

# WE'RE IBM. BUSINESS *is* OUR MIDDLE NAME.

International Business Machines isn't about electric charge running across a piece of circuitry. It's about business.

That's precisely why this deals with what it takes to do business in these changed times, and how – despite the rude awakening from last night's dotcom dream – companies like yours can thrive in the brave, fearsome, wired new world.

## The conditions are ripe.

Since no company can compete in the New Economy without the requisite infrastructure, nations really concerned with economic growth are addressing basic connectivity issues like telecommunications and ISPs. They're making sure that access is fast and affordable, not just available. And they're providing a friendly regulatory and legal environment, as well as confidence in the security of networks.

The government in the U.K. aims to make Britain the world's best place for e-business by 2002. The EU has announced a similar goal for an *e-Europe*. South Korea's President has launched an e-commerce crusade. Japan's IT Strategy Council has drawn up plans for Japan to overtake the US within five years as a major Internet nation.

Conditions are ripe across the world. But in Bangalore, the technology epicentre of India, it is still necessary to get countless permits to set up a business.

And as if that weren't bad enough, conditions in India are reflecting the apathy of the global economy.

## Is this a good time to leave the country?

If you're someone who lives off the labour of code-crunchers and head-down workers, or if you're someone whose business plan constitutes a B-to-C portal with a burn rate and a prayer, there's never been a better time.

Cut your losses. Auction your domain name. Hand out pink slips. And leave. However, if you're someone who's been doing business (or intends to do business) with as little fanfare and as much common sense as possible – stay put, you're ready for the next stage.

A stage where businesses choose not to beat the system or escape from it, but to rise above it. A stage where businesses, Judo-like, go about their work with quiet efficiency, using to their advantage the forces that act against them. A stage where businesses transform themselves into e-businesses.

## The 'e' word. Explained in one word.

E-business isn't about what great brainwave shook the walls of some garage start-up. What morsel of funding someone managed to wrangle from the closest venture capitalist. Or what champagne flowed when they went IPO – as a lot of people will tell you now, it's terribly hard putting champagne back into a bottle.

E-business is about the decidedly less glamorous (yet infinitely more crucial) part of doing business in this day and age.

It's about building on a strong business foundation with strong business ideas. It's about recognising the need to bring suppliers, vendors, employees and customers together. It's about transforming current processes and systems into more hardworking ones, without disrupting them. It's about having the right tools in the right place at the right time – and using these tools to improve the way you do business.

In one word, e-business is all about *infrastructure*.

## Should your infrastructure have a past?

### Or should it have a future?

The answer, most definitely, is yes. A well-planned, well-executed infrastructure shouldn't just take into account where your business is headed, but also consider where it's coming from.



*Earlier this year, IBM predicted that the economy would make a comeback. And even as you read this, the prediction is coming true. Worldwide, e-businesses are back in business.*

What industry segment are you in? How have you done business all along? Where have your systems worked and where have they failed? You'll need to take a long hard look at these questions before you take a look at infrastructure. And because it's the non-negotiable foundation for successful e-business growth, you'll need to get it right in one shot.

Which means integrating your servers, software and storage systems. Making everything work seamlessly and transparently – from a vendor's hardware to a supplier's software to wireless devices that have yet to be invented. Implementing business-critical applications that are flexible, reliable and scalable. Getting people not just with expertise, but also experience, to piece the entire thing together. And most of all, ensuring your infrastructure solution is open, not proprietary (that is, built on industry standards that give you the freedom to change your technology as your business changes).

Basically, your infrastructure should be something you need, not something you're sold.

## What can you learn from 20,000 other companies?

20,000 companies like yours realised that a robust infrastructure can be extremely expensive and complex. And none of them had the skills, resources or time to implement a new plan themselves. They also realised they needed someone who knew what specific solutions work for which industries – and more importantly, which solutions don't.

They turned to IBM. And discovered that certain basic business principles still hold good, especially for e-businesses.

Success requires innovative ways of attracting and serving customers, innovative ways to reach them at their convenience, with facilities to understand what they need – and why they buy.

To be efficient and competitive, an e-business must transact business using integrated, automated processes that include partners and suppliers.

IBM put these principles to work for them. Helping them not only to incorporate the Web into the way they did business, but also to plan and manage the kind of infrastructure that's necessary for delivering real business value.

Today, they're using the Internet to manage procurement and monitor deliveries, using business intelligence to offer customers deals they really want, and using e-business solutions to boost sales, increase customer loyalty and lower costs.

## e-business isn't out of business.

Thanks to companies like the ones we've just mentioned, and despite everything that trade and finance ministers throw at it, the world economy is in fantastic shape, growing at more than 4%, with rich-country inflation at an acceptable 3% and unemployment low – unprecedentedly low in many cases – throughout the industrialised world.

Closer home, IT-enabled services such as call centres and ticketing operations are flourishing, from which India expects to get \$50 billion in export revenues by 2008, ten times what it will earn in 2001.

If the truth be told, we'll be one of the world's fastest-growing economies by 2002, which will do more for the country's poor than eleven 5-Year Plans or decades of World Bank aid.

Perhaps not the best time to move out of the country. Perhaps the best time to move to e-business.

Which should lead you to the last question: when you make that move, just who do you go with?



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