Six Mistakes of the Enterprises’ E-commerce Strategies

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Abstract: E-commerce is a strategic issue in Chinese enterprises. But at present, they have six mistakes-incomplete understanding of the significance of e-commerce, unknowing of its conditions and requirements, ill-timed entrance, unscientific fixation of strategic targets, ambiguous strategic guiding ideology and false developing priorities and approaches.

Key words: corporate e-commerce; strategy; mistake

Chinese website based on Web technology has gone through the high birth rate phase and has come into the high death rate phase or merging phase. When enterprises running websites with web technology are successively gun-shy, many Chinese operative enterprises have experienced a process from high expectation to pessimism to wait-and-see. It is a strategic issue instead of opening up a project for an enterprise to develop e-commerce. Therefore, it must be designed and planned from the strategic level all problems in implementation. Meanwhile, it must be put in line with the enterprise’s total strategies. During the craze for e-commerce a few years ago, many enterprises established their own web pages or even websites. Because they did it without a detailed analysis and research and without long- mid- and short-term strategic plans, they failed to achieve the success as they had expected. Reviewing and rationally analyzing the developing course of Chinese e-commerce, we think that it has the following strategic mistakes.

1. Incomplete understanding of the significance of e-commerce

Since 1997, especially in 1998, media propaganda about Chinese e-commerce has been seen endlessly. It has been the hottest topic in IT industry. Misguided by the media, people in e-commerce even believed that they could become new-rich overnight with e-commerce. Driven by this thought, people crowded into the e-commerce Titanic. They spent large amounts of money on e-commerce advertisements, just as on Internet. This momentary enthusiasm for e-commerce led directly to people’s malformed outlook on it-an incomplete understanding of its significance and an over-high expectation of it.

The effect of e-commerce on the operative enterprise lies in that it would propel the enterprise upgrade its total level of its whole management process including R&D, provision, manufacture and sales. Only if the total level be upgraded, could the enterprise improve its operative performance and successively heighten its comprehensive competitiveness. E-commerce competition and its outcome would be reflected by competing enterprise’s comprehensive competitiveness-its product competitiveness, its managerial capacity, its technologic innovating capacity as well as other auxiliary factors. Any incomplete understanding of e-commerce or eager for
quick success would result in neglect of its strategic significance. According to a latest survey of e-commerce outlook- www.cc.gatech.edu/gyu/user_surveys, most governors thought of e-commerce as establishing websites to elevate their capacity of marketing, advertising, selling and customer serving. As for e-commerce types, most conceived it as an application of B2C. Popular up to now are the following viewpoints-by establishing a website, offering supply information, providing order input and accepting service-after-sale information, e-commerce may raise customers’ loyalty and the enterprise’s competitiveness; or it may quickly elevate the enterprise’s sales amount, even cause the enterprise become new-rich overnight.

2. Unknowing of the conditions and requirements develop e-commerce

Analyzed from a deep level, a corporate e-commerce system involves three elements. The first is its function to support marketing, advertising, selling and customer serving. The second is its background applied system and quick responding system to support electronic business and information treatment. The last is its competitive coordinate function to support efficient information exchange and technological innovation. To simply classify the above three elements, we may define an enterprise’s interior and exterior conditions to develop e-commerce.

As many media have propagandized, an enterprise’s interior conditions for e-commerce refer to the hardware—a computer, a telephone line and a modem, the software—an ISP account, Winsock software, e-mail software, a Web browser and other Internet applications. In fact, in addition to the above, it includes more stuff conditions, such as specialized web page or website maintenance staff, a quickly responding material flow and information flow management system concerning every respect of the enterprise from supply, production, sales to management, a R&D capacity to quickly track and satisfy customers' individualized demands, and an information exchange system to support co-operation with strategic partners.

The exterior conditions generally involve a simple Internet payment system, a quickly responding delivery system, a secure and reliable credit system including merchant’s, bank’s and individual’s credit, a wholesome law and regulation system, as well as people’s e-commerce sense.

At present, many people have a very shallow and unilateral understanding of e-commerce. According to them, an enterprise may develop e-commerce with only 10 ten thousand yuan to buy the hardwares and softwares mentioned above. They neglect the supporting conditions of interior qualities and exterior environment.

3. Ill-timed entrance into e-commerce

It is no doubt that e-commerce would be the trend of trading in the future. Its application and spread would bring great benefits for the society and economy. It would be the biggest economic growth point. While, all enterprises are not suitable to roundly develop e-commerce at any time. Just as an enterprise should market its newly developed product at a proper time, they should seek for a right time to enter
e-commerce in the light of its interior and exterior conditions. A premature entrance would cost the enterprise too much time and money in waiting. While, a too late one would lead the enterprise to miss commercial opportunities. The present high death rate of Chinese e-commerce websites and the ill performance of e-commerce in many enterprises very well account for this.

When an enterprise choose to enter e-commerce and time their entrance, they should consider microscopic and macroscopic factors—the national income which would decide the number of consumers on Internet and the income elasticity coefficient of e-commerce demand; the consumers’ acceptance of e-commerce; the present situation of national laws, regulations and policies concerning e-commerce; the environment and level of e-commerce in the specific industry; support from related industries such as financial industry; suitability of the enterprise’s characteristics of production process, product and services; regional characteristics of the enterprise’s market orientation; the enterprise’s qualities.

It is worthy of attention that the enterprise must have a proper advance period before their conditions have matured. During this period, the enterprise may establish or improve its e-commerce system. In addition, they may upgrade their internal management level, especially their qualities.

4. Unscientific fixation of strategic targets for e-commerce

According to Zwass, the e-commerce is intended to share commercial information, maintain business relationship and accomplish commercial behaviors through telenet. It not only includes business behaviors, but also the total process to support this target. According to Kalakota and Whinston, e-commerce consists of four information technologies. They are the technology of information exchange through E-mail and Fax, technology of establishing a shareable net database to improve the enterprise’s interior operational level and exterior strategic partnership, and the technology of establishing an electronic website to upgrade the enterprise’s capacity of marketing, advertising, selling and customer serving.

However, Chinese enterprises’ present conditions for e-commerce, whether interior or exterior conditions are not mature yet, and they are not supposed to come up to these requirements at the very beginning. Strategically, the enterprise must make a scientific, feasible and graded target, which would help realize e-commerce and more importantly would help upgrade the enterprise’s comprehensive competitiveness.

A great mistake in e-commerce development of Chinese enterprises is their unscientific fixation of their strategic targets. According to the development strategy theory, when making strategies, people should take into consideration their enterprises’ demands in different stages, make development targets of different stages and then define their tasks and priorities of different stages. Most enterprises’ principal target of e-commerce is to increase orders, without long- or mid-term targets including development of B2B, development of informationalization, improvement of relationship with customers, development of R&D, managerial innovation, and so on. The development of e-commerce without a long-term goal is destined to be
short-lived.

5. Ambiguous strategic guiding ideology

E-commerce is an important strategic measure and an important means to upgrade the enterprise's competitiveness, so the ideology guiding the development of e-commerce is supposed to be aimed at fostering good competitive environment and elevate the enterprise's competitiveness. The enterprise's e-commerce strategy should be coordinate with its total development strategies and be helpful to enhance implementation of its total strategies.

However, many Chinese enterprises, especially those small and mid-sized ones are developing e-commerce without strategies. Most of them are attending to trifles but neglecting essentials. Their strategic target-if it could be said to be strategic-to develop e-commerce is limited to e-commerce itself. Many e-commerce websites are pursuing for so-called "attention" economy or "eyeball" economy. That is, they judge the reasonability of a website by the standard of click ratio. They are developing e-commerce for e-commerce itself but neglect the requirements of the total strategies and improvement of the enterprise's comprehensive quality and competitiveness.

6. False developing priorities and approaches

An enterprise's e-commerce involves their upstream and downstream businesses-B2B and B2C. These two businesses have different requirements for the enterprise's interior quality and exterior environment. They also have different developing potentials and different functions.

At present, most Chinese enterprises' e-commerce is oriented to B2C. Nevertheless, according to statistics, its national retail amount in 1999 was only 5500 ten thousand, accounting for 0.18% of the gross national retail sales of consumer goods. At present, there exist the following problems in the development of B2C. Firstly, payment system and delivery system on Internet are immature. Secondly, informationalization is low-leveled and the social credit system is imperfect. Thirdly, infrastructures of informationalization are weak. Fourthly, consumers have not yet formed scales. Finally, legislation of e-commerce is lagged behind.

Compared with B2C, B2B based on Extranet has the following advantages. Firstly, compared with other forms of e-commerce, it has a weaker requirement for security certification, delivery system and related laws. Secondly, it connects the enterprise with their main suppliers, distributors, customers and co-operating organizations, who are the principal contributors to the sustainable development of the enterprise. Thirdly, its development based on Extranet would enable the enterprise to build up knowledge, technology and managerial experience necessary for e-commerce. Finally, some large and mid-sized enterprises have established EDI system and its auxiliary system, MRPII/ERP, and thus they have accumulated experience, knowledge and equipment for trans-organizational operation.

To sum up, the development of Chinese e-commerce has not yet been put into consideration of the strategic level. So, propaganda and education must be strengthened to correct wrong ideas, convincing the enterprises that development of e-commerce has still a long way to go, and eventually promoting healthy development
of Chinese e-commerce and upgrading Chinese enterprises’ competitiveness in international markets.

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企业电子商务发展中的六个误区

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摘 要：企业电子商务是一个重要的战略问题，中国企业目前存在对电子商务的意义认识不全面、条件要求不明、切入时机把握不准、战略目标定位不科学、战略指导思想不清、发展的重点和途径有误等六大误区。

关键词：企业电子商务，战略，误区

中国基于 Web 技术的网站已经经历了“高出生率”阶段，进入了“高死亡率”和并购阶段，在基于 Web 技术的网站经营企业一片风声鹤唳的同时，中国众多生产经营型企业对企业电子商务也经历了从寄予厚望到悲观和观望的过程。企业发展电子商务不是一个项目开发问题，而是一个重要的战略问题，需要从战略的高度来规划和设计其发展过程中的各种问题，同时，必须与企业的总体战略相协调。在前几年的“电子商务热”中，许多企业没有进行详细的分析和研究，并在此基础上制定科学的长期和中、短期发展战略规划，盲目开发了企业的网页甚至是网站，而实际上并没有取得开始时预期的业绩。回顾这几年中国企业电子商务发展的历程，基于理性的分析，我们认为，从战略学的角度考虑，中国企业电子商务在理论和实践中存在如下的误区。

一、企业发展电子商务的条件要求不明

从 1997 年开始，尤其是在 1998 年，中国电子商务的媒体宣传一浪高过一浪，成为近两
年来 IT 业最热门的话题之一。在媒体的误导下，中国电子商务业界人士甚至相信电子商务
能够一夜致富。在这种心态下，人们一窝蜂挤上电子商务这艘铁达尼号上来，在电子商务
随联网大流，大肆烧钱做广告的同时，也怂恿了众多生产经营企业对开发电子商务的
头脑发热，导致了企业对发展电子商务的条件要求不明和希
望过高并存的畸形发展观。

从电子商务对生产经营企业本身的作用而言，其意义在于对企业和从研发、供应、生产、销售的生产经营全过程和经营管理整体水平提升的推动作用，只有这种整体水平的提升才能真正带来企业经营业绩特别是企业综合竞争力的持续提升。电子商务竞争及其竞争结果最终将反映在参与企业的综合竞争力——产品竞争力、管理能力、技术创新能力和其他辅助因素上。对电子商务狭义的理解或者对电子商务急功近利，都可能忽略电子商务潜在的战略意义。然而，由于媒体的片面宣传加上众多电子商务公司别有用心的广告和推销，使众多生产经营企
业仅仅热衷于其中的销售作用。最近一次电子商务观调查（www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user_surveys）中，多数管理者认为电子商务就是建立网站，提高市场销售、广告、销售和支持能力。对于电子商务类型，多数管理者认为电子商务应是“B2C”应用。那种认为“建立了网站、发布供求信息、提供接受订单输入、接受售后信息服务”就是“电子商务提高了客户忠诚度和提高了竞争力”，“就能快速提高企业的销售业绩，甚至是使企业一夜暴富”的想法到目前为止还是很普遍的。

二、企业对发展电子商务的条件要求不明

企业发展电子商务从深层次分析，主要包括三个方面的要素：(1) 支持市场营销、广告、销售和客户支持的功能；(2) 支持电子商务、信息处理的后台应用系统和敏捷的反应系统；
（3）支持高效的信息交流和技术创新的竞争性 R&D 协作功能。对以上三要素进行简单的划分，实际上就可以明确企业发展电子商务必须具备的内外部条件。

从内部条件而言，真正高效的企业电子商务系统除了目前大多数媒体所宣传的应配备的基本硬件设施（一台计算机、一根电话线、一台调制解调器和软件（一个 ISP 帐号、Winsock 软件、电子邮件软件、Web 浏览器及其它的应用软件））条件外，还包括更多、更复杂的企业素质条件，如专业的网站（网页）维护人员；支持快速反应的物流和信息流（包括企业供应、生产、销售和管理的各个方面）管理系统；能快速跟踪和满足用户个性化需求的研究与开发能力；支持企业与战略伙伴协作的信息交流系统等等。

从外部条件而言，大体上包括简捷的网上支付、快速反应的实物配送、安全可靠的信用（包括商家、银行和个人信用）健全的法律法规以及人们的电子商务意识等。

目前，我国大多数企业对发展电子商务条件的认识相当肤浅和片面，许多企业以为只要花上 10 多万元甚至更少的资金，购买如前所述的上网的基本硬件和软件，就可以开展电子商务，忽视了企业内部的素质和外部环境的支持条件。

三、对企业发展电子商务切人时机把握不准

勿庸讳言，电子商务代表着未来贸易方式的发展方向，其应用和推广将给社会和经济带来极大的效益，电子商务将成为全球经济的最大增长点之一。然而，并不是任何企业在任何时候都适合全面开展电子商务业务，就象企业开发的新产品必须在适当的时间投放市场一样，企业必须根据内外部的条件寻找合适的时机切入电子商务。过早的进入会消耗大量的等待时间和费用，而过晚的进入又便会企业丧失发展的商机。目前，国内电子商务网站高死亡率的现象说明了这一点，众多企业发展电子商务目前的业绩并不理想也说明了这个问题。

企业在选择是否发展电子商务以及切入时机的时候，必须综合考虑从宏观经济到微观多方面的复杂因素，这其中主要包括：(1) 国民收入水平。国民收入水平主要决定消费者个体上网的人数及对电子商务需求的收入弹性系数的大小。(2) 消费者对电子商务观念上的接受程度。(3) 国家电子商务相关法律、法规、政策的状况。(4) 行业电子商务发展的环境及水平。(5) 商业、金融业等相关产业对电子商务的支持状况。(6) 企业生产过程、产品和服务的特点是否适合发展电子商务。(7) 企业市场定位的区域特点。(8) 企业本身的素质条件是否能满足发展电子商务的要求。等等。

值得注意的是，企业发展电子商务必须在条件完全成熟之前有一个适当的“提前期”在这个提前期内，一方面可以建立和完善企业的电子商务系统，同时，还可以根据电子商务发展的要求，改善企业内部的管理水平特别是提高企业的素质，为全面发展电子商务创造条件。

四、企业发展电子商务的目标定位不科学

从电子商务的战略目标而言，Zwass 认为，电子商务是“共享商业信息，维持业务联系，通过远程通讯网络进行商业行为”，电子商务不仅包括买卖行为，也包括公司支持这个目标的各个业务过程。

Kalakota 和 Whinston 认为四类信息技术构成了电子商务：(1) 通过 Email 和 Fax 进行信息交流；(2) 构建可共享的网络数据库，提高公司内部操作水平和外部战略关系；(3) 电子文件交换和电子支付系统；(4) 建立电子商务网站，提高公司市场宣传、广告、销售和客户支持的能力。

然而，无论从企业的外部条件还是企业的内部条件来说，目前中国企业全面发展上述电子商务业务的条件还不成熟，企业也并不是一开始发展电子商务就要全面达到以上目标。从电子商务发展的战略角度而言，企业必须制定一个科学、可行、分阶段的战略目标，而这种

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目标除了要达成实现电子商务的目标以外，更重要的是要达成提高企业综合竞争力的目标。

中国企业目前在发展电子商务时战略目标定位的误区主要表现在定位的不科学。发展战略学理论要求，任何战略的制定都必须考虑主体长期和中、短期发展的阶段需要，并制定各阶段的发展目标，在此基础上才能明确各阶段的任务和实施的重点。绝大部分企业是为电子商务业务的主要目标，是为了增加订单，缺乏中、长期的目标定位，包括 B2B 业务发展的目标、企业信息化发展的目标，改善企业与客户关系的目标，企业 R&D 发展目标、企业管理创新目标等。这种电子商务发展的结局必定是短命的。

五、企业发展电子商务的战略指导思想不清

电子商务是企业发展的重要战略措施之一，是提升企业竞争力的一个重要手段。因此，企业发展电子商务战略的指导思想应是建立和发展良好的竞争环境，提升企业的综合竞争力，企业电子商务战略必须与企业的总体发展战略相协调，并有利于推动企业总体发展战略的实施。

然而，中国众多的企业特别是中小企业处于“无战略”的状态，因此，中国大多数企业都舍本求末，电子商务的战略目标（姑且称其为“战略”目标）仅局限于电子商务的发展。在众多电子商务网站仅追“注意力”经济或者称“眼球”经济的同时，企业衡量网页设计是否合理的目标也在点击率上，为发展电子商务而发展电子商务，在指导思想上难以体现为企业总体发展战略服务的要求，忽视了企业本身素质和综合竞争力的提高。

六、电子商务优先发展的重点和途径有误

企业电子商务涉及企业内部价值增值链的上游和下游业务行为，简单来说，就是包括 B2B 和 B2C 两个大的方面。这两个方面业务的发展对企业内部素质和外部环境的要求、发展潜力、作用是不一样的。

目前，中国绝大部分企业电子商务发展重点定位于 B2C，然而，据统计，99 年全国网络零售总额仅有 5500 万，仅占全国社会消费品零售总额的 0.18%。当前我国 B2C 业务发展存在如下诸多障碍：(1) 网上支付和配送系统不完善；(2) 信息化水平低，社会信用体系不健全；(3) 信息化基础设施薄弱；(4) 消费群体还未形成规模；(5) 电子商务立法滞后等。而基于 Extranet 的 B2B 的电子商务有以下优点：(1) 相对于其他形式的电子商务，对电子商务、安全认证、配送系统和相关法律问题的需求较弱；(2) 连接了公司主要的供应商、分销商、客户和协作组织，他们是公司效益和持续发展的战略贡献者；(3) 通过 Extranet 系统发展可逐步积累电子商务发展所需的知识、技术和管理经验，推进电子商务法规、电子支付、配送系统和电子商务研究的发展；(4) 我国一些大中型企业已经建立的 EDI 系统及其辅助系统 MRP II/ERP，积累了运作跨组织系统的经验、知识和设备，等等。因此，对于大多数企业而言，目前电子商务发展的重点应该是 B2B 业务。

总体来说，目前中国企业对发展电子商务并没有放在战略的高度加以认识、研究和规划。必须加大宣传和教育力度，纠正存在的错误观念，使企业真正认识到发展电子商务任重道远，走出目前的误区，从而促进中国企业电子商务的健康发展，真正提高中国企业在国际市场的竞争力。

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