Foreword

I consider it an honour and a privilege to be given the opportunity to write the Foreword to this book, as it provides the results of many investigations into the use of the Internet by small business.

Over many years of research the authors have noted a change from basic technologies that promote a more efficient operation to now where Websites attached to the Internet are employed to engage customers and contribute to the effectiveness of the business.

Small businesses are unique (Belich and Dubinsky, 1999; and Pollard and Hayne, 1998). They contribute significantly to a nation's economy. Also, as a sector it represents the largest employer.

Yet small businesses suffer from resource poverty (Thong et al, 1994). They lack time, money, and skills. Thus, managers of small businesses tend to make short term decisions (Bridge and Peel, 1999; and Hunter et al., 2002) focusing upon minimal commitments (Stevenson, 1999). This approach seems contradictory to the decision making necessary to invest in the development of Websites. Thus, as you will find in this book, small business managers have come to recognize the benefits of both Websites and the Internet.

My own research into information systems and small business has found similar results. Pugsley et al. (2000) and later Hunter et al. (2002) determined that the adoption of information systems increased small business dependency on either an internal or external entity. Further, most adoptions of information systems have been to support efficiency of operations. These findings were further substantiated internationally (Hunter, 2005a; Hunter, 2005b; and Hunter et al, 2005).

The readers of this book will appreciate its format and organization. In Section I, the context for information and communication technologies and small business is presented via a discussion of relevant research projects and the lessons for small businesses presented throughout the book are summarised. This discussion then proceeds, in Section II, into the readiness of small business for adoption of

I consider it an honour and a privilege to be given the opportunity to write the Foreword to this book, as it provides the results of many investigations into the use of the Internet by small business.

Over many years of research the authors have noted a change from basic technologies that promote a more efficient operation to now where Websites attached to the Internet are employed to engage customers and contribute to the effectiveness of the business.

Small businesses are unique (Belich and Dubinsky, 1999; and Pollard and Hayne, 1998). They contribute significantly to a nation's economy. Also, as a sector it represents the largest employer.

Yet small businesses suffer from resource poverty (Thong et al, 1994). They lack time, money, and skills. Thus, managers of small businesses tend to make short term decisions (Bridge and Peel, 1999; and Hunter et al., 2002) focusing upon minimal commitments (Stevenson, 1999). This approach seems contradictory to the decision making necessary to invest in the development of Websites. Thus, as you will find in this book, small business managers have come to recognize the benefits of both Websites and the Internet.

My own research into information systems and small business has found similar results. Pugsley et al. (2000) and later Hunter et al. (2002) determined that the adoption of information systems increased small business dependency on either an internal or external entity. Further, most adoptions of information systems have been to support efficiency of operations. These findings were further substantiated internationally (Hunter, 2005a; Hunter, 2005b; and Hunter et al, 2005).

The readers of this book will appreciate its format and organization. In Section I, the context for information and communication technologies and small business is presented via a discussion of relevant research projects and the lessons for small businesses presented throughout the book are summarised. This discussion then proceeds, in Section II, into the readiness of small business for adoption of the necessary technology; and subsequently the strategy and planning required to prepare for the establishment of a Web presence. In Section III, the chapters discuss issues surrounding implementation and evaluation of Websites. Finally, Section IV presents comments about future innovations.

Various stakeholders will appreciate the material contained in this book. Academics will find leading edge discussion and analysis of the application of information and communications technologies to small business. Researchers will be presented with novel approaches and intriguing findings in this subject area. Students will see how small business is using information and communication technologies. This will be of interest to students of small business as well as those studying information and communications technologies. Of course, Web developers and small business consultants will discover many ideas which may be employed in their own interactions with small business. Finally, small business owners and managers will be able

to determine the necessary approach and steps to be taken to ensure readiness for and the subsequent establishment of a Web presence.

The authors bring 25 years of combined experience and research into small business and the use of information and communications technologies. This represents extensive authority and significant longevity in such a new area of investigation.

As stated earlier, I am honoured to write this Foreword and to recommend this book. The issues presented and discussed here are current and provide an important context regarding small business and the use of information communication technologies to establish a Web presence.

M. Gordon Hunter
Professor Information Systems
The University of Lethbridge
Alberta, CANADA
Editor, Book Series
Advances in Global Information Management
August, 2008

__M. Gordon Hunter__ is a professor of information systems in the Faculty of Management at The University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. He has also been appointed visiting professor, Faculty of Business, Computing and Information Management, London South Bank University. Gordon has previously held academic positions at universities in Canada, Hong Kong, and Singapore. He has held visiting positions at universities in Australia, England, Germany, Monaco, New Zealand, Turkey, and USA. During July and August of 2005 Gordon was a Visiting Erskine Fellow at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. He has a bachelor's of Commerce degree from the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada and a PhD from Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. Gordon has also obtained a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) designation from the Society of Management Accountants of Canada. He is a Chartered Information Technology Professional (CITP) and member of the British Computer Society. Gordon is also a member of the Canadian Information Processing Society (CIPS), where he has obtained an Information Systems Professional (ISP) designation. He has extensive experience as a systems analyst and manager in industry and government organizations in Canada. Gordon is an associate editor of the Journal of Global Information Management. He serves on the editorial board of Information and Management, The International Journal of E-Collaboration, and The Journal of Global Information Technology Management. Gordon is also a member of the Advisory Board for the Journal of Information, Information Technology, and Organizations. Gordon has published articles in MIS Quarterly, Information Systems Research, the Journal of Strategic Information Systems, the Journal of Global Information Management, Information Systems Journal, and Information, Technology and People. He has conducted seminar presentations in Australia, Canada, England, Europe, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, Turkey, and USA. Gordon's research approach takes a qualitative perspective employing personal construct theory and narrative inquiry to conduct in depth interviews. He applies qualitative techniques in interdisciplinary research such as multi-generation small business, recruitment and retention of medical doctors, and cross-cultural investigations. His current research interests in the information systems (IS) area include the effective development and

implementation of IS with emphasis on the personnel component; the role of chief information officers; and the use of IS by small business.

REFERENCES

Belich, T. J., & Dubinsky, A. J. (1999). Information Processing Among Exporters: An Empirical Examination of Small Firms. J*ournal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 7*(4), 45-58.

Bridge, J., & Peel, M. J. (1999). A Study of Computer Usage and Strategic Planning in the SME Sector. *International Small Business Journal, 17*(4), 82-87.

Hunter, M. G., Burgess, S., & Wenn, A. (2005). The Use of Information Systems by Small Business: An International Perspective. In M. G.Hunter, S. Burgess, & A. Wenn (Eds.), *Small Business and Information Technology: Research Issues and International Case Studies*. Melbourne, Australia: Heidelberg Press.

Hunter, M. G. (2005a). International Information Systems and Small Business Project: A Western Canadian Perspective. In M. G.Hunter, S. Burgess, & A. Wenn (Eds.), *Small Business and Information Technology: Research Issues and International Case Studies*. Melbourne, Australia: Heidelberg Press.

Hunter, M. G. (2005b). Information Systems and Small Business: Stakeholder Considerations. In M. Khosrow-Pour (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology*, Volume I-V. Hershey, PA: Idea Group Publishing.

Hunter, M. G., Diochon, D., Pugsley, D., & Wright, B. (2002). Unique Challenges for Small Business Adoption of Information Technology: The Case of the Nova Scotia Ten. In S. Burgess (Ed.), *Managing Information Technology in Small Business: Challenges and Solutions*. Hershey, PA: Idea Group Publishing.

Pollard, C., & Hayne, S. (1998). The Changing Faces of Information Systems Issues in Small Firms. *International Small Business Journal, 16*(3), 70-87.

Pugsley, D., Wright, B., Diochon, M., & Hunter, M. G. (2000). Information Technology and Small Business: Listening to Voices from the Field. *Proceedings of the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada* (ASAC) Conference, July 8-11, Montreal, Canada.

Stevenson, H. H. (1999). A Perspective of Entrepreneurship. In H. H. Stevenson, I. Grousebeck, M. J. Roberts, & A. Bhide (Eds.), *New Business Ventures and the Entrepreneur*, (pp.3-17). Boston: Irwin McGraw-Hill.

Thong, J., Yap, C., & Raman, K. (1994). Engagement of External Expertise in Information Systems Implementation. J*ournal of Management Information Systems, 1I*(2), 209-223.