



Introducing the Small Business Toolkit

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.

[END OF SEGMENT]

IBM Corporation

New Orchard Road, Armonk, New York 10504, USA