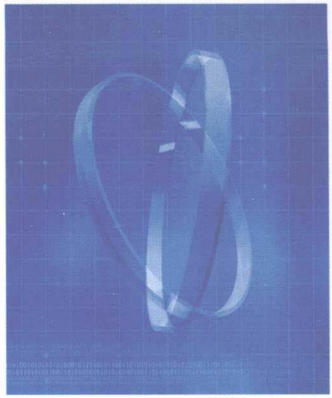

电子商务英语

主编 陈 英
主审 王 璨

English in Electronic Commerce

哈爾濱工業大學出版社

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内 容 提 要

本书共有12个单元，系统、全面地介绍了电子商务的基础知识，对其中关键的电子商务术语均给出了注释。每个单元包括电子商务专业词汇和专业文章，专业文章来自国外文献，每个单元后面附有单词，文中的一些较难语句附有必要的注释。

本书适合普通本科及高职院校商务英语专业、电子商务专业、外贸专业的学生使用，也可供网络、商贸人员参考。

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前　言

本书由哈尔滨职业技术学院英语系组织编写，可供商务英语、电子商务等专业的普通本科生及高职学生使用。

本书选取了一些英文原文文章，在内容安排上由浅入深，涵盖了电子商务的几个主要方面。这些文章难度适中，语言流畅，既具专业性又具可读性。全书共分12个单元，每个单元后附有词汇表和难句的注释。同时，前几个单元后面还附有阅读材料，旨在帮助学生更好地记忆词汇和提高阅读及写作能力。

本书由陈英主编，陈曼倩副主编，王琛主审，参加编写的人员还有田野、闫晶、柳旭和蒋立莉。

限于作者水平，书中难免存在不足及疏漏之处，敬请读者指正。

编　者

2009年4月

CONTENTS

4 Marketing on the Web

5 E-commerce Web Site Design Models

6 Web Site Design Approach

7 Onsale Company

12 Planning for Electronic Commerce

1

A Overview of E-commerce

1.1 Introduction to Electric Commerce

1.1.1 Electronic Commerce

The business phenomenon that we now call electronic commerce has had an interesting history. From humble beginnings in the mid-1990s, electronic commerce grew rapidly until 2000, when a major downturn occurred. Many people have seen news stories about the "dot-com boom" followed by the "dot-com bust" or the "dot-bomb". In the 2000 to 2003 period, many industry observers were writing obituaries for electronic commerce. Just as the unreasonable expectations for immediate success fueled the high expectations during the boom years, overly gloomy news reports colored perceptions during this time.[1] Beginning in 2003, with the general economy still in the doldrums, electronic commerce began to show signs of new life. Companies that had survived the downturn were not only seeing growth in sales again, but many of them were showing profits. Although the rapid expansion and high levels of investment of the boom years are not likely to be repeated, the second wave of electronic commerce is well underway. This section defines electronic commerce and describes how it is growing once again in its second wave.

To many people, the term "electronic commerce" means shopping on the part of the Internet called the World Wide Web (the Web). However, electronic commerce (or e-commerce) also includes many other activities, such as businesses trading with other businesses and internal processes that companies use to support their buying, selling, hiring, planning, and other activities. Some people use the term electronic business (or e-business) when they are talking about electronic commerce in this broader sense. For example, IBM defines electronic business as "the transformation of key business processes through the use of Internet technologies". Most people use the terms "electronic commerce" and "electronic business" interchangeably. In this book, the term electronic commerce (or e-commerce) is used in its broadest sense and includes all business activities conducted using electronic data transmission technologies. The most common technologies used are the Internet and the World Wide Web, but other technologies, such as wireless transmissions on mobile telephone and personal digital assistant (PDA) devices, are also included.

1.1.2 Categories of Electronic Commerce

Some people find it useful to categorize electronic commerce by the types of entities participating in the transactions or business processes.[2] The five general electronic commerce categories are business-to-consumer, business-to-business, business processes, consumer-to-consumer, and business-to-government. The three categories that are most commonly used are:

Consumer shopping on the Web, often called business-to-consumer (or B2C).

Transactions conducted between businesses on the Web, often called business-to-business (or B2B).

Transactions and business processes that companies, governments, and other organizations undertake on the Internet to support selling and purchasing activities.

To understand these categories better, consider a company that manufactures stereo speakers. The company might sell its finished product to consumers on the Web, which would be B2C electronic commerce. It might also purchase the materials it uses to make the speakers from other companies on the web, which would be B2B electronic commerce. Businesses often have entire departments devoted to negotiating purchase transactions with their suppliers. These departments are usually named supply management or procurement. Thus, B2B electronic commerce is sometimes called e-procurement.

In addition to buying materials and selling speakers, the company must also undertake many other activities to convert the purchased materials into speakers. These activities might include hiring and managing the people who make the speakers, renting or buying the facilities in which the speakers are made and stored, shipping the speakers, maintaining accounting records, purchasing insurance, developing advertising campaigns, and designing new versions of the speakers. An increasing number of these transactions and business processes can be done on the web. Manufacturing processes (such as the fabrication of the speakers) can be controlled using Internet technologies within the business. All of these communication, control, and transaction-related activities have become an important part of electronic commerce. Some people include these activities in the B2B category; others refer to them as underlying or supporting business processes.

Figure 1.1 shows the three main elements of electronic commerce. The figure presents a rough approximation of the relative sizes of these elements. In terms of dollar volume and number of transactions, B2B electronic commerce is much greater than B2C electronic commerce. However, the number of supporting business processes is greater than the number of all B2C and B2B transactions combined.

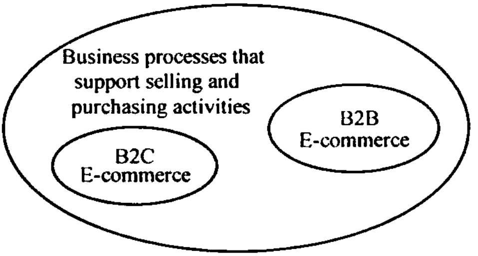

Figure 1.1 Elements of electronic commerce

The large oval in Figure 1.1 that represents the business processes that support selling and purchasing activities is the largest element of electronic commerce. This section provides some background and explains how business processes are built from their component parts, activities, and transactions.

For more than 70 years, business researchers have been studying the ways people behave in businesses. This research has helped managers better understand how workers do their jobs. The research results have also helped managers, and, increasingly, the workers themselves, improve job performance. By changing the nature of jobs, managers and workers can, as the saying goes, "work smarter, not harder". An important part of doing these job studies is to learn what activities each worker performs. In this setting, an activity is a task performed by a worker in the course of doing his or her job. For a much longer time centuries, in fact business owners have kept records of how well their businesses are performing. The formal practice of accounting, or recording transactions, dates back to the 1400s. A transaction is an exchange of value, such as a purchase, a sale, or the conversion of raw materials into a finished product. By recording transactions, accountants help business owners keep score and measure how well they are doing. All transactions involve at least one activity, and some transactions involve many activities. Not all activities result in measurable (and therefore recordable) transactions. Thus, a transaction always has one or more activities associated with it, but an activity might not be related to a transaction.

The group of logical, related, and sequential activities and transactions in which businesses engage are often collectively referred to as business processes.[3] Transferring funds, placing orders, sending invoices, and shipping goods to customers are all types of activities or transactions. For example, the business process of shipping goods to customers might include a number of activities (or tasks, or transactions), such as inspecting the goods, packing the goods, negotiating with a freight company to deliver the goods, creating and printing the shipping documents, loading the goods onto the truck, and sending check to the freight company. One important way that the Web is helping people work more effectively is by enabling employees of many different kinds of companies to work home. In this arrangement called telecommuting or telework, the employee logs in to the company computer through the Internet instead of traveling to an office.

Some researchers define a fourth category of electronic commerce, called consumer-to-consumer (or C2C), which includes individuals who buy and sell items among themselves. For example, C2C electronic commerce occurs when a person sells an item through a Web auction site to another person. In this book, C2C sales are included in the B2C category because the person selling the item acts much as a business would for purposes of the transaction.

Finally, some researchers also define a category of electronic commerce called business-to-government (or B2G); this category includes business transactions with government agencies, such as paying taxes and filing required reports. An increasing number of states have Web sites that help companies do business with state government agencies. For example, the CAL-Buy site makes it easy for businesses to conduct online transactions with the State of California. In this book, B2G transactions are included in our discussions of B2B electronic commerce.

1.2 The Development of Electronic Commerce

Over the thousands of years that people have engaged in commerce with one another, they have adopted the tools and technologies that became available. For example, the advent of sailing ships in ancient times opened new avenues of trade to buyers and sellers. Later innovations, such as the printing press, steam engine, and telephone, have each changed the way in which people conduct commerce activities. The Internet has changed the way people buy, sell, hire, and organize business activities in more ways and more rapidly than any other technology has in the history of business.

Although the Web has made online shopping possible for many businesses and individuals, in a broader sense, electronic commerce has existed for many years. For more than 30 years, banks have been using electronic funds transfers (EM, also called wire transfers), which are electronic transmissions of account exchange information over private communications networks.

Businesses also have been engaging in a type of electronic commerce, known as electronic data interchange for many years. Electronic data interchange (EDI) occurs when one business transmits computer-readable data in a standard format to another business. In the 1960s, businesses realized that many of the documents they exchanged were related to the shipping of goods, for example, invoices, purchase orders, and bills of lading. These documents included the same set of information for almost every transaction. Businesses also realized that they were spending a good deal of time and money entering this data into their computers, printing paper forms, and then reentering the data on the other side of the transaction. Although the purchase order, invoice, and bill of lading for each transaction contained much of the same information—such as item numbers, descriptions, prices, and quantities—each paper form usually had its own unique format for presenting that information. By creating a set of standard formats for transmitting that information electronically, businesses were able to reduce errors, avoid printing and mailing costs, and eliminate the need to reenter the data.[4]

Businesses that engage in EDI with each other are called trading partners. The standard formats used in EDI contain the same information that businesses have always included in their standard paper invoices, purchase orders, and shipping documents. Firms such as General Electric, Sears, and Wal-Mart have been pioneers in using EDI to improve their purchasing processes and their relationships with suppliers.

The U. S. government, which is one of the largest EDI trading partners in the world, also was instrumental in bringing businesses into EDI. For nine years, ending in 2001, the Defense Logistics Agency operated a number of Electronic Commerce Resource Centers (ECRCs) throughout the country. The ECRCs provided free assistance to many businesses, especially smaller businesses, so they could do EDI with the U. S. Defense Department and other federal agencies. The Georgia Institute of Technology continues to operate one of these centers as the Georgia Tech Electronic Commerce Resource Center, which serves businesses in Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee.

One serious problem that potential adopters of EDI faced was the high cost of implementation. Until the late 1990s, doing EDI meant buying expensive computer hardware and software and then either establishing direct network connections (using leased telephone lines) to all trading partners or subscribing to a value-added network. A value-added network (VAN) is an independent firm that offers connection and transaction forwarding services to buyers and sellers engaged in EDI.[5] Before the Internet came into existence as we know it today, VANs provided the connections between most trading partners and were responsible for ensuring the security of the data transmitted. VANs usually charged a fixed monthly fee plus a per-transaction charge, adding to the already significant expense of implementing EDI. Many smaller firms were unable to afford to participate in EDI and lost important customers, who went elsewhere to buy. The companies that operated VANs have gradually moved EDI traffic to the Internet, but many other companies have developed other ways to do EDI types of transactions on the Internet.

1.3 The Dot-Com Boom, Bust, and Rebirth

Between 1997 and 2000 more than 12 000 Internet-related businesses were started with more than $ 100 billion of investors' money. In an extended burst of optimism and what many came to describe as irrational exuberance, investors feared that they might miss the money-making opportunity of a lifetime.[6] As more investors competed for a fixed number of good ideas, the price of those ideas increased. Worse, a number of bad ideas were proposed and funded. More than 5 000 of these companies went out of business or were acquired in the downturn that began in 2000. The media coverage of the "dot-com bust" was extensive. However, between 2000 and 2003, more than $ 200 billion was invested in purchasing electronic commerce businesses that were in trouble and starting new online ventures, according to industry research firm WebMergers. This second wave of financial investment has not been reported extensively in either the general or business media, but it is fueling a rebirth of growth in online business activity.[7]

After seeing so many news stories during the period from 2000 through 2002 proclaiming the death of electronic commerce, many people are surprised to find that the growth in online B2C sales had continued through that period, although at a slower pace than during the boom years of the late 1990s. Thus, the "bust" that was so widely reported in the media was really more of a slowdown than a true collapse. After four years of doubling or tripling every year, growth in online sales slowed to an annual rate of 20 to 30 percent starting in 2001. Most experts expect this growth rate to continue over the next several years.

One force driving the growth in online sales to consumers is the ever-increasing number of people who have access to the Internet. The Pew Internet & American Life Project (funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts) began conducting several long-term research projects in 2000 to study the growth of the Internet and its effects on society. You can consult its Web site for the latest reports on these projects. In 2004, A Pew research project found that two-thirds of Internet users have purchased at least one item online.

In addition to the renewed growth in the B2C sector, B2B sales online have been increasing steadily also. B2B online sales have been more impressive than B2C sales because EDI was already well established in 1995, with more than $400 billion per year in transactions, so B2B has been growing from a larger base. In this book, we include business processes in the B2B category, so companies' transactions with other businesses, with their employees, and with governmental agencies (for example, when they pay their taxes) are all candidates for the application of Internet technologies. The dollar amount of these transactions, seven for individual businesses, is substantial. Intel is a good example of a company that sells its products to other businesses rather than to consumers. Intel accepts more than 95 percent of is orders (more than