

Survey: Computer use can result in profits

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nology interests of small minority- and women-owned businesses can strengthen our nation's economy and help create jobs."

Sixty-eight percent of businesses surveyed reported using computers in their accounting and 43 percent used e-mail to attract or

interact with customers. Forty-two percent reported having a web site. More successful small businesses reported using technology to improve office operations, service, product delivery and financial controls.

"By showing that productivity is enhanced with more extensive use of computers

across a greater array of business functions, this study suggests one way to help more minority- and women-owned businesses succeed and become more prominent in the world of small business," said Robert Lerman PhD, senior fellow at the Urban Institute and professor of economics at

American University.

The study found that the cost of technology doesn't appear to be a barrier to its adoption by small businesses. Twenty percent of respondents said technology was unaffordable. Researchers also found no significant differences in technology use among minority and women

business owners, compared to white men entrepreneurs.

But a lack of skills and training could pose a problem. Nearly half of respondents said they lacked or were unsure of their computer skills, and many reported relying on family or friends as their main source of tech-

nical support.

"Making these communities more technology-competent will probably require more education, training and technical support, but our study suggest such efforts will pay dividends in the form of improved business practice and business performance," Lerman said.

Dot-com IPOs get ready for sequel after late '90s meltdown

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over the past year, a move capped last week by its announcement of a two-for-one stock split. Such successes have removed some of the stain associated with being a dot-com.

"It's kind of hip to be dot-com again," said Tom Tauli, manager of the Oceanus Value Fund, a hedge fund based in Newport Beach, Calif. "It's back in style. It's retro."

It's also a marked change from the recent past. In the 1990s, companies fell over themselves to add a ".com" to their names. In 1995, 1-800-

Flowers, one of the best-known telephone florist brands, became 1-800-Flowers.com Inc. before its 1999 IPO. That Web name came even though the company's telephone sales at the time — and even now — are greater than those generated online.

Once the bubble burst, many companies backtracked.

Even companies that arguably should have had a dot-com in their name dropped them. Netflix Inc., the online movie-rental company, originally filed to go public in April 2000 as

Netflix.com. But the company withdrew its IPO three months later, citing poor market conditions. About two years later, it successfully went public without the dot-com suffix.

The new dot-coms planning IPOs have had the chance to change their names and didn't. In fact, Shopping.com, an Israel-based online comparison-shopping company, did change its name, but remained a dot-com. The company was known as DealTime.com Ltd. when it filed in March 2000 to raise \$50 million through the now-

defunct Robertson Stephens. The company withdrew that offering in 2001 and later changed its name. The company, which refiled its IPO in late March, plans to raise about \$75 million.

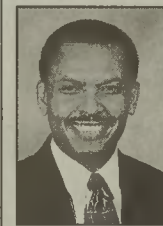
The recent wave of dot-com IPOs comes as other Internet offerings have performed well. In December, Ctrip.com International Ltd., a Chinese online travel agent, became the first company in more than two years to trade at more than double its offering price in initial trading.

What's more, the added breed of dot-coms don't

appear to be the kind of high-risk enterprises of past years, given that several are profitable.

Take salesforce.com, a customer-relationship software company based in San Francisco.

Over the first nine months of last year, it reported net income of \$4.7 million on revenue of \$66 million, according to offering documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.



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Preparation For Success

The beginning of our journey on the road to success can be one of the most optimistic times of our lives. This can be especially true if for a long time we have been dreaming of what it is that we really want to do. Once we see a chance to pursue our dreams, there seems to be nothing that can get in our way. We cannot imagine anything happening that would make us give up on our dreams.

However, as we work on making our dreams real, we discover that our plans do not always go as designed. Our efforts at success meet some obstacles despite our trying to anticipate problems that may arise. We may discover that it takes more time to invest in our dream than we thought it would take. It may be that the financial plans we had made to finance our dreams fall short of what we really need. The people that started out supporting us may drop to the wayside. What looked like a sure fire project for success ends up in failure.

After a series of failures, we may feel like giving up on our dreams. We may think the time has come to agree with those who said that we could never make it on our own.

But along the journey to success, one of the things that we have to realize is that there are going to be times that we do not reach our goals. There will be times that no matter how carefully we may have planned something, that our efforts will not yield the degree of success that we envisioned. A part of the journey is knowing that there will be disappointments. The key is to expect them so that they will not catch us off guard.

One of the best ways to look at your disappointments and failures is to think of them as preparation for your success. As you experience each of your failures, do not let them go to waste. Learn the valuable lesson that each holds for you. Know that the more you learn from each disappointment, the better prepared you are to meet any other challenges that you may encounter along the way. *These failures are simply stepping stones to help you pave the way to your success. Use them wisely!*

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