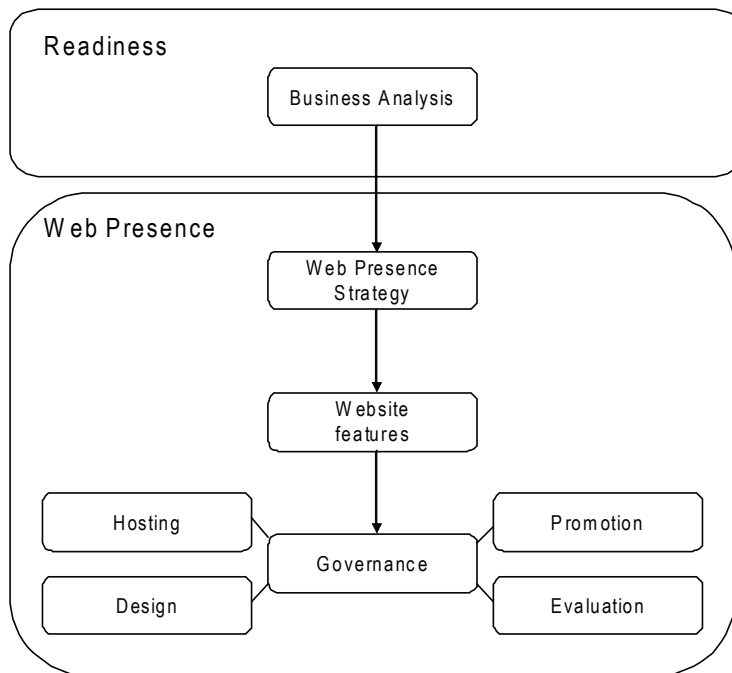# Chapter II
Web Presence Lessons for Small Businesses

INTRODUCTION

Whilst writing this book it has become apparent to us that small businesses face numerous challenges and issues when they are considering their Web presence. In fact, although we thought we had the organisation of the book determined before we started, we found that it was necessary to not only increase the number of

chapters, but also reorganise planned chapters. We believe this has allowed a more detailed explanation of the important issues that are investigated and explored in the book.

So, let's be honest with ourselves here. How many small business owner/managers are going to have the time to carefully sit down and work through all of the tenets that we have suggested in later chapters – whilst understanding the background (presented in this book) behind them? We believe that if they did they would benefit greatly from their investment of time. Alas, time is one resource that is limited in small businesses. In addition, in this chapter small business researchers are presented with a more concise summary of the lessons for setting up and maintaining a small business presence that have emerged during the writing of this book.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to present the tenets from the book, as well as the lessons from ours and other studies, in a manner that might be more informative for small business owner/managers to consider - indeed, a Web presence primer for small business operators.

In the following sections we introduce the factors that small businesses should consider when setting up and maintaining their Web presence. Specific detail in relation to each of the areas is provided in the chapters in Parts Two and Three of the book. We will commence with a discussion of whether the small business is in a position to adopt a Web presence.

AT THE START: WEB PRESENCE READINESS

There are a number of reasons as to why a small business may not be ready to set up a Web presence. Small business owner/managers need to be aware of the various issues associated with organisational readiness for a Web presence. Performing a readiness assessment will assist businesses to address the barriers and opportunities relevant to adopting a Web presence and allow them to determine their most appropriate Web presence strategy. Armed with such knowledge, small businesses will be better positioned to engage in the process of analysing, developing and managing their Web presence.

Our own studies highlighted the importance of three major factors that can affect the e-readiness of a small business:

- *The outside environment.* This mainly revolves around whether there is suitable infrastructure available to set up a Web presence. It is not uncommon for there to be unreliable, slow or even no infrastructure in many developing countries or rural areas of developed countries.
- *The organisational environment.* Our studies showed the importance of organisational readiness, particularly in relation to having suitable technol-

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