

EC-NOW Final Report

PROMISE
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EC-NOW
Electronic Commerce, Wholesale, Retail, North-West



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3 Executive Summary

3.1 Context

Experiences made so far in implementing e-business solutions among companies at regional level have shown that it is not sufficient just to organize users and suppliers individually. Users expect solutions that are ready to be plugged into their businesses and immediately yield a profit.

The approach of EC-NOW for solving this problem is to introduce a networking agent as an intermediary between users (i.e. retailers) on the one hand and suppliers (i.e. wholesalers) on the other.

In order to test the right methodology for a networking agent being a new and efficient tool to raise actively awareness among SMEs in e-business issues two different approaches have been implemented:

- The approach in Bremen was to use external know-how with specific experiences in developing e-business solutions. The rationale was to take a professional with good access to companies working under the instructions of the ministry.
- The approach of OFFIS was to integrate the networking agent in its staff and to implement the working method as permanent business.

3.2 Objectives

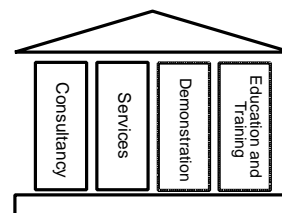
- Initiating practical and innovative e-commerce-projects – not: general and broad activities to raise awareness.
- Initiating innovative "multi-lateral" e-commerce projects for sectors or at least a number of interested SME's of a sector – not: assistance in implementing an online-shop for individual companies.
- Working on a concrete number of projects to be fulfilled: 5 consortia per partner (Bremen/Oldenburg) / 3 running projects by the end of the project.
- Concerning the European dimension of the project: To raise awareness among executives in order to take advantage of new – and European - markets provided by ICT and to demonstrate means of integration in existing networks in order to improve opportunities in a global market. Furthermore, to identify and share best practice of electronic commerce in Member States for the later benefit of companies. This is an additional value of an interregional cooperation.

3.3 Process

The networking agents shall realize the following steps:

- Finding open doors: The first step in the agent's work is to find local and regional companies that are willing to invest in a best practice eCommerce solution.
- Finding Best Practice: In parallel to the first step, the agent would need to find examples of best practice of eCommerce. These examples will be demonstrated by executives and will serve as a "how-to-do".

- Demonstrating Solutions: After “finding open doors”, the next step is to inform executives about best practice in eCommerce, by demonstrating existing solutions.
- Coordinating the Set up and Formation of Consortia: One of the main steps in the agent's work is to stimulate the formation of consortia of companies. This step is critical for the success of the agent's work. The companies must be convinced that indeed there is the potential for a common eCommerce project. Based on this conviction legal consortia can be established.
- Coaching up to Feasibility: After the basic concepts have been declared the project must be coached until its feasibility has been proven.
- Trans-regional Networking: The regional projects can only be best practice if they have a trans-regional, European dimension. Therefore, the networking of the regional projects with other European best practice examples is a essential part of the work.



Due to practical experiences, the order of the workpackages has been modified, in order to guarantee a practical result.

3.4 Results

Some concrete consortia have been brought in the position to prepare business plans or at least concepts for the implementation of sector-oriented e-business-solutions.

3.5 Impact and Achievements

Methodology

- During EC-NOW it turned out that the networking agent fills a gap between concrete interests of companies to start e-commerce-activities and the actual implementation of a project.
- A list of success-criteria for the set up of e-business-consortia has been made out.
- An awareness model has been developed demonstrating where the services of the networking agent seem to be most helpful.

Effects within the regional structural policy:

- The networking agent method has been incorporated as a systematic tool for IS awareness in the Bremen Ministry's strategy for the next years and is intended to be incorporated as one part of the regional programme within EFRE (objective 2).
- As far as Oldenburg is concerned, the networking agent method will be continued in the it.net initiative, a competence network for ICT as part of the Regional Innovation Strategy Weser-Ems.
- A consortium of IT-consultants have prepared a proposal for the 5 RTD, based on the EC-NOW experiences.
- In Bremen, a second networking agent has been launched for the handycraft sector.
- Also in Bremen, a structure has been developed to integrate the networking agent tool in a strategy for economic development in e-business issues.

3.6 Contact

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