and effort associated with doing it in-house. If you're a small business owner who is always pressed for time, a web app just might be the perfect way to improve your online presence without sacrificing valuable energy that could be devoted to other aspects of your business.