

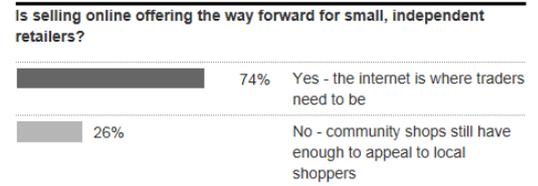
Levelling the playing field

Small local businesses have various competitive advantages over their distant larger cousins; whether through providing a more personal service, being a niche player with unique products or having specialist skills and knowledge or perhaps just being the best.

However, when it comes to creating an effective and engaging online experience, the challenges of budget, knowledge and skill often prevents small businesses from competing online in this digital age.

Online is crucial

This is a critical issue for most businesses, with today's tech savvy customers fully expecting to be able to, not just research products and services via the internet, but continue that online experience to its logical conclusion; **the purchase**. Respondents to a survey carried out by The Guardian in September this year confirm this view.



Daily Computer Use (%)				
Age Group	2006	2012	% Change	
16-24	63	82	↑	30%
25-44	62	83	↑	34%
45-54	56	71	↑	27%
55-64	36	63	↑	75%

Source - ONS August 2012

Add to this the increasing **number of online users** in Britain and we can see just how important having a competitive online offering is to today's consumers, with the majority of today's adult (16+) population using the internet as an integral part of their daily routine.

If your business is unable to offer a high quality end to end experience via the internet, it's fair to assume you will be missing out on a significant opportunity.

The Shopping Cart

If your business fits the retail model of products and goods that can be put in a '*shopping basket*' then you are already well catered for, with a number of e-commerce platforms with localised providers such as *shopiom.co*. Choosing to operate under such e-commerce umbrella platforms makes perfect sense for small businesses, as it allows the costs of software, infrastructure and secure payment services etc. to be shared.

There's always a But!

However, there are a significant number of businesses where the '*shopping basket*' e-commerce model just doesn't fit. These businesses are generally those that offer for sale their **time, skills and services**; whether that is a beautician, driving instructor, electrician, gardener, hairdresser, maths tutor, painter & decorator or anyone else who fits the mould.

All these types of businesses need the opportunity to offer their customers the flexibility and choice they now expect in this digital age. Online shopping, hotel, flight and restaurant booking is now part and parcel of everyday life for millions of people, and research tells us that the public expects to complete more and more of their day to day activities via the internet across a wide range of business sectors, as shown by the examples:



33% - Entertainers



30% - House Viewing / Valuation



29% - Employment Agency Interview



28% - Hair & Beauty Appointments

Source - MiQuando Online Booking Surveys (Aug/Sep 2012)

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Let's recap on what we now know?

- There are literally **millions** of prospective customers using the internet every day
- These **potential customers** want to do as much as possible online
- The days of offering just a static web site with a bit of information and contact details are long gone
- Businesses need to offer a full end to end online service to meet consumer expectations

This graphic shows us the UK's peak internet usage times. So now we also know that most people are online when nearly all small businesses are closed! If you want to capture this business then you really only have a couple of options:

Peak internet usage is late afternoon into the evening

Monday to Friday	7pm to 11pm
Saturday	4pm to 8pm
Sunday	4pm to 10pm



1. Stay open and work much longer hours
2. Get your business **working for you** online

Option 1 is not really an option, as the costs both financially and personally are simply too much to bear. So that leaves option 2 as the only real viable alternative.

Fortunately for you, the team at MiQuando.com has worked tirelessly over the last two years to come up with a solution and create an umbrella platform that is designed to cater specifically for businesses that provide their **time**, **skills** and **services** as their 'products'.

MiQuando.com helps to level the playing field by helping these small businesses offer a full end to end online service to their customers through a simple low cost online booking service. By using our simple, integrated **online booking** facility, your customers can book appointments via the internet 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Imagine the scenario where a prospective customer conducts a keyword search online using the MiQuando directory and is returned a list of businesses. In that list of businesses there are some (yours) that offers a full **online appointment booking service**. Will that customer wait until tomorrow and call, send you an email and wait for a response or simply go and choose the service they are looking for and **book online** right there and then?

The business opportunities are right there; people booking their **Hair and Beauty** appointments, their **Driving Lesson**, an **Electrician or Painter & Decorator** to price a job, extra help for the kids with **Maths Tuition**, an appointment for the **Heating Engineer** to service the boiler, a discreet appointment for an interview with **the employment agency**, a convenient time with the **Estate Agent** to view that new house and so on.

All of this can be done from the comfort of their own home, during the evenings or weekends providing the online experience people now expect without the need for you or your staff to **work longer or harder**. During working hours when you're **busy doing what you do best**, you might not be available to answer phone calls. Using MiQuando, your customers can simply go online and book an appointment with you saving you valuable time and effort.

The service is very flexible and you can easily set it up to fit in with **how you work** or want to work. Choose to manually accept/confirm appointments or let MiQuando manage them for you. Making a new appointment, rescheduling or cancelling existing appointments, is **quick and easy**, with a familiar 'look & feel'.

It's **100% Free** to use yourself and **just £1** per online customer booking. So what are you waiting for, get started today at www.miquando.com or for further details contact our customer service team via email (mail@miquando.com) or call us on 0845 564 0000 (local call) to get an **online competitive advantage**.