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The World without the World Wide Web: Business

Over 20 years ago, the use of the computer networking then known as the ARPAnet was purely for US military and academic institutions only. In fact, the National Science Foundation's appropriate use policy forbids businesses to use it for their own. The original idea was that, ARPAnet must be utilized anonymously – completely hidden from the public eye. Another premise is that it's supposed to be an indestructible computer communications network – if one of the computers were to be disconnected, the whole network will not collapse and communications would be preserved (Cockburn & Wilson, 1995).

During ARPAnets' growth, similar networks are being developed in a more business-oriented direction. Still, these networks do not have access to the ARPAnet. There's also an argument stating that in order to be fully anonymous, that is, in order to be hidden from the public, you must blend in with the public. And so the NSFnet (One of the two divisions of the ARPAnet, the other one being the Milnet) and these commercial networks finally merged to form what we now know as the Internet. According to Tetzeli (1994), 60% of the 25,000 networks connected to the Internet is being run by businesses and is the main reason why the Internet is rapidly growing.

The World Wide Web (WWW) is a sub-network from the Internet created at CERN. It's built upon the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), and uses the Hypertext Mark-up Language to create webpages easily navigated through links (Cortese, 1995). These webpages are what businesses use today in order to connect not only to its customers, but also its employees and associates.

Today, it's undeniable that most businesses heavily depends on the Internet, most particularly the WWW. This paper will discuss the state of the business sector without the WWW.

The Business Sector before the WWW

Businesses before the conception of the WWW heavily relies on other mediums to connect to people. Advertisements were put up on the television, radio and newspaper. Special promotions or announcements aren't disseminated quickly and often to only a small fraction of their customers. Smaller businesses heavily rely on their local customers in order to survive. In order to get more customers, they need their existing customers to refer others to their business. Customers on the other hand, have to go to a mall or a store hoping that what they're currently looking for is there in order to purchase anything.

The Impact of the WWW to the Business Sector

Thousands and thousands of business websites are being put up on the Internet. Across multiple sources that we've gathered, these are the most common uses of the Internet and the WWW to the business sector:

- **Publicity, Marketing and Advertising** – Putting up businesses on the Internet undoubtedly allows access to millions If not billions of customers from all over the world.
- **Online Selling (e-commerce)** – Companies such as Amazon offer a new and possibly revolutionary method of purchasing goods and services. These websites allow customers to use their credit card credentials for their transactions. Some companies such as eBay and OLX even offer customers to put up some of their own valuables for sale.

- **Communication** – Communications between owners, employees, customers and associates have become way more inexpensive and accessible through WWW services such as electronic mails (e-mails) and instant messaging.

In their research discussing the business use of the WWW, Cockburn and Wilson (1995) states that businesses primarily use the WWW and its services as tool for displaying information about the business as well as information about their goods and services. However, most of these businesses do not allow direct selling of their products (only 11.7% of the respondents engage in e-commerce). This is due to the fact that during the time of their research, the Internet, is still in its embryonic stage and the thought of sending valuable credentials (i.e. credit card information) is considered risky. Nonetheless, this security threat did not stop businesses from all over the world to put up theirs on the Internet.

The research also states that just about 30% of the companies they studied saw significant changes to their turnovers. The others are in an even distribution of either having no noticeable difference or unsure whether their website made any difference, stating that it's still too early to tell.

Without the World Wide Web

After careful analysis of the materials we've gathered, we propose two distinct possible outcomes to what would happen to the business sector without the influence of the WWW, depending on our assumptions. These assumptions vary whether the WWW was never conceived, that is the ARPAnet never divided and remained to be the domain of the US military and academic organizations, or the Internet (including the WWW) collapses due to a global-scale attack or in a more realistic setting, certain authorities declared ban of utilizing the Internet for commercial purposes.

Assuming that the WWW was never conceived, things will still be the same. Marketing and advertisements would still be the television. The scope of their customers will remain local. Acquiring more customers requires customers referring others to their businesses. And of course, we the consumers will have to be physically in a store in order to purchase goods and services.

If however the ARPAnet actually became our very own Internet, and an event triggered it to disappear, things would be pretty violent. In the event of an attack, a hysteria among all people will surely ensue. Stock markets will go low, Businesses that are heavily dependent on the Internet will lose millions if not thousands of revenue, and credit card credentials of people is at high risk of being compromised. If the authorities banned the use of Internet, it would be pretty much the same. Protests being held everywhere demanding their rights and other similar matter. After sometime, businesses will slowly revert back to the traditional ways. Going back to televisions to advertise their products and services.

In conclusion, the Internet and the WWW is a vital tool for the business sector. A lot of businesses are eager to be a part of this global scale of networks. Gone were the days when businesses open storefronts, put advertisements on TVs, radios and newspapers, and rely on local customers in order to survive. It has come to the point where businesses are heavily dependent on the Internet that disabling it will result in a disaster.

References

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