



Australian Government

Department of Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts

e-businessguide

an Australian guide to doing business online

getting started

an Australian guide to doing business online

www.e-businessguide.gov.au

JUNE 2004

getting started

About this booklet

This *getting started* booklet forms part of an e-business initiative funded by the Australian Government's Small Business Assistance Package.

The initiative also includes a comprehensive website on e-business—www.e-businessguide.gov.au

This publication has been developed by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) and United Focus Pty Ltd.

For further information about the department, visit www.dcita.gov.au

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Using this booklet

This booklet is aimed at business people who want a quick and easy explanation of e-business: what it is, its benefits and what is needed to get started using the Internet as a business tool.

The e-business guide website provides a comprehensive resource designed for those with some knowledge and experience with e-business—see page 26.

References to websites are included in this booklet because while many readers may not have access to the Internet at home or in their business they may be able to access the websites mentioned from a local library's Internet connection or that of a friend or colleague.

getting started: step by step



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what is e-business?

Broadly speaking, the term e-business refers to using the Internet for doing business.

Broadly speaking, the term 'e-business' refers to using the Internet for doing business.

It can happen in a number of different ways, for example, when a company receives an order by email for a product or an enquiry about prices or when a business accesses a supplier's website and orders or pays for something.

It can also happen when a business owner applies for a licence or a permit via a government department's website. It can mean doing banking or booking business travel online.

Every time a business uses the Internet to conduct business it is engaging in e-business.

The term 'e-commerce', which is widely used, has a narrower meaning than e-business. It refers to using the Internet to order and/or pay for products or services. So e-commerce is a subset of e-business.



Are you doing e-business?

Is your business doing e-business? Here's a checklist to help you find out. If you can say yes to any of these then you are doing e-business.

CHECKLIST

- we communicate with customers or clients via email
- we send emails to other businesses to order products and services
- we sell our products or services via our website
- we use the web to find information such as prices, phone numbers and reviews of products
- we take bookings and deposits via our website
- we use the web for research, such as the latest industry trends
- we use our website to provide information about our business
- we use our website as a means of managing the information in our business
- we use the Internet for online banking and to pay our bills using BPAY

Some case studies are presented in this booklet to demonstrate the business case for e-business and how it is being used by small business in Australia.

Many more case studies are available from the e-businessguide website:
www.e-businessguide.gov.au

the benefits of e-business

*An effective
use of
e-business
can have
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benefits.*

An effective use of e-business can have many benefits.

Create cost savings and operational efficiencies

Many companies still rely on purchasing and back-office systems that revolve around the fax machine, telephone, or handwritten forms. Organisations that have adopted e-business are reaping the benefits that come from replacing manual processes with automated systems. This can lead to a range of efficiencies such as getting paid faster.

Reach more customers and markets

One of the great benefits of the Internet is that it can help broaden your customer base at a relatively low cost. And as more and more people get access to the Internet and become confident Internet users, the potential to expand customer bases will increase proportionately.

Make it easier for people to do business with you

A well planned and designed website can make it easier for your customers, members, visitors, suppliers, distributors or associates to do business with you—and you with them.

A well designed and maintained website can be a highly effective promotional tool.

Improve marketing and promotion

A well designed and maintained website can be an excellent promotional tool. This is not to say that promoting a business on the web is better or more effective than traditional forms of promotion. It is simply another promotional tool that should complement other forms of promotion.

Meet the needs and expectations of customers

Customers are defining the terms 'opening hours' and 'convenience' to mean online access to your business 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Having a website and using email wisely helps you meet the expectations of your customers and encourages them to contact you at their convenience.

Concentrating on things that matter

One of the most important consequences of using the Internet effectively is that it can reduce the time staff spend doing administrative tasks, freeing them up to concentrate on the things that really matter—servicing clients and customers and increasing sales.

The cost of not being there

The cost of not having a practical e-business plan and not having a credible online presence can be measured in terms of lost opportunities to create more revenue and cut costs.

Help meet business goals

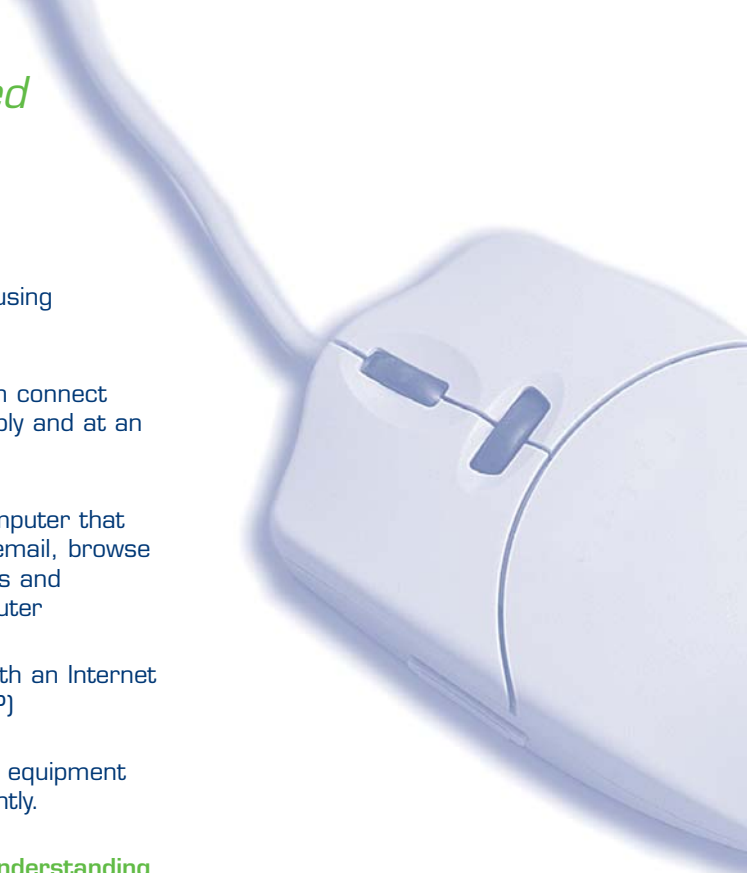
Integrating the Internet into daily work practices has the potential to help an organisation meet its business goals.

getting started

In order to get started using e-business you need:

- 1** a computer that can connect to the Internet reliably and at an acceptable speed
- 2** software on the computer that allows you to send email, browse the web for websites and protects your computer
- 3** an email account with an Internet service provider (ISP)
- 4** training in using the equipment and software efficiently.

For further help with understanding e-business, please refer to the back cover of this booklet.



getting the equipment

The first step in e-business is to have a computer that can be connected to the Internet.

The computer

You will need a computer that is fast, very reliable, can be upgraded to a larger memory, and can not only connect to the Internet but also run standard business software such as word processors and spreadsheets.

There are two main types of computers you can buy: a personal computer, often referred to as a PC, and a Macintosh computer, often called an Apple Macintosh.

If you intend using your business computer for home use, for games or for scientific or graphic design use, you may need to purchase a computer with more memory, a faster processor and more storage capacity than suggested here.

Prior to committing to any purchase you should seek appropriate professional advice or assistance.

getting the equipment

- 1 *a megabyte (MB) is one million bytes of information, which equates to about one average size novel*
- 2 *a gigabyte (GB) is 1000 megabytes of information, which equates to about 1000 average size novels*
- 3 *a modem connects your computer to your phone line, allowing you to send and receive email and information from websites*
- 4 *CD-ROM stands for compact disc—read only memory which can store up to 700MB of information, which equates to a whole encyclopaedia*

When talking to a computer salesperson about your computer requirements, you might like to use the following as a reference.

Personal desktop computer or PC *(minimum specifications—January 2004)*

- > processor: Intel compatible Pentium 4 or equivalent and 2GHz (gigahertz)
- > memory: 256MB of random access memory (RAM)
- > storage: 40GB hard drive, 1.44MB 3.5 inch floppy disk drive, CD or DVD reader and writer
- > screen: 15 inch flat panel display
- > modem: 56Kbps (kilobits per second)
- > operating system: Microsoft Windows XP
- > Internet software: Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape

Expect to pay between \$1500 and \$2300 for well-known brands with this configuration. Computers assembled and sold by a local computer store may cost less than this.

Apple Computer

The following models, as of January 2004, would be adequate for Internet access and business use:

- > 1GHz eMac with 40GB hard drive, CD drive and read DVD drive
- > 1GHz eMac with 80GB hard drive, CD read/write and DVD read/write drive.

Expect to pay between \$1349 and \$1899 for these configurations.

- > 15 inch 1GHz PowerBook 60GB with hard drive CD drive and read DVD drive is available starting at: \$3699.

Apple computers come with built-in modems and networking.

Researching your computer needs

It should be noted that this booklet is just a guide, not a definitive reference, and before committing to any course of action you should seek appropriate professional advice or assistance.

This is especially important because computer technology advances rapidly so statements about specifications and costs are likely to date quickly—these prices and specifications were current at January 2004.

To be sure you have up-to-date information, download the latest version of this booklet from www.e-businessguide.gov.au

The software

The software for using email and the web is free. It comes already loaded on new computers or can be obtained free from the Internet or from promotional CD-ROMs that accompany many computer magazines available in newsagents.

It is highly advisable to purchase business software at the time of ordering a new computer as it is usually much cheaper that way. A standard business software package includes a word processor, spreadsheet, scheduling and database software.

The most commonly used business software package in Australia is Microsoft Office which includes the applications above. Expect to pay about \$900 for Microsoft Office XP Professional if purchased separately from the computer (price as advertised

in June 2004 by a national software retailer). If packaged with a new computer, Microsoft Office XP Professional would cost much less.

If you have an old version of Microsoft Office then you may be able to upgrade to Office XP at a reduced price.

It is strongly advised that at the time of purchase you also buy and install anti-virus software to protect your computer system. Make sure you keep anti-virus software up-to-date.

getting the equipment



Researching your needs

When researching the ideal computer for your business, you might like to access these sources and undertake these activities:

- > contact or visit three computer stores and compare advice and prices
- > look in your local newspapers for computer advertisements
- > ask a colleague or friend who uses computers and the web frequently
- > ask a friend who works in the computer industry for advice
- > ask your accountant or business advisor for advice
- > visit computer manufacturers' websites
- > visit *Choice Magazine's* website and find articles on computers.

Issues to consider

If researching on the Internet or talking to a salesperson in a computer store, you need to consider:

- > the type of business you have
- > the types and quantity of records and information you keep
- > what else you will use the computer for other than the Internet— e.g. office software, managing your finances.

Questions to ask

Once you have considered these issues, seek answers to these questions:

- > Do I need a desktop, laptop or portable notebook computer?
- > How much does the computer cost, including the software installed on it?

Will the computer allow me to use commonly-used small business office software?

- > Is the computer model a reliable one—for how long has this make been produced?
- > Are the businesses that are buying this particular model similar to my business?
- > Is the computer Internet-ready? Does it have a modem and is it fast enough for my needs—e.g. 56Kbps? Does it have email software and an Internet browser installed?
- > What type of processor does it have? What is its speed and is this sufficient?
- > Will I be able to store everything I need on this computer over the next few years—e.g. all my files, the programs I want to run on it?
- > Will I be able to read CD-ROMs and DVDs and back up my files onto a CD-ROM using this computer?
- > Is the amount of random access memory large enough (usually expressed in advertisements as 128MB RAM, 256MB RAM) for the computer to run as fast as I require? What would it cost to add more memory if I need to now, and in the next 12 months?
- > Will the computer allow me to use commonly-used small business office software—e.g. a word processor, accounting system, stock control?
- > What are the warranty terms, what is covered and for how long is the warranty valid?
- > Who can I contact if I have hardware or software problems? Is there any cost for getting help?
- > If it breaks down, will you come to my business to fix it? If not, where does it have to go to be fixed and who pays for getting it there?
- > Where are repairs carried out and how long do they take—e.g. disk drive failure?
- > Are loan units available while repairs are being carried out?

Email enquiries now form about 70 per cent of all new enquiries. There has also been a significant increase in sales.

Maningrida Arts & Culture

Maningrida Arts & Culture is a community-based Aboriginal arts organisation located in north-central Arnhem Land, and is one of Australia's largest Aboriginal artists' cooperatives. It concentrates on marketing traditional and contemporary arts, including bark paintings, wooden sculpture, fibre craft, prints and items of material culture.

Maningrida's remote location was a significant limiting factor in its operation. An effective website has enabled them to make Aboriginal art works available to a wider audience by illustrating them on the site and providing an online ordering service.

Purchasing online is conducted through the 'dilly bag'. Potential customers register interest in an art work to which Maningrida responds with information on its availability and freight details. Payment is made through traditional means, and the work is shipped on confirmation of the sale.

One of the biggest challenges in developing the new site was to review all internal business processes and adapt them to work with the new e-business system—particularly the freight procedures.

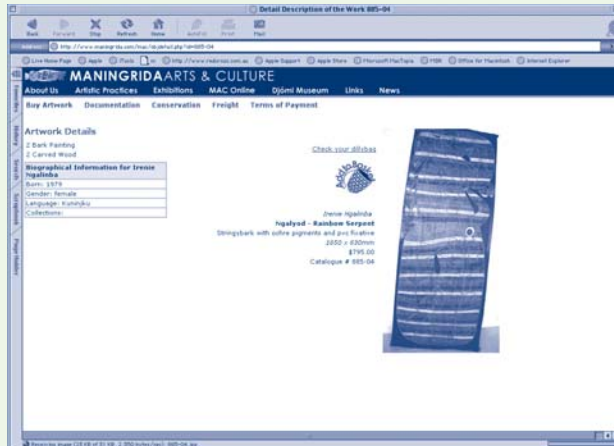
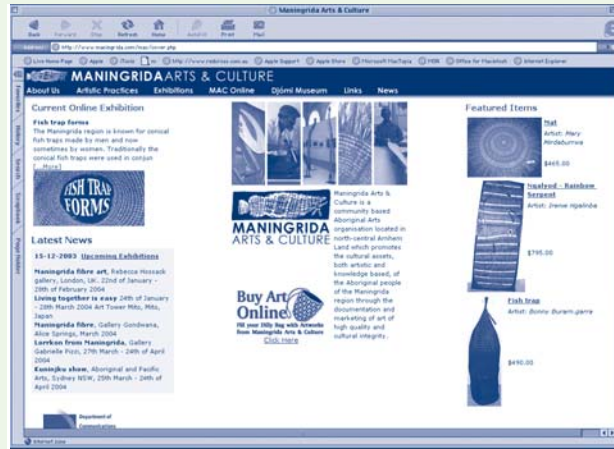
Maningrida has no hesitation in identifying the most useful advice for those intending to move into e-business for the first time—keep it simple!

Physical remoteness has ceased to be the predominant issue in marketing Aboriginal artworks while local artists have benefited from improved communications with clients, and from the ability of the community to promote itself in the international art market.

www.maningrida.com

This and other case studies are available on the www.e-businessguide.gov.au website.

An effective website has enabled them to make Aboriginal art works available to a wider audience by illustrating them on the site and providing an online ordering service.



getting connected

Assuming you have a computer that can be connected to the Internet, follow these steps.

For more information on getting connected, refer to the booklet **Broadband for Small Business** www.dcita.gov.au/smallbusiness/broadband and **Why Broadband** www.dcita.gov.au/ie/publications/2003/10/broadband/why —both produced by DCITA

Step 1

Research the optimum speed for your connection to the Internet. The choices are 'normal' or 'fast'.

Normal: dial-up

connect by dialling up via a normal telephone line

Fast: broadband

connect via one of these options:

- > **DSL** or digital subscriber line refers to a group of technologies, the most common being ADSL or Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line. DSL uses your existing telephone line to deliver high-speed Internet access. It allows voice communication and high-speed data transmission on the same line at the same time.
- > **Cable Internet** uses the pay TV cable network to bring you broadband Internet access.

- > **Satellite broadband** uses a satellite dish to connect to the Internet.
- > **Wireless broadband** can deliver fast access by using radio waves instead of cables or wires to carry signals and data.

If connecting via broadband, your system's security needs to be considered. Seek advice from your broadband supplier.

ISDN

An integrated services digital network (ISDN) connection sends data via a digital phone line to national and international destinations and can be used for high speed Internet access. It can be used to deliver the total Internet, telephony and fax requirements of a small business.

Your choice of technology will depend largely on which technologies are available to you, as not all are available in all areas.

The decision as to which connection speed is right for your business should be guided by your business plan and the role you want the Internet to play in it. Considering the advantages and disadvantages of dial-up versus broadband raises a number of issues that are covered comprehensively in DCITA's booklet, **Broadband for Small Business**.
www.dcita.gov.au/smallbusinessbroadband

Comparing normal and fast Internet connections

Normal—dial-up	Fast—broadband
<p>Advantages for e-business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > costs nothing to install if an existing telephone line can be used and the computer already has a modem > monthly payment plans cater well to infrequent and low-level users > available in Australia wherever a phone line exists <p>Disadvantages for e-business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > can be slow or impractical for some e-business practices—e.g. video conferencing > cost of a telephone call every time someone dials up to connect > if more than one computer needs to be connected, additional hardware is required and it will be slower 	<p>Advantages for e-business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > generally 10–20 times faster than dial-up > large files can be transferred quickly e.g. building plans, photos > provides permanent, always-on and almost instant access to the Internet > saves time dialling up and cost of a phone call every time you want email or the web > allows for simultaneous phone/web/email use > several computers in the office can be connected via the one connection which saves money on multiple connections <p>Disadvantages for e-business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > installation can cost more than normal dial-up connection (but monthly fees can be less) > not as readily available everywhere in Australia as normal dial-up

getting connected

You need to take electronic security measures for any business activities conducted online, to protect both yourself and your customers.

This is particularly important where businesses are using broadband technology because of its continuous connection to the Internet.

Step 2

Select a company to provide your Internet service.

Connections to the Internet, both dial-up and broadband, are offered by companies called Internet service providers (ISPs). An ISP is your gateway to the Internet.

ISPs provide:

- > a computer in your locality (called a server) to which you connect using a modem and through which you can access the web
- > an email address for you—
e.g. sales@freshfruitmart.com.au
- > a send-and-collect service for your email messages.

Many ISPs can provide a website hosting service and can provide your business with a domain name—
e.g. freshfruitmart.com.au.

For a list of ISPs, refer to the Australian Communications Authority's website www.toolkit.aca.gov.au
Also try looking in the *Yellow Pages*® under Internet access providers.

For further help with understanding e-business, please refer to the back cover of this booklet.

For a list of broadband service providers in Australia visit www.broadbandxchange.org

For further questions to ask ISPs refer to the Australian Communications Authority's website www.toolkit.aca.gov.au

Questions to ask an ISP before signing up

Questions that will help you determine which ISP can best meet your needs include:

- > Which dial-up and/or broadband services does the ISP offer?
- > What installation fees and charges apply?
- > What are their various usage plans and associated fees? For how many hours can I be connected and how much information can I access each period (often referred to as downloads)? Periods are usually in months, like mobile phone plans.
- > What is the speed of the connection (for sending and receiving) ?
- > Can the service provide increased capacity and, if so, at what charge?
- > Is there a service level agreement guaranteeing a minimum level of performance for speed and reliability?

- > What support is offered and in what form—e.g. phone, on-site?
- > What are the terms and conditions of the contract and acceptable use policy?

Further information sources

Contact DCITA to obtain their brochure: ***Broadband for Small Business***

phone: 02 6271 1000

or fax: 02 6271 1901

or write: GPO Box 2154

Canberra ACT 2601

or download it from their website www.dcita.gov.au/smallbusiness/broadband

Techbooks is a family business which employs 20 full-time staff. It stocks specialised and unique books in the automotive, computers, engineering, aviation, electronics, business and military subject areas.

technical bookshop

Melbourne business Techbooks demonstrates the benefits of e-business using broadband.

Techbooks is a family business which employs 20 full-time staff. It stocks specialised and unique books in the automotive, computers, engineering, aviation, electronics, business and military subject areas.

The company website, www.techbooks.com.au, allows customers to search for specific books, send enquiries, order online and pay by credit card using Techbooks' secure shopping system. Since upgrading from a normal modem to broadband Internet access via ADSL, the company has benefited from more efficient access to supplier databases to check pricing, stock availability and delivery times.

Broadband's superior data transmission capacity has saved Techbooks money on telecommunications expenses and staff time. In addition, Techbooks has saved \$20 000 on the printing of brochures and cheques as the business now uses the website for marketing and processes banking online.

For Techbooks, the speed and reliability of broadband means happier customers and staff as well as a healthy bottom line.

The full Techbooks case study is available at www.e-businessguide.gov.au

...the speed and reliability of broadband means happier customers and staff as well as a healthy bottom line.

getting email

CHECKLIST

Checklist for choosing an email address.

When selecting an email address, keep in mind that the name should:

- be easy for users to remember
- be easy to type
- be readily associated with your company's name or products
- avoid acronyms and abbreviations, if possible.

An email address will allow you to communicate with your customers, clients, suppliers, bank and anyone else you do business with or who wants to do business with you. It is one of the first steps in using e-business.

You have two choices for selecting the name of your email address.

- 1 Accept an address that piggy-backs off your Internet service provider's name—e.g. freshfruitmart@ispname.com.au**
This is a relatively inexpensive option but associates your name with your ISP. This option simply requires that you select the name to go at the left of the @ sign, and then your ISP will establish it for you.

- 2 Register your own Internet name (called a domain name) with the registration authority in Australia and have your ISP establish an email address using that name—e.g. sales@freshfruitmart.com.au**

This is more expensive than option 1 but it also offers a more advanced level of e-business as it gives your company its unique place on the Internet.

Another advantage of owning your own domain name is that it moves with you if you choose to change ISPs or have your website hosted by another company.

Most ISPs will host your domain name and provide space for a website under that name—e.g. freshfruitmart.com.au

Ensure when sending commercial electronic messages that you comply with Australian spam legislation. For more information see www.dcita.gov.au/spam

www.e-businessguide.gov.au

choosing a domain name

A domain name is your unique electronic address on the Internet.

Having a domain name—e.g. freshfruitmart.com.au, is a critical element in developing your e-business. It is your unique electronic address on the Internet.

The following questions will help guide you in choosing the most appropriate domain name for your website.



- Does the domain name support the branding of your organisation?
- Would your target audience guess the domain name?
- Does the domain name stand on its own and convey meaning?
- Is the name too long, awkward to type or repeat verbally to people?
- Can the name be confused with an existing popular domain name?

A set of guidelines to help you develop your domain name is available online on the [.au Domain Administration Limited \(auDA\) website: www.auda.org.au](http://www.auda.org.au)

You can register a new domain name yourself or have your ISP do it for you.

Before applying for a domain name you should check that the domain name you are seeking is available. Do this by visiting the Australian Registry site—www.ausregistry.com.au or phone them on 03 9866 3710.

Registering a domain name

Domain names are licensed on a first come, first served basis to eligible applicants by registrars who have been accredited by the official administrator for the .au domain space, .au Domain Administration Ltd (auDA). Most ISPs will register your domain name for you with one of these official registrars.

You can register and pay for domain names yourself by visiting the websites of registrars.

The cost of registering varies depending on the type of domain you choose, the registration period, and the services included with your registration—all of which vary between registrars

and resellers, as do the terms and conditions offered.

If you register your domain name yourself you will pay about \$150 for two years' registration. If your ISP or website host registers it for you, expect to pay about \$200.

Visit the auDA website (www.auda.org.au) for links to registrars and resellers to confirm current fees and options.

Further information sources

Contact DCITA to obtain the brochure:

Staking your claim on the Web

with its checklist,

How do I register and use my domain name?

phone: 02 6271 1000

or fax: 02 6271 1901

or write: GPO Box 2154

Canberra ACT 2601

or download it from the website

www.dcita.gov.au/stakingyourclaim

www.e-businessguide.gov.au

getting trained

training
staff to
maximise
the
effectiveness
of email
and their
websites.

Many organisations offer training in the use of the Internet and how businesses can maximise the effectiveness of email and their websites.

Try the following sources in your local area who might provide training courses or know who does:

- > TAFE colleges
- > private providers—look in the *Yellow Pages*® e.g. under 'computer training services'
- > your local library or local council
- > business advisors who are supported by government and local communities
- > the people who sold you the computer
- > or consult the 'resources' section of the e-businessguide.gov.au website

Further information sources

You might like to try these websites as sources of information about training courses in Australia:

- > www.courses.com.au/index.cfm
This lists 12 000 courses of all types. When searching, after selecting your state, click a category—either computing & IT or 'business and finance'. You can then select your regional area.
- > www.ntis.gov.au
This is the National Training Information Service website which provides a database of vocational education and training in Australia. Click on courses/qualifications, then type in e-business (with a hyphen) in the 'course title/qualification' box. Click on search.

Working procedures can be put in place in the workplace that minimise the chance of anyone misusing your information.

As the Internet becomes an increasingly important tool for business, electronic security (e-security) has emerged as a major issue.

While there are stories of information being stolen from computers and fraud involving the Internet, there are simple precautions that can be taken to counter this:

- > working procedures can be put in place in the workplace that minimise the chance of anyone misusing your information
- > virus protection software should be used and kept up-to-date
- > a 'firewall' should be deployed to stop unauthorised access to your computer
- > back up your data as a precaution against viruses, theft or fire
- > develop a system for creating and using secure passwords.

Further information sources

For a layperson's guide to e-security designed for small business, contact DCITA to obtain their booklet:

Internet security essentials for small business

phone: 02 6271 1000

or fax: 02 6271 1901

or write: GPO Box 2154

Canberra ACT 2601

or download it from their website

www.dcita.gov.au

For further help with understanding e-business, please refer to the back cover of this booklet.

the e-businessguide website

The e-businessguide website is aimed at business owners, no matter what size business or level of e-business they engage in.

If you have been following this booklet through from the beginning, you will now be ready to get onto the Web and visit the e-businessguide website—

www.e-businessguide.gov.au

The e-businessguide website is aimed at business owners, no matter what size business or level of e-business they engage in. Whether a business uses email to conduct its daily business, or the Internet as an integral part of the business, the e-businessguide website is a very useful resource.

The website is a comprehensive guide to doing business online. It caters for those just starting out and for businesses that have been using the Internet for years but want to explore new ways in which it can help their business.

The website helps small businesses that are planning or doing business online to:

- > understand what e-business is
- > explore what the benefits might be for their business
- > develop an e-business plan
- > build, manage and protect their website
- > review their e-business practices and improve them
- > understand and deal with e-security issues
- > access information about who can help, and what training and assistance programs are offered in their state or territory.

The website uses, and has links to, much of the rich e-business information, resources and tools already produced by governments and others, and presents them in a way that is relevant, easy to understand and quick to access.

The website gives practical advice and offers suggestions about managing your e-business. The information is presented in a variety of formats, such as checklists and template documents. The main section of the website is divided into six sections which represent a step-by-step guide to doing e-business.

- **understanding**—what the jargon means and what the benefits are
- **planning**—the possibilities and developing your e-business plans
- **building**—creating your website and email systems
- **protecting**—security issues and how to deal with them
- **managing**—maintaining the website, budgeting and promoting
- **improving**—evaluating your e-business and expanding it

The site features over 90 case studies and numerous links to other websites providing resources and help. There is discussion on advanced e-business topics such as e-logistics and e-catalogues for those who are well advanced in their use of e-business but who want to know how to benefit even further.

Our research told us that most business owners are time-poor and want a fast website with information that is easy to find and understand. So we made sure the design of the website is uncluttered and the writing is to the point. We have provided a 'print this page' function, so it is easy to print out pages of the website for reference later or for use at a staff meeting.

“now...”



*I understand
what is meant
by ‘e-business’*



*I can see how
e-business
would help us*



*we have the
right equipment
and software*



*my business
is connected
to the Internet*



*my business
has an email
address*



*my business
has a domain
name*



*we know where
to get e-business
training*



*I know about the
e-businessguide
website*

I am ready to do e-business”

Notes

**Further information
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or to contribute ideas and
resources, please email:
dcita.gov.au
or telephone 02 6271 1000.

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Phone 1800 282 679
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Phone 1300 134 359

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State Development Centre
Phone 13 2650

South Australia

Department of Trade and Economic
Development
Phone 08 8463 3800
Business Enterprise Centre or
Regional Development Board
Phone 13 1891

Tasmania

Department of Economic Development's
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Phone 1800 440 026

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