

CHAPTER

PREFACE

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

This book is designed to aid and abet the study of e-commerce or e-business. It also intends to show how actions can be taken to bring into reality e-commerce (or e-business) initiatives. The differences between such e-terms will be discussed later in the book, but for now we will use them interchangeably, to mean *commercial activity via electronic (computerized), networked connections*.

Organizations that are deploying e-commerce or e-business systems are seeking to become 'Net'-enabled organizations (NEOs). We shall use the term NEO and NE ('Net'-Enablement) to refer to this transition to networked businesses in addition to the term e-commerce (and occasionally e-business).

The knowledge being developed is specifically on "organizations." One could design many books on the impact of the Internet and e-commerce on individuals, how it changes the way they learn, think, interact. How individuals are gaining direct access to other individuals, for business and other purposes could be another interesting subject for study. But that is not the focus of this book.

Or one could stress community use of e-commerce—how towns, cities, and regions highlight their strengths through effective use of Web-sites. Again, this is a worthy area of inquiry, but it is not the subject of this book.

This book concentrates on organizations, and particularly on profit-making institutions. The intention is to explore the ways in which an organization can become technically and operationally proficient in e-commerce. And, of course, no organization can become proficient unless its human capital – its employees and its future employees – is proficient. For this reason, the range of topics covered by the book is broad. In that regard, the book is intended to be introductory in nature.

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The audience of the book is fairly broad also. This book serves as an introduction to Wiley books of a more specialized nature delving into e-commerce, and, therefore, the intended audience is general managers or those studying in academic programs to be general managers, but also those who are preparing to be specialists in chosen areas of e-commerce. Restated, there is no expectation that readers will have a strong technical background and already understand, for example, the intricacies of the Internet protocols. Nor are they supposed to be marketers, with many years of marketing experience.

Just to be perfectly clear, students in MBA programs or specialized master's programs in business or management schools are a primary target audience. Improvement of the basic understanding of graduate students for conducting business in cyberspace is a goal of the book.

The philosophy underlying the structure of the book may be of interest to readers or potential readers. There are five major modules in the book. They are: I. Fundamental Concepts, II. Basic NE Technologies, III. Strategizing 'Net'-Enablement. IV. Implementation and Roll-Out, and V. Looking Ahead.

In the "Fundamental Concepts" module, it is made clear that 'Net'-Enablement is a phenomenon whose time has come. In a certain sense, it was an inevitable consequence of the evolution of computing and networking. The beginning of the book, Chapter 1, "The Migration from Traditional to 'Net'-enabled Organizations and Systems," makes this argument. Readers need to understand why the e-commerce revolution makes sense from an economic standpoint, and the second chapter, "Principles of New Economy Businesses," presents the economic justification for making the huge investments that are required to be e-commerce –proficient. As a groundwork for the rest of the book, Chapter 3, "Structures, Frameworks, and Classes of NE Activity" presents readers with the NE terms, acronyms, and concepts that will be used throughout the rest of the book.

At its heart, the e-commerce revolution is a technological innovation, or better said, a host of technological innovations. The second module is, therefore, a layman manager's view of how the underlying information technologies actually work. The next two chapters (3 and 4), "Basic NE Infrastructure" and "Middleware Technologies and Applications for 'Net'-Enablement," respectively, introduce the reader (or level the playing field somewhat) to how open networks and the Internet works and shows how distinctly different this is from proprietary networks. Security is a topic in its own right, and will be considered along with trust issues in this commercial space as well as online payment issues. These appear in Chapter 6, "NE Security, Trust, and Payments."

Module III, "Strategizing 'Net'-Enablement," covers corporate strategies, business models, and marketing strategies for introducing successful e-Commerce systems. The first chapter deals with this topic at the highest level in the corporation, exploring how NEOs should strategize e-commerce. It probes questions like: What are the ways to be successful in organizational evolution to NE? Following this seventh chapter on "NEO Strategies" is an eighth chapter on creating business models that define the opportunities in e-Commerce distinct from traditional business settings (Chapter 8, "Business Models and Strategic

Planning for NE.” A crucial element in corporate strategic planning and business modeling is for managers to redesign their organizations through partnering and contractual arrangements that call for broad and wide electronic communications. A chapter that discusses these “virtualizing” designs is Chapter 9, “Strategic Partnering, Outsourcing, and Virtual Organizations.” Finally, the last two chapters in the module, Chapter 10, “e-Marketing in B2C and B2B Spaces” and Chapter 11, “Cybermediaries,” shows how managers can exploit marketing concepts in both the consumer and organizational buying online environments.

In module IV, “Implementation and Roll-Out,” the opening chapter covers what is required to phase in an NE initiative, both from a technical and project management standpoint. How one gets feedback to learn from the effort is also an important topic in this Chapter 12, “Implementing NE Solutions.” Hurdles to successful implementation are also a knowledge base that every well-educated manager should have and that is dealt with in Chapter 13, “Technological Impediments and Managerial Options.” Social issues that managers must think about in order to implement NE are delineated in Chapter 14, “Considerations of Social Issues: Internet Law, Ethics, Privacy, and Social Change.” The final chapter in this module probes into how rapidly firms can expand abroad. What parts of the world have NE infrastructures that are ready for expansion, and which do not? How level is the playing field for non-US firms in cyberspace? These are some of the topics in Chapter 14, “Competing Internationally.”

Module V, “Looking Forward,” examines a few, absolutely central key trends and reflects on how the NE evolution will interact with these movements.

Persons who are just beginning their serious study of electronic commerce are the audience for this book. All that it takes to gain value from this book is the willingness to learn and the ability to apply that learning.

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