

E-SOLUTIONS AWARDS

Paintain Tools Ltd, shortlisted West Midlands region:

An engineers' tools merchant based in Birmingham.

The brief: To protect its position as an intermediary between engineering companies and tools manufacturers.

Visitors to the **Paintain Tools Ltd** web site are greeted with a mild in-joke: '42 years without a website!' reads the slogan. In fact, the way things are going, the company will soon have more websites than staff (at the moment, it employs just nine people total).

Joint managing director **Robert Paintain** realised quickly that, for a distributor to engineering firms, the internet has as much potential to be a deadly enemy as a powerful ally.

Big manufacturers and importers like Draper have caught on to the fact that, via the web, they can sell directly to end-users, which could threaten the position of once-indispensable middlemen such as **Paintain Tools Ltd**.

Through creative use of web marketing, **Paintain Tools Ltd** is attempting to secure & enhance his company's position as an intermediary, albeit a virtual one.

In the world of e-commerce your good name matters and can make the difference between success and failure. The company's branded website, www.paintain.co.uk, is fine for established customers and others who already know it exists.

But in a bid to grab the attention of the growing number of business users browsing the web to find the best deal, **Paintain Tools** also registered www.tools241.com, a generic site conveying the distributor's 'buy one, get one free' range of offers.



The key, says **Robert Paintain**, is grabbing the attention of the internet search engines as they scour millions of websites in response to an enquiry which could be a single word – tools. 'Tools241 has bought us in traffic & enquiries from all over the world,' says **Robert Paintain**. 'It's really been an eye-opener.'

The internet's ability to send potential new customers his way led **Paintain Tools** to experiment with other ideas. A powerful message for his customers was the company's ability to deliver quickly – hence his registration of toolsnextday.co.uk.

ToolsNextDay is another device to grab search engine browsers – and it works. Type in the four words 'tools, next, day and UK' into **Google** – one of the world's biggest search engines with a range of more than 1.3 billion web pages – and sure enough, toolsnextday.co.uk appears near the top of the search results.

Clicking on it will guide you straight to the **Paintain Tools** website. **Paintain** says presence on the web is more than just crafty marketing; it could also help secure his company's place in the supply chain.

'Manufacturers and importers are developing ever more sophisticated e-commerce systems. But we can sit in front of, and link into, those systems if we are grabbing the traffic,' explains **Robert Paintain**.

'Any traffic we capture on our sites becomes our own registered traffic – in effect, our customers – and can still earn us money.' The brand identities born on the internet have proved so popular that **Paintain Tools** has taken them out of cyberspace and into the real world, and they can now be found adorning the distributor's premises and vans.

'Many people now know us as **tools241** and **toolsnextday**,' he says. And more ventures are in the pipeline. **Paintain** is looking to create a range of 'microsites' offering tightly-focused ranges of high-value capital equipment to particular sectors. To this end, he has bought the name nextworkingday.com from its former owner in Australia.

Paintain admits his company's move into e-commerce has been a steep learning curve, but a vital one. 'The business internet is still at a relatively early stage, and things are going to kick into a much higher gear before too long,' says **Robert Paintain**. 'I think small and medium-sized companies like ourselves have the most to learn – and the most to gain.'