Assessing your e-business potential

If you're going to succeed in e-business, you have to start with a clear-sighted evaluation of your company's e-business potential. You could try to work this out from scratch, but it's easier to use Industry Canada's *e-Business Readiness Diagnostic Tool*. You can access this feature through the Industry Canada Web site referred to on page 41, via the link labelled Assesing Your Business. The questions encourage you to think about issues such as:

- **Your company** – what current structure, customer base, and partnership networks do you have? Do you have a Web presence? Who are your target customers? Do they use the Internet?
- **Your strategic context** – your e-business strategy needs to be developed in the context of your overall corporate objectives. For example, do you want to increase profits, increase market share, expand your customer base or enhance customer service?
- **Accessing online resources** – do you use online resources to track competitive trends, identify technologies you might use in your operations and identify potential new customers?
- **Online procurement** – does your company contract for online support services such as credit card payments and customer service? Do you obtain materials, supplies and equipment through online sources?
- **Your online presence** – what information does your Web site provide? How do you use it? How can your customers use it? How do you maintain the site?
- **Online interactivity** – how do your customers primarily interact with your business? How do you acquire new customers? How well has the Internet penetrated your target markets? How do you collect customer feedback?
- **Operational preparedness** – has your company mapped its core processes and documented its design and production functions? Are your operating policies and procedures documented in electronic format? Do you have an intranet?
- **Integrated operations** – can your internal operations support integrated customer service? Do you have a documented quality assurance plan in place? Can your production processes be expanded quickly?
- **Integrated service delivery** – how effectively can you provide seamless, one-stop customer service that is personalized and customized?
- **Extended boundaries** – how easily can you include external partners to help you meet customers' needs? Do you work with customers in the U.S. and Canada, or in developed or developing countries? Do you use electronic tools and resources such as extranets or e-marketplaces to work with your partners?

At the end of the diagnostic, you'll get a detailed analysis of how ready you are to adopt e-business for your export operations. The tool will also give you recommendations for improving your competitiveness in this venture.

TIP

The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) has two more diagnostics you may find useful. Go to **www.bdc.ca**, click the E-Business link and then choose either the E-Business Readiness Diagnostic or the E-Business Relevancy Diagnostic from the menu. BDC also offers its E-Strat service to help companies develop their e-business strategies.