

## **WHAT THE DOCTOR PRESCRIBES FOR LAUNCHING AND SUSTAINING A VIABLE E-TRADE INITIATIVE FOR THE 13<sup>TH</sup> NORTHEAST ECONOMIC FORUM ?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Tradelink. Hong Kong's e-commerce pioneer. Since 1997, Tradelink has been spearheading the development of electronic commerce. Today, Hong Kong's trading community witnesses 100% of trade declarations submitted electronically, and many industries like garments and textiles, import and export, shipping, warehousing and logistics have benefited from Tradelink services with enhanced productivity and competitiveness. As Tradelink continues to expand its scope of services and build on its experience, it garners greater support and trust from the trading community.

Today, Tradelink is Hong Kong's undisputed leader in e-commerce. With its ever -enriching portfolio of electronic services, Tradelink is committed to serving all customers in all businesses whenever and wherever the power of e-commerce can reach them

The paper examines some of the ingredients crucial and critical for the success of launching and sustaining a e-trade initiative.

### **KEYWORDS**

Tradelink  
e-commerce  
import and export  
trade declarations  
Digital trade and transportation network

### **MAIN TEXT**

Tradelink Electronic Commerce Limited is a joint venture between the Hong Kong SAR Government and other private sector shareholders. Its mission is to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the Hong Kong trading community by making available a range of

value-added electronic commerce services, with equal emphasis on automating commonly-used trade transactions of the Hong Kong SAR Government and the commercial sector.

The Government has the largest single shareholding in Tradelink, currently owning about 42 per cent. The other shareholders are all key players in the international trade cycle in Hong Kong, either directly or as a representative organisation.

Tradelink provides a single electronic gateway between the trading community and the Hong Kong SAR Government under an agreement reached with the Government in November 1992, as part of which the Government became a Tradelink shareholder.

Backed by the strong support of the Hong Kong trading community and company shareholders, Tradelink has built up and maintained an impressive customer base of more than 53,000 companies. Currently 100% trade declarations are submitted electronically.

Tradelink also takes care of customer needs for secure electronic transactions with digital certificates issued by its subsidiary, Digi-Sign Certification Services Limited (Digi-Sign). Digi-Sign is the first private company granted recognition as a certification authority in Hong Kong under the Electronic Transactions Ordinance. Digi-Sign carries on the business of a recognised certification authority with the issuance of digital certificates (branded ID-Cert) to customers for the purpose of providing a secure and trusted environment for the conduct of electronic transactions in Hong Kong.

In 2000, Tradelink and other major e-commerce service providers in Asia formed the Pan Asian E-Commerce Alliance (PAA) to promote and (China Taipei), KNet (Korea), CrimsonLogic (Singapore), TEDI Club (Japan), DagangNet (Malaysia) and TEDMEV of Macau. At present, the e-commerce service providers from the region handle millions of electronic transactions everyday. The Pan Asian Portal provides a common platform that promotes connectivity among importers/exporters, banking and insurance sectors through the consolidation of key customer information, products and services, thus increasing customers' competitiveness in the global market. It is foreseeable that the PAA will bring not only benefits to its members and customers, but huge potential growth to the Asia region as well.

#### HELPING SMALL COMPANIES

There are over 130,000 importers, exporters and manufacturers in Hong Kong with more than 98% being classified as small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Of these small businesses more than 70,000 are actively involved in preparing import/export documentation.

In order to help SMEs make use of electronic commerce in an affordable, convenient and user-friendly environment, Tradelink provides:

- User-friendly software: Tradelink's software has been specifically designed for PC use and includes many user-friendly features requested by traders themselves, including an auto set-up feature for easy installation, and powerful databases for finding the right Harmonised System (HS) code easily. It also offers online technical support and information and the facility for Tradelink to download upgrades automatically to customers.
- Tradelink Internet Services: The aim is to add value to Tradelink services by enabling importers, exporters and manufacturers to submit trade declarations securely online to the Hong Kong SAR Government and apply for various trade licences and permits through Tradelink-ebiz.com. It also allows the transaction status and other customer information to be viewed online. Further, there is a wide range of practical and useful information for Hong Kong traders, including transport schedules, exhibition details, financial data, and trade news

and features, as well as information on tariffs, regulations and labour legislation. In addition, customers can subscribe free of charge to a list of value-added services that include Tradelink newsletter, webhosting service and Membership Rewards Program.

- Tradelink Service Centres: To help those traders who are not yet ready to make the switch from paper, but who wish to communicate electronically with trading partners, Tradelink has established a network of Service Centres at convenient locations around Hong Kong. Traders need just to bring a paper document to the Service Centre for conversion to electronic data interchange (EDI) format and onward transmission to Government or the trading partner. 25 Tradelink Service Centres are currently in operation, with most operating in conjunction with leading local trade associations.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES**

In conclusion, the success of an e-trade initiative can only be achieved through enhancing the trading process by providing customers, local, regional as well as international, with a range of value-added services that facilitate the management of trade transactions.