E-COURSE
REVIEWS

Differentiating between e-business and e-commerce can be confusing. *E-business* is an umbrella term for using electronic means (including the Internet) to enable business practices. *E-commerce* focuses on the selling of products in an online store format. But within each, nuts-and-bolts concerns such as Internet technology, legal issues, and payment options arise. Lguide reviews the e-business training offerings from four publishers and finds that each is strong in its coverage of the essentials.

Highly Recommended

★★★1/2   *Building e-Businesses Series:* 7 hours, US$585 for 1 year of course access. Publisher: Harvard Business Online

Harvard Business Online's three e-business courses focus on business strategy. The courses introduce e-business models and the methods used to modify and choose among them; examine the Amazon.com strategy to discuss value in the Internet economy; and explore how Internet-based digital infrastructure affects business structures, alliances, and operating models.

Each course consists of five sections, which include video clips of e-business experts, case studies, PDF worksheets, and a 10-question quiz. Navigation is straightforward, with a detailed table of contents and progress tracking.

Rich, college-level content makes this series the deepest source of e-business information of the publishers reviewed here.

★★★1/2   *E-Business Series:* 12 hours, pricing models vary by user or organization. Publisher: Quisic

Quisic's e-business series consists of six courses and one simulation. Like many e-business series, Quisic's starts with an overview of technical terms and economic issues, then moves on to strategic issues such as offensive and defensive competitive models. Some courses use case studies and interviews with e-business experts.

In addition to the courses, Quisic offers an e-business simulation, in which the learner is given the task of managing an online initiative. Progress is tracked by financial graphs and charts, as well as the stock price of the fictional company. Feedback comes in the form of emails from fictional peers, the CEO, and customers.

Quisic's e-business courses should give learners a solid understanding of e-business strategy. Each course strikes a balance between broad content and detail. Courses are also even-handed in their topics, presenting pitfalls as well as advantages for each model.

Recommended

★★★   *E-Business Solution Series, E-Commerce Planning Series:* 50 hours, pricing models vary by user or organization. Publisher: DigitalThink

DigitalThink offers five lengthy courses on e-business and e-commerce covering a wide range of topics:
- legal, structural, security, integration, and payment issues
- storyboarding, transactions, and administration
- e-business models and the technologies needed to implement them.

The courses offer comprehensive content, but they look like textbooks. The graphics are useful and informative, but infrequent. Some pages offer optional audio narration. An excellent interactive course syllabus shows learner progress and allows seamless navigation to different sections.

★★★   *E-Business Solutions Series:* 30+ hours, pricing models vary by user or organization. Publisher: SmartForce

Titles include "Building an E-Business," "CRM for E-Business," and "The E-Business Revolution." Courses include real-life case studies of companies that have exhibited the e-business traits under discussion. Chapter quizzes use matching and multiple-choice questions. Some courses consist of slide shows synched to streaming video of interviews with business professors. SmartForce's interface is easy to use.

The overall course structure is based on modular learning objects. Because each learning object is independent, modules don't flow well from one to another, resulting in a lack of course cohesion. Some lessons are oversimplified, while others are text heavy.

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These ratings are independent of ASTD Certification Institute's E-Learning Courseware Certification.

At a Glance

★★★1/2   **Building e-Businesses Series:** Focuses on strategy. In-depth material, frequent examples, clear navigation.
★★★1/2   **E-Business Series:** Strong case studies and explanations. In-depth simulation in a separate course.
★★★   **E-Business Solution Series, E-Commerce Planning Series:** Clean design, detailed content, relevant information. Text-heavy interface.
★★★   **E-Business Solution Series:** Coverage is broad, but could be deeper. Clear navigation.