

Web sites ease way for entrepreneurs

What ever did we do before the Internet?

As an entrepreneur, I turn to the Internet every day. I research products, find information, purchase goods and services, hire employees and contractors, book travel, arrange shipping and on and on.

For my New Year's gift to you, I've compiled a list of Web sites to help you build and run your business during the coming year.



RHONDA ABRAMS

Small Businesses

Market and industry research

www.census.gov, U.S. Census Bureau
www.factfinder.census.gov, American FactFinder
www.census.gov/epcd/cbp/view/cbpview.html, County Business Patterns
http://censtats.census.gov, CenStats

The Census Bureau collects in-depth data about all aspects of American life. Want to find the percentage of college graduates in Indianapolis or the number of dry cleaners in a Phoenix ZIP code? The census bureau has this information, and it's free and easy to use. "County Business Patterns" is particularly useful for information about businesses. American FactFinder has information

about demographics. **www.ersys.com**, Synergos Technologies

If you're thinking about doing business in a certain location, or just going on a business trip, you'll find this Web site a quick and easy way to find information about that city. This site is run by a private company specializing in site selection for large companies.

www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook, Central Intelligence Agency
The CIA is the spy agency of the United States, but you can use some of its intelligence for free if you're doing business internationally. Their online "World Factbook" provides easy-to-use info about countries worldwide. (And it's great for your kid's school reports, too.)

www.loc.gov/rr/news/stategov/stategov.html, Library of Congress
www.statelocalgov.net, State and Local Government on the Net

Need to know what state laws apply to your business? Find a link to your state and local governments at these Web sites.

www.planningshop.com/associations, industry association links

I think trade associations are an amazing source of information, data and advice for entrepreneurs. Since I couldn't find an easy-to-use list

of associations on the Web, I compiled one myself and put it on my Web site.

Finances

www.irs.gov, Internal Revenue Service

You might not like hearing from the IRS, but their Web site has a wealth of tax-related information and downloadable forms.

www.annualcreditreport.com, Annual Credit Report

A new federal law entitles you to one free credit report annually from each of the three major credit-reporting agencies. This is the authorized, legitimate Web site for these free reports.

www.angelcapitalassociation.org, Angel Capital Association

Looking for an investor? Angels are individuals who provide funding to entrepreneurs. Check this Web site for a directory of angel capital groups — perhaps you'll find one in your area.

Travel

www.seatguru.com, Seat guru.com

Discover that seat 15D doesn't recline or that 33G is usually cold. Check the advantages and disadvantages of individual seats on most airlines at this indispensable site for frequent flyers.

www.mapquest.com

Mapquest

http://maps.google.com, Google maps

Before you hop in your car, get driving directions from one of these two sites.

Technology

http://reviews.cnet.com, CNET

www.pcmag.com/reviews, PC Magazine

www.pcworld.com/reviews, PC World

www.consumerreports.org, Consumer Reports

Before you invest in that new computer or flat-panel monitor, check reviews at one of these sites. Consumer Reports charges a small fee for many reviews.

www.download.com, Download.com

Get freeware, shareware and trial versions of popular software at this Web site run by CNET.

Shipping

www.usps.gov, United States Postal Service

www.fedex.com, FedEx
www.ups.com, UPS

We prepare all our shipping online. It's much faster and makes tracking packages easier. You can calculate cost, look up ZIP codes, find state abbreviations and arrange for pickups.

Contact Rhonda Abrams at www.PlanningShop.com.

Report: Children no safer in SUVs than in cars

Sport utility vehicles weigh more but also roll over more often

By JAN DENNIS
The Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Children are no safer riding in sport utility vehicles than in passenger cars, largely because the doubled risk of rollovers in SUVs cancels out the safety advantages of their greater size

"We're not saying they're worse or that they're terrible vehicles. We're challenging the conventional wisdom that everyone assumed they were better," said Dr. Dennis Durbin, a pediatric emergency physician who took part in the study, published today in the journal Pediatrics.

Eron Shostek, a spokesman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, said he had not seen the study but cited government research released last summer that found SUVs have

called the first about SUVs and child safety, was sponsored by Partners for Child Passenger Safety, a research project of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and the world's largest insurer, State Farm Insurance.

The researchers looked at accidents involving nearly 4,000 children under age 16 between 2000 and 2003 and found child injury rates of about 1.7 percent in both cars and SUVs. The study examined only 1998 or newer cars and SUVs with second-generation air bags

twice as likely as cars to roll over in crashes.

Children in rollovers were three times more likely to be seriously injured than those in non-rollover accidents, according to the study.

The findings surprised researchers, who assumed heavier SUVs were safer than cars when they launched the study a year ago, Durbin said.

SUV safety will probably improve because of legislation approved by Congress this year that requires the NHTSA