eBusiness Learning Modules

What are eSolutions? And the Questions to Ask for Each.

eSolutions are the typical applications for which businesses use the Internet for a wide range of business purposes. **eSolutions** are grouped into two major categories:

eCommerce – A range of business activities related to the buying and selling of products or services over electronic systems such as the Internet and other computer networks.

eProcess -   Leverages electronic systems such as the Internet and other computer networks as part of business operational processes

E-Commerce

Selling goods or services

Selling goods or services online can range from the simple taking of orders via a web site through to processing the order payment and delivery of the product or service. The suitability of selling online depends on the goods or services being offered and the target customer base. Retail products for consumers are often suitable for online sales through well-designed websites and a range of easily implemented and affordable payment systems are available. For other businesses with highly customizable products or small customer base, such as business-to-business sales, online sales may not include payment but may be satisfied with an online quotation request method.

Coach question examples:

- Let's map your current sale process and see where the best ROI exists. (i.e. calling for availability can be replaced by a shopping cart or availability calendar and can save business time in inquiry calls)
- What would be your process for shipping to customers and the cost as compared to unit cost? (i.e. Is it viable to expect customers to pay for shipping?)
- What is process for clients to decide whether to buy your product or not? (i.e. Return customers, customers who have used product or product that does not need to be tried makes it easier to sell a product online.)
- What are the pros and cons for YOUR business for selling online?

eBusiness Learning Modules

Purchasing goods or services

Purchasing goods or services online typically does not require any unique software or skills. However, there may be online marketplaces or clearing houses available for different types of business needs that can facilitate finding the right products or services at the best price, thus reducing business costs. Certain types of businesses with a standard list of suppliers may be able to link into supplier systems to procure goods as needed based on inventory demand.

Coaching question examples:

- Where and what do you currently purchase and have you tried sourcing them online?
- What are pros and cons you perceive about online procurement? (coach solutions and elements to develop an ROI review)

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources

- Selling Online
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Online Marketing, Security, Customer Support

Website for business

Business websites have become a virtual necessity for every type of business. They not only provide an online presence for your business to promote who you are, but they can provide a portal for selling online, promoting your products and services, supporting customer service, and generally helping you get found by customers from around the globe.

Coaching question examples:

- Do you have a website?
    - If yes… What works and doesn't work for you? Is it producing a) leads and b) sales?
    - If no… What is keeping you from getting a website? (i.e. If it is expertise, cost etc. please visit cloud module resource page for free website tools, they are easy and NO business should be without a website)

eBusiness Learning Modules

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources
- Selling Online: Resources section has website building tools and reviews
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Online Marketing, Cloud

Advertising and promotion

Whatever goods or services you offer; using the Internet for advertising and promotion of your business and products can open up new markets and expand your customer base. Your website can be used directly in your advertising and promotion efforts, but other methods also exist to use the Internet for advertising and promotion, including linking in to online marketplaces and trade sites, reciprocal relationships with related websites, using social networking, permission marketing, and more.

Coaching question examples:
- What is your current online marketing and promotion strategy?
  - If none then discuss target market… Where is the market online (i.e. social media, community online groups). Even local markets can be targeted with online advertising and promotion to the benefit of the company. (see the Online Marketing module)
  - If currently participating in online marketing discuss strategy and goals. See Online Marketing module for tips to enhance campaigns.

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources
- Online Marketing
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Selling Online, Customer Support

Deliver services and content online
Some services and content can be delivered directly online, especially products such as software, ebooks, and creative content such as videos. Some services may be accessed for use directly online rather than by download creating opportunities for recurring sales based on monthly subscriptions. The delivery of physical products can also be enabled and tracked through an online ordering process.

Coaching question examples:
- Do you currently deliver services online?
  - If no… What are your products and services?

o Can some of them be easily translated into an online product? (i.e. how-to videos, demos, eBooks etc.).
o Can they be used to market the company?
o Are their manuals, reports, or other written materials that can be put online?

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources

- Selling Online
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Online Marketing, Security, Customer Support, Cloud

Customer service and support

Online customer service and support can range from the basic provision of an email link to customer account access to providing live online support through text chat or even voice communication. Call center applications can be used to integrate customer support with client ordering systems. Providing improved customer support online can improve the customer experience and retention.

Coaching question examples:

- Do you have online customer support?
  - o If no… Visit the Customer Support module to brainstorm ideas. Ensure the business understands the boost in sales that can be gained with the right online customer support.
- What are the "busiest" aspects of your support and how would they look if automated?

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources

- Customer Support
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Cloud, Online marketing (Social Media)

Rich media or service creation

Rich media and service creation can provide a more valuable user experience to promote sales and to keep people coming back to your website. Creating 3-D views of products, multi-media presentations, and value-added tools, such as online calculators or map-based services, can create website traffic and support sales activities. Some content services may be suitable for recurring sales based on monthly subscriptions.

eBusiness Learning Modules

Coaching question examples:
- Do you currently use rich media?
    - If no... What are elements of your product sales, knowledge, support, training that are popular with customers?
    - How can we translate this to rich media (i.e. YouTube how-to video(s) for your website and newsletters)

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources
- Online Marketing (You Tube Section)
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Cloud

Research by staff

This most basic e-solution cannot be underestimated in its importance. Online access by your staff can provide effective use of resources for necessary research, whether it is for product development, market research, or keeping an eye on your competitors. Access to a world of information and research can assist in all aspects of business operations. Very little is required beyond good Internet access.

Coaching question examples:
- How are you using the internet to conduct business research? (explore)
- How does your staff research keywords for your website SEO?
    - If you conduct online marketing do you staff look for popular searches using Google Keywords Tool (See Online marketing SEO)

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources
- Google is the most popular and comprehensive search engine, and a natural starting point

E-Process

Supplier communication and coordination

Basic supplier communication and coordination is facilitated through email and RSS feeds. Where established and ongoing supplier relationships exist more sophisticated supplier communication and coordination applications may be suitable to help manage supply chains in coordination with your

eBusiness Learning Modules

business or production needs. For example, supplier orders can be generated based on your systems identifying parts required to meet production demand.

Coaching question examples:

- What are the most common supplier questions you get?
- How do you respond to them?
  - If it is not automated… Maybe a website FAQ or monthly newsletter using these as topics would be valuable.

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources

- Cloud
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Online Marketing (Vendor management) and Telework (Online Meetings).

Staff training and skills development

The value of staff training and skill development requires little explanation. Using online training methods can make training available to more staff on a flexible basis and significantly reduce training costs by eliminating travel and productivity impacts from out of office training. For in-house training materials can be provided online for self-paced learning and ongoing reference.

Coaching question examples:

- What are the most time consuming and or most valuable training you do?
  - Do you repeat it over and over in person for new staff?
  - Is it also of value to your customers/partners?
  - How could you do it more efficiently (i.e. online video, live streamed (remote work module), FAQ, website page, etc.?

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources

- Cloud
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Online Marketing (Vendor management) and Telework (Online Meetings)

eBusiness Learning Modules

Accessing collaborative tools

Online collaborative tools allow for easy sharing of information from any location and facilitate team collaboration and communication on shared activities. Collaborative tools have the added benefit of acting as an information repository for the business and reducing the incidence of working with out-of-date information. Effective use of collaborative tools enhances organizational productivity.

Coach question examples:

- Do you have times when staff can't access the information they need about a customer, a file, record, inventory, shipping info, etc.?
    - What happens when they can't? (problem)
    - Would it be of value if we could make all that available 24/7? (solution)
- What is the typical instance in which your staff needs access this information?

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources

- Cloud
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Online Marketing (Vendor management) and Telework (Online Meetings)

Telework

Teleworking, or telecommuting, provides the functionality for people to work remotely from home as effectively as if they are working in an office location. Effective teleworking requires a similar level of Internet access and computing capability in the home office as in the normal workplace, thus enabling the worker to operate at the same level in either environment. Teleworking enables businesses to access skilled employees outside of their local area and reduces ongoing operating costs related to office space. Teleworking is not suitable for every occupation, but research shows that teleworker are just as productive as their office-based counterparts.

Coaching question examples:

- It looks like you may need to access specific expertise for these **eSolutions** – is the expertise available internally?
    - If no… Have you considered a remote/teleworker to fill that need and what do we need to research to see if this could work for you?

- What are travel expenses for your company? Let's look at opportunity to reduce those through Telework (staff meetings, training, sales, conferences, etc.)

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources
- Telework
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Cloud

Social Networking

Social networking is a relatively new phenomenon that helps people connect with each other. From a business perspective having a presence through social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, can enhance communication with your customer base and provide another avenue of feedback on products and services. Social networking can also provide another means of communication among employees.

Coach question examples:
- What are elements of your product or service that customers are emotionally connected/responsive to?
- How do your customers provide word of mouth referrals – and is there an element of your services that gains the most traction in this area? (use for creating a social media plan)
- What are aspects of your target market that unite them in a social way like similar beliefs, things they like, read, clubs they belong to etc. (these can be used in finding social media channels and groups – see Online Marketing: social media)

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources
- Online Marketing (Social Media)
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Security, Customer Support

Access government information

An increasing amount of government information required for businesses is being made available online. Access to government information only requires Internet access and, in some cases, access to secure government accounts for your business. Keeping abreast of government information relevant to your business is important and online access makes this virtually immediate.

eBusiness Learning Modules

Coach question examples:

- What government information do you need and how can we automate its delivery to you? (look for newsletters, eUpdates, feeds etc.)

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources

- Your source for this can be found at your City, County, and State websites

Government transactions

Along with access to government information, many government services are becoming available for online transactions, such as submission of application forms and payments of fees and taxes. Use of online services for government transactions saves time and costs and reduces delays compared to traditional methods.

Coach question examples:

- What are your current government transactions?
- Can you conduct them electronically or automate them?
    - What would that look like and what government agencies (ones you deal with most frequently)?
    - Should we contact them to ascertain options?

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources

- Your source for this can be found at your City, County, State, and Federal websites

Banking and financial

Almost all financial institutions provide online services for transactions and viewing account status updated on a daily or real time basis. Some banks provide special value-added services online specifically for businesses to facilitate bookkeeping and other accounting needs. Using online financial services saves time and allows for conducting business transactions any time, 24/7.

Coach question examples:

- How do you currently bank? (If manual or in part manual explore online options which are often cheaper and faster)

eBusiness Learning Modules

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources

- Selling Online
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Security, Customer Support, Cloud

Electronic document transfer

Most businesses need to transfer documents, whether it is internally or between customers, partners, or suppliers. While sending attachments to email is a common practice, it is not necessarily the most convenient or secure method for transferring large and important files. Other systems can provide secure sharing of large documents online. Ensuring effective and secure document transfers for mission-critical documents is essential. In addition, some suppliers and customer require that key documents be transferred through their specific systems in order to do business with them.

Coach question examples:

- How are you currently transferring documents? (if faxing please look to online solutions)
- What is the level of sensitive information you handle and how are you securing it? (if sensitive materials, a third party versus in-house solution may be preferable – see Cloud Module and Ecommerce module)

eBusiness Learning Modules/Resources

- Cloud
- Supplemental information in the following modules: Selling Online, Security, Customer Support