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## The Small Business Toolkit



Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.  
Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for life.

### But how do you teach four billion?

#### The Small Business Toolkit

Two-thirds of the world's population earns less than five dollars a day. And a large percent of the world are small business owners. To that end, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the financial arm of the World Bank, developed the Small Business Toolkit. This Web-based portal is a powerful resource for business owners who need a little added expertise to run their business. Accounting advice. Legal guidance. Financial calculators. All the tools that businesses large, small and very small need to succeed.

The portal includes 27 global and local sites in 14 different languages. Partners in each of the countries customize and localize the content, making it relevant to each market. The sites are seeing healthy traffic, averaging 2.5 million visitors a year collectively. More than a portal, owners can receive online or onsite training on the toolkit resources through a certified network of 1200 trainers.

IBM has joined forces with the IFC to launch the next chapter of the SME Toolkit, and to put the power of collaborative technology in the hands of small business owners.

Built on an open source platform, with more than 500 pieces of content, the system will include new functionalities and capabilities to expand its value and increase usability, with features that include:

- Web conferencing, blogging, group calendars, and survey and quiz builders.
- Content syndication to enable partners to share and access new content easily.
- Multilingual business directories to help businesses link locally, regionally and globally.
- Full support of right-to-left languages like Arabic.

## Powerful tools for entrepreneurs

IBM, the IFC and a vast network of partners have provided 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.



[Play video](#) (4:25min, 7.84MB)

[Read this video transcript on page 3](#)

## Meet the business owners

Five entrepreneurs talk about their experience and how the SME Toolkit has helped them build their businesses.



[Play video](#) (3min,5.65MB)

[Read this video transcript on page 4](#)



Vincent Akue is the Director of Vision Afrique Conseils, working with small businesses in Africa to improve productivity and competitiveness.



Virginia Bradley is founder and CEO of GlobalEXECWomen, connecting business leaders with national and international business opportunities.



Ablade Odoi-Atsem is the founder and President of Odoi Associates, Inc., an \$8.2 million dollar construction, energy and facility management corporation.



Fletcher White is a franchise owner of The Little Gym and used the SME Toolkit to help establish his business outside Washington, D.C.



Taren Coleman is founder of The Coleman Financial Group, a consulting firm that helps people navigate retirement planning.

**NARRATOR:** Recently Lars Thunell, executive vice president of the International Finance Corporation, had this to say about the impact of the updated Small Business Toolkit: "Small businesses are the growth engines of the world's economies, yet their success rate is not as good as it could be. Giving small business access to information and new collaborative technologies will help us provide better means of support to emerging markets."

**STAN LITOW:** The Small Business Toolkit provides for free on the Internet in a multiple of languages attracting small business leaders in emerging geographies all around the world with the same kind of tools that large businesses get through business consultants.

**NARRATOR:** In the past decade, small businesses accounted for 60 to 80 percent of new U.S. jobs annually, yet nearly half of them fail within four years, primarily due to a lack of business management knowledge and resources. Throughout the world, statistics are similar for all small enterprises.

IBM and the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank, have a centralized solution to assist global entrepreneurs, create jobs and fuel economic growth. It's a Small Business Toolkit.

IBM has dedicated top research talent and nearly \$2 million to transform the toolkit, founded by the IFC in 2002, into this innovative, open source platform that harnesses the power of Web 2.0 technology for collaboration and resource sharing.

The toolkit is available in 22 emerging markets around the world, such as Vietnam, Philippines and Bangladesh, and is now expanding to under-served communities in the United States such as Hispanic, women, black, Native American and Asian businesses.

Business development is supported through training workshops. Already more than 1,200 small business service providers have been trained on how to use the toolkit.

Local partners were established by the IFC in each country to help customize the content, translate it into local languages and to provide an additional support network.

The toolkit is organized by eight major subject areas, including accounting and finance, business planning, human resources and international business. Specially designed free tools help small businesses make decisions or meet online.

It has online conferencing, blogs and group forums, interactive survey and quiz builders, calculators to determine financing readiness, and free business forms.

The toolkit helps businesses connect to the global economy for sales opportunities by providing data on a country's economic performance, import/export regulations, transportation rules and patent laws.

Users claim the toolkit is helping them grow their businesses. The managing director of the Nepal Knotcraft Center used the toolkit to increase her company's revenue and profits by expanding her line of local crafts and adjusting pricing. Today she sells largely in Japan and the United States.

The owner of The Little Gym, a children's fitness facility in Clinton, Maryland, calls the toolkit a virtual treasure chest.

He has used it for business management and human resources support, as well as including forms from the Web site as part of his employee handbook and customer service manual.

A business development manager from NepaSoft Solutions in Nepal learned presentational skills from the site that have helped him land three new corporate clients.

The small business toolkit is available in English and Spanish, and has been translated into 14 other languages, including Nepali, Vietnamese and Urdu.

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## Video Transcript

## SME Toolkit has helped them build their businesses.

Vincent Akue  
Vision Afrique Conseils

**AKUE:** Out of five SMEs that starts, four will die before even reaching a year or two, just because they don't have the business or even business planning skills.

Virginia Bradley  
GlobalEXECWomen

**BRADLEY:** It's all about making sure that their business can grow and scale to full opportunity and survive past that four or five year threshold.

Ablade Odoi Atsem  
Odoi Associates, Inc.

**ODOI-ATSEM:** The initial problems were financing, I mean, just like most companies would attest to, financing was very, very difficult.

Fletcher White  
Franchise Owner,  
The Little Gym

**WHITE:** No matter how organized we were with it we were still going to have to go through three or four different lawyers.

Taren D. Coleman  
Coleman Financial Group

**COLEMAN:** When I have to take time out of actually being in front of my clients to do things like research or talk to my attorney or my accountant, that actually costs me money.

**BRADLEY:** When the venture capitalists or the angel investors or seed investors come in to look at that, they want to see your history. They want to see those finances. Is it in a Excel spreadsheet?

**ODOI-ATSEM:** I have traveled to Africa already like four times specifically for business, and it takes so long to get one form.

**BRADLEY:** Would you be okay with signing a non disclosure? And they said, absolutely. And I realized I didn't have a non disclosure form.

**ODOI-ATSEM:** Type them and send them and sometimes there are mistakes in there, you have to bring them back. When you bring them back they may have been outdated.

- BRADLEY:** These are family owned business, they don't have an accounting books.
- WHITE:** I didn't have an offer letter. And I was like, oh, i saw one in the toolkit. I went back through, copied it, pasted it into a Word document, changed the names. And plugged in my numbers, and I had my offer letter.
- ODOI-ATSEM:** This really is like a breath of fresh air. I can go to one place, target a region or a country, and be able to pull all information that I need to start the business.
- COLEMAN:** It helps me get to a lot of information and get to it quicker.
- AKUE:** Instead of spending 10 days, I can just spend two days.
- WHITE:** The forms and everything are great. But I'm finding the networking part of it to be even better.
- AKUE:** A content developed in Madagascar might be relevant for business in Dakar, for in stance.
- ODOI-ATSEM:** I see in Nigeria, I see Ghana, I see all these countries that I can do something in through this toolkit.
- COLEMAN:** It's the idea that we all can meet in the same place and download information that may be similar because we're all facing probably similar struggles.
- BRADLEY:** The technology community will be contributing to the open source code to make it more robust and incorporate new tools.
- AKUE:** This lady called me and say, you made my, you know, a whole lot of different in my life, because I have my business running.
- WHITE:** We are seeking to hire four full time employees and four part time employees.
- COLEMAN:** The information that I found on the toolkit is information that I have been cobbling together myself for the past couple of years.
- ODOI-ATSEM:** Probably would have been very, very useful when I started my company.
- AKUE:** It's possible, it's there, it's free.
- BRADLEY:** I mean, it doesn't get any easier than free and online.

[END OF SEGMENT]

**IBM Corporation**

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