



SME Toolkit: IBM, IFC develop small business toolkit to support global economic development.

More than 1,200 small business service providers around the world have been trained in the use of the Toolkit for business management classroom instruction.

On July 26, 2007, IBM and IFC—the private sector arm of the World Bank—officially launched the next chapter of the SME Toolkit.

This cutting-edge set of assets helps promote economic growth in underserved and emerging markets through access to real-world business knowledge, online collaboration and capital resources.

The U.S. Census Bureau notes that approximately 50 percent of all small and medium enterprises in the U.S. fail within their first four years. Throughout the world, the statistics are similar. The SME Toolkit encourages business growth by combining business skills

development material with access to capital and support.

Generating jobs and growth

Small businesses generate the majority of jobs around the world. Yet they lack the resources that large businesses use to succeed.

IBM, the IFC and a vast network of partners are working together to provide entrepreneurs and small businesses with advice and guidance on how to implement sustainable business management practices, especially in areas such as finance, accounting, international business, marketing, human resources and insurance.

“Small businesses are the growth engines of the world’s economies. Yet, their success rate is not as good as it could be because of a lack of good business management practices. Giving small business access to information and new collaborative technologies will help us provide better means to support emerging markets.”

Lars Thunell
Executive Vice President and CEO
IFC

Interactive, collaborative sharing of experience

IBM and the IFC are engaging with financial institutions, NGOs, the private sector and governments to customize and localize the Toolkit experience, content, and online community features for end users. It is a free, open source, multilingual portal and content management system which emphasizes Web 2.0 collaborative tools as well as in-person and online training modules.



The SME Toolkit brings together business information, tools, training services and Web 2.0 technology to increase the success of small and medium businesses, thereby generating jobs and economic growth.

Among the specially designed free tools are an online calculator that helps small businesses determine their readiness for financing, free software to build an e-commerce-enabled web site and free business forms used for employee performance evaluations. The Toolkit can also help small businesses go global by providing detailed market access, investment and trade information for the 64 most exported to countries.

Building on IFC's Success

The Toolkit—which today attracts more than 2.5 million visitors annually—was originally launched by the IFC in 2002.

The new SME Toolkit management platform will deliver more than 500 interactive tools, business forms and how-to articles created by leading content providers for the small and medium enterprise space. It consists of four components:

- Global Content: Best-of-breed small business content acquired from major global providers.
- Web/CD ROM Interface: Allows users to search or browse the content they need.
- Content Management System: Robust back office application.
- Training Curriculum: Business training curriculum for both business development service (BDS) providers and SMEs.

To be eligible for IFC funding, a project must: be in the private sector; have a sound technology base; have good prospects for being profitable; benefit the local economy and be environmentally and socially sound.

It leverages the depth and breadth of the IFC's considerable success in developing nations as well as IBM's unique technology and global reach. IBM dedicated top talent in IBM Research and nearly \$2 million to transform the Toolkit and rebuild it on an innovative open source platform.

SME Toolkit: A perfect alignment of business and societal value

The Toolkit is expanding in the US to reach Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American and Women business owners, and the small business market in India, South Africa and Brazil. It is available in English and Spanish as well as 14 other languages including Nepali, Vietnamese and

Urdu, with Hindi and Arabic set for release later this year.

"In a globally integrated enterprise, corporate citizenship means the alignment of business and societal value. This SME Toolkit is in perfect alignment with our IBM values and business strategy where we are experiencing rapid growth in the small and medium enterprise space," said Nick Donofrio, IBM Executive Vice President for Innovation and Technology.

"The potential of this initiative to improve the lives of millions of people around the world through greater economic opportunity cannot be overestimated."



Ms. Anjana Tamraker, executive director, Creative Women's Craft, expanded her business for low-income women in Nepal through the SME Toolkit.



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