

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. Start preparing by answering such questions 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?

Investigating the Return on Investment for eBusiness

Determining the Return on Investment (ROI) can be crucial in the decision to invest in a new information technology. However, it is not an easy process - many of the benefits are intangible and difficult to quantify. This new module of Industry Canada's ebiz.enable examines many of the issues that need to be addressed when contemplating an ROI analysis. It features a comprehensive ROI spreadsheet, best suited to medium-sized and large firms. See http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/inee-ef.nsf/en/h_ee00632e.html.

