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## EBUSINESS - SMALL BUSINESS NECESSITY

The rapid growth of the internet commerce in recent years presents established small businesses with a serious dilemma. On the one hand, they can stick with the business model that has worked for them for the last number of years. On the other hand, they can make the shift to serious eBusiness. Choosing to stand pat is usually much easier in the short term. But in the longer term this almost certainly means they will be left behind by technology, and lose many of their most important clients to more aggressive competitors. But shifting to eBusiness may involve committing substantial resources to developing a new game plan. That usually means refining product lines to make them easier to sell online, upgrading computer systems and websites, and training personnel at all levels to be more web savvy. It also means developing or hiring staff to handle the administration of new marketing, sales, and delivery systems, and working with outside consultants and service providers to handle the technical aspects of the new program that cannot be handled by your own people. Is adopting an eBusiness Solution worth the effort? Are the short term difficulties involved in making the transition to eBusiness worth the effort? In virtually all cases, Yes. It is like any other investment in your business. Some businesses look at the cost of upgrading production equipment or of renovating their office or retail space and decide it is simply not worth the cost. They decide the future is too uncertain to risk moving ahead, so they opt to tread water until either circumstances change, or they simply cannot continue any longer in business. In this sense, choosing to stay abreast of technological changes is a business necessity. And these days, deciding to get involved with eBusiness is the most important technological decision many current businesses will ever make. Advantages of eBusiness Here are some of the more important advantages of moving to eBusiness. You can develop a more cost-effective Communication and Marketing Strategy - The most obvious advantage of "upgrading" to eBusiness is that it gives you a vital web presence. In an upgraded "eBusiness environment" your company web site becomes the focal point of your communications and marketing strategy. And in an era when an increasingly large number of people are using the web as their first source of product and service information, "being there" 24/7 is extremely important. You can reach New Markets World Wide - The internet offers exciting ways of reaching new markets that could only be dreamed of in the past. There are methods of promoting your products online that allow you to precisely target the customers you are after whether they are in your town or on the other side of the world. You can reach Local Customers and Prospects more effectively - Until recently, companies offering a product or service to local customers could not see the benefits of having an online presence. But as more and more people become comfortable with using the internet instead of traditional advertising sources like classified ads or yellow pages, having an aggressive web presence makes better business sense even for local companies. This may also offer a springboard to developing new markets further afield. You can cut Advertising and Marketing Costs - Online advertising is not only more efficient, but it is often less expensive than traditional advertising. After sales training expenses can also be reduced by utilizing online seminars, training videos and tutorials. You can streamline the Ordering Process by taking orders online - Implementing an online ordering system allows you to eliminate manual paper work or telephone order taking. It also offers the possibility of integrating your sales order system with order fulfillment and delivery so customers can be up to speed on the progress of their orders at all times. You can cut Communications and Telephone Costs - While the costs of voice communications using long distance telephone services have been coming down rapidly over the last few years, switching to an eBusiness model offers the possibility of totally eliminating many of these costs. Of course there is traditional email. But beyond that, there are systems like "Live Help" where customers can chat live with support or sales staff. And the most recent development is VoIP (Voice Over Internet) which promises to completely revolutionize telephone service. Finding the right eBusiness Solution Every business is unique, so every business will require a unique eBusiness solution. Chances are most small businesses will not have the resources inhouse to make the move. In that case they should find an eBusiness solution provider that takes a comprehensive approach to each situation. Rather than offering a pre-packaged program, they should be able to look carefully at a business and make recommendations based on its specific needs. That includes the ability to provide staff training and ongoing support long after the initial system is put in place.

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