

An Investigation of the Barriers to E-Business Implementation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

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Abstract : E-business technologies, whereby business transactions are conducted remotely using the Internet, present unique opportunities and challenges for business. E-business technologies are applicable to a wide range of organizations and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are no exception. There is an established body of literature about e-business, looking at definitions, concepts, benefits and challenges. In general, however, the research focus has been on larger organizations, not SMEs. In an attempt to redress the balance of research, this paper looks at e-business technologies specifically from a small business perspective. It seeks to identify the possible barriers that SMEs might face when considering adoption of the e-business concept and practice as part of their business process change initiatives and implementation. To facilitate analysis of these barriers a conceptual framework has been developed which outlines the key conceptual and practical challenges of e-business implementation in SMEs. This is developed following a literature survey comprised of three categories: characteristics of SMEs, issues of IS/IT use in SMEs and general e-business adoption and implementation issues. The framework is then empirically assessed against 7 SMEs who have yet to implement e-business or whose e-business efforts have been unsatisfactory. Conclusions from the case studies can be used to verify the framework, and set parameters for further larger scale empirical investigation.

Keywords : business process change, disruptive technologies, electronic business (e-Business), electronic commerce (e-Commerce), ICT adoption, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)

Conference Title : ICISDT 2015 : International Conference on Information Systems Design and Technology

Conference Location : Zurich, Switzerland

Conference Dates : January 13-14, 2015