

The e-commerce revolution

Down 4-3-03 By Syed Haider Abbas Zaidi

e-commerce

BACK in 1969, French author Georges Perec wrote a 300-page novel, *A Void*, without once using the letter 'e'. In French, 'e' is deprived Perec of about seven-eighths of the language, and in English two-thirds of the tabulary.

Today, we can no more do without 'e' as it has done something magical to our economy, our businesses and our shopping trend. Just as the fashion world embraced brown as the 'new black' in the winter of 1996, the business world has now adopted e-commerce as the new trend.

However, this has also done something very effective and amazing. It has forced business concerns across the globe to accept the Internet revolution. There is also a growing realization that they need highly skilled staff to lead their moves online. But this is not easy. Universities and business colleges are striving hard to take lead in imparting quality education and training to their ambitious and eager students of e-commerce. Some of their courses are based on strategic elements, some others deal with technical areas in depth. There are also some courses combining both the subjects.

Of course, those who are engaged in practical e-business for a while may argue that in such a young market, putting your hands dirty through on-the-job experience is the only way to gain real e-commerce skills. Yet, according to experts, from both academia and commercial sector, one can get real benefits by acquiring e-business qualifications.

If you hire someone having insight the whys and wherefores of e-business, you won't have to spend more time and money to recruit who will start delivering only after going through the style and policy of your company.

For those willing to acquire a qualification, it is important to choose an institution maintaining objectivity and giving some sort of association

or affiliation with many business concerns, not just a couple of particular firms no matter how big or old.

Training and skills of e-commerce provide additional qualification to any person eligible to handle business related job. However, it supports the academic qualification, potential and experience of an MBA more significantly. So much so that e-commerce capability has become an essential requirement these days. To compete with rivals, most companies seeking international clientele have to employ agile brains to be assigned to handle communication with their counterparts having the same skills.

In order to produce qualified MBAs, as well as other graduates, with such skills, business institutions focus on raising

Karachi University, an MBA degree is the best vehicle for e-business channel. "The impact that e-business will have on traditional markets would be tremendous. But the technology is really the means to the end. So, we are teaching people how they can use the technology most effectively. In fact, the Internet is not merely a fast communication medium i.e. for e-mail exchange or online infor-

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mation gathering. If understood and used appropriately, it can be the new paradigm for marketing and corporate communications that can change the way businessmen and professionals perceive and transact business

to lose its importance to a great extent. Like education, entertainment and other fields of public interest, online marketing is also becoming buyer-centric swiftly and this can be gauged from the current strength of websites.

The organizations promoting virtual communities and their evolution and those predicting customer psychology and trends are at this moment moving fast towards the accomplishment of their mission. Gone are the days of traditional publicity budgets and traditional sales promotion techniques. To ensure access into maximum possible number of virtual communities in a minimum possible time, and also to make this access result-oriented, the most effective means is e-commerce.

E-commerce is a tool for busi-

a specific field and most of them did not know which one would lead them to the desired destination.

Asim Inam, a business executive, points out that over the past few years, 'systems' have turned out to be a favourite subject of specialization for people seeking an MBA degree. This trend is prompted by the high salaries with attractive packages offered by the employers engaged in website business in the related fields. Is it correct that to qualify for such a lucrative job, one has to acquire expertise in the field of systems? Isn't it enough for them to obtain a certificate, diploma or degree in some IT course? The students must make it sure that they had chosen the right subject of specialization for their career. Those interested

e-commerce have two options: a) learning general application of e-commerce to handle business affairs; b) learning application of specific technology. Type 'a' courses are suitable for an MBA, whereas type 'b' suits an IT (software) professional. Though both fields required almost the same training, the difference is the medium of service to be delivered. And the medium being not so ordinary demands a high degree of imagination and innovation from the learners.

With thousands more websites added to the millions of those already existing ones every week, MBAs' demand is rising because many of them need such professionals. The future of a large number of websites and, of course, the own organizations is unpredictable. We see that the websites strength is not the same as

was a few years back. As such their sustainability or survival rate in the future years cannot be predicted at this point of time. This indicates the risk factor. It doesn't mean that e-commerce revolution is short-lived. The professional in this field would have gained a lot in a very short time as their experience would open up plenty of avenues related to their career. ■



awareness on e-commerce, understanding the drivers for change, other e-businesses techniques and strategies for e-commerce in their training courses. They also provide an insight to the students to understand and undertake a project to be assigned to them by a commercial firm.

According to Syed Ashraf Wasti, Professor of Applied Economics Research Centre at

over the next century."

In our country, such a revolutionary change is possible only when our corporate planners and marketing strategists looked beyond the traditional marketing and business techniques.

Amid the swift growth of virtual communities, the role of traditional media like newspaper, television, cinema and even the salesmanship is bound

ness, not a business technique. An expertise in e-commerce did involve many other things, top on all being the approach on trends, competition, costing, evaluation, etc. that is related to the qualifications of a good MBA.

Students are often found confused over the appropriate field for themselves to work. Before entering into the world of business, they have to select