

Foreword



At the end of 1998 this Government set itself a visionary target of making the UK the best environment in the world for e-commerce. This embraced a far-reaching approach to getting everyone in the UK online – citizens, business and Government.

Since then, in the UK there has been a surge in businesses getting connected and significant progress has been made in the numbers of firms that are actually trading online. The challenges – and the (admittedly hazy!) language used to express them – has also moved on from e-commerce to e-business, e-enabled organisations and a host of other e-s! But there is much further to go in terms of businesses taking up new ways of working. This means not just ordering and paying online or having a website. The challenges are about how information and knowledge is used within organisations, how people work together and communicate. It also impacts upon how businesses relate to each other within supply chains: not just in placing orders but how every stage of the relationship is managed. And new approaches to customer relations management are significantly changing customers' expectations. Best practice in all the areas is only emerging as the boundaries of what is possible are pushed back.

The idea of a new emerging business ecosystem perhaps captures this sense of needing to rethink and reshape much of what we take for granted – to adapt to and prosper in a very different environment. I hope this pioneering book will stimulate further fresh thinking. By setting out some principles and illustrating them with real live cases of changing organisations I believe it has much to offer in this exciting and un-charted territory we are entering.

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