

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

**Use of the Internet
for Efficient International Trade**

Guide for SME Managers

Prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat



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PREFACE

This Guide is the outcome of a series of UNCTAD national and regional e-business training events organized in Geneva, Switzerland (2001); Chiangmai, Thailand (2002); Thimphu, Bhutan (2003); Phnom Penh, Cambodia (2003); and Kathmandu, Nepal (2003) in the framework of UNCTAD technical assistance projects aimed at strengthening the capacity of trade support institutions in Asian developing countries.

The publication is intended for use by managers of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and policy makers in developing countries as a reference manual for e-business. It should be of particular relevance for professionals in least developed countries (LDCs), as special efforts were made to include real-life examples (Bhutan and Cambodia) that highlighted both challenges and creative solutions found by entrepreneurs in those countries. More than 300 interviews and visits to SMEs were conducted in developed and developing countries alike, including LDCs, to make the publication even more relevant and useful. The valuable experiences described in its pages can be shared by all SMEs, no matter what the level of their countries' development.

The Guide contains a comprehensive review of doing business on the Internet. It explains the major technical and commercial features of the Internet and their potential impact on businesses in developing countries. Readers will acquire an in-depth understanding of the key success factors and pitfalls of Internet business applications. They will also learn how the Internet can be useful for each key function of import and export processes, based on an array of websites and Internet-based tools presented by way of illustration.

UNCTAD is strongly committed to capacity-building for SMEs in developing countries, particularly those located in the LDCs, so that they can realize the full potential of the Internet and information and communication technologies in supporting their attempts to trade internationally. E-business is a promising area, one which can offer SMEs new ways to participate in global markets. It is our hope that this publication will contribute to that end.

Rubens Ricupero
Secretary-General of UNCTAD

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