

2008 Global DELL Small Business Excellence Award - Summary Report

The second annual [International Small Business IT Survey](#) was conducted with more than 1,500 small-business owners and experts worldwide to better understand how small businesses might thrive and excel through the innovative use of IT. To actively support such small business IT excellence and leadership, DELL expanded its Small Business Excellence Award program previously held in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. (in partnership with the National Federation of Independent Business) to 12 countries. The mission of the award is to identify small businesses worldwide that demonstrate the innovative use of IT to better serve customers.

Analysis of the finalists and winners in each country shines a light on the innovative uses of IT that set them apart from the entrants that were non-finalists. The set of crucial differences we've identified should be considered by other small businesses looking to leverage IT to benefit customers and grow. Of note:

- Finalists approached their business strategy not just in terms of traditional physical or "*atom*"-based thinking but in terms of information "*bits*" as well.
- They relied not just on mailings to reach customers but used digital media, such as e-mail advertising and social media to engage in a two-way conversation.
- Finalists were twice as likely to use extensions of standard IT, such as internet-based sales, as were non-finalists. These can be seen as IT *evolutions*.
- Finalists were even more likely to adopt *revolutionary* IT innovations, such as interactive web-based seminars through which they could deal directly with customers.
- Only half of the non-finalists used IT to *reach* out to customers, compared to more than eighty percent of the finalists.
- Even more striking, more than twice the proportion of finalists (as non-finalists) used IT to create a *rich* customer experience, as by using IT to develop "customized" two-way customer relationships.

The finalists excelled in many of these categories. In Japan, for instance, farmers who supply the agricultural products are experts in growing agriculture but lack knowledge in retail business and



are far removed from IT. In addition, the prices of these goods fluctuate daily depending on their size and market distribution prices, making it difficult to supply goods at fixed prices. By utilizing IT and integrating technology into operations in farming, the Japanese country winner adapted IT into farming operations. The system is not revolutionary but innovative as it has streamlined the categorization, pricing and sales of agricultural products. As a result, farmers themselves became interested in IT, and the ability to see sales update information in real time, thereby improving production and inventory management to prevent product shortages. This has led to greater customer satisfaction including yearly increases in the number of items purchased by consumers, with repeat customers rising.

The global winner – [Wiggly Wiggles](#) – used five of these six strategic techniques to a high degree.

The more of these strategic techniques—atoms, bits, evolutionary IT, revolutionary IT innovations, reach, and richness—that a firm employs, internally and externally, the more likely it will be to achieve [excellence](#).

DELL's efforts to explore, support and encourage small business excellence through the use of IT have been productive both in helping to outline how it can happen and to encourage and support small businesses that are trying to do it. ICSB, Endeavor and Dell's national award partners will continue to collaborate to expand the effort to impact small business excellence globally.

For related information on results of the Second Annual **International Small Business IT Survey**, [click here](#).

Direct questions and comments to:

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