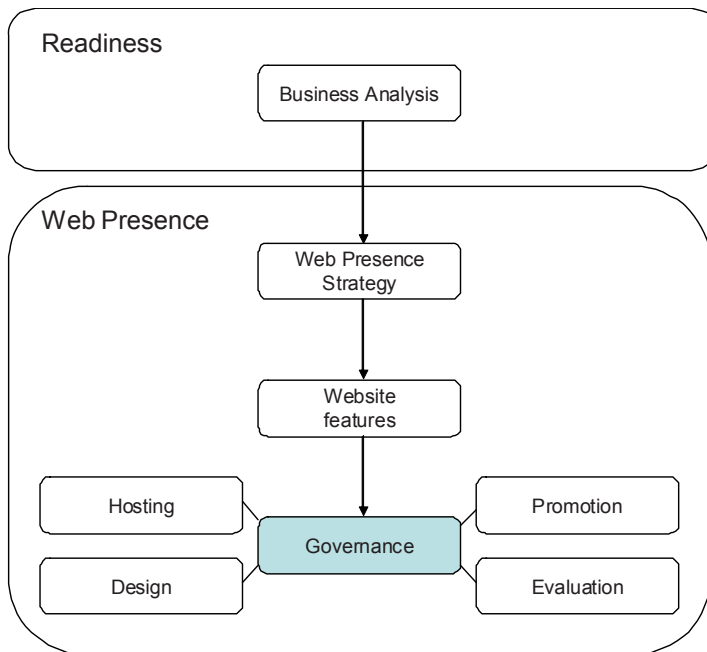


Chapter IX

Web Presence Governance



INTRODUCTION

The initial idea behind this chapter was to expand on the issue of security, predominantly in relation to ensuring that a small business operator would be confident that not only its own information was protected, but that customer information

derived via its Web presence was also safe and secure. However, it seemed more appropriate to expand the discussion in the chapter to how the security associated with a small business Website might fit into an overall business continuity plan and the general governance of a small business, including a discussion of ethical and cultural issues. The purpose of this chapter is not to be a primer on corporate governance and business continuity. However, the chapter does introduce various concepts associated with these areas for the purpose of identifying their importance to the running of the business.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Corporate governance is concerned with improving the performance of a company, allowing the commensurate benefits to flow to stakeholders, such as owners and employees. The particular characteristics of small businesses mean that the way they deal with corporate governance issues will be different from those associated with larger businesses. As previously stated in the book, many small businesses might not be interested in focusing on business growth, tending to concern themselves more with maintaining a lifestyle. These businesses tend to be satisfied as long as they survive on a day-to-day basis and can provide themselves and perhaps their employees a comfortable living.

One or two people usually make major decisions in small business, primarily the owner(s) and/or the managers(s) of the business. For them, governance is a combination of the views of the owner and the manner in which the business is run. It reflects the critical steps in the management of the business.

How does a small business access the knowledge and/or skills it requires to meet its regulatory or legislative requirements? These skills are often not available within the business, especially in the case of micro businesses. Our own research has found that it is common for the small business to engage an accountant as a primary source to provide appropriate guidance and assistance for the business with respect to compliance and regulatory requirements. On some occasions, accountants will also be asked for advice that might be seen as being outside their normal briefing activities - such as providing recommendations on aspects of computer systems and related Internet issues. In these situations, the small business operator should be directed to appropriate consultants that have relevant expertise with information technology. Clearly, there is a key message here. Often accountants are seen as a 'trusted' source for many aspects of business advice and it may be questionable to seek advice or engage them in areas where their expertise does not necessarily exist.

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