NETWATCH

Your guide to business and accounting on the Internet

Chartered accountants have long been specialists in the world of business, and as a result, we've guided many of our clients, or the companies for which we work, into new business ventures.

We've become very familiar with the intricacies of startups, having to deal with everything from business and strategic planning, to financing and taxation, to import/export issues and financial systems. And yet, many of us have become challenged by the increasing complexity of business in the global marketplace, facing obstacles such as greater degrees of red tape.

To better assist clients or companies with their new ventures, take a tour of some of the sophisticated resources online. Start with the government agency sites of major industrialized countries — over the years, most have recognized that the Internet provides an excellent means of disseminating information related to business startups. You're bound to find plenty of details about licensing and business registration, legal issues and corporate name search facilities, as well as data on the country's economic climate and other factors related to particular geographic areas.

Two of the best sites to start with here at home are Strategis — an Industry Canada site that provides an extensive library of startup and other business information, and the Canada Business Service Centres.

Where to start on startups

Strategis www.strategis.ic.gc.ca
Canada Business Service Centres
ww.cbsc.org
Canadian Intellectual Property Office
www.cipo.ca
Joseph Grasmick www.grasmick.com

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Also be sure to check out the sites of various provinces and states, many of which also contain vast amounts of information required for new business ventures.

The material and tools that can be found online are actually quite sophisticated. For example, you can undertake extensive trademark research to determine whether the corporate or product names you are considering are available. Of course, don't just restrict yourself to Canadian sites for such searches — indeed, you can find searchable online trademark databases for many countries.

Beyond that, you will also find that the sites of various associations and organizations can help you greatly as you learn about what's needed for setting up a business. These range from accounting firms to law offices, import/export companies, to local chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

A good example is the site of Joseph Grasmick, a lawyer from Buffalo, who specializes in US immigration issues. Let's say your startup has concerns about immigration to the US. Visit his site for an extensive set of resources that will help you understand the many issues and options involved in this matter.

This is but a small sampling of the help that is out there. The key is realizing that when it comes to startup issues, the Internet has quickly become a powerful tool that can enhance your capabilities.

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