



Getting Started

An eBC Guide to Using the World Wide Web

Not yet ready to build a website? Not to worry, engaging in e-business is not only about selling on the Internet. E-business involves utilizing various technologies and new practices to provide superior customer service, streamline your business processes, increase sales and reduce costs.

You can realize the benefits of the World Wide Web simply by having access to it in your office and using it to meet a variety of business needs.

The Web can be used for:

- General Research and Purchasing Goods Online
- Customer Intelligence
- Competitive Intelligence
- Verifying Customer Credit
- Collecting Tax Information and Banking Online

General Research and Purchasing Online

The web is an extremely powerful research tool. You can leverage it to:

- Evaluate potential markets for new products
- Understand international regulations
- Learn new methods of promotion
- Recruit new employees
- Establish pricing for products and services
- Market your products and services
- Incorporate or sell a business

Looking to purchase a new desk, computer or even seek out a new supplier? Before you travel around town looking for the best deal, try conducting some research on the Internet. Today, most organizations have a web presence -- researching and even purchasing online can save you precious time that could be better spent focusing on core your business objectives.

Customer Intelligence

The web can help you find information about your customers -- who they are, what they buy and what they expect from you. Online surveys, statistics and industry reports help you get to know your potential customers so that you will be able to provide superior customer service -- a goal of the e-business model. Your ability to provide superior customer service positions you to be more competitive and thus differentiates you in your industry or sector.

Competitive Intelligence

The web also gives you unlimited access to your competitors' websites for information about their business processes and growth. Online press releases, financial information, and product news can keep you on top of what your competitors are doing.

You can also conduct competitive intelligence research by searching on search engines such as SEDAR (System for Electronic Document Analysis and Retrieval). SEDAR is the electronic filing system for the disclosure of documents filed with the Canadian Securities Administrators by companies and mutual funds across Canada.

Knowing your competitors helps you satisfy and retain the customers you have and increases your ability to attract new customers.

Verifying Customer Credit

Issuing credit to your customers for online or offline purchases can be risky for any business. The Web provides online credit check services such as www.equifax.ca to help you reduce the risk of offering credit.

Collecting Tax Information and Banking Online

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency has developed an online tax resource center which includes downloadable guides and tax forms for small business. Visit www.ccr-aadrc.gc.ca/ for more information.

Performing banking activities online is easy, secure and convenient for busy small business operators. Through your financial institution's online banking centre you can check your account balances; transfer money between accounts, pay bills and even apply for a loan, 24 hours a day.

Every Business Needs a Website

Electronic commerce or e-commerce refers to business transactions that happen online. That is, selling on the Internet. Electronic business or e-business refers to more than just selling online.

In Canada's private sector, more than 75% of businesses are estimated to be using the Internet to facilitate some aspect of their business. In fact, more than 62% of businesses in Western Canada operate a website.

The Benefits of eBusiness

E-Business is about utilizing Internet technologies -- such as email and online banking solutions, and more sophisticated systems such as web-based customer relationship management solutions — to provide superior customer service, streamline business processes, increase sales and reduce costs.