

E-COMMERCE AND ONLINE BUSINESSES:
Notions on Information Technology and the Development of
Business Strategies in the Internet

Number of sessions: 30

Length of each session: 1,5 h

Total length of the module: 45 hours

OVERVIEW

The increasing development of information technologies (IT) has significantly affected both firms and markets. IT is currently changing the world in a more permanent and far-reaching way than any other technology in the history of mankind. A new economy, where knowledge is the most important strategic resource, is forcing firms to review their traditional routines and take advantage of the tools able to create new value. Meanwhile, the tool that is currently having the most significant effect in the business world is the Internet.

The Internet and the World Wide Web are revolutionizing the way people, businesses and governments transact business via electronic commerce (e-Commerce). This process is just beginning but is already having enormous impact on our activities and the way we relate to people and organisations. This course examines the major concepts that enable e-Commerce, including the Internet, security and privacy, software and hardware architectures, policy, legal and economic issues. The objectives of the course are to become familiar with the technologies, strategy and management issues associated with e-Commerce as well as to develop a good understanding of the risks in its use.

The course has the following main **learning objectives**:

- Analyse the state of the art of e-Commerce and the factors that have provoked its incredible growth worldwide.



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- Understand the technical underpinnings of e-Commerce, including steps to build up web presence, web server hardware and software, and web design.
- Understand the legal and fiscal environment of e-Commerce, specially in the Spanish (LSSICE)
- Understand the concepts related to marketing online and publicity in the Internet.
- Understand business models in the Internet and develop business strategies to conduct e-Commerce.

REQUIREMENTS

- Fluent in English

CONTENTS

Classes will be conducted in seminar format promoting student's participation. Attendance is not compulsory, but it is crucial to attain a satisfactory grade. It is important to remark that most of the theoretical material is needed to undertake the case studies and the presentations.

Fundamental theoretical notions and special issues in electronic commerce will be discussed in class and applied on case studies. Although there is a theoretical base, the class is mainly case study based.

The presentations: the objective of this assignment is to engage students deeply in the course material, and to allow students to contribute to class discussion with up-to-date information and analysis. The ideal presentation includes information and data on recent developments regarding the subject matter. In general, the focus of the presentations should be on business aspects of the discussed topics (business models, applications in business-related environments, impacts on industries). All material that is used for the presentation is analyzed critically and tied in to provide for a coherent and interesting story that becomes part of the overall class discussion. Students are encouraged to



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gather first-hand information, e.g., by contacting a representative of the respective e-commerce users, vendor firms, customers, competitors etc., and/or to include hand-on demonstration to support the presentation.

COURSE OUTLINE

1. Introduction to e-Business and e-Commerce
2. Technical aspects and infrastructure of e-Commerce
3. Selling on the Web
4. Marketing online
5. Legal environment in e-Commerce
6. Fiscal environment in e-Commerce
7. Case studies and presentations

GRADING

The final grade of each student is determined considering the following weights:

20% - Participation: Participation in class and involvement in class debates during presentations

35% - Case-study assignments: Quality and originality, as well as commitment will be considered.

45% - Final Case: The assignment will be evaluated according to the following criteria: **a)** Substance and overall effectiveness of presentation: How well has the student mastered the subject matter? Did the presentation go beyond a mere summary of the sources used for research and did it include critical commentary? Was the presentation up-to-date and did it manage to position recent developments with respect to established business methods, research, earlier developments etc.? Ability to answer questions and lead a discussion; **b)** Clarity: audibility, wording, flow of ideas; **c)** Persuasiveness and interactivity: credibility, eye contact, fun; **d)** Use of visual aids: clarity and readability; **e)** Clear organization of information.



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In groups of two to three, students will prepare their presentations, each of approximately 25 minutes and 20 minutes more for discussions. In the case of the final case, each group will choose one topic from a list of topics provided by the instructor. Each presentation will be given at a pre-defined date during the semester.

Students will also receive a mid-term feedback report including an assessment on the evolution of their learning process and recommendations for improvement.

In the case that the students want to receive specific feedback from the professor, they must ask for an appointment.

READINGS AND MATERIALS

All necessary readings as well as the case-study pack and additional material will be handed to you during the course. Also, the case studies and exercises are purchased from Harvard Business School (www.hbsp.harvard.edu) and from the European Case Clearing House (www.ecch.com)

In addition, the following book is complementary reading:

Laudon, K.C., Traver, C.G. (2009) E-Commerce. Business, Technology, Society. 5th Edition. Prentice-Hall