

- **Know whether you want to outsource or use in-house experts.** For maximum control, the latter route is preferable; the disadvantage is its expense, and it may not be suitable for smaller companies. Outsourcing the electronic commerce infrastructure is an attractive solution for small businesses.
- **Evolve.** With standards being defined and key software (such as browsers) changing rapidly, evolution and adaptability are the keys to a successful electronic commerce site.
- **Be flexible.** Flexibility involves customer needs as well as technological needs. Businesses need to be flexible enough to accommodate varying customer needs including reverse credit, support and ensured satisfaction.
- **Create a business framework.** This guideline encompasses defining business processes and building relationships with customers and vendors.
- **Anticipate hurdles.** Some hurdles, such as expansion, will be anticipated. Others will not.

Case Study

Cooking Up an E-Commerce Solution

El Pote de Cobre is a retail chain that sells copper cooking utensils. The chain has 10 stores, located throughout Mexico. The company does not currently have a presence on the Internet. Tina has been hired as a consultant to help the company design an e-commerce solution. She must assess the benefits, costs and risks of implementing an e-commerce site and make recommendations to the company.

Tina analyzes the company's current business model and determines that the company should immediately proceed with an offline solution that implements full transactional support. She recommends implementing the site in only Spanish at first, and then phasing in other languages as the budget permits.

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As a class, discuss the following issues with regard to El Pote de Cobre.

- What benefits will be gained by offering products for sale on the Internet?
- What risks are involved in offering products for sale on the Internet?
- Should the company use the implementation approach suggested by Tina? If not, how would you change the implementation phases?
- What advantages are provided by offering an English version of the Web site?
- Tina has recommended using an offline solution. Is this the best choice?