

IBM. PROUD SPONSOR *of the* ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

The bubble has burst. Dotcom hysteria has given way to pink-slip pathos. Start-ups are locked out of their own garages. Venture-Capitalists have taken flight. And the only light at the end of the tunnel seems to be the headlamp of an approaching train.

It isn't. It's the economic recovery.

An introduction to the business cycle.

First of all, in the business cycle there is no such thing as death. The business cycle, like most things in life, is organic. It only has highs and lows. Near-births and near-deaths.

So what you've really witnessed is a lull, the kind that usually follows in the wake of natural selection. The weakest make way for the fittest.

It's these second kind of businesses that are about to nurse the economy back from the red and into the black.

Businesses that have sound business models. Businesses that aren't ticketless travellers on the e-business gravy train, but are actually driving that train. In short, businesses that continue the business cycle.

Just what kind of business are you in?

Two years ago, this question was never asked. Word was out that anyone and everyone who did some kind of business – no matter how small or how obscure – could turn into an e-business overnight and become something they were never intended to become.

The results are out.

Which is precisely why, two years later, it's important to understand that unless you have a sound business model, you are going to fail. Unless you already recognise the need to bring customers, employees, vendors and suppliers together, you are going to fail. Unless you have an idea of where your business will be even two years down the line, you are going to fail.

If, however, you're in the kind of business that relies on having the right tools in the right place at the right time – and then using those tools to improve the way you do business – you are going to succeed. It's as simple as that.

And as difficult as that, because though everyone can understand all this, not everyone can undertake all this.

Everything they tell you about e-business is right.

Unfortunately, it's also incomplete.

In the past two years you've seen more defenders of the e-business faith than you've seen actual e-businesses, each with its own blueprint of the wired economy. But no two blueprints are the same.

The reason is that every company out there has its core strength (it could be SCM, CRM, ERP or BI – one or the other, but never all of these). And it's within the four walls of this core strength that they arrive at an understanding of e-business.

It's a classic example of how one can be completely right and yet so completely wrong.

What do 20,000 e-businesses know that you don't?

20,000. That's the number of businesses across the world that IBM successfully transformed into e-businesses.

What each of these e-businesses knows is that SCM, CRM, ERP and BI aren't the half of it. More critical than having a business system in place is having the infrastructure on which a given system can run well.



*If the bear is here, can the bull be far behind?
IBM was the first to point
this out – as early as January this year.*

You can have the best business system on earth and yet, if your server crashes, you're out of business. So you need hardware that can take millions of hits a minute from people inside and outside your enterprise, for years. You need software that is not just up and awake around the clock, but is productive on the job from day one. You need the know-how to knit everything together across your company, across geographies, no matter how dissimilar your systems. You need a lot more.

But more than anything else, what you need is someone you can rely on to handle the geek part – from beginning to end – because the last thing an e-business needs is distraction from its business goals.

20,000 businesses like yours realised this. And they called IBM for the infrastructure they needed so badly. Today, they're part of what we'd like to call generation e-business.

The generation that means business.

They're the people who've incorporated the Web into the way they do business. Who use the Internet to manage procurement and monitor deliveries. Who use business intelligence to offer customers deals they really want. Who use e-business solutions to boost sales, increase customer loyalty and lower costs.

They all had their reasons for calling on IBM. The most overriding of these is the fact that IBM is the single most qualified company in the world to know precisely what makes e-business tick. Because IBM's already been there.

We were doing e-business before it became fashionable to be one. Matter of fact, our biggest e-business customer has been ourselves (everything that we recommend for your business has already been hard at work in IBM facilities across the globe).

IBM is also the only company in the world that makes everything that goes into making an e-business – the operating system that runs our hardware, the hardware itself, the software solutions that run on it, and the expertise to make everything work together. As you know by now, the advantages of doing business with a single vendor, instead of multiple vendors, show up quarter after quarter on your bottomline.

Which should bring you to the next question:

Should you be the 20,001st successful e-business?

If you'd like your left hand to know what your right hand is doing, or extend that hand to your customers, the answer is yes.

If you'd like to share information with one person securely, or do transactions with a million people securely, the answer is yes.

If you'd like to move to new systems and processes without phasing out your expensive existing infrastructure, the answer is yes.

If you'd like to reach out to the over 2 million people in India with access to the Net and money in their wallets, the answer is yes.

If you'd like to be a business that doesn't merely survive the information age, but thrives on it, the answer is yes.

Basically, if you'd like to help put the economy – your company's, and your country's – on the road to recovery, the answer is yes. We know it can't be done in a day. But we do know it can be done together. IBM and you.

Welcome to the task.



generation  business