

If you want to know more about web portals, here's the perfect place to start your search.

Web portals are 'hub websites' that provides links out to information and related businesses. They are often industry-based or location-based and are a great starting point when you are searching for specific information. There are hubs for tourism destinations, industry-specific services, government information and more.

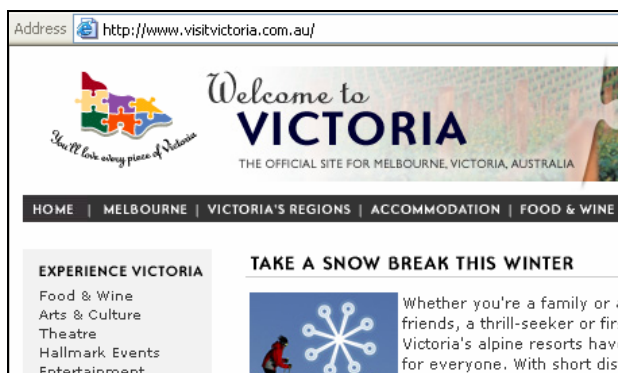
Benefits of using web portals

The benefits of being registered on and linked to a web portal include low-cost advertising to a larger group of visitors to the site. Due to the number of businesses linked to the web portal, there are also new opportunities to collaborate and share information.

- The hub generates customer traffic due to the number of businesses onboard, making it a one-stop shop. Some web portals are free to join. Others charge you to advertise or participate.

Basic Web Hubs

- Basic web hubs are purely entry points to information on one subject area. Related businesses join together so that visitors can easily locate information about them. For example, the tourism hub for Victoria, www.visitvictoria.com.au, contains details on all sorts of accommodation, attractions, events, maps and weather. There is often an annual membership fee to display your details on these websites.



- Depending on the nature of your product or service, it may be worthwhile to become part of an industry-specific web portal where customers looking for a specific product or service could look at a variety of suppliers.

The following are examples of basic web portals:

- www.visitvictoria.com.au — the tourism hub for Victoria
- www.ballarat.com — Ballarat regional portal
- www.promacom.com.au — an accommodation and tourism portal for South Gippsland
- www.ausfish.com.au — portal for all fishing enthusiasts, with links to other websites
- www.giveanaussieago.com.au — portal for small businesses to showcase their services
- www.e-wimmera.com — government-sponsored gateway to information and businesses of the Wimmera.

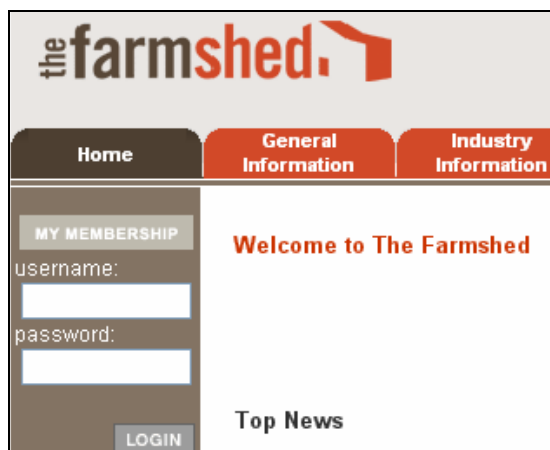


Sophisticated Web Portals

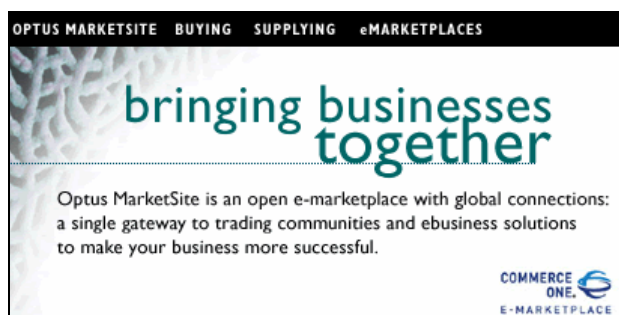
- Sophisticated versions of web portals can include large-scale systems and supply-chain integration and commitment, or operate as collaborative buying groups over the World Wide Web. The level of commitment that is required to become a member depends on the website.
- Membership of a sophisticated web portal can bring great advantages, but requires careful consideration, as there are pros and cons to being a small fish in a larger network. You may gain group bargaining power with suppliers and reduced supply costs, but you may also lose the benefits of one-on-one supplier relationships.

The following are examples of sophisticated web portals:

- www.farmshed.com.au — portal for the Australian farming industry



- www.optusmarketsite.com — gateway to global trading communities and e-business solutions
- www.asiademand.com — global trade and supply chain management portal allowing partners to interact, exchange information, and transact.



Joining A Web Portal

Consider joining a local web hub that supports local businesses. These are becoming especially popular in remote areas to advertise services available in each community. As well as displaying your details, you can also provide links to your website and email. Charges may apply.

Handy Hint

Choose carefully, as there are many web portals and you need to determine which will be used by your potential customer groups. Ask your suppliers and industry associations which web portals they are linked to. Ask your customers which ones they have heard of or already use!

Where to Get More Information

- Contact your local community centre, council, Victorian Business Centre, industry association and related businesses to see which web portals they are using.
- Search the Internet for web portals in your field of business or geographical area.
- Look at competitor websites and see if they include links to web portals.

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