



TECHNOLOGY MEANS BUSINESS MANIFESTO

Raising Business Standards for Information Technologies

What is Technology Means Business (TMB)?

Technology Means Business (TMB) is the standard for the provision of Business IT Support to Small & Medium enterprises (SME's).

The national network of TMB accredited advisers seeks to ensure UK SME's receive competent and credible business IT support and advice. The aim is to improve their competitiveness through a top-class standard of advice offered by IT advisers and suppliers in the private and public sectors.

The programme is managed by the IT Forum Foundation and has the backing of the DTI, which played an active role in its creation.

Why the UK SME market needs TMB

The market for IT needs balance. A challenge facing the market is whether SME's can expect impartial advice to be given by a channel that inevitably has product loyalties. Many TMB advisers have no product or vendor affiliations. Others came into the scheme with the active backing of IT vendors. The medium term goal for TMB is to produce an environment in which balanced advice and reliable delivery mechanisms are available to the whole of the market, particularly the SME sector.

TMB believes it is important to not only be given the best advice but to also have the right solution installed and running properly.

TMB aspires to a marketplace where solutions are sold and supplied based on best practice and balanced advice.

Users organisations need IT advisers and suppliers who will help them to manage their businesses. Not all in the IT sector behave with that ethos in mind. TMB aims to put good and balanced advice at the top of the list with the assurance that whatever is bought will, when assembled and configured, work according to plan.



The Aspirations of Technology Means Business

The TMB standard will reflect the constantly changing landscape of the Business IT professional at three distinct levels:

- ▶ Individual IT user skills
- ▶ Individual Business IT adviser skills
- ▶ Company ability to provide Business IT support to SME's

Development of the TMB standard based upon competent academic research and practical experience together with rigorous accreditation and re-accreditation methods will ensure that UK SME's continue to receive competent Business IT advice and thus improve their competitiveness.

TMB will continue to increase its profile in the SME community in order to ensure that the benefit of using a TMB accredited adviser or organisation is widely understood and integrated.

Having consulted with strategic partners and conducted an extensive review of the TMB standard, the ITFF is now committed to the formation of a unified national standard.

The Achievement of These Aspirations

Three interlocking agendas are being focused upon with the aim of building cohesion between all parts of the community that have historically promoted TMB and continue to do so. A national agenda with supporting regional and business agendas is now in progress.

TMB will position itself to collaborate with all activities in the UK and Europe that seek to raise the standard of IT supply into the marketplace at large and SME in particular. Wherever feasible, equivalences will be established with other standards and accreditation schemes with the aim of having a contiguous framework that links all initiatives, with the aim of reducing confusion in the marketplace for both users and suppliers.

▶ Department of Trade and Industry - National Agenda

TMB enjoys continued endorsement from the DTI, which had a key role in the creation and promotion of TMB. Today the standard is considered as a key element in the initiatives of others who have received such support from the DTI.



▶ **Partnership with IT Sector Skills Council - e-skills - National Agenda**

TMB has established a partnership with e-Skills UK, the aim of which is to broaden the scope of the programme. One method is by mapping IT user skills against the IT e-Skills Passport. An additional area is the ITQ qualification for users and the IT Professional Passport mapped to technical qualifications due for release during 2005.

e-Skills and TMB will co-operate on the production and delivery of an IT Technical Certificate to complement existing TMB initiatives aimed at providing a technician's accreditation.

These combined initiatives will go a long way towards assisting the Government to minimise the number of IT qualifications while removing duplication and minimising confusion in the marketplace.

Working with e-Skills UK to harmonise and map standards and codes of practice to the already established TMB standard will be a major activity for the TMB Agency.

▶ **Partnership with Scottish Enterprise - National Agenda**

Scottish Enterprise and TMB have agreed to co-operate in the drive for the desired national standards. Agreement has been reached with Scottish Enterprise under the auspices of the long-established Project PACT to adopt the e-Business Supplier Certification as the basis for the nationwide accreditation of business solution suppliers.

Bearing in mind that the major focus of TMB is to accredit advisers as individuals, the Scottish Enterprise based standard and Club UK Online's already adopted supplier validation process represent a substantial platform for this next phase of activity on trading standards development. The current TMB Centre initiative that deals with company accreditation will be merged with this process over the next 12 months.

The new company accreditation model will be offered nationally immediately with the intention of having the first accredited companies in place by June of 2005. TMB accredited advisers interested in becoming assessors for this scheme should register their interest with the TMB Agency immediately.

▶ **Regional Development Agency Partnerships - Regional Agenda**

TMB today announces the establishment of a National Council to promote the national strategy, aims and positioning of TMB. A number of RDA's have confirmed their participation in this new initiative.



▶ **Partnership with Business Links - Regional Agenda**

A new agreement with Business Link for London brokers opportunities for services to SME's amongst the TMB network of advisers who also have current Small Business Service National Consultant Register status. An announcement on this will be made on 20 April 2005. TMB will then be an authorised supplier of IT accreditation services and accredited consultants to Business Link for London.

This initiative mirrors a scheme already in place in Yorkshire. It is intended that this service will be rolled out across the UK during 2005.

▶ **Partnership with Professional Bodies - Professional Agenda**

TMB has and will continue to establish partnerships with professional bodies so that the scope and reach of the TMB Adviser Network is expanded. Both the Independent Association of Accountants Information Technology Consultants (IAAITC) and the Thanet Business Centre, who have developed a new technician qualification, have agreed to collaborate with TMB in order to advance the network of TMB Accredited Advisers,

Discussions are also in progress with a number of significant professional bodies with the objective of TMB endorsing their qualifications where agreements are reached on standards.

▶ **Sunday Times Enterprise Network Partnership (STEN) - Business Agenda**

TMB will deliver improved publicity for members through regular features and promotional activities such as the STEN/TMB National Seminar Programme in association with participating Regional Development Agencies.

As part of the ongoing programme to enhance the profile of TMB, links are being forged and reinforced with the national press as well as specialist business and other trade publications.



Other Developments

NEW WEBSITE - www.tmb.org.uk A new TMB website is currently under construction which will be launched in May 2005, greatly enhancing the profile and visibility of the accreditation programme.

IMPROVED INFORMATION FOR TMB ADVISORS - New weekly news feeds are already in place and more are planned.

INCREASED NATIONAL AWARENESS - The homepage of the 2005 DTI/InterForum E-Commerce Awards, which last year received nearly 300,000 unique page requests, references TMB with a link to its website.

These aspects are an endorsement of TMB's focus on currency, relevance, co-operation and the intention to provide a nationally recognised and accepted standard in more than one area.

The TMB Agency will continually seek to identify and partner with appropriate organisations to ensure the TMB standard is the one to which all others will aspire and that the strength of this network attracts more business opportunities for its members.

Contacts

In the first instance, please contact either **Neville Marsberg** (Operations Director) or **Linda Rose** (Senior Administrator) at the TMB agency on 01784 473 005 or on tmb@itff.org.uk
Website: **www.tmb.org.uk**



Supporting information

How did Technology Means Business Develop?

The TMB programme was launched by the then e-Commerce Minister Patricia Hewitt MP in 2000 following the publication of the DTI's Competitiveness White Paper which called for a national IT Business Advisers accreditation programme.

Research had been undertaken by the Durham Business School (Mind the Gap ISBN 857731816) and the Institute of Management (now the Chartered Management Institute) and the TMB standard was developed to address the problem of poor support being offered to UK SME's. The knock-on effect of this was (and continues to be), poor IT adoption by the SME's and a lack of competitiveness in the global arena.

Founding and current partners/supporters include members of the private, academic and public sectors and consist of, among others, BT, Microsoft, Intel, HP, Club UK Online, Business Link for London, Business Link South Yorkshire and Thanet Business Centre, Small Business Service, IAAITC, Scottish Enterprise, Yorkshire Forward, Durham Business School, the University of Glamorgan, the University of Central Lancashire, the Sunday Times Enterprise Network, Advantage West Midlands, the South West Regional Development Agency, the Welsh Development Agency and McAfee.

During 2004, custodianship of the TMB standard transferred to the IT Forum Foundation of which InterForum and the National e-Commerce Awards programme (run in partnership with the DTI) are key constituents. The aim is to roll out the underpinning ethos of TMB to the wider Business IT support community in the UK. The ITFF manages the TMB standard through the 'TMB Agency'.

The Benefits of Technology Means Business Accreditation

The TMB accreditation scheme provides a recognised and widely accepted standard against which the competency, proficiency and professionalism of both advisers and the centres from which they operate are measured. These standards are constantly monitored and the diagnostic tools are regularly reviewed to ensure the TMB standard continues to set the benchmark for this sector of the IT industry.

Benefits of Adviser Accreditation are:

- ▶ Advisers can confidently use their TMB status to assure customers they have followed a structured, monitored, supervised programme which endorses their qualification to offer relevant advice to small and medium enterprises searching for IT advice.
- ▶ Advisers are assured their status will meet the pre-requisites set by Business Links which receive requests for IT advice in their local areas
- ▶ Membership of a unique body of like-minded and qualified individuals playing a key role in the IT sector

- ▶ The opportunity to trade ideas and establish a network of contacts
- ▶ The ability to maintain an externally verified, constantly reviewed level of accreditation
- ▶ The guarantee of meeting a specific requirement for many tendering activities
- ▶ Access to expertise which understands the role IT can play in the strategic development of businesses
- ▶ Capitalisation on personal and organisational strengths within a business using IT
- ▶ Assistance with the realisation of business goals through the recommendation of effective IT solutions
- ▶ The guarantee of quality assurance through compliance with strict standards and the demonstration of a high level of competence prior to accreditation. Part of this process is the provision of case study evidence from businesses willing to act as referees.
- ▶ The assurance that working relationships are established on professional levels with practical and relevant advice being given in accordance with the culture and needs of individual organisations.
- ▶ The guarantee that TMB IT advisers keep abreast of developments in the fast moving world of emerging technologies. This is measured by an annual demonstration of competence against the TMB standard.
- ▶ This process ensures the advice given by TMB accredited advisers has kept pace with both business and technological changes. Best practice is, therefore, represented at all times.

The benefits of ensuring the wider acceptance and further development of TMB cover the entire spectrum from UK PLC through the SME community, the adviser body, the Business Support Industry both public and private.

To gain access to these comprehensive benefits, a potential adviser would make contact with an Accreditation Centre initially. The Accreditation Centre provides the initial accreditation programme.

TMB ACCREDITATION CENTRES

A network of TMB Accreditation Centres is the primary point of contact for aspirant advisers. This contact normally comes through the TMB website: www.tmb.org.uk Upon completion of an initial diagnostic, a supervised programme is undertaken by the candidate. A CV is compiled, a Code of Practice acknowledged, a Professional Development Plan constructed and implemented in co-operation with a Centre Tutor Assessor. Verifiable case study material is included.

Once the programme has been completed and verified, adviser status is granted for a one-year period. Re-accreditation is undertaken on an annual basis.

► **TMB APPROVED CENTRES**

ICT centres that meet a number of specific criteria may be awarded Approved Centre Status. Ability to demonstrate they provide up-to-date, high quality advice to SME's on how the adoption of IT can improve the profitability and competitiveness of their business will enable these centres to gain Approved Centre Status.

The existence of a national network of Approved Centres with a set number of TMB accredited advisers gives the SME community the assurance of access to advice delivered by accredited advisers whose level of proficiency is constantly monitored and up-graded.

► **THE TMB AGENCY**

All of the activities outlined above are supported by the TMB Agency, which offers administrative support and back-up during the initial accreditation process. The Agency becomes the primary source of contact for advisers following initial accreditation.

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