

POR Number: 356-07  
Contract Number: U5450-073832-001/CY  
Award Date: 2008-01-25

## **FINAL REPORT**

### **Evaluation of SBPB Small Business Websites**

#### **Prepared for Industry Canada**

Any questions regarding this report can be directed to:

Communications and Marketing Branch

Industry Canada

C.D. Howe Building

Room 204E, 235 Queen Street

Ottawa ON K1A 0H5

Canada

Telephone: 613-943-2545

Fax: 613-952-5162

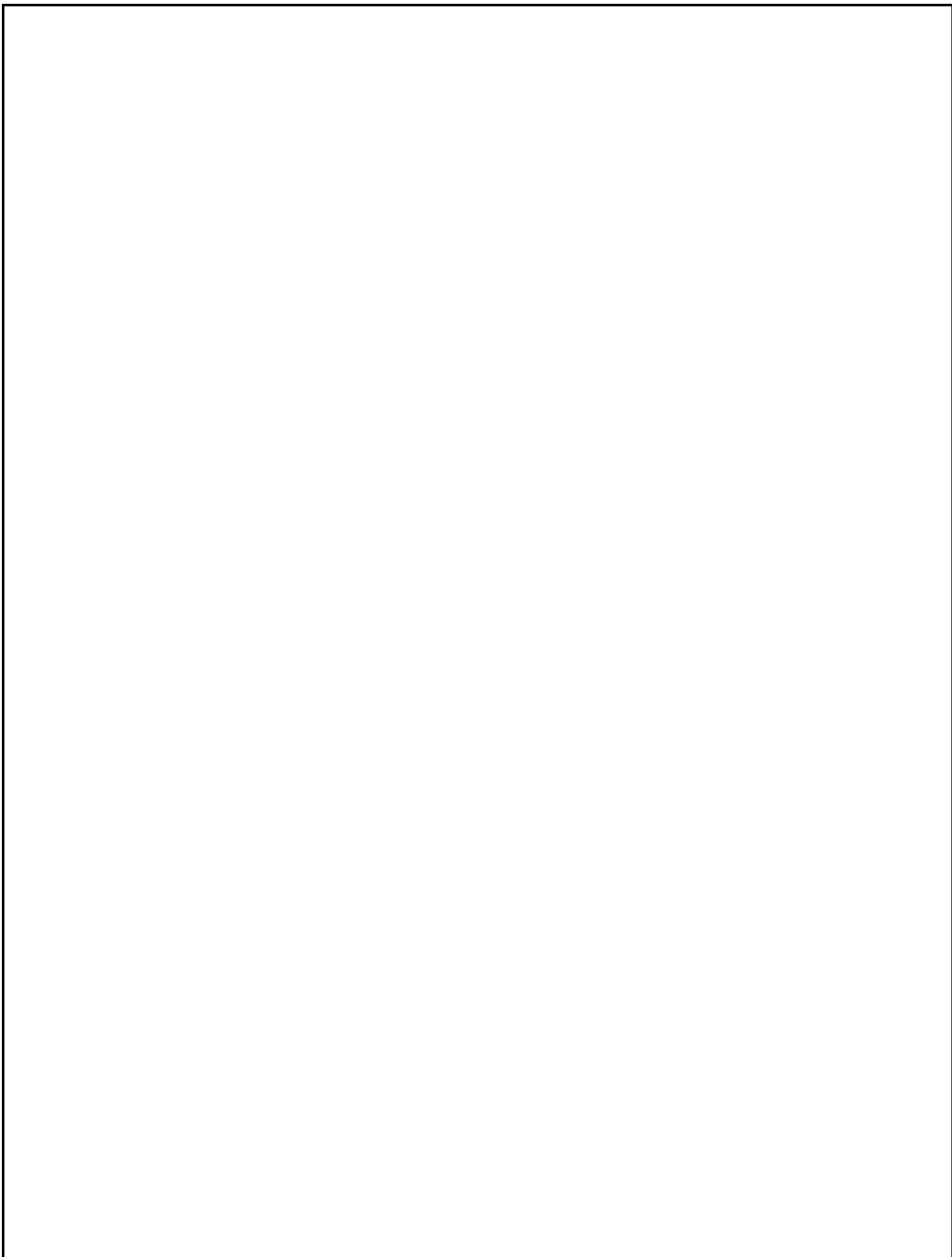
Email: [ResearchAdvertising\\_RecherchePublicite@ic.gc.ca](mailto:ResearchAdvertising_RecherchePublicite@ic.gc.ca)

**Ce rapport est également disponible en français.**

**May 2008**



**Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.**  
1678 Bank Street, Ste. 2, Ottawa, Ontario K1V 7Y6  
Tel: (613) 260-1700 Fax: (613) 260-1300 Email: [info@phoenixspi.ca](mailto:info@phoenixspi.ca)  
[www.phoenixspi.ca](http://www.phoenixspi.ca)



This report is formatted for double-sided printing.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	i
Introduction .....	1
<b>Part 1: Managing for Business Success</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Background Characteristics .....	8
Use of MFBS Website .....	14
Assessment of Website Content & Tools.....	18
Perceptions of MFBS Website .....	22
Perceived Impact of MFBS Website.....	27
<b>Part 2: Performance Plus</b> .....	<b>31</b>
Background Characteristics .....	32
Use of Performance Plus Website.....	38
Assessment of Website Content & Tools.....	42
Perceptions of Performance Plus Website .....	45
Perceived Impact of Performance Plus Website .....	51
<b>Part 3: Steps to Growth Capital</b> .....	<b>56</b>
Background Characteristics .....	57
Use of SGC Website .....	62
Assessment of Website Content & Tools.....	66
Perceptions of SGC Website.....	69
Perceived Impact of SGC Website.....	73

### Appendices:

- Age of business - Sub-group analysis
- Online questionnaire
- In-depth interview guide
- Confirmation email and instructions for in-depth interview participants.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Phoenix SPI was commissioned by the Small Business Policy Branch at Industry Canada to conduct research related to three websites that target small businesses – Managing for Business Success, Performance Plus, and Steps to Growth Capital. The purpose of this research was to identify the characteristics of users who visit SBPB small business websites, and their level of satisfaction with the information provided, including its usefulness. This information will enable SBPB to determine the effectiveness of these websites, and help identify what changes may be required in order to improve their usefulness to small businesses, intermediaries, and other small business stakeholders.

The research included both quantitative and qualitative elements. A separate online survey was conducted for each of the three websites from late February to late April, 2008. The questionnaire was divided into two parts – Part A and Part B. Part A was a two-minute survey focused on collecting demographic, corporate profile, and usage data. Once they completed Part A, respondents were asked if they were willing to provide further feedback. If so, they were directed to Part B of the survey, which collected detailed information about usage, satisfaction, and the impact of website content. The table below shows the total number of completed surveys<sup>1</sup>. The number of completes for Part A+B is presented as a range due to survey restructuring that occurred during the first two weeks in field.

Survey Completion Dates & Number of Respondents				
	Field Dates	Part A Only	Parts A & B	Total
<b>Managing for Business Success</b>	February 29 – April 28	296	103-109	399-405
<b>Steps to Growth Capital</b>	February 27 – April 27	236	72-76	308-312
<b>Performance Plus</b>	February 27 – April 8	292	150-151	442-443

To support the quantitative research, a set of 14 in-depth interviews were conducted with users of the three websites. This executive summary presents the survey results only.

### Managing for Business Success (MFBS)

MFBS visitors were generally 35 years of age or older (67%), and live in urban or suburban locales (74%) in central Canada (38% Ontario, 29% Quebec). Representatives of businesses were the largest group of visitors to the site (40%), followed by consultants or business advisors (17%), students (15%), and the general public (10%). Business visitors were most likely to be owners (44%), presidents/CEOs (16%), or managers (13%). Just under two-thirds (64%) work for relatively small firms with fewer than 20 employees. An equal proportion (64%) work in companies that have been in operation for 10 years or less, including 40% in firms that are no more than three years old.

<sup>1</sup> No margin of error is provided because the size of the population of visitors to these sites is not known.

Turning to usage of the site, 73% of MFBS visitors consider themselves to be unfamiliar with the site, including 58% who were not familiar with it at all. This is not surprising as 61% were first-time visitors, at least within the previous 12 months. Likely because of this, many visitors had difficulty rating the site's usefulness (44% were unsure); those who did offer their assessment were more likely to be neutral (27%) or positive (22%), than negative (6%). Visitors who did not rate the site as useful pointed to this being their first visit to explain why (32%). Positive ratings of the site (35%) were more likely to be moderate than high (25% vs. 10%); however, only 6% expressed dissatisfaction with the overall quality of the site.

Visitors tended to judge the specific content that they had used as useful or valuable. They rated as useful the following content areas: Finance (83%), Human Resources (72%), Strategy (70%), Business Support (69%), Business Self-Assessment Tools and Marketing and Sales (61-64%), and Operations Management (50%). Moreover, negative appraisals of any of the site's content were relatively infrequent (14% or less).

To put this in context, their assessments of the site's characteristics overall were generally positive as well. Respondents felt that the information (78%) and terminology (76%) on the website were easy to understand, and that it had the information they needed (63%). They also found the site to be easy to navigate (74%), easy to find (68%), visually appealing (66%), and to contain the information they were looking for (58%). Visitors also expressed satisfaction with the content in terms of the information's completeness, relevance, and currency, as well as the range of resources available (63-70%). That said, 43% of MFBS visitors were unable to find on the website some of the information they were looking for.

The site was seen to have numerous positive impacts for visitors' businesses and/or those that they serve. Most felt that the site provided them with valuable information they might not have otherwise found (76%), and helped them to make more informed decisions about their business (66%), to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their business (61%), to improve their business management skills (61%), and to resolve a business issue (60%). The perceived impact in these areas was more likely to be moderate as opposed to strong. More than three-quarters (79%) would recommend the site to others (52% would definitely do so). Moreover, fully 91% plan to return to the site themselves (54% said definitely).

### **Performance Plus**

Performance Plus visitors typically live in urban or suburban (69%) locations in Ontario (38%) or Quebec (21%). Most were 35 years of age or older (59%), and identified themselves as working for a business (31%), followed by students (25%), and consultants or business advisors (17%). Most of those who identified themselves as businesses were the owners (74%). Many business representatives were self-employed (39%) or were in businesses of 2-4 employees (36%). Almost half (49%) of the businesses have been in operation for less than one year.

In total, 63% of Performance Plus visitors see themselves as generally unfamiliar with the website, with 51% not familiar at all. That said, this was the first visit to the site for more than half (55%), at least within the previous 12 months. In total, 32% rated the site as useful, with 17% offering more middling assessments; while only 6% were negative (47% were unsure).

The most popular content area of the site was 'Build Your Own Profile' (50%), the central tool on the site. This section was also the most widely seen to be useful (74%), with more than half the users feeling strongly about it (51%). Although the remaining sections were less used (used by 19-34%), majorities saw value in each. Specifically, they assessed as useful What is Performance Plus? (67%), Other Relevant Information (61%), How to Use Performance Plus (58%), and View a Sample Business Case (56%). Those who did not see these as useful were more likely to hold neutral rather than negative views.

Majorities also had positive perceptions of the site in general. Most agreed that the terminology (75%) and information (68%) on the website were easy to understand, and that it had the information they needed (64%). Smaller majorities agreed that the site was easy to navigate (60%), easy to locate (59%), and that it was easy to find the information they were looking for (55%). They were also satisfied with the content in terms of the information's relevance to their needs (72%), its completeness (61%), the range of information and resources available (60%), and that the information was up to date (55%). Satisfaction with all of these aspects was much more likely to be moderate than strong. Positive feedback on content notwithstanding, almost half (46%) were unable to find some of the information they were looking for.

Most Performance Plus visitors attributed positive outcomes to their use of the site. The site helped them to see how a business measured up to others in their sector (73%), to prepare a business plan (71%), provided valuable information that they may not have otherwise found (68%), helped them make informed operational decisions (63%), or helped them improve business performance (51%). Many also pointed to receiving help with financial and business planning (49%) and getting research and general information (45%). The perceived impact in these areas was more likely to be moderate than strong. Less positive respondents were more likely to hold neutral perspectives than negative ones. In total, 87% of Performance Plus visitors would recommend the site to others (54% would definitely do so). Moreover, 92% plan to return to the site themselves (59% think they will definitely do this).

### **Steps to Growth Capital (SGC)**

SGC visitors generally live in urban or suburban settings (67%) in Ontario (34%) or Quebec (40%). Two-thirds (68%) were 35 years of age or older. In terms of respondent 'type', they were most likely to represent businesses (42%), followed by students (14%), the general public (12%), and consultants/business advisors (9%). Most of those who identified themselves as businesses were owners (56%), followed by presidents/CEOs and managers (11% each). Most of these businesses have less than 20 employees (80%), and are relatively young – almost three-quarters are less than 10 years old, with 49% no more than three years old.



In total, 71% consider themselves to be unfamiliar with the website overall (57% were not at all familiar with it). This is undoubtedly related to the fact that, for 63%, this was their first-visit to the site, at least within the previous 12 months. Turning to the perceived usefulness of the site, visitors offered mixed assessments. In total, 17% rated the site as useful, while 24% held a more neutral or middling view, and 12% considered the site to be of little to no use. A further 46% were unsure. Those who did not see the site as useful were most apt to explain that this was because it was their first visit (28%). In terms of satisfaction, 34% were satisfied with the overall quality of the site, while 23% were neutral and 5% were dissatisfied (38% were unable to provide a rating for this).

In terms of key content areas, visitors were at least twice as likely to have used the Self-Study Guide (33%) and the Fast Track to Growth Capital (29%) sections in the last 12 months compared to the Investor Readiness Test (13%). That said, almost half (45%) were unsure what they had used/visited. Those who used these sections generally reported them to be useful, although feedback was more mixed for the Investor Readiness Test.

Considerable majorities held positive perceptions of various aspects of the SGC site. Most found the terminology and information to be easy to understand (80% each), and felt that the site contained the information they needed (71%). Turning to usability issues, most found the site to be easy to navigate (78%), visually appealing (72%), easy to locate (67%), and easy to find the content they were looking for (63%). Those not positive were more likely to be neutral than negative. Turning to content, approximately three-quarters were satisfied with the range of information and resources available (75%), the relevance of the information to their needs, its completeness, and that it is up to date (73% each). Among those less satisfied, perceptions were much more likely to be neutral, with relatively few expressing dissatisfaction (6-10%). Slightly less than one-third of visitors (31%) were unable to find information on the website that they were looking for.

In terms of positive outcomes attributed to use of the site, visitors were most apt to think the site provided them with valuable information (71%), and helped them with their business planning (67%), making informed business decisions (61%), and identifying their financial needs (52%). Visitors were less likely to think the site helped them to attract investors or gain access to and secure capital (36-37%). In terms of specific benefits from using the site, visitors identified obtaining research (32%), business or financial planning (31%), and starting a business (29%). Almost three-quarters (72%) would recommend this site to others. Moreover, 90% plan to return to it themselves (44% will definitely do so).

### Conclusions and Implications

Turning first to the websites' clientele, visitors to these websites were most likely to live in urban or suburban areas in Ontario or Quebec, and to be at least 35 years of age. In all cases, the most likely visitors were representatives of businesses, often business owners. Most of the companies were relatively young, having been in operation for three years or less. Moreover, they tend to be small companies, often with fewer than 20 employees. Taken together, these results suggest that the websites are in fact being used by small businesses in early start-up stages of operation.

Most visitors were relatively unfamiliar with the websites (63-73% each). However, this can be explained in large part by the fact that, for the majority (55-63%), this was their first visit to the sites, at least in the previous 12 months but likely ever. The lack of familiarity, and consequently experience, with the websites made it difficult for many respondents (44-47%) to assess the overall usefulness of the sites to them. That said, those who did offer assessments almost always provided positive (or neutral) evaluations, rather than negative ones. Moreover, when evaluating tools or content they were familiar with, visitors tended to judge them to be useful. In fact, relatively few expressed dissatisfaction with the overall quality of the websites or with specific components of them.

In addition to most visitors being satisfied with the particular sections of the sites that they had used, feedback was also positive regarding aspects of the sites' information/content and usability. While most visitors are not regular users of the sites, many clearly viewed the sites as valuable and associated positive business-related impacts from having used them. When evaluating particular aspects of the sites – tools, content or usability – positive feedback offered by respondents was more likely to be moderate than strong<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, for each site, at least seven in ten would recommend the website to others, and nearly all intend to return to the site in the future. These findings suggest that the websites are seen to be valuable and that continuing to invest in them would be welcomed by site visitors.

Consideration should be given to more aggressively communicating the existence of these sites to the small business community that they target. The research indicates that most visitors only learn about the sites through word of mouth, Google searches, or while browsing the main Industry Canada site or other federal government websites.

**More Information:**

**Supplier Name:** Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.  
**PWGSC Contract Number:** U5450-073832-001/CY  
**Award Date:** 2008-01-25

**To obtain more information on this study, please email [por-rop@ic.gc.ca](mailto:por-rop@ic.gc.ca).**

---

<sup>2</sup> The only tool for which a majority provided strongly positive feedback was 'Build Your Own Profile' from Performance Plus (51% considered this to be *very* useful).

## INTRODUCTION

Phoenix SPI was commissioned by the Small Business Policy Branch of Industry Canada to conduct research related to three websites that provide information to small businesses.

### Background

As part of its mandate, the Small Business Policy Branch (SBPB) of Industry Canada informs small business stakeholders about small business programs and policy development by the federal government. As well, the Branch responds to the needs of the small business community by providing information to help entrepreneurs and small business owners and managers develop and grow their business.

SBPB has developed three websites, among others, that provide online information to small business owners and managers to help them improve their business management skills, the performance of their business, and to grow their business. These three websites are *Managing for Business Success*, *Performance Plus* and *Steps to Growth Capital*. SBPB has also developed and is managing three other websites that are more oriented toward small business research and policy development. The Branch also produces and publishes research publications in hard copy and electronic formats. These include *Small Business Quarterly* (SBQ), *Key Small Business Statistics* (KSBS), *Key Small Business Financing Statistics* (KSBFS), and *Venture Capital Monitor* (VC Monitor). In addition, SBPB distributes promotional material to increase awareness about Branch information products to small business stakeholders.

*Managing for Business Success* was developed and launched in 2004 in recognition of the growing body of research that underlines the correlation between management skills and business success or failure, and the importance of strong management skills in moving entrepreneurial start-ups to profitable businesses. While the primary target audience for the site is owners and managers of Canadian small businesses, the *Managing for Business Success* site is also of interest to small business intermediaries who provide advice to small businesses. The site is available at: <http://www.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/mfbs-gprea.nsf/en/home>.

Launched in 2000, the *Performance Plus* website is an online benchmarking tool that provides detailed financial and employment data on more than 600 Canadian business sectors, including more than 30 performance indicators, to help SME owners and managers determine how they measure up against their competition. *Performance Plus* can be found at: <http://www.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/pp-pp.nsf/en/home>.

The *Steps to Growth Capital* website helps SME owners and managers determine if they are ready to meet investors' needs. Studies indicate that there is a shortage of funds available to small and medium-sized growth-oriented firms. Moreover, these funds are only available to businesses that are investor-ready – that demonstrate they are well managed and offer positive prospective returns on investment in the medium and long term. The site includes a step-by-step guide on how to prepare to meet potential investors in order to secure financing for business. The site can be found at: <http://www.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/stgc-evcc.nsf/en/home>

## **Research Objectives**

The purpose of this research was to identify the clientele visiting SBPB small business websites, and their degree of satisfaction with the information provided, including its perceived usefulness. This information would be used by SBPB to determine the effectiveness of these websites, and help determine what changes may be required in order to improve their usefulness to small businesses, intermediaries, and other small business stakeholders.

The research was designed to assess the performance and effectiveness of SBPB small business websites to determine the extent to which the websites are used by target audiences, and the degree to which their content is relevant and useful for small businesses. It was anticipated that subsequent research will assess the effectiveness of the other three research and policy development websites, and online information products targeted at researchers and other small business stakeholders.

The target audiences for this project were owners and managers of small businesses (defined as less than 100 employees for the purposes of this study). A secondary audience of importance was small business intermediaries who provide front-line advice to small business owners and managers on various aspects of business management. Such intermediaries include accredited professionals, such as chartered or general accountants, lawyers, business consultants, professional associations, and industry or business associations.

## **Research Activities**

To address the research objectives, a mixed methodology was used. This included online surveys that focused on each of the three websites, and a set of 14 qualitative interviews undertaken to help interpret the results. Each research element is described in detail below.

### Online Surveys

The online surveys represent the core element of this research. A separate online survey was conducted for each of the three websites. The purpose of the surveys was to obtain a profile of website users, and to explore usage, satisfaction, and perceived impact with respect to each website.

During the first two weeks of the research, the number of visitors completing the surveys was considerably lower than expected. In order to speed up and ensure sufficient data collection among website visitors, some of whom were perhaps not as engaged with the sites as others, the questionnaires were divided into two parts – Part A and Part B. Participants were told that Part A was a two-minute survey. Once they completed the Part A survey, they were asked if they would be willing to provide further feedback. If so, respondents were then directed to Part B of the survey. Part A focused on collecting demographic, corporate profile, and usage data, while Part B focused on collecting more detailed information about usage, satisfaction, and perceived impact of the website content.

The table below shows the completion times for each survey:

<b>Table 2: Survey Completion Times</b>		
	<b>Part A</b>	<b>Part A and B</b>
<b>Managing for Business Success</b>	2.3 minutes	6.9 minutes
<b>Steps to Growth Capital</b>	2.4 minutes	6.9 minutes
<b>Performance Plus</b>	2.2 minutes	6.3 minutes

Due to the relatively slow traffic for these sites, all three surveys were available online for approximately eight weeks, from late-February to late-April in order ensure sufficient responses. The table below shows the total number of completed surveys<sup>3</sup>. Note that the number of completes for Part B is presented as a range. This is due to the survey restructuring that occurred during the first two weeks in field.

<b>Table 1: Survey Completion Dates &amp; Number of Respondents</b>				
	<b>Field Dates</b>	<b>Part A Only</b>	<b>Parts A &amp; B</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Managing for Business Success</b>	February 29 – April 28	296	103-109	399-405
<b>Steps to Growth Capital</b>	February 27 – April 27	236	72-76	308-312
<b>Performance Plus</b>	February 27 – April 8	292	150-151	442-443

Both passive and active invitation methods were used in order to invite survey respondents to participate. The ‘active’ approach included an interstitial invitation page that appeared to participants after they had been on the website for 10 seconds. Because this was an interstitial page and not a pop-up, it was visible to all visitors (even those with pop-up blockers). This was supported by a ‘passive’ invitation method, which included a static link placed on the left-hand navigation bar of each website (visible regardless of the page the participant was on), as well as an additional link placed in the body of several high-traffic pages on each site.

<sup>3</sup> No margin of error is provided because the size of the population of visitors to these sites is not known.

In addition, the following specifications applied to the online surveys:

- The questionnaires resided on a secure server, ensuring security of data and confidentiality of responses for participants.
- Online respondent support was available for respondents that encountered any difficulties completing the questionnaire.
- In terms of the areas of investigation, a core part of the questionnaire was the same for all three websites. However, other sections/questions were customized to deal with content and potential outcomes specific to each website.
- Prior to going 'live', the programming was tested by Phoenix and Industry Canada officials to ensure proper functioning.
- The surveys were registered with the National Survey Registration System.

#### In-Depth Interviews

A set of in-depth interviews was undertaken from March 10 to May 15. The purpose was to gain insight to better interpret the survey findings, and add qualitative feedback to enrich understanding of related issues.

The following specifications applied to the in-depth interviews:

- In total, 14 in-depth interviews were conducted, among users of each of the three websites. The interviews averaged 35 minutes in length and were semi-structured in nature, designed to obtain robust, qualitative feedback.
- All interviews were conducted by phone by professional research staff (i.e. not hourly-paid telephone interviewers). Respondents had the choice of being interviewed in English or French.
- Interview participants were recruited using lists of individuals that had submitted a question to Industry Canada through these websites or had received promotional material about them through an Industry Canada mail-out. The balance of the interviews were conducted with users of the *Performance Plus* website, as this was where sample was the most robust. That said, every effort was made to reach users of all three websites.

- The table below shows the final breakdown of the interviews by website:

<b>Table 3: In-Depth Interviews Completed</b>	
	<b>Number of Interviews</b>
<b>Managing for Business Success</b>	4
<b>Steps to Growth Capital</b>	2
<b>Performance Plus</b>	8
<b>Total</b>	14

- The interview guide was developed in close consultation with Industry Canada officials. The same guide was used for all three websites.
- The first three interviews served as a pre-test of the interview guide, where researchers were attentive to the functioning of the instrument to determine whether any adjustments were required. The results of these interviews were retained and included in the analysis.

**This phase of the research was qualitative in nature, not quantitative. As such, the results provide an indication of participants' views about the issues explored, but cannot be generalized to the full population of website users.**

Notes to Reader:

This report is divided into three sections: Part 1 presents the results of the *Managing for Business Success* website, Part 2 the results of the *Performance Plus* site, and Part 3 the results for the *Steps to Growth Capital* site. Feedback obtained through the in-depth interviews is presented in shaded boxes in the relevant part of the report (i.e. in the report section dealing with the relevant website that was being assessed).

As well,

- The wording of the survey questions is included in the graphs. However, for a more fulsome understanding of the structure/approach used for each question, please see the questionnaire appended to the report.
- At times, the number of respondents (i.e. not the percentage) who answered certain questions or answered in a certain way is provided. The following method is used to denote this:  $n = 100$ , which means the number of respondents, in this instance, is 100.

- Since some questions were asked of sub-samples of the survey population, the number of respondents changes throughout the report. Accordingly, readers should be aware of this and exercise caution when interpreting results based on smaller numbers of respondents.
- Some of the graphs do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Appended to this report are the following in both official languages:

- Age of business sub-group analysis
- Online questionnaire
- In-depth interview guide
- Confirmation email and instructions for in-depth interview participants.



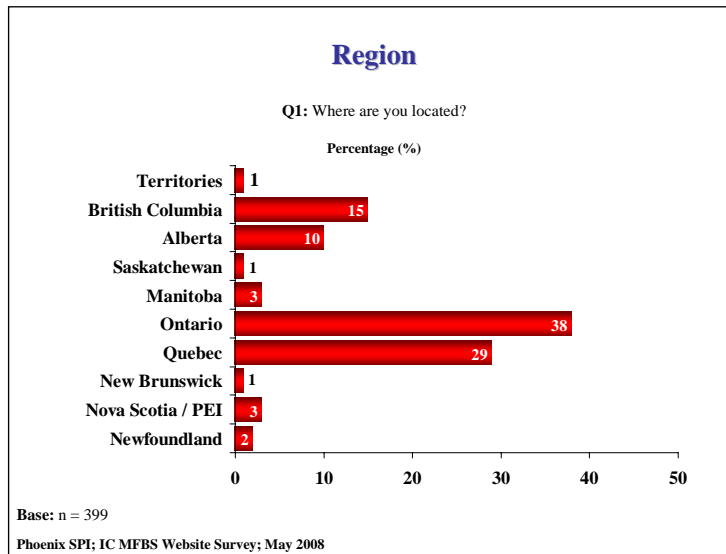
**PART 1: MANAGING FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS**

## BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

This section presents background information collected from visitors to the Managing for Business Success (MFBS) website. Questions in this section were asked of all survey respondents (n = 399), unless otherwise indicated.

### Region

Website visitors were most likely to live in Canada's most populous regions. The largest proportions of visitors reside in central Canada – 38% in Ontario and 29% in Quebec. Following this, 15% live in B.C., and 10% in Alberta. Other regions were represented by 3% or less each.

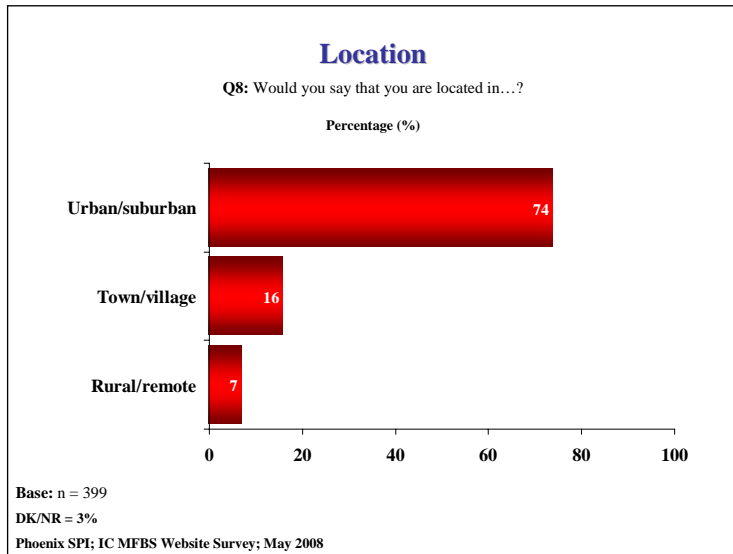


In total, 177 potential respondents were excluded from the survey because they do not live in Canada and hence are primarily outside the mandate of the Small Business Policy Branch. Access to this site from abroad was most likely to occur from Africa (wide range of countries) (31%), France (11%), and various other European countries (16%). The table below identifies the countries and continents in which foreign visitors reside:

International Visitors to MFBS			
Country	%	Country	%
Africa (various)	18	Asia (various)	5
France	11	South Africa	4
Europe (various)	10	Ivory Coast	4
USA	8	Philippines	3
India	6	Cameroon	3
United Kingdom	6	South America (various)	3
Australia	6	Morocco	3
Middle East (various)	5	Other	5
Base n = 177			

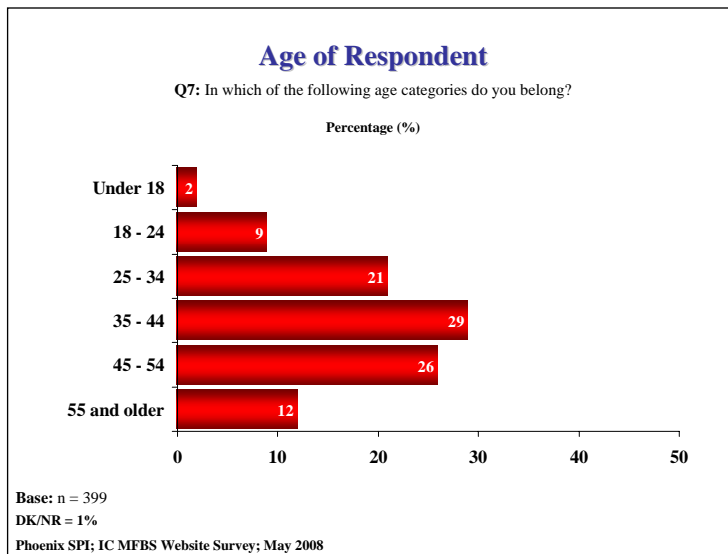
### Three-Quarters Live in Urban/Suburban Locations

Almost three-quarters of MFBS visitors live in an urban or suburban location (74%). Among the remaining quarter, 16% are in towns or villages, and 7% are located in rural or remote areas.



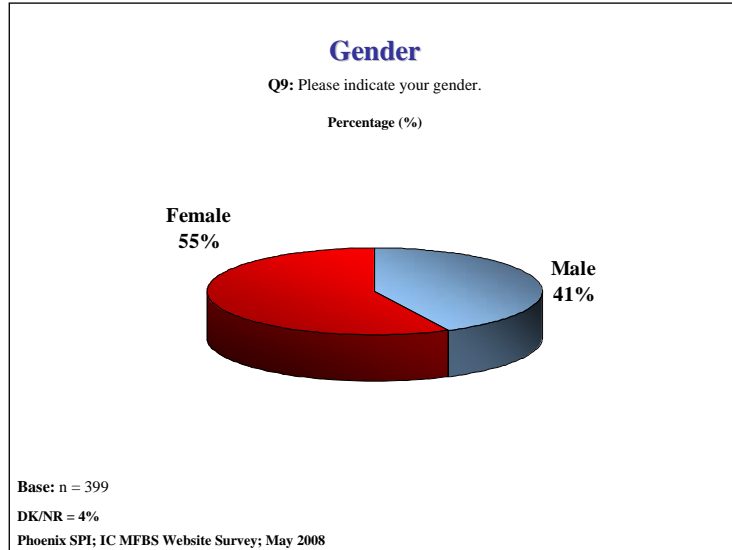
### Most MFBS Visitors Were 35 Years of Age & Over

In total, two-thirds (67%) of website visitors were at least 35 years of age, including a majority (55%) that were between 35 and 54 years old, and 12% that were 55 and older.



**Gender**

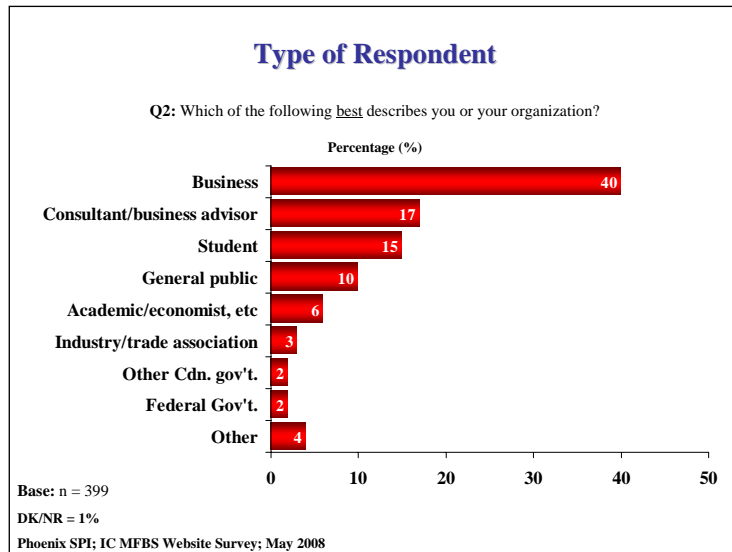
A majority of MFBS website visitors were women (55% vs. 41% males).



**Many Visitors Were Business Persons, Followed by Advisors & Students**

Visitors work in a variety of organizations and occupations. That said, the single largest number work in businesses (40%). Following this, 17% identified themselves as consultants or business advisors, 15% as students, and 10% as members of the general public.

Professions or types of organizations identified by relatively small numbers included academics, professors, researchers, or economists (6%), industry or trade associations (3%), the federal government (2%), and other governments in Canada (2%).

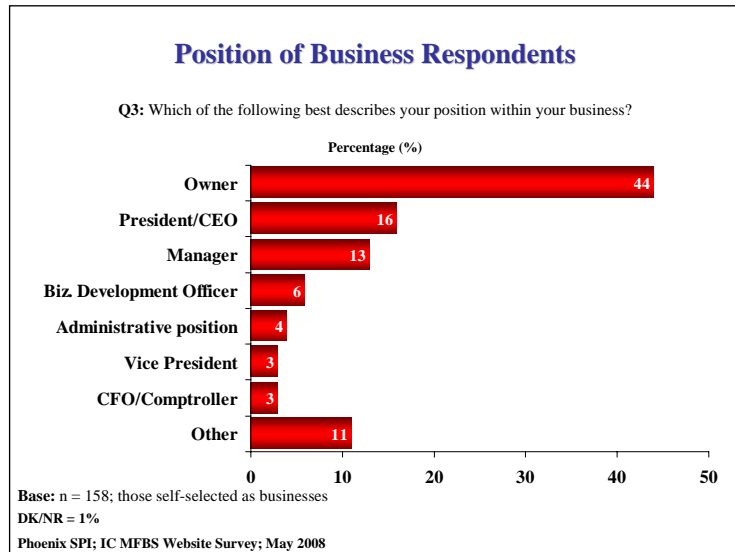


Professions or organizations included in the 'other' category were working for the Government of Quebec, as an independent worker, as a member of a board of directors, and for the media.

### Business Representatives Most Likely to be Owners

Visitors who said they work for a business (n = 158) were asked to identify their position in the company. Slightly less than half (44%) identified themselves as business owners. Just over one in five (22%) held other senior positions, such as president or CEO (16%), vice president (3%), and chief financial officer or comptroller (3%).

Among the rest, 13% were managers, 6% business development officers, and 4% held administrative positions.

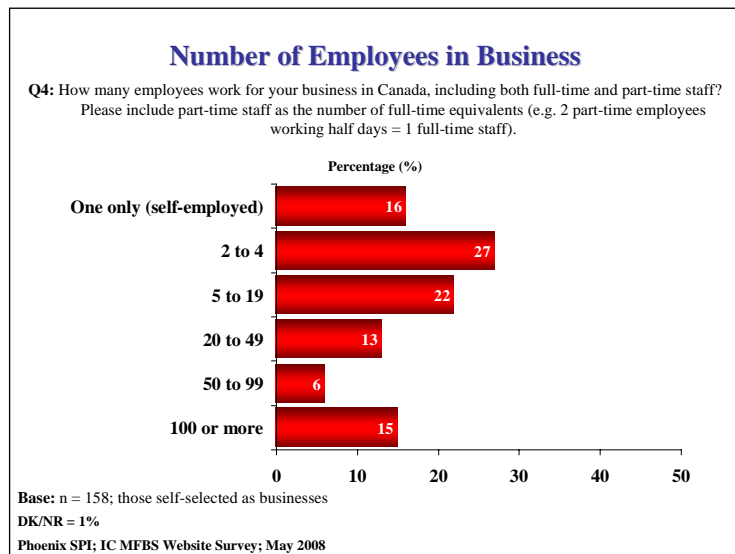


Positions in the ‘other’ category include business analyst, sales, marketing project agent, human resources consultant, engineer, and quality control technician.

### Most Businesses Have Fewer Than 20 Employees

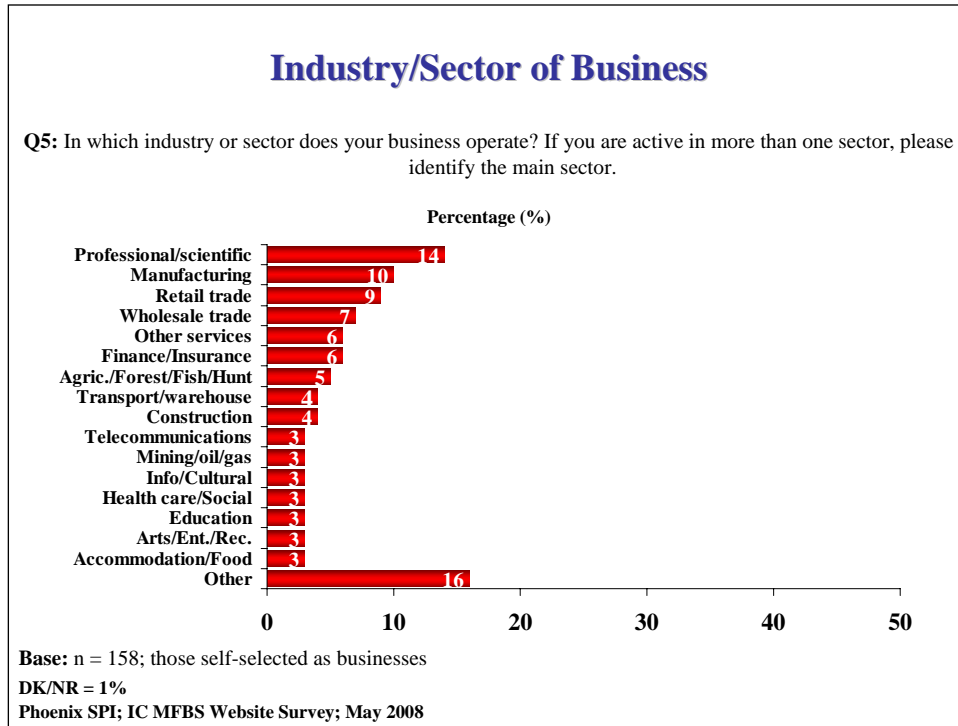
Just under two-thirds (64%) of those who work for businesses said they work for relatively small firms with fewer than 20 employees. This includes 22% who work in firms with 5-19 employees, 27% with 2-4 employees, and 16% that are self-employed.

Following this, 19% work for medium-sized firms (i.e. 20-99 employees), while 15% work for larger firms – those with 100 employees or more.



### Businesses Operate in Wide Range of Sectors

Business visitors (n = 158) to the MFBS site work in companies that operate in a wide range of industries or sectors, with professional, scientific and technical services (14%) leading the way, albeit by a small margin. Following this were manufacturing (10%), retail (9%) and wholesale (7%) trade, other professional services (except public administration) (6%), finance and insurance (6%), and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (5%).



Other sectors were identified by 5% or less, and include transportation and warehousing, construction, telecommunications, mining, oil and gas extraction, information and cultural industries, health care and social assistance, educational services, arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food services.

Industries in the ‘other’ category include aerospace, sports, fitness, spa services, botany, and biotechnology.

### Many are Relatively Young Companies

Just under two-thirds of surveyed businesses (64%) have been in operation for 10 years or less. Moreover, they were most likely to have been operating for no more than three years (40%), with many (20%) less than one year old. The remaining 35% were more mature, having been in operation for at least 11 years. This includes 18% that have been operating for over 20 years.



### **Participants Undertake Business Research for Work**

All interview participants considered doing research on business issues to be part of their job responsibilities. This includes things like business development, providing advice on business issues, and business intelligence gathering. That said, participants came from varied organizations, such as privately-owned consultancies, business research firms, and government.

### **Participants Routinely Work with Businesses on Range of Issues**

All participants work for organizations that provide advice and assistance to businesses. This includes advising and assisting small and medium-sized enterprises with business development, e-commerce, human resources, program management (including charitable giving programs), and management of companies in general. Their experience in these areas ranged from a low of five years to a high of 13. The organizations ranged in size from one or two consultants to just over 100 employees.

### **Broad Information Needs**

Asked about their information needs, participants generally pointed to information that could be helpful in their work with businesses. This included a broad range of information types, including information on financing, taxes, marketing, administration, cash management, e-commerce, and organizational efficiency.

### **Range of Information Sources Identified – Primarily Online**

Participants identified numerous sources of information that they use, all of which were online. Not surprisingly, all said they count MFBS among their many sources.

Few other resources were identified with any frequency, although some were identified by several participants each. These include:

- The Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses (CFIB)
- Industry Canada's *Strategis*.
- Websites of industry/trade associations in general

Websites for the following organizations were each identified by one participant:

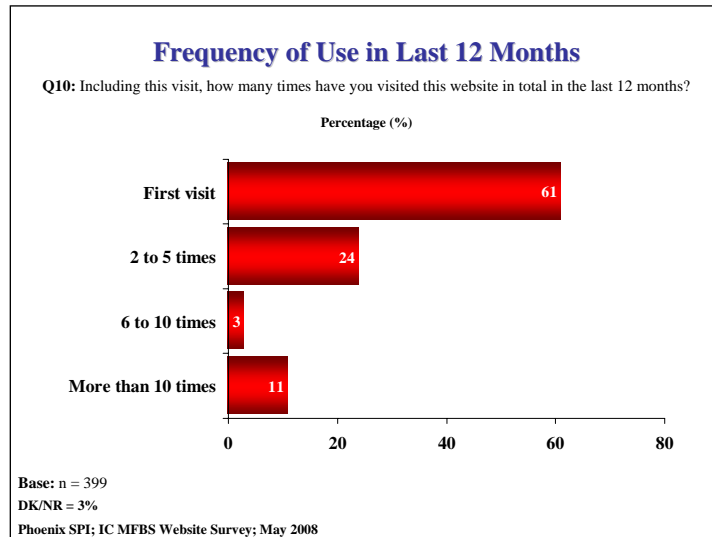
- Business Development Canada (BDC)
- The Canadian Banker's Association
- Boards of trade (in general)
- Business schools (in general).

## USE OF MFBS WEBSITE

This section describes visitors' use of the Managing for Business Success (MFBS) website in terms of their frequency of use, reasons for their visit(s), familiarity with the site, and satisfaction with the site. Questions in this section were asked of all survey respondents (n = 399), unless otherwise specified.

### Majority Were First Time Visitors

For the majority of visitors (61%), this was their first visit to the MFBS site, at least within the previous 12 months. Following this, approximately one-quarter (24%) had made between two and five visits. Only 14% had visited the site with greater frequency, most of whom had visited more than 10 times (11%).



### Sporadic Use, Dependent on Assignment or Project

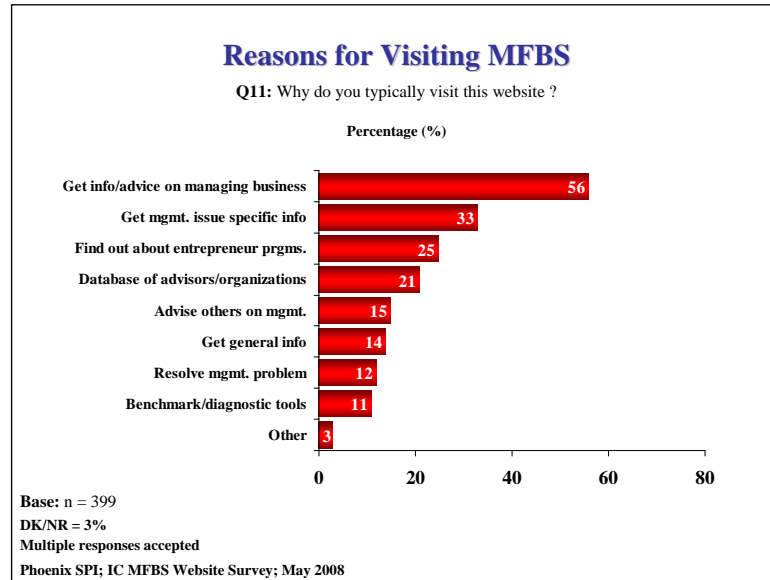
None of those interviewed were frequent users of the site. Rather, all reported that they used the site as it applied to the work they were doing at a given point in time. Some had in fact been frequent visitors for a time and then did not visit for over a year. It was related to what they were currently working on.

In terms of their reasons for visiting the site, participants visited for a variety of reasons, including obtaining information on human resources, innovation and technology, and operations management. While reasons for visiting were typically to fulfill client needs (i.e. client businesses), one participant added that they visited the site for their own small business operation as well (i.e. managing their business consultancy).

### Obtain Information/Advice on Managing Business – Top Reason for Visiting Site

Respondents identified a number of reasons for visiting the MFBS site. However, visits to obtain information or advice related to managing a business was the reason identified most often and the only one to be cited by a majority of respondents (56%). Following this, one-third visited to get more information about a specific management issue (i.e. finance, human resources, etc.), one-quarter to find out about entrepreneur-support programs, and 21% to access a database of small business advisors and support organizations.





Several reasons for visiting the site were identified by smaller but noteworthy numbers. These include providing others with management advice (15%), getting information in general (14%), obtaining information to resolve a management problem or challenge (12%), and assessing business performance with the benchmarking and diagnostic tools (11%).

Other reasons, identified infrequently, include registering a company for services, learning about starting a home business, and obtaining information to help increase sales.

**Perceived Purpose of MFBS – To Help SMEs Succeed**

Participants were asked, in an unaided manner, what they thought the overall purpose of the website was, based on their experience with it. Most participants thought that the MFBS site was designed to provide information that will help SMEs succeed. A few said that this was because the federal government recognized SMEs as important parts of the Canadian economy. One participant thought that the site was simply a vehicle for anyone looking for SME-related information.

**Mixed Views of Website’s Purpose Based on IC Definition**

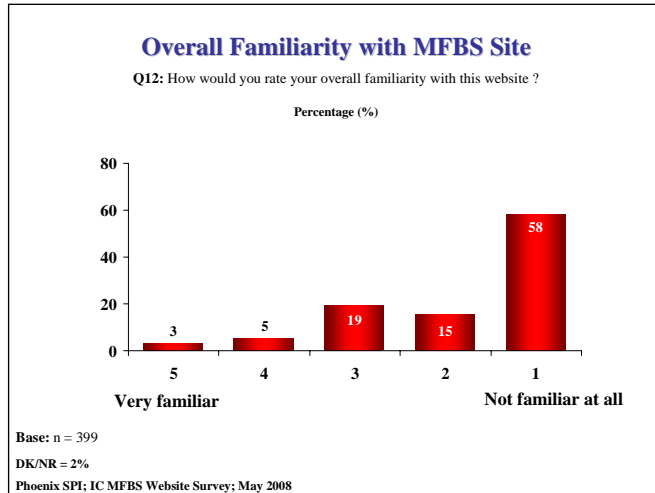
After being read a description of the website’s purpose (see appendix), participants were asked if the description of the purpose was clear based on their own experiences with the site. While this was the case for half the participants, others disagreed. One noted that the definition sounded as though Industry Canada (IC) had created an information

portal for SMEs to visit. However, this person's experience was such that MFBS contained enough unique information to not be seen as a portal (i.e. its own databases and the 'Advisory Network'). The other participant felt that while the site tried to achieve this, it was not successful because he found information to be difficult to find.

### Low Familiarity with MFBS Site

In total, 73% considered themselves to be unfamiliar with the website overall (scores of 1-2 on 5-point scale). Moreover, a clear majority (58%) were not familiar with the site *at all*. This is not surprising as 61% had not visited the website more than once in the last year.

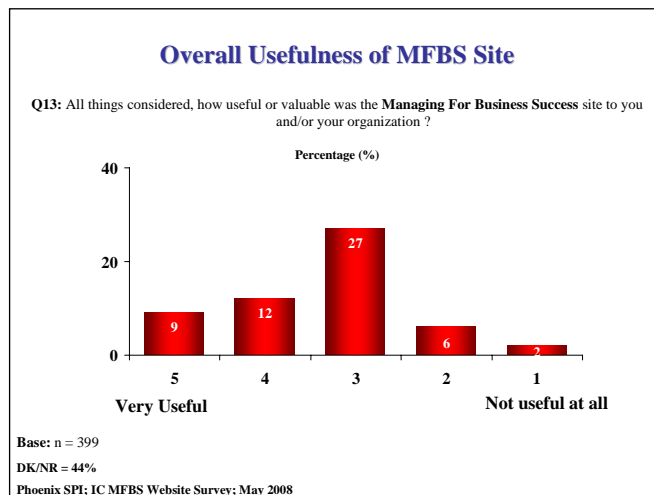
Among those more familiar, visitors tended to characterize their familiarity as only moderate (19% gave scores of 3), as opposed to being clearly familiar with the site (8% gave scores of 4-5).



### Mixed Perceptions of Usefulness of MFBS Website

Website visitors offered mixed reviews of the perceived usefulness of the MFBS site to them or their organizations. While few (8%) considered the site to be of little or no value (scores of 1-2 on 5-point scale), only 21% provided clearly positive evaluations (positive scores on scale). An additional 27% were more likely to be undecided or neutral, offering scores at the midpoint of the scale.

It is important to note that 44% felt unable to rate the site's usefulness.



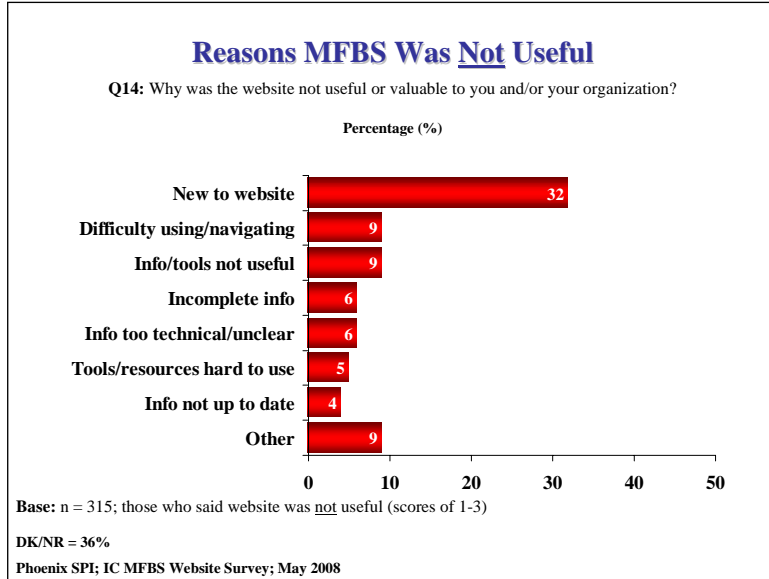
### Most Found MFBS Valuable & Useful

In-depth interview participants generally found the MFBS site to be a valuable and useful resource for them and/or their organization. One noted that they always direct clients to this site, while another had bookmarked it for personal reference. Those who found the site less useful gave it moderate assessments. Both these participants suggested more detailed information would improve their assessment of the site.

**New to Website – Main Reasons Site Not Perceived as Useful**

In total, 79% of visitors did not provide positive assessments of the MFBS website’s usefulness (n = 315) – 35% did not express a positive view, while 44% did not know or gave no response. These respondents were asked to explain why the website was not useful or valuable to them. Heading the list of explanations, by a wide margin, was being new to the website (32%).

Other reasons were given with much less frequency and can be divided into usability and information issues. The former include difficulty using or navigating the site (9%), information or tools that were not useful or relevant (9%), and tools and resources that were difficult to use (5%). In terms of information issues, information was sometimes seen to be too technical or unclear (6%), incomplete (6%), or out of date (4%).



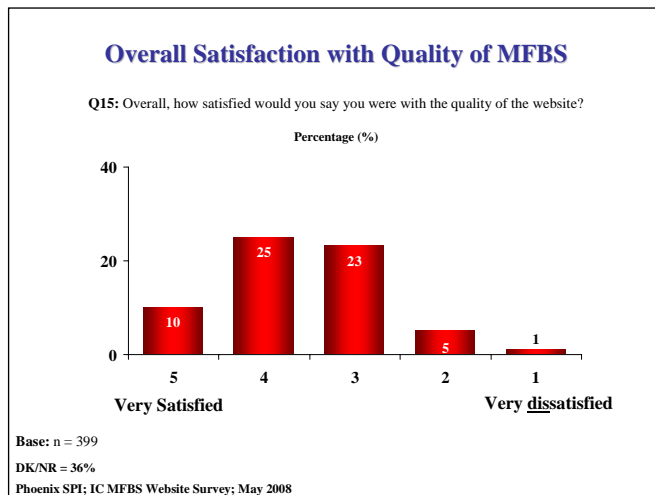
Reasons grouped in the ‘other’ category include perceptions that the search function was not effective, the inability to find information on team building, not being sure what to look for, and having already found the information elsewhere.

Note that more than one-third (36%) could not say why the website was not useful or valuable to them.

**Neutral-to-Moderate Satisfaction with Overall Quality of MFBS**

In total, more than one-third (35%) offered positive assessments of the overall quality of the website (scores of 4-5 on 5-point scale). That said, this was more likely to be moderately than highly positive (25% vs. 10%). Following this, 23% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and just 6% of visitors were dissatisfied with the overall quality of the MFBS website.

Once again, many (36%) were unable to rate their satisfaction with the quality of the website.

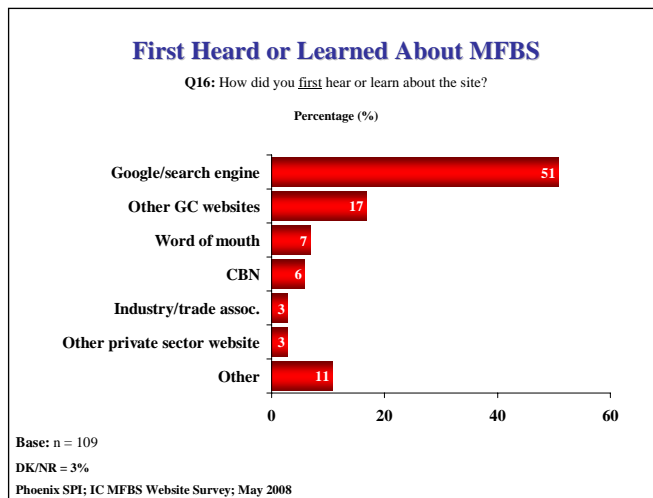


## ASSESSMENT OF WEBSITE CONTENT & TOOLS

This section explores visitors' assessments of the website's content areas and tools. Questions in this section were only asked of those who chose to complete the Part B component of the online questionnaire (n = 103-109).

### Most Learned of MFBS via Google/Search Engine

MFBS visitors identified a range of methods through which they first learned about the website. That said, finding the site through Google or another search engine was the method cited most often and the only one identified by a majority (51%). Other online methods included Government of Canada websites (17%), and private sector websites (3%). A few had first learned of MFBS through word of mouth from colleagues or co-workers (7%), the Canada Business Network (6%), and industry or trade associations (3%).



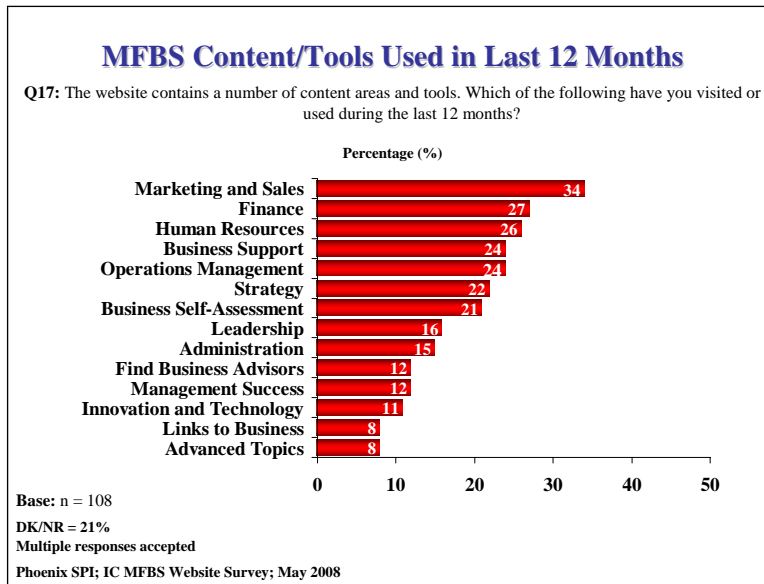
Some visitors had first heard of the site through alternative means, included in the 'other' category, such as through a university website, a course, an advertisement, or while looking for another government site.

### First Heard of MFBS Through Internet Search

Interviewed MFBS patrons first came across the website while searching the Internet for information pertaining to business in general (one mentioned small and medium-sized enterprises specifically). Half had discovered the site through Google, while the others had come across it while searching for information on Industry Canada's website. None were looking for this site specifically when they found it.

### Marketing & Sales – Top Content Area Used in Last 12 Months

The MFBS website contains numerous content areas and tools. Among these, visitors were most likely to have used the Marketing and Sales section in the previous 12 months (34%). Following this was use of the following sections: Finance (27%), Human Resources (26%), Business Support (24%), Operations Management (24%), Strategy (22%), and Business Self-Assessment Tools (21%).



Other sections and tools were used with less frequency (11-16%). These include the sections on Leadership, Administration, Finding a Business Advisor, Management Success, and Innovation and Technology. Relatively few made use of the Links to Business and Advanced Topics Sections (8% each).

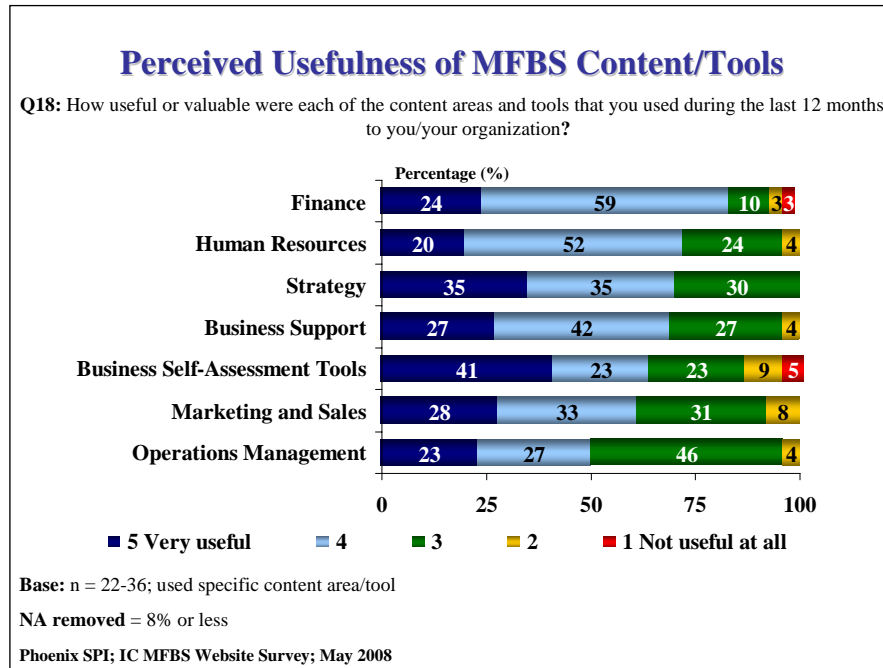
As well, 21% did not know what sections they used or provided no response.

### Content & Tools Widely Seen as Useful by Users

Website visitors were asked to rate how useful or valuable each of the content areas and tools that they had used during the previous 12 months were to them or their organization. To do this, they used a 5-point scale (1 = not useful at all, 5 = very useful). Recall that some content was only used by 16% or less of MFBS visitors (n = 7-17). These are reported on separately given the very small sample sizes involved.

The most commonly-used content areas and tools (those rated by 22-36 visitors) were all generally seen to be useful by majorities of those who used them (50-83% gave scores of 4-5). The section on Finance was the most likely to be perceived as useful (83%), followed by Human Resources (72%), Strategy (70%), and Business Support (69%). Smaller majorities (61-64%) perceived as useful the Business Self-Assessment Tools and Marketing and Sales sections, while 50% of users felt this about Operations Management. Positive perceptions tended to be moderately positive as opposed to strongly positive in all but one case – users of the Business Self-Assessment Tools were almost twice as likely to feel strongly rather than moderately positive about the usefulness of this tool (41% vs. 23%).

Those who did not rate the content and tools as useful were much more likely to hold neutral rather than negative views.



Turning to the least-used content areas and tools, perceptions tended to be positive rather than neutral as well. Moreover, very few (n = 1 or less) considered any of the content to be of little use to them. The table below shows the actual numbers of respondents that rated each of these services (i.e. not the percentages).

Perceived Usefulness of MFBS Content/Tools (Cont'd)					
	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Leadership</b> (n = 17)	5	7	5	-	-
<b>Administration</b> (n = 16)	8	6	2	-	-
<b>Management Success Stories</b> (n = 12)	5	5	1	1	-
<b>Innovation and Technology</b> (n = 12)	4	3	5	-	-
<b>Find Business Advisors</b> (n = 12)	4	2	5	-	1
<b>Links to Business Magazines</b> (n = 9)	5	1	3	-	-
<b>Advanced Topics</b> (n = 8)	2	5	1	-	-
<b>NA (removed) = 1 or less</b>					

**Assessment of Key Content Areas & Tools**

Although Managing for Business Success contains many key content areas, only a few of these were used with any frequency. The remaining areas were typically used by no more than one participant each. For the most part, all those who had used a given section considered it to be useful.

## Evaluation of SBPB Small Business Websites

Turning first to the areas used most frequently (i.e. by two or three participants):

- Human Resources: Those who used this section considered it to be useful because of its comprehensives, clarity of the information presented, and specifically the information on 'employee relations'.
- Finance: Feedback on this section was generally positive, with most finding the information to be useful. This was due to its high quality, and in particular the information on financing and managing cash flow. That said, one user did not find this to be helpful, saying that the information was disorganized and difficult to use.
- Business Support: Users of this section had positive experiences. They specifically noted that the information on 'Women in Business', and the 'Business Start-up Assistant' were useful to them.
- Operations Management: Participants that used information in this section praised its direct, organized and detailed nature.

The following content areas were used by no more than one participant each. Moreover, this was often the same participant. That is, most users of the site accessed the content discussed above and not what is discussed below.

- Advanced Topics: This was seen to be useful because it helps a company to benchmark its performance. This section of the website contains a link to the Performance Plus website, also the subject of this research.
- Marketing and Sales: This section was considered useful because it contains useful information for developing a marketing plan.
- Administration: This section was useful because of the security, legal, insurance, and regulatory information it contains.
- Strategy: This areas was deemed useful because the 'Selling Your Business' chapter is helpful in developing a business plan.
- Innovation and Technology: This was considered useful primarily because of the link to the 'Innovation Portal' website.
- Links to Business Magazines: Information in this section was useful because the magazines linked to the site contain examples of current business success stories.
- Management Success Stories: This section was useful because the success stories/case studies are encouraging for new business owners to read.

In-depth interview participants had not visited or at least could not recall visiting the following sections: Leadership, Find Business Advisors, and Business Self-Assessment Tools.

### **None Used Business Self-Assessment Tool**

None used the Business Self-Assessment Tool found on the site. However, one participant, an intermediary, recommended that their client use this tool for operations planning.

## PERCEPTIONS OF MFBS WEBSITE

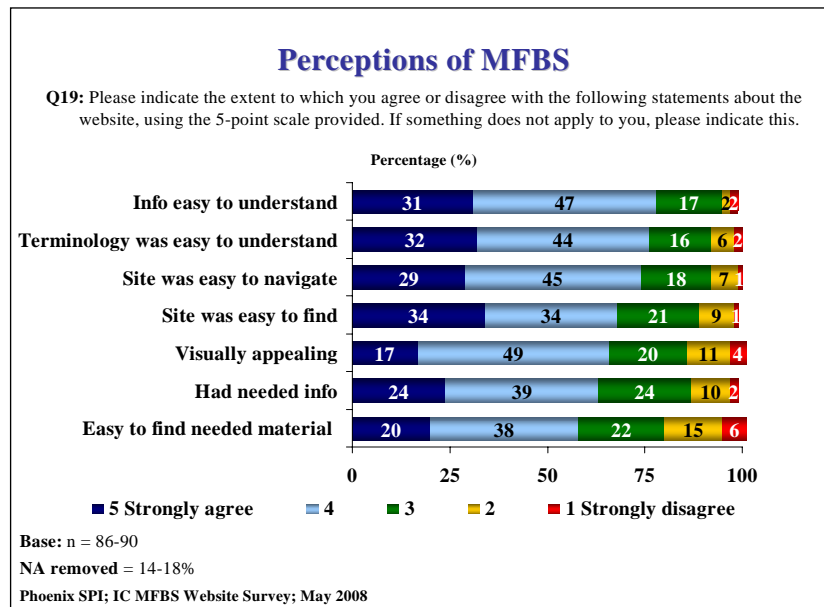
This section explores visitors' perceptions of and satisfaction with various aspects of the MFBS website. Questions in this section were only asked of those who completed Part B of the online questionnaire (n = 103-109).

### Generally Positive Perceptions of MFBS Site

Visitors were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements about the MFBS website, using a 5-point scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree):

- It was easy to find what you were looking for.
- The site was visually appealing.
- The site had the information you needed.
- The information was easy to understand.
- It was easy to find the site.
- When accessing information on the site, it was easy to move from section to section.
- The terminology used on the site was easy to understand.

Majorities of visitors held positive perceptions of each aspect of the MFBS site. That said, the size of these majorities ranged considerably (58-78%). Common to all aspects, agreement was more likely to be moderate as opposed to strong. Turning first to content, most respondents agreed that the information (78%) and terminology (76%) on the website were easy to understand, and many agreed that it had the information they needed (63%). Moreover, most found the site to be easy to navigate (74%), easy to find (68%), and visually appealing (66%). Finally, more than half (58%) said that it was easy to find the information they were looking for.





For each of these, the remaining visitors were more likely to hold neutral, rather than negative views. Moreover, in most cases this difference was considerable.

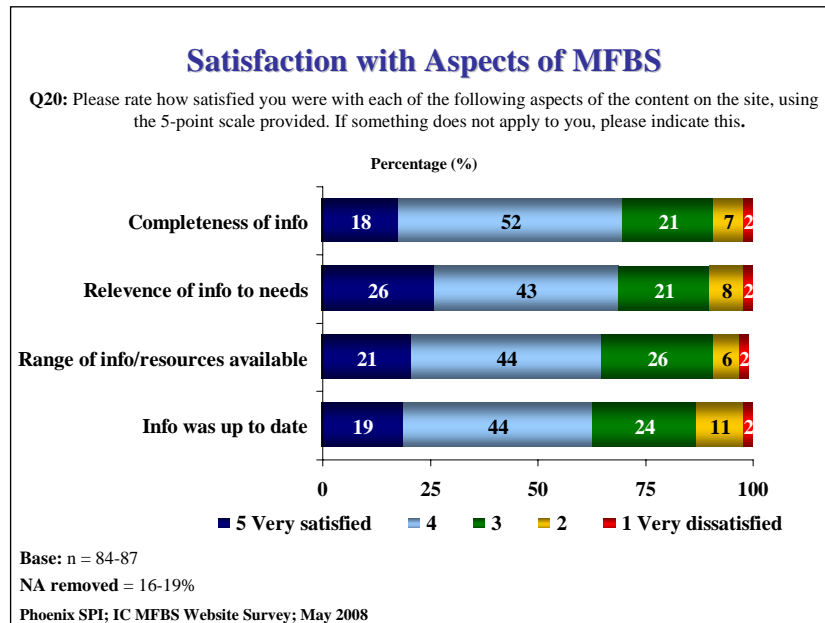
**Widespread Satisfaction with Aspects of MFBS Content**

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with each of the following aspects of the content on the MFBS site using a 5-point scale (5 = very satisfied, 1 = very dissatisfied):

- The extent to which the information was up-to-date.
- The completeness of the information.
- The relevance of the information to their needs
- The range of information and resources available on the website.

Clear majorities were satisfied with each aspect of the MFBS content. Visitors were most apt to be satisfied with the completeness of the information (70%), and its relevance to their needs (69%). Following this, 65% were satisfied with the range of information and resources available, and 63% with the currency of the information. Satisfaction with all aspects was much more likely to be moderate as opposed to strong.

Among those less satisfied, perceptions tended to be neutral, with 8-13% expressing dissatisfaction.



**Widespread Positive Perceptions of MFBS Overall**

Most held positive perceptions of the website overall. Reasons given to explain this were the comprehensiveness of the site, the quality and amount of information it contains, and that it is well-organized and easy to navigate. One individual added that they found the site to be particularly valuable for finding information when preparing their business plan. One participant thought that the site ‘could be better’ if information was easier to find.

### **Organization – Main Strength of MFBS**

It was generally felt that the main strength of the website was its organization. Participants said that it was easy to find information, and that it was logically presented, and did not require too much ‘click-through’. A few also pointed to the high quality of information found on the site.

### **Some Weakness Identified**

While all participants identified perceived weaknesses, none were widely held. The following weaknesses were identified by one person each:

- Need for more links to outside sources.
- The site does not have its own content. It was suggested that there be Industry Canada content in addition to the links to outside sources.
- Lack of information on how or why particular sources were chosen. For example, a visitor does not know why they are directed to an RBC site, when the same information is available on a TD or CIBC site.
- The site is not well-organized.

### **MFBS Structure Well-Organized, Easy to Use**

Turning to structure, almost all in-depth interview participants found the website to be well-organized and easy to use, and felt that it facilitated finding the information they were looking for. One participant was less satisfied with the organization. It was suggested that the left-hand navigation bar could be improved by having categories such as ‘Reports’, and ‘Research Materials’, so that all similar resources could be accessed in one place.

### **Categories Clear & Intuitive, But Some are Missing**

Nearly all found the categories presented in the website to be clear and intuitive, and to contain the kind of information expected. The one dissenting participant explained his/her position by noting that he/she felt more comfortable doing a Google search on the website to find information because the categories did not clearly identify what they would find.

All participants identified topics or categories that they felt were missing from the website. The following were seen to be missing, identified by one person each:

- How to Start a Business: There is no category about how one starts a business. This could have all the information someone might need to know to start their business in one place.
- Links to other sites that have collected resources for businesses.
- A section with reports.
- A ‘quick links’ section for the most popular pages on the site.

### **No Strong Opinion of Website Look & Feel**

Participants did not hold strong opinions about the overall look and feel of MFBS. In fact, several noted that it was a ‘typical’ government website, describing it as ‘practical’. Others felt that the site was not visually attractive, but said that this did not affect their use of its content.

### **Overall Satisfied with MFBS Content**

Most participants were satisfied overall with the content of the website. Reasons given include that the information appears to be up to date, and the content is useful, user-friendly, and accessible. Those who were critical of the content said it was incomplete, or should have more original Industry Canada information as opposed to simply providing outside links.

### **Content Clear & Easy to Understand for Some, Needs More Detail for Others**

Participants were divided in their assessments of the text or content that they had read. Some found it to be clear and easy to understand, while others did not. Those who did not, explained that the site might be a good starting point, but they would need other sources to get the details they ultimately need. That is, they found the information to be brief and lacking detail.

### **Some Were Unable to Find Needed Information**

Forty-three percent of MFBS visitors were unable to find on the website some of the information they were looking. Conversely, 32% had no such difficulties, and 25% were not looking for any specific information.

Those who could not find what they were looking for (n = 45) tended to point to diverse and specific needs, each identify by five respondents or less: looking for full or more profiles of businesses, specific business statistics, service industry statistics, and recent data in general.

Other types of information identified include information on change management, team work, quality assurance, starting a business from scratch, web design, best practices for terminating employees, reaching out to business owners, finding R&D capital, licensing, and mergers.

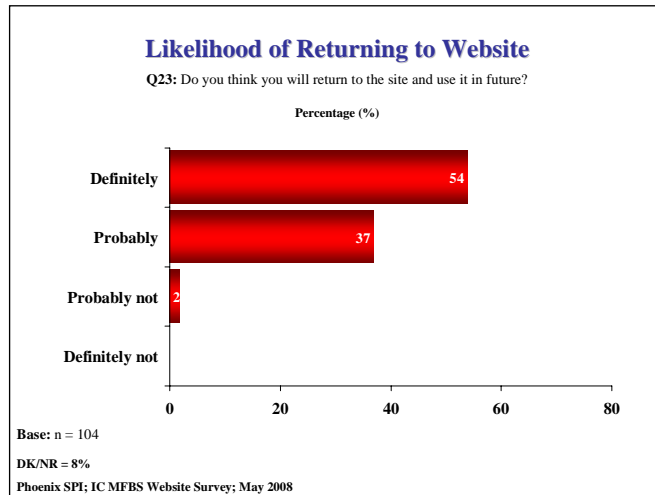
In total, 15 visitors did not know or gave no response.



### Almost All Plan to Use MFBS in Future

Fully 91% of MFBS visitors plan to return to the site and use it in the future. This includes more than half (54%) who think this is definitely the case. Only 2% do not consider a return to the site to be likely.

A further 8% did not know or gave no response.



### All Would Return to MFBS in Future

All MFBS interview participants would return to the site in the future. Those who were sure they would return explained that it has useful information for either themselves or their small business clients. One participant said they would likely return, but was unsure, noting that it depends on the level of detail needed in the information they would be looking for (i.e. if they did not need great detail, they would go to this site).

### Several Similar Websites Exist – MFBS Generally Seen as Superior

Most participants could identify at least one other website that provides similar information or services to MFBS. Asked how these sites compare to MFBS, feedback tended to highlight MFBS as superior due to its organization and easy navigation. Moreover, one said that there are no other sites that provide similarly comprehensive content for small businesses all in one place. The only website seen to be superior to MFBS, which was identified by one person, was the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses website (<http://www.cfib.ca/>). This participant explained that the categories and subject headings of the CFIB site are more intuitive than those on MFBS.

Other websites were identified in general terms, such as *Strategis*, not-for-profit organizations, and various chambers of commerce. One participant also identified Info Entrepreneurs (<http://www.infoentrepreneurs.org/>).

## PERCEIVED IMPACT OF MFBS WEBSITE

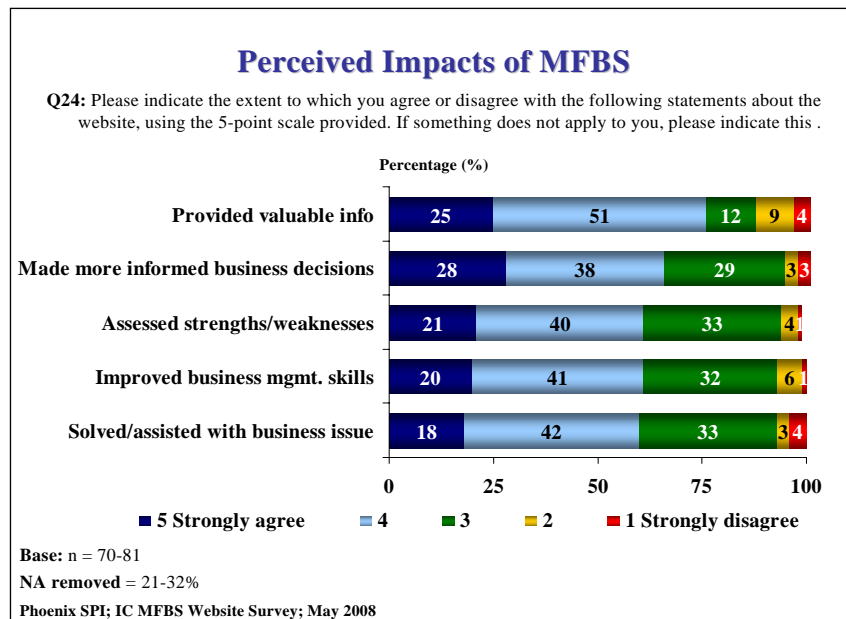
This section of the report explores the impacts of the MFBS website on respondents' businesses. Questions in this section were only asked of those who completed Part B of the online questionnaire (n = 103-109).

### MFBS Widely Seen to Have Positive Impacts on Businesses

Website visitors were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements about the impact of the website, using a 5-point scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree):

- The information and resources helped you to improve your business management skills.
- The diagnostic tools helped you to assess your businesses strengths and weaknesses.
- The site helped you to make more informed decisions for your business.
- The site helped you solve or assisted you with a business issue.
- The site provided you with or directed you to valuable information you might not have otherwise found.

Most website visitors (60-76%) had positive outcomes from their use of the site. They were most likely to agree that the site provided them with valuable information they might not have otherwise found (76%). Following this, two-thirds used the website to make more informed decisions about their business, and approximately six in ten (60-61%) were able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their business, improve their business management skills, and found the site helpful in resolving a business issue. Agreement in these areas was much more likely to be moderate than strong.

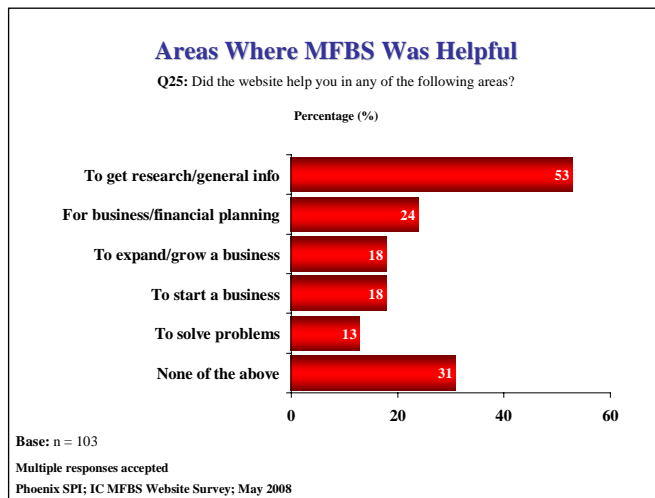


Visitors that did not agree that the website had a positive impact in these areas almost always held neutral views, not negative perceptions (29-33% vs. 5-7%). The only exception was in terms of providing valuable information, where respondents were similarly likely to be neutral or to disagree.

Significant proportions of visitors did not feel that impacts in these areas applied to them. More specifically, this was as high as 32% regarding assessing a business' strength and weaknesses, 31% in terms of improving business management skills, 30% for making more informed decisions, 30% for solving business issues, and 21% in terms of obtaining valuable information. In this area, it is important to recall that many site visitors were students or members of the general public.

### Obtaining Research, General information – Most Common Benefit of MFBS

MFBS visitors were asked if the website had been helpful in a number of specific areas. The site was most likely to have been of assistance to visitors in terms of obtaining research or general information for a business (53%). Other areas were cited much less often. This include obtaining assistance with business or financial planning (24%), to expand or grow a business (18%), to start a business (18%), and to solve problems a business was experiencing (13%).



For a further 31%, the website was not helpful in any of these areas.

### MFBS Has Positive Impact on Businesses

Nearly all in-depth interview participants described the overall impact of MFBS on their business or the business(es) they serve as positive. They explained that the site helped them to meet their information needs in terms of informing clients (i.e. legal, regulatory, and financial information), and in business planning. Further to this, it was felt that MFBS fills a research need for small businesses. For one participant, the site had no discernable influence on their business, positive or negative.

### Range of Uses for MFBS Information

A range of uses were identified for the information found on the MFBS site. The most common of these was strategic planning or some form of guidance for businesses. That said, no specific uses were identified by more than one participant. These included:

- Updating own information about small business in Canada.
- Helping to make an effective strategic plan for a business.
- Helping to build partnerships.

- Helping to comply with appropriate regulations in a timely manner.
- Meeting client information needs in general.
- Conducting a competitive analysis of a business' resources.

One intermediary added that having this information available on a free government site makes their job easier. In fact, this participant suspects that small business clients have paid others to assemble some of this information for them.

### **MFBS Moderately Helpful in Business or Operational Planning**

All participants acknowledged the potential MFBS has to help them with their business and operational planning activities. That said, only a couple used the website in this way, one of whom said it was indirect. Among the rest, one planned to use the site for operational planning in the future, while another wanted to, but could not find enough information to do so.

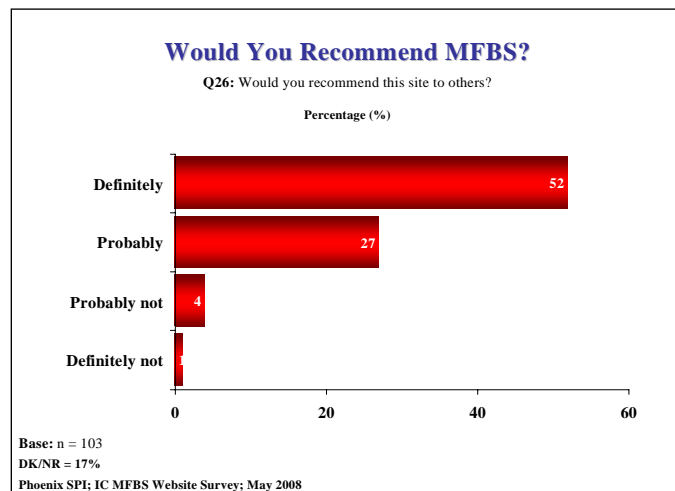
### **Users Supplement MFBS Information with Other Sources**

For the most part, MFBS was seen as useful, but not sufficient to give participants all of what they were looking for. Most supplemented the information they found on the site with information from other sources. For example, one participant said that they combined information they found on MFBS with information from the CFIB website to get a more complete picture. Conversely, one intermediary said that when they presented this website to their clients, some were overwhelmed by the volume of information.

### **Over Three-Quarters Would Recommend MFBS to Others**

More than three-quarters of MFBS visitors would recommend the website to others (79%). In fact, more than half (52%) would definitely do this.

Among the rest, very few (5%) were unlikely to recommend the site, while 17% were unsure.



### **Unanimous Belief that MFBS is Good Idea**

All interview participants agreed that the *idea* of a website like MFBS is good. One felt particularly strongly about this, saying this was 'definitely' a good idea, while another held that any government site that can assemble factual information makes it easier for businesses to establish what is credible and what is not. The remaining participants, while

seeing this as a good idea, had reservations. One felt that the site is of little value if the government does not generate awareness by promoting it to the small business community. Another saw the site as a starting point, but would recommend doing additional research.

**All Think Industry Canada Should Continue to Invest in MFBS**

Participants agreed that Industry Canada should continue to invest in the MFBS product. Their reasons were that it provides much-needed information to small businesses, is comprehensive or a one-stop source, and is generally helpful to small businesses in terms of gathering information. It was also added that it is simply good government policy to ensure that SMEs have the information they need to prosper, since they are a large part of the Canadian economy. One participant suggested that continued investment should focus on re-organizing the website to make the information easier to find.

**Suggestions to Improve the Usefulness of the Website**

Few visitors provided suggestions to improve the website. In fact, 68% did not provide a response to this question. Those with suggestions (n = 33) did not identify anything frequently. That said, suggestions identified by more than one person (up to two respondents) include easier searching and navigation for information, giving access to more recent information, as well as more business-specific information. Other suggestions included adding demographic reports, a module on instilling financial responsibility, pictures, tips on generating sales, and information for newcomers to Canada on starting a business.

As well, 10 respondents said they would have preferred doing the survey after having explored the site more, while four felt that no improvements were needed.



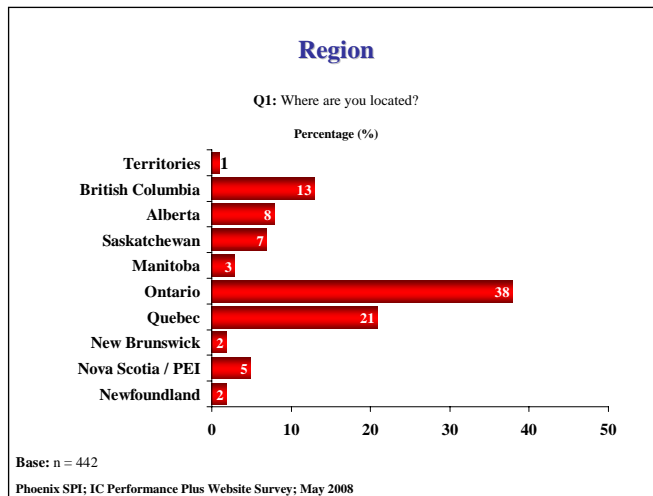
**PART 2: PERFORMANCE PLUS**

## BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

This section presents background information collected from visitors to the Performance Plus website. Questions in this section were asked of all survey respondents (n = 442), unless otherwise indicated.

### Region

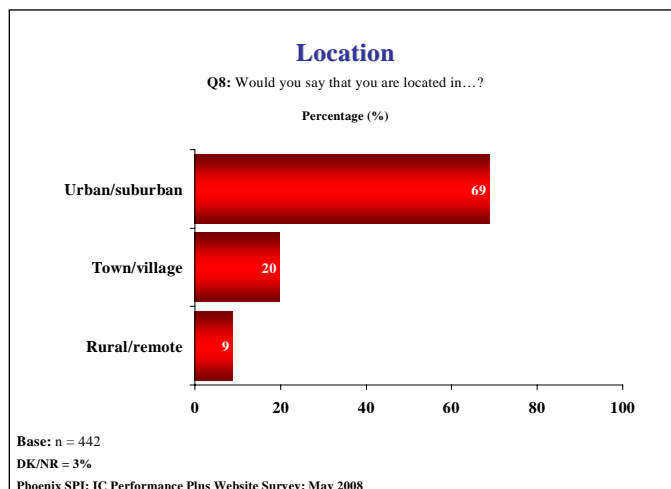
Visitors to the Performance Plus website were most likely to come from Canada's most populous regions. The largest proportions of visitors live in central Canada – 38% in Ontario and 21% in Quebec. Following this, 13% live in B.C., and 18% in the Prairie provinces. A further 9% reside in Atlantic Canada, and 1% in the Territories.



In total, 19 respondents were excluded from the survey because they do not live in Canada. These visitors were most often located in Africa (n = 5; Algeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Morocco, Nigeria, and Tunisia), followed by France (n = 3), and the United States (n = 4). Other individuals live in Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Romania.

### Over Two-thirds Live in Urban/Suburban Locations

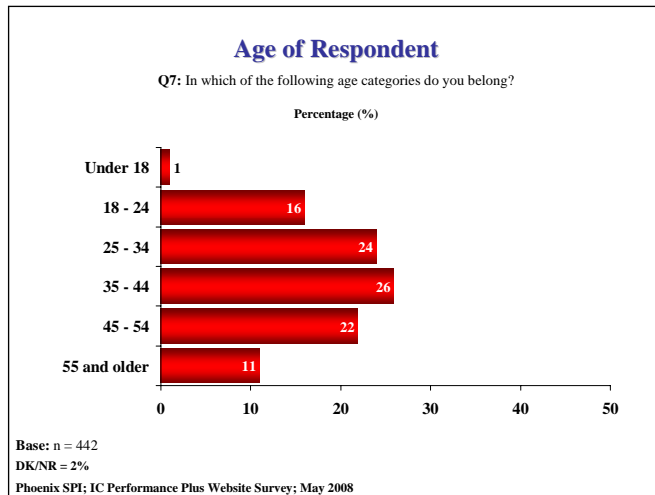
More than two-thirds (69%) of Performance Plus visitors are located in an urban or suburban location. Among the rest, 20% live in towns or villages, and 9% in rural or remote locations.



### Most Performance Plus Visitors Were 35 Years of Age & Over

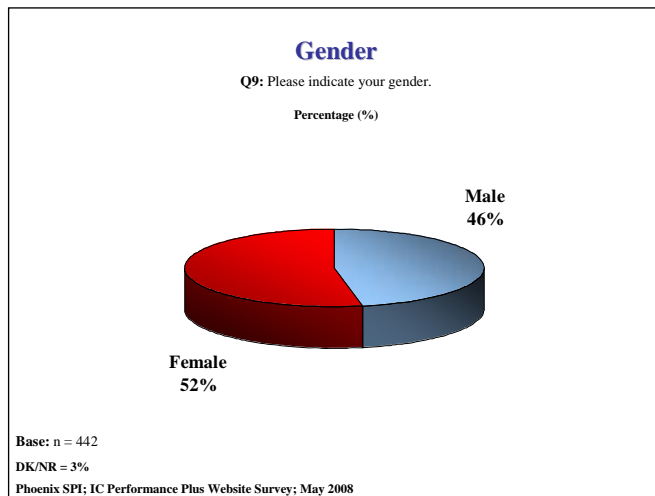
The majority of website visitors were at least 35 years of age (59%), most of whom (48%) were between 35 and 54 years old, with the rest (11%) being 55 and over.

Among the younger respondents, 24% were 25 to 34 years of age while 17% were younger than this.



### Gender

Just over half of Performance Plus website visitors were women (52%), while under half were men (46%).



### Businesses, Students – Most Likely Users of Performance Plus Site

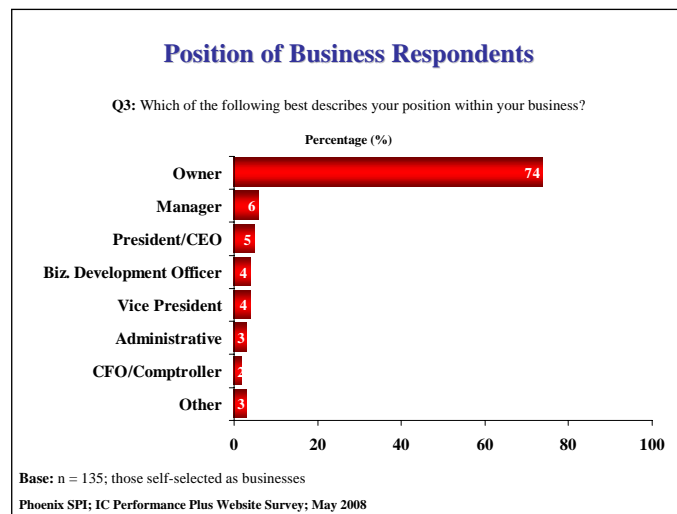
Visitors to the Performance Plus website were most likely to represent businesses (31%) or be students (25%), followed by consultants or business advisors (17%). Other professions or organizations were identified considerably less often and include members of the general public (9%), federal government employees (5%), academics, professors, researchers, or economists (3%), and employees of other governments in Canada (2%), or industry/trade associations (2%).



Professions or organization included in the ‘other’ category were translation, landscaping, librarian, credit union, insurance, and filmmaker.

### Three-Quarters of Business Representatives Were Owners

Almost three-quarters (74%) of visitors who identified themselves as working for businesses (n = 135) were business owners. All other positions were identified by relatively small numbers (6% or less). These include managers, presidents and CEOs, business development officers, vice presidents, chief financial officers or comptrollers, and administrative positions.

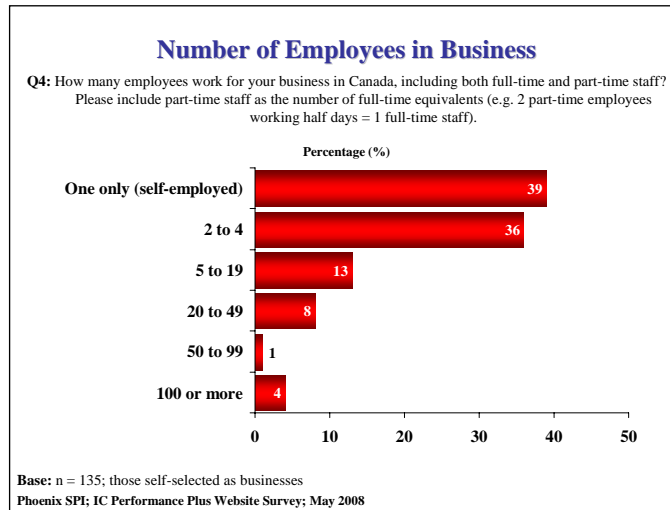


Positions in the ‘other’ category include co-op students, credit representatives, and consultants.

### Most Businesses Have Fewer Than 5 Employees

Exactly three-quarters of those who identified themselves as businesses representatives (n = 135) work for small firms with fewer than five employees. This includes 36% with 2-4 employees, and 39% that are self-employed.

As well, 13% work for firms with 5-19 employees, 8% for those with 20-49 staff, and 5% for those with 50 or more employees.



**Businesses Operate in Wide Range of Sectors, Particularly Other Services, Retail**

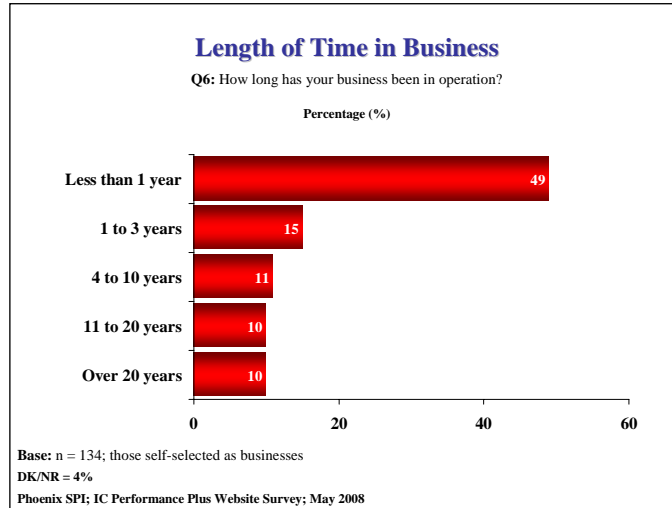
Business visitors (n = 134) to the Performance Plus site work in companies operating in a range of industries or sectors. However, they were most likely to operate in other services (excluding Public Administration) (17%), followed by retail trade (15%). Other industries were represented by fewer than 10%, including manufacturing, accommodation and food services, wholesale trade, professional and scientific services, transportation and warehousing, information and cultural industries, health care and social assistance, construction, arts, entertainment and recreation, and finance and insurance.



Industries or sectors grouped in the ‘other’ category include venture capital, aesthetics, and economic development.

### Many Businesses Newly Formed

Almost half (49%) of the businesses surveyed (n = 134) have been in operation for less than one year. Among the rest, 15% have been operating for 1-3 years, 11% for 4-10 years, and 20% for 11 years or more (including 10% for over 20 years).



### Roles & Responsibilities of Performance Plus Reviewers

In-depth interview participants that reviewed the Performance Plus site were typically intermediaries of some kind. Some were part of government organizations, while others were with not-for-profit organizations. Many worked with small business owners or start-up businesses. These organizations ranged from those operating at the federal to those active at the municipal level. A few participants described themselves as small businesses – one was an owner of a newly-formed company, and another was a financial manager of a more established firm. Intermediary participants held titles such as Business Information Specialist, Information Technician, Advisor, and Coordinator. Participants held similar positions in that their role often requires them to assist their clients (businesses and internal organizational clients) in obtaining and understanding business-related information, particularly at the start-up phase. The information used tended to be from economic and business information databases (both free and subscriber based), government documents, reference material in general, and market research. A few also provide training on the use of these materials. One participant is responsible for producing reports on labour market issues and the state of the economy. A few noted that Performance Plus is an important tool in their information repertoire.

Most Performance Plus participants work for organizations that have been in existence for some time, such as public libraries (business resource sections), business service centres, and libraries of government departments, as well as a few not-for-profit advisory organizations, which have been in operation for approximately 20 years. That said, one business owner only recently launched his or her company. Most intermediaries described

their organization's activities as information and research services, while businesses included in this research operate as consultancies (includes software/computer issues).

### **Type of Information Used**

Performance Plus reviewers look for and use a wide variety of information in dealing with their clients or operating their businesses. They often pointed to 'market research' and 'financial planning' or 'business development' information as being most important to them. That said, a number of other information types were also identified, including legal or rules information, financing and debt management, industry profiles, and demographic data. A number of intermediary participants added that to serve their clients' information needs, they tend to collect whatever information might apply to the client's situation, which can vary considerably.

### **Sources of Information**

Participants identified a wide range of sources they use to find what they are looking for. Interestingly, almost all counted Performance Plus as one of their key resources for client information. Overall, they tended to point, both generally and specifically, to print sources, and online sources, often in the form of databases, statistics, and directories.

The following specific sources were identified with relative frequency:

- The London Economic Development Corporation ([www.ledc.com](http://www.ledc.com))
- Canada-Ontario Business Services Centre
- Reference materials developed internally.

Other specific sources were identified by one person each:

- [www.Strategis.ic.gc.ca](http://www.Strategis.ic.gc.ca)
- [www.superdemographics.com](http://www.superdemographics.com)
- The Canada Business and Current Affairs database (online via ProQuest)
- CANSIM (available online via Statistics Canada)
- Federal government websites (in Canada, the United States, and abroad).
- Provincial governments (general)
- Canadian Company Capabilities database (print)
- Vernon's Business Directory (print)
- Business Plans Handbook (print)

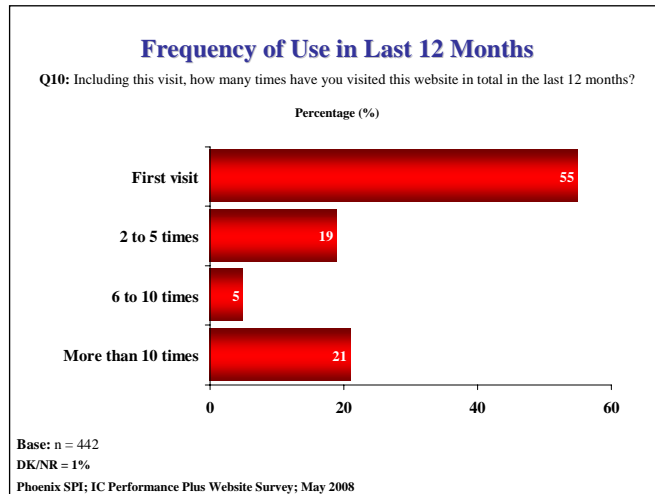
Many intermediaries noted that they are routinely adding new sources and are 'finding new sources of information constantly' in order to serve their clients' needs.

## USE OF PERFORMANCE PLUS WEBSITE

This section describes visitors' use of the Performance Plus website in terms of frequency of use, reasons for their visit(s), familiarity with the site, and satisfaction with it. Questions in this section were asked of all survey respondents (n = 442), unless otherwise specified.

### Majority Were First Time Visitors

This was the first visit to the Performance Plus website, at least in the last 12 months, for just over half of respondents (55%). Following this, approximately one in five (19-21%) had been to the site 2-5 times or more than 10 times. Just 5% had visited the site 6-10 times in the last year.

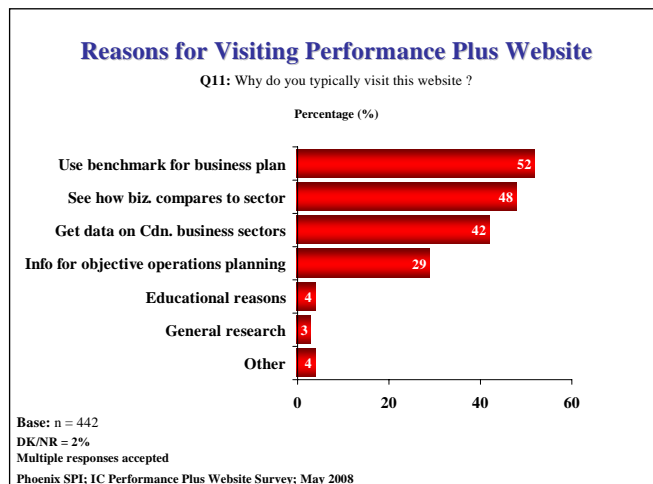


### Regular Visits to Performance Plus

Almost all participants currently visit the Performance Plus site on a regular basis. This is typically weekly, although a few visit it as much as daily or as little as monthly. Some intermediaries added that the number of times they visit depends on their assignment at a given time, which may or may not require the use of the website. The site is generally used for three purposes – to get information about a specific sector, to demonstrate the tools to clients, and to aid in developing business plans. The latter being the most common, this includes benchmarking activities, making financial projections, and planning expenditures and revenues. Almost all referred specifically to the 'Build Your Own Profile' tool.

### Benchmarking, Comparing to Others, Business Sector Data – Top Reasons for Visits

Visitors chose to visit the site in order to get information that would help them situate their business. Approximately half (52%) used the Performance Plus benchmark to construct a business plan, 48% wanted to see how their business measures up to others in their sector, and 42% sought financial and employment data on Canadian business sectors.





A further 29% visited the site to get information on objective operations planning. Small numbers visited for educational reasons (4%), and for conducting general research (3%).

Other reasons were identified with little frequency include collecting information on behalf of someone else, and business development.

### Perceived Purpose of Performance Plus – Planning & Information for Businesses

All participants described (in an unaided manner), the website’s purpose in similar terms. They suggested it was designed to help businesses with planning and filling information gaps they may have in terms of what to expect in their industry financially. A few noted more specifically that the site is designed to help business know how they are performing vis-à-vis their counterparts in the industry. Many used words such as ‘benchmarking’ in this regard. One noted that the site exists because there is a need to have this type of information available at no cost given the costs incurred by businesses when they are starting out.

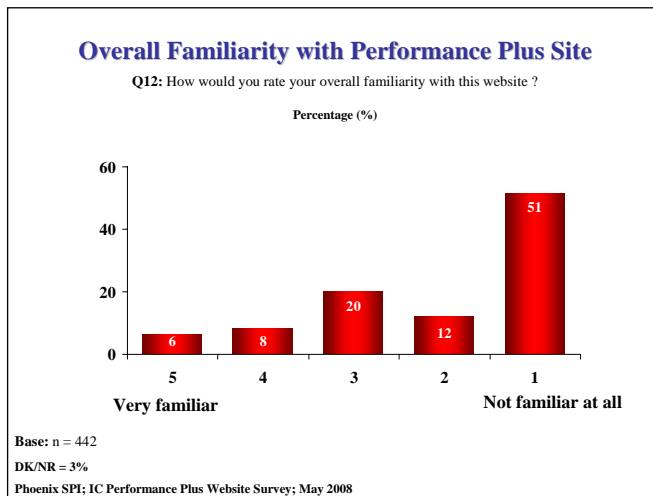
### Purpose as Defined Seen to be Clear

Reviewers were read a description of the purpose of the Performance Plus site and asked if it was clear to them that this is what the website was trying to achieve (see appendix for website purpose). Participants unanimously agreed that the purpose as outlined in the definition was clear to them, based on their use of the site. Several pointed specifically to the benchmarking feature in this regard, while others simply concurred that the definition itself was appropriate.

### Limited Familiarity with Performance Plus Site

In total, 63% considered themselves to be generally unfamiliar with the website (scores of 1-2 on 5-point scale). Moreover, half (51%) were not familiar with the site at all. Recall that for 55%, this was their first visit to the site in the last 12 months (and likely their first visit ever).

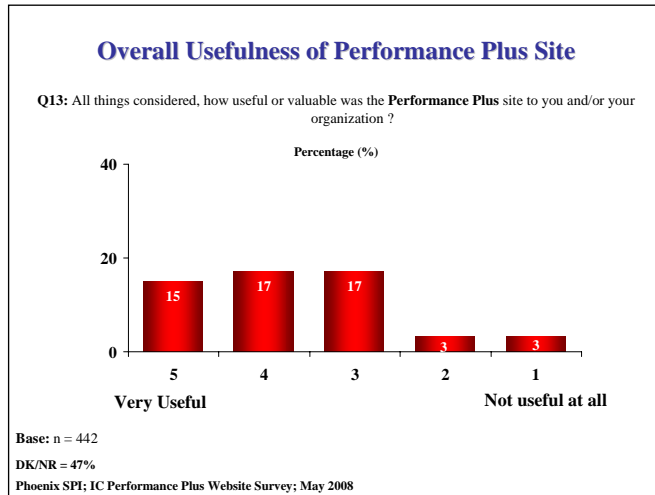
Among those more familiar, only 14% of visitors indicated clearly that they were familiar with the site.



**Perceptions of Usefulness of Website Moderately Positive**

Website visitors offered moderately positive assessments of the perceived usefulness of the Performance Plus site to them or their organization. In total, 32% rated the site as useful (scores of 4-5 on 5-point scale), with an additional 17% offering more middling or neutral assessments (scores of 3). Conversely, just 6% considered the site to be of little to no use to them (scores of 1-2).

Almost half (47%) were unable to rate the website’s usefulness.



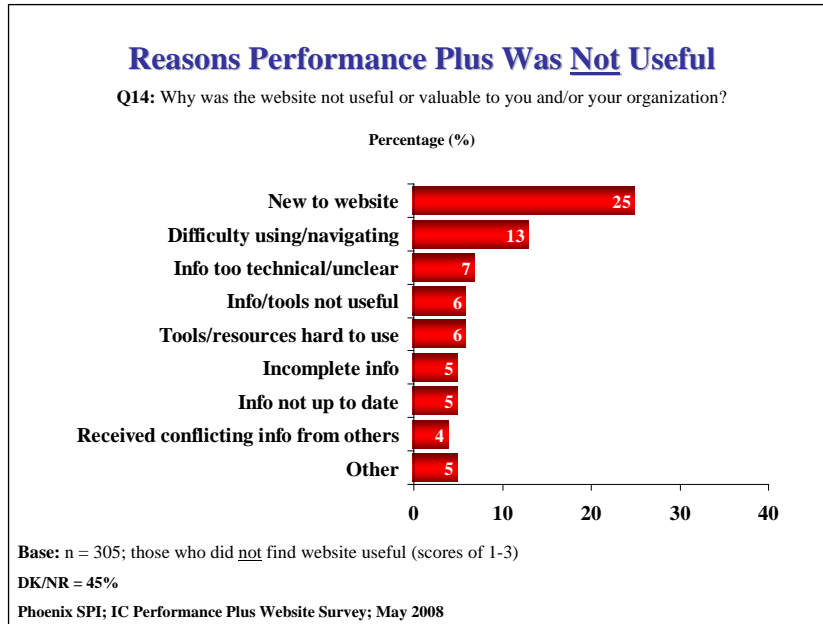
**Performance Plus Highly Useful & Valuable to Self/Organization**

Participants unanimously considered the Performance Plus website to be valuable and useful to them and/or to their organizations or the businesses that they serve. Moreover, most felt strongly about this. It should be noted that the value and usefulness of this site is clearly and strongly linked to the performance of the ‘Build Your Own Profile’ tool. All participants referred to this in their overall assessment of the site’s usefulness or value. They found the tool to be an excellent resource for themselves and their clients in terms of comparing businesses (new and established) to their sector’s performance, and for gathering intelligence that could be used for business planning and auditing.

Other reasons for their positive feedback, cited by one person each, were that the information is free of charge, and easy to access.

**New to Website – Top Reason Site was Not Seen as Useful**

In total, 70% of visitors did not perceive Performance Plus to be useful (n = 305) – 23% offered ‘neutral’ or negative perceptions, while 47% gave no response. These visitors were asked to explain why the website was not useful or valuable to them. The most common response was that they were new to the website (25%). Other reasons were given much less often and can be divided into usability and information issues. The former include difficulty using or navigating the site (13%), information or tools that were not useful or relevant (6%), and tools and resources that were difficult to use (6%). Turning to information issues, information was seen to be too technical or unclear (7%), incomplete (5%), out of date (5%), or in conflict with information they received elsewhere (4%).



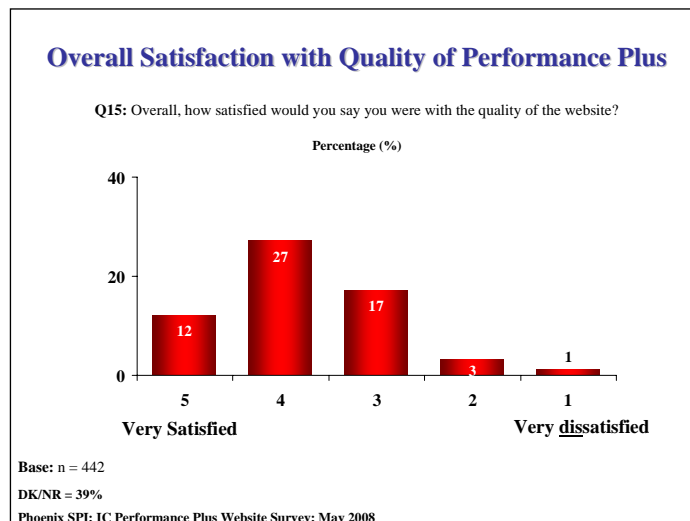
Reasons in the ‘other’ category include too much information to look through, too busy to dig through the site, and difficulty sorting through the information.

Note that a significant number of respondents (45%) could not say why the website was not useful or valuable to them.

### Moderate-to-Positive Satisfaction with Overall Quality of Performance Plus

In total, more than one-third (39%) of Performance Plus visitors were satisfied with the overall quality of the website (scores of 4-5 on 5-point scale). That said, satisfaction was more likely to be moderate than high (27% vs. 12%). As well, 17% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while just 4% were dissatisfied with the overall quality of the site.

In total, 39% were unable to rate their satisfaction with the quality of the website.

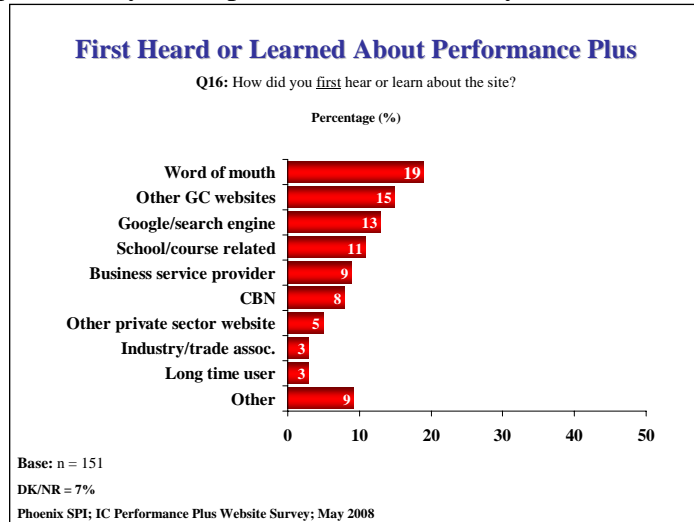


## ASSESSMENT OF WEBSITE CONTENT & TOOLS

This section presents visitors' assessments of the key content areas and tools of the Performance Plus website. Questions in this section were only asked of those who completed Part B of the online questionnaire (n = 150-151).

### First Heard of Performance Plus in Variety of Ways

Performance Plus visitors identified a range of methods through which they first learned about the website, with none being particularly widespread. The most likely of these were word of mouth (19%), other Government of Canada websites (15%), and Google or some other search engine (13%). Following this were those who first heard of the site through school or course-related work (11%), a business service provider (9%), the Canada Business Network (8%), other private sector websites (5%), and industry or trade associations (3%). Finally, 3% noted that they were long-time users of the resource.



Some visitors first heard of Performance Plus through other means, included in the 'other' category, such as a book, by chance while surfing the web, B.C. provincial government site, and by calling Industry Canada.

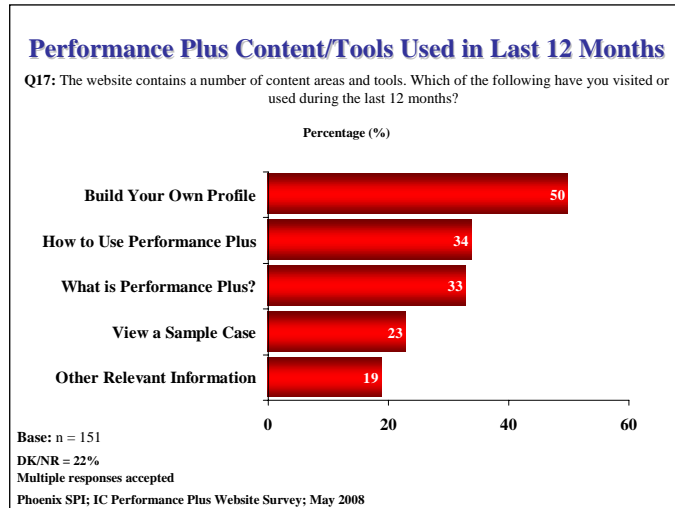
### First Heard of Website via Workplace

In-depth interview participants were most likely to have first learned or heard about Performance Plus through their current or previous workplace. That is, they were directed to it as a resource by colleagues. A few were also informed of the site through seminars given by the Canada-Ontario Business Service Centre, and through word of mouth in the business community. One participant each had first encountered the site after receiving a flyer from Industry Canada entitled "These Sites Mean Business", and after stumbling upon it while looking for information.

Participants routinely explained that they chose to use the site because it appeared to contain information that would be of value to them in their jobs. They noted specifically that they used the statistics or information found on the site, and that they wished to present profiles or scenarios to their clients.

### Build Your Own Profile – Top Content Area or Tool Used

The Performance Plus website contains a number of content areas and tools for visitors to use. Among these, Build Your Own Profile was the most popular, being used by half (50%) of surveyed visitors. Approximately one-third (33-34%) used the How to Use Performance Plus and What is Performance Plus? sections. Meanwhile, 23% used the View a Sample Business Case, and 19% visited Other Relevant Information.

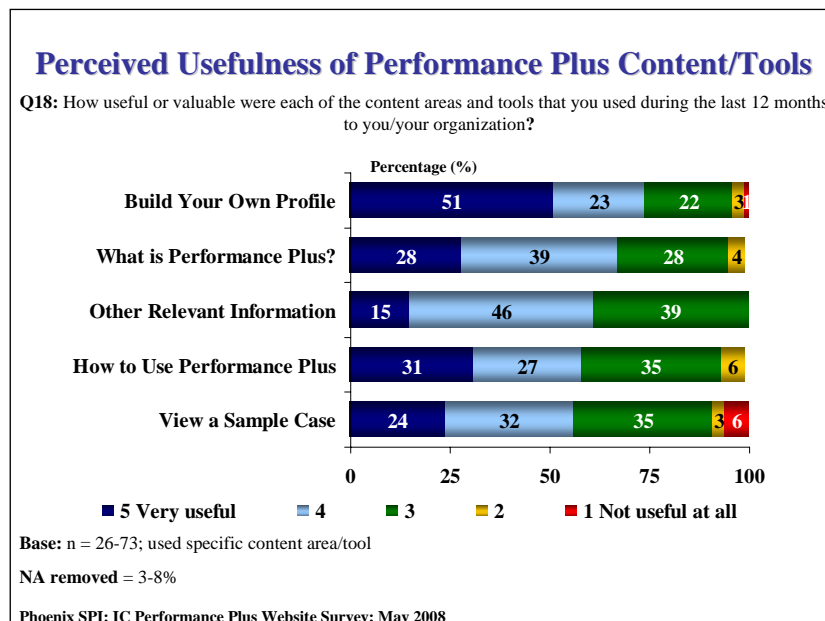


Twenty-two percent did not know what they used or provided no response.

### Content & Tools Widely Seen as Useful by Users

Website visitors were asked to rate the usefulness or value of each of the Performance Plus content areas and tools that they had used during the previous 12 months (using a 5-point scale; 1 = not useful at all, 5 = very useful).

Majorities of users perceived each content area and tool to be useful (56-74% gave scores of 4-5). Positive assessments were most widespread among users of Build Your Own Profile (74%). Smaller majorities assessed as useful What is Performance Plus? (67%), Other Relevant Information (61%), How to Use Performance Plus (58%), and View a Sample Business Case (56%). Perceptions of value were more likely to be moderate than strong in all but two cases. Users of Build Your Own Profile and How to Use Performance Plus were more likely to perceive these areas as *very* useful.



Those who did not rate the content and tools as useful were much more likely to hold neutral rather than negative views for all content areas and tools.

### **Assessment of Key Content Areas & Tools**

Of the four content areas and tools asked about, 'Build Your Own Profile' was seen to be the most useful. In fact, most participants went so far as to characterize it as 'very valuable', or the most important part of the site. Reasons given for this were the ability to create customized reports, the benchmarking capability, and its applicability to their needs. One participant suggested that to improve this section, the site should be able to accept six-digit SIC codes in addition to the NAICS codes it accepts now (SIC was the predecessor to NAICS).

Turning to the remaining sections, 'What is Performance Plus' and 'How to Use Performance Plus' were both widely seen to be important and useful sections, though not for experienced visitors to the site. Participants felt that these sections were useful for first-time users, with one saying that they refer clients to these sections before they use the 'Build Your Own Profile' tool. A few added that 'What is Performance Plus' does a good job of introducing visitors to the site (i.e. background for those new to the site). Another experienced visitor noted that they did return to the 'How to Use Performance Plus' section occasionally to see what else could be done on the site. In terms of suggestions to improve the section, one participant sought changes to the format so that as one learns to use the site, they are also actually creating a profile.

Finally, 'View a Sample Business Case' received more mixed feedback. Many said it was useful for first-time users to see what a profile would look like, including one who found the level of detail in this section helpful. That said, a few suggested that this section could be removed entirely, or subsumed as part of the 'How to Use Performance Plus' section.

### **All Used 'Build Your Own Profile' Tool**

All participants had used the 'Build Your Own Profile' tool. In fact, this was the principal reason for their visit(s). They considered the tool to be either useful or very useful, with most noting it was particularly helpful to them professionally.

A few suggestions were made, albeit by one person each, to improve the tool:

- Increase the speed with which the tool creates reports.
- Allow access to the data through a browser program called "Beyond 20/20" so that it can easily be exported and manipulated.
- Provide exclusively Canadian data. For some industries and sectors (not specified), the tool provides American data, which was of no value to this participant (i.e. he/she sought Canadian figures).
- Verify that the French text is accurate. One French-speaking participant thought that the translation of the site was very literal as opposed to having French text developed for the site separately.

## PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE PLUS WEBSITE

This section explores perceptions of and satisfaction with various aspects of the website. Questions in this section were only asked of those who completed Part B of the online questionnaire (n = 150-151).

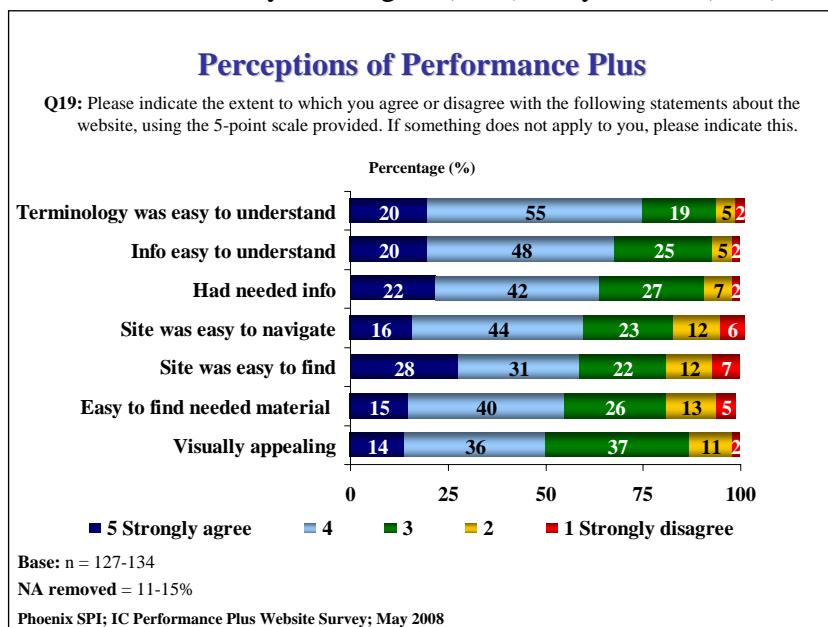
### Majorities Held Positive Perceptions of Performance Plus

Visitors were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements about the Performance Plus website, using a 5-point scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree):

- It was easy to find what you were looking for.
- The site was visually appealing.
- The site had the information you needed.
- The information was easy to understand.
- It was easy to find the site.
- When accessing information on the site, it was easy to move from section to section.
- The terminology used on the site was easy to understand.

Majorities of visitors held positive perceptions (scores of 4-5) of each aspect of the Performance Plus site, ranging from 50% to 75%. There was clearly a hierarchy of satisfaction between aspects related to content and those related to usability, with the former more widely seen to be satisfactory. Turning first to content, most respondents agreed that the terminology (75%) and information (68%) on the website were easy to understand, and that it had the information they needed (64%). In terms of usability, smaller majorities agreed that the site was easy to navigate (60%), easy to find (59%), and that it was easy to find the information they were looking for (55%). Visitors were less certain regarding the visual appeal of the site (50%).

Those who did not hold positive perceptions of these aspects of the site were more apt to be neutral as opposed to negative.



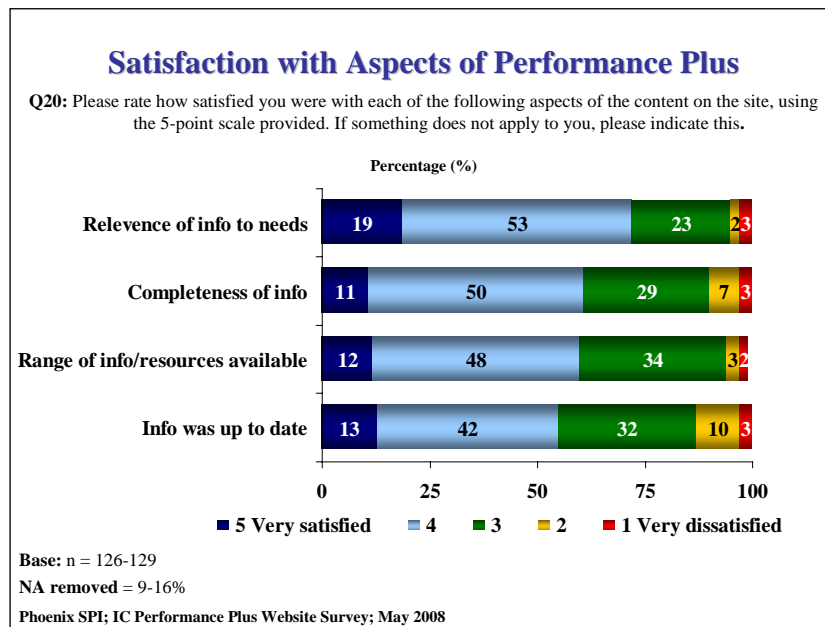
### Widespread Satisfaction with Aspects of Content

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with each of the following aspects of the content on the Performance Plus site using a 5-point scale (5 = very satisfied, 1 = very dissatisfied):

- The extent to which the information was up-to-date.
- The completeness of the information.
- The relevance of the information to their needs
- The range of information and resources available on the website.

Majorities expressed satisfaction with each aspect of the Performance Plus content. Visitors were most apt to be satisfied with its relevance to their needs (72%), followed by the completeness of the information (61%), and the range of information and resources available (60%). At just over half, participants were somewhat less satisfied that the information was up to date (55%). Satisfaction with all aspects was much more likely to be moderate than strong.

Among those who did not express satisfaction, perceptions tended to be neutral, with relatively few expressing dissatisfaction (5-13%).



### Positive Overall Impressions of Performance Plus

Overall, participants held positive impressions of the website. They characterized it as good overall, well done, and useful. Explaining this, they pointed to the level of detail, the design of the program, and the presence of links to definitions embedded in the reports. The positive overall impressions notwithstanding, two caveats were presented by a few participants. Some felt that the site may be less accessible to those who are not as familiar with the correct ‘buzzwords’ when doing their searches. A few also noted that the site is hard to find if you do not know what to look for. One suggested changing the URL to read



'performanceplus.ca', while another suggested adding the word 'benchmark' to the title to make it easier to find through search engines, as this is what visitors will use it for.

### **Level of Detail – Main Strength of Website**

It was widely held that the main strength of the Performance Plus site was the level of detail provided via the reports produced in the 'Build Your Own Profile' tool. The information was seen to be specific enough to help businesses make decisions, and to be of considerable detail. Moreover, a few valued being able to customize the reports for a given industry or business, as well as the type of information presented. Some pointed to the clear and straightforward organization of the site, viewing it as user-friendly and easy to follow.

### **NAICS Search Engine – Main Perceived Weaknesses of Performance Plus**

Only a few aspects of the website were seen to be in need of improvement. Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the website's NAICS keyword search feature. It was seen as 'too basic' and requires visitors to already know what key words will apply to their industry or sector. That is, the search engine was too strict or narrow, and was difficult for participants to use because of this. As an example, one participant said that he had tried to go back and find an NAICS report for something he 'knew was there', but had to make several attempts through the search engine in order to find it.

Other areas seen to be in need of improvement were identified by one person each:

- Adding a sample case study to the site so that people can see how a business used and interpreted the information they compiled through Performance Plus.
- Adding information on financial institutions – a sector seen to be absent from the NAICS search.

A few participants did not think there were any areas in need of improvement.

### **Performance Plus Seen to be Well-Organized & Easy to Use, With Caveats**

All participants found Performance Plus to be a well-organized and easy to use website in general. One added that having a glossary of terms on the left-hand navigation bar is particularly helpful when reading the reports produced through the site. That said, almost all added caveats to their positive impressions. A few felt that the site would be easier to use if it were re-organized so that the most important section of the site – the 'Build Your Own Profile' section – were made the home page and all other sections given a secondary status. One person found the link difficult to find without going through the Industry Canada main site, while another felt that the site would be easier to use if the NAICS keyword search was stronger.

### **Categories Generally Seen to be Clear & Intuitive**

For the most part, participants found the various categories to be clear and intuitive. In fact, only one participant found this not to be the case. This individual suggested that the title for 'Build Your Own Profile' did not accurately reflect the section. The current title was

seen to be more suggestive of ‘signing up for something’ as opposed to creating a customized report on one’s industry or sector.

A few participants took this as an opportunity to reiterate their criticisms of the NAICS search function, suggesting that the categories were not clear to inexperienced users.

Almost all felt that there were enough categories on the website to cover the subject matter. A few suggested that it is best to keep the site as simple as possible, and adding categories could detract from that. One person suggested adding new information – a SIC to NAICS conversion table so that people who only know the SIC (Standard Industrial Classification – the predecessor to the NAICS system) code for their industry are able to find the equivalent easily.

### **Positive Impressions of Overall Look & Feel of Site**

Thinking about the website as a whole, participants had positive perceptions of its overall look and feel. They felt that it was visually appealing, with some pointing specifically to the colour scheme. They found it to be well-designed in terms of the Government of Canada template it follows, with a professional yet simple look. One participant found that following a clear Government of Canada template makes the site more credible to users.

As to whether or not the site was motivating, most held that the design was neutral or purely functional in this regard. A few added that they did not need to be motivated by the site to use it, as they knew what they were looking for when going to the site in the first place. To this end, one participant suggested presenting the ‘Build Your Own Profile’ section in a manner that raises its profile on the site and makes it easier to quickly spot.

### **All Satisfied with Content, But Seek Updated Information**

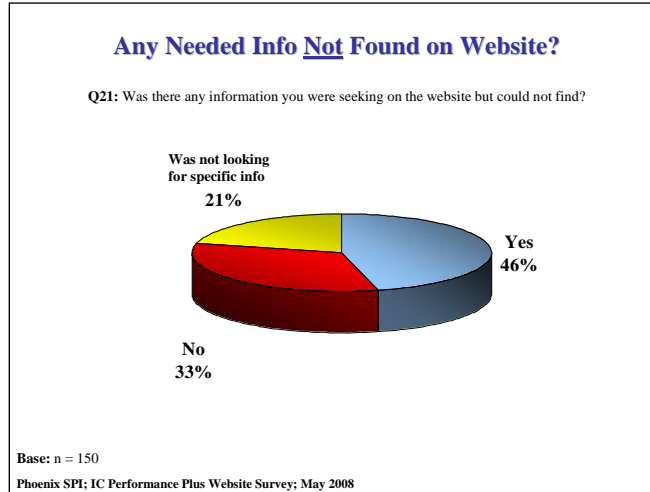
Participants were satisfied with the content of the Performance Plus website. In fact, several were *very* satisfied. By way of explanation, participants typically pointed to the relevancy of the content to their daily jobs, with some commenting on the complete or fulsome nature of the information. Almost all expressed concern that the information was not as up to date as it could be (currently the most recent data is for 2004). One suggested that having a set time frame for regular updates published on the site would be helpful. A few also sought greater detail in the reports generated through ‘Build Your Own Profile’, with one specifically seeking information at the city level.

### **Text Clear & Easy to Understand, Appropriate Length**

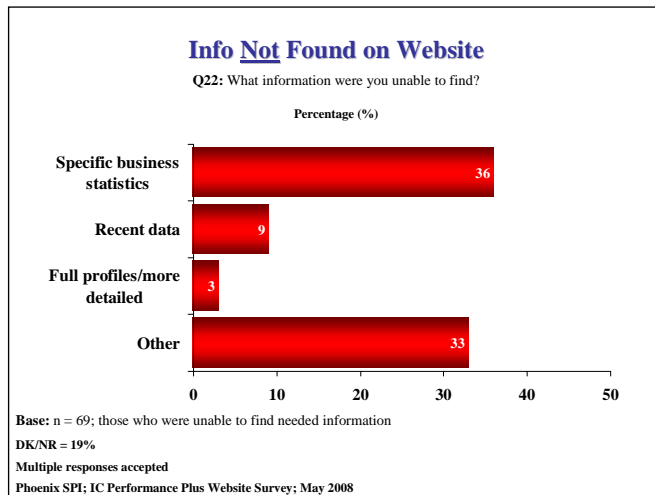
Participants found the text and content on the website to be clear and easy to understand, and to be of appropriate length. Many thought the vocabulary used was appropriate for the subject matter, although some had reservations that those not working with this information regularly may not understand a lot of the content. That said, several of these participants also felt that the strong glossary available on the site helps to mitigate this. A few volunteered that the pages themselves are easy to read and use space well.

### Almost Half Unable to Find Needed Information

Almost half (46%) of Performance Plus visitors were unable to information on the website that they were looking. Conversely, 33% had no such difficulties, while 21% were not looking for any specific information.



Those who could not find some of what they were looking for (n = 69) pointed to several needs, with one standing above the rest. More than one-third could not find business statistics related to their business (36%). Following this, 9% wanted more recent data, and 3% sought more detailed profiles of businesses.

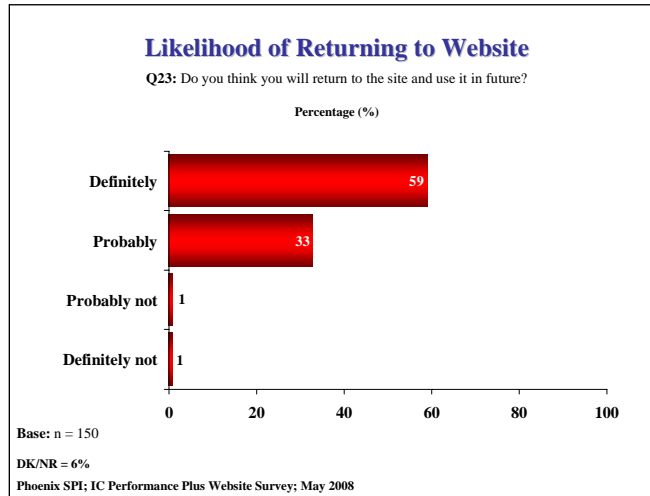


A considerable proportion identified ‘other’ pieces of information, including financial ratios, inventory turnover data, working capital figures, business plans, industry benchmarks, loan amortization information, and market share calculations.

Nearly one-fifth (19%) did not know or gave no response.

### Almost All Plan to Return to Performance Plus in Future

Fully 92% of Performance Plus visitors plan to return to the site and use it in the future. This includes 59% for whom this is definite, and one-third who will *probably* return. Only 2% are not likely to return (6% gave no response).



### Almost All Plan to Return to Site – Important Part of Their Work

All but one participant considered it a virtual certainty that they will return to Performance Plus in the future. To explain why, participants tended to emphasise that they already rely on the site as a source of information in their work or for their business and would continue to use it. The one person that was not certain he/she would return was unsure.

### Few Aware of Similar Websites

Few participants were aware of any other websites that provide similar information or services. Those that were aware tended to prefer Performance Plus either because of the balance struck between the quality of information it provides and its cost-effectiveness (i.e. a free resource).

The following specific websites were identified by one participant each:

- [www.GDsourcing.ca](http://www.GDsourcing.ca) – provides access to Government of Canada reports for a fee
- [www.factiva.com](http://www.factiva.com) – a subscriber service that provides industry and business news.
- Statistics Canada Financial Performance Indicators (available online for a fee).
- Canada Revenue Agency posts financial data for charities.

## PERCEIVED IMPACT OF PERFORMANCE PLUS WEBSITE

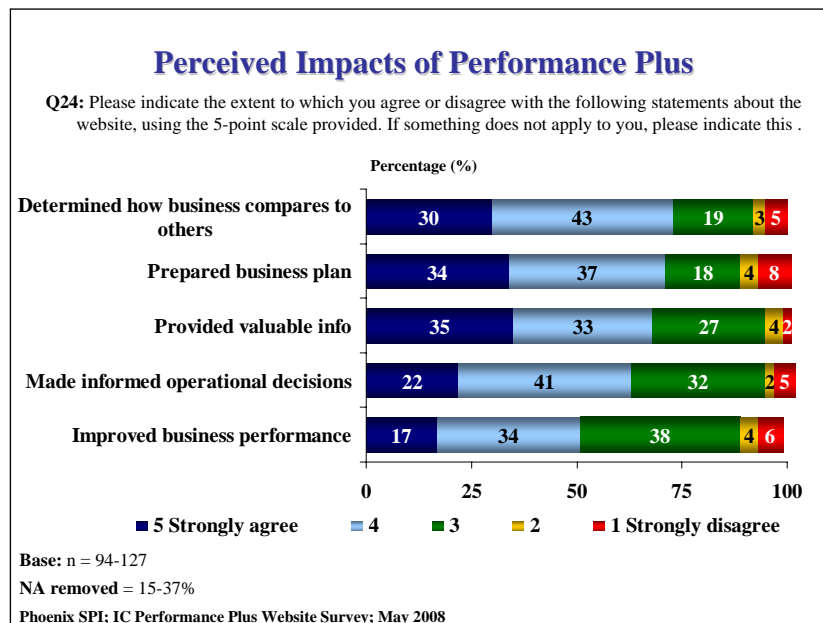
This section explores the perceived impacts of the website on respondents' businesses. Questions in this section were only asked of those who completed Part B of the online questionnaire (n = 150-151).

### Performance Plus Had Widespread, Positive Impacts on Businesses

Website visitors were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements about the impact of the website, using a 5-point scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree):

- The information and resources helped you to improve your business management skills.
- The diagnostic tools helped you to assess your businesses strengths and weaknesses.
- The site helped you to make more informed decisions for your business.
- The site helped you solve or assisted you with a business issue.
- The site provided you with or directed you to valuable information you might not have otherwise found.

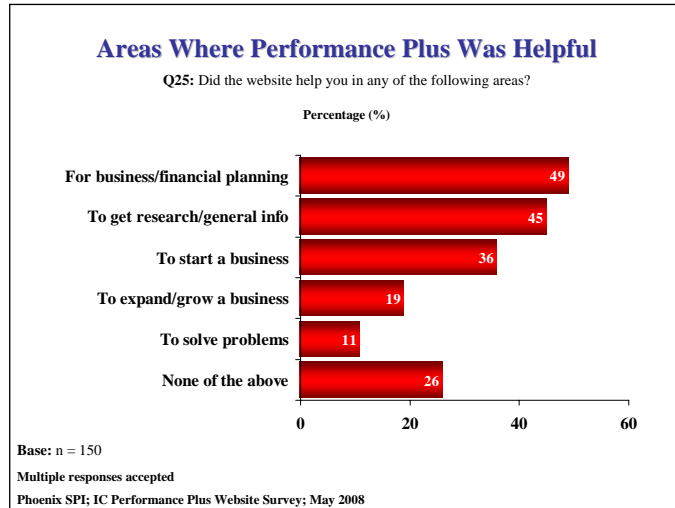
Majorities of Performance Plus visitors agreed they had positive outcomes from their use of the site in all areas (51-73%). They were most likely to agree that using the site helped them to see how a business measured up to others in their sector (73%), helped them to prepare a business plan (71%), and provided valuable information that they may not have otherwise found (68%). Fewer visitors agreed that the site helped them make informed operational decisions (63%) or improved the performance of their business (51%). Agreement on these impacts was generally more likely to be moderate than strong, with a few exceptions. Among less positive respondents, participants were much more likely to hold a neutral perspective than a negative one.



It should be noted that numerous respondents (15-37%) did not feel that these impacts applied to their situation. This was highest (37%) for improving the performance of a business, followed by making informed operational decisions (26%), preparing a business plan (23%), and measuring up to others in their sector (21%). In this area, it is important to recall that many site visitors were students or members of the general public.

### Business/Financial Planning, General Research – Top Benefits of Performance Plus

Performance Plus visitors were asked whether the website was helpful in a number of specific areas. The site was most likely to have helped users with business or financial planning (49%), and with obtaining research or general information for a business (45%). This was followed by 36% for whom the site helped to start a business, and 19% who were able to expand or grow a business. Finally, 11% used the Performance Plus site to help solve business problems.



For 26% of visitors, the website was not helpful in any of these particular areas.

### Positive Overall Impacts for Most Businesses

Most intermediary participants reported that their clients' experiences with Performance Plus have been positive. These participants tended to point to the benchmarking and comparison data that their clients were able to get to help inform their business planning activities. One went so far as to say that this was essential information for new start-up businesses. Others simply noted that the results have been positive.

A few (including one business participant) did not think the benefits of the site manifest themselves in an easily measurable manner. That is, they surmised that positive impacts likely occurred, but were not able to comment specifically because these were likely a result of many factors – Performance Plus included.

### Comparative Data for Business – Top Use of Information

The majority of participants referred to some manner of financial comparison as the way they or their business clients used the information they found on the site. This includes comparing a business' financial needs with those of other businesses in their sector, gauging the success of a business, assisting in making financial forecasts based on industry norms, and providing auditors with an understanding of various sectors.

Other uses, cited by one or two participants each, included:

- Preparing publications on various sectors.

- Providing information packages to clients.
- Helping to make informed business decisions.

### Performance Plus Widely Seen as Helpful in Operational & Business Planning

Almost all considered Performance Plus to be helpful with business or operational planning. Those who expanded on this said that the site was particularly helpful in terms of planning expenditures and fiscal management (i.e. cash flows, budgeting, typical expenses, etc.). One participant specifically pointed to the “Standard Expenditures” column of data found in reports generated through ‘Build Your Own Profile’ as being useful. Another held this to be an essential resource for their business clients. The only person to not see this as helpful in terms of operational planning, has not used the site in this way, but expects that it would be helpful if he/she did.

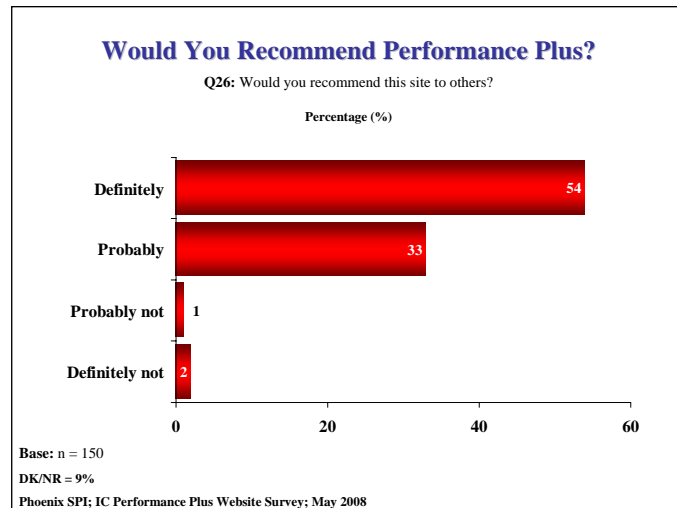
### Performance Plus is One of Numerous Sources Used

Most participants did not perceive the website to be a complete source for their information needs. This is not to say that the site itself was seen to be deficient. In fact, most noted that while they would like more information, the site is still very useful to them. Participants tend to combine information they retrieve from Performance Plus with a variety of other pieces of information. Generally speaking, these include databases, print publications, and labour market information. A few specifically noted accessing Statistics Canada business data as well.

### Decisive Majority Would Recommend Performance Plus to Others

Fully 87% of Performance Plus visitors would recommend the website to others. In fact, more than half (54%) would definitely recommend the site.

Among the rest, very few (3%) were unlikely to recommend the site, and 9% were unsure.



**Unanimous Agreement Performance Plus is Good Idea/Valuable Resource**

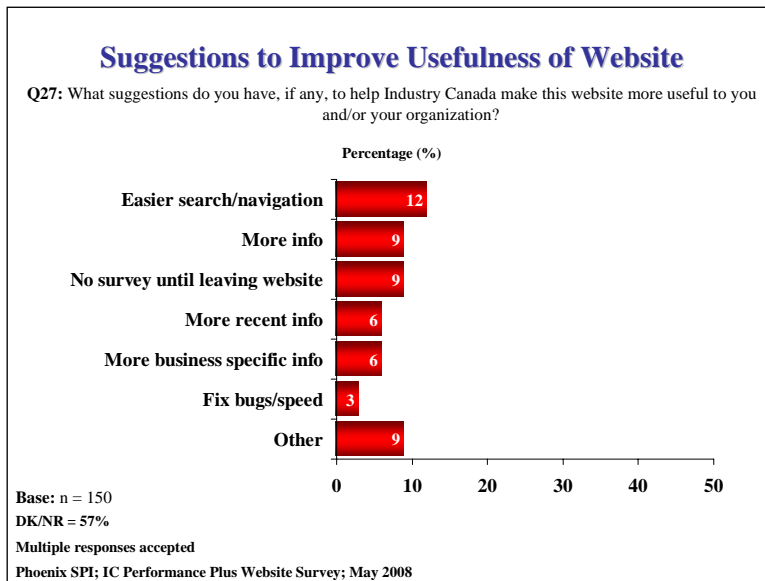
Participants unanimously agreed that the idea of a site like Performance Plus is good, and that the site is a valuable resource. Most said this was ‘absolutely’ a good idea. A few expanded by saying that they or their clients were very happy to have this information publicly available.

**All Agree Industry Canada Should Continue to Invest in Performance Plus**

All participants felt that Industry Canada should continue to invest in this product. They typically gave two reasons for this. The first is that no one else makes this information available in an accessible online format. The information is seen as highly important for businesses, and small businesses in particular, to have. A few added to this by saying that the information found on the site ‘fills an important void’ for small and medium-sized enterprises in terms of their information needs. Secondly, the resource is free of charge, which is especially important for new companies.

**Suggestions to Improve Usefulness of Performance Plus**

More than half of website visitors (57%) did not offer any suggestions to improve the website. Turning to the suggestions given, none were widespread. Suggestions included easier search and navigation (12%), including more information (9%), more recent information (6%), more information for specific businesses (6%), and fixing bugs or the speed of the website (3%).



Suggestions included in the ‘other’ category were information on Canadian firms in third world countries, providing knowledgeable Industry Canada contacts, better ability for the site to be found by search engines, making the site known to schools, allowing saved searches and login for visitors, and linking older profiles to their NAICS equivalents.



A further 9% said they would have preferred taking the survey after finishing their visit to the site.

**Suggestions to Better Meet Needs**

Few participants could offer further suggestions as to how the website could better meet their needs. Moreover, only one was made more than once – provide access to city level data breakdowns. That said, both of these participants recognized that this would be difficult to do. The remaining suggestions, made by one person each, were to create a brochure about the site’s capabilities to be distributed to small businesses, make the list of industry sectors more comprehensive, and provide information on business with annual revenues larger than \$5 million.

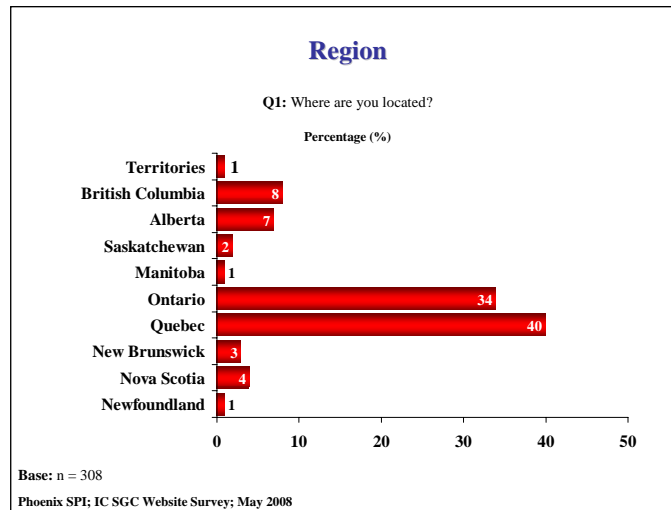
**PART 3: STEPS TO GROWTH CAPITAL**

## BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

This section presents background information collected from visitors to the Steps to Growth Capital (SGC) website. Questions in this section were asked of all survey respondents (n = 308), unless otherwise indicated.

### Region

Visitors to the Steps to Growth Capital website were most likely to live in central Canada – 40% in Quebec and 34% in Ontario. Following this, 18% live in Western Canada, 8% in Atlantic Canada, and 1% in the Territories.

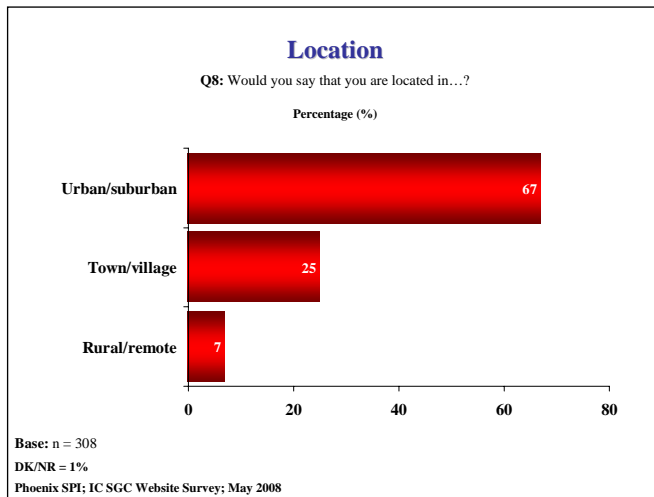


In total, 228 respondents were excluded from the survey because they live outside Canada. The table below identifies the countries in which foreign visitors were located. They were most likely to be from Africa (29%), Europe (28%, including 16% from France), and the United States (17%).

International Visitors to SGC			
Country	%	Country	%
U.S.	17	UK	3
France	16	Tunisia	3
Africa (various)	13	South Africa	3
Europe (various)	12	Ivory Coast	3
Asia (various)	7	Nigeria	3
India	6	Australia and New Zealand	3
Morocco	4	Other	8
Base n = 228			

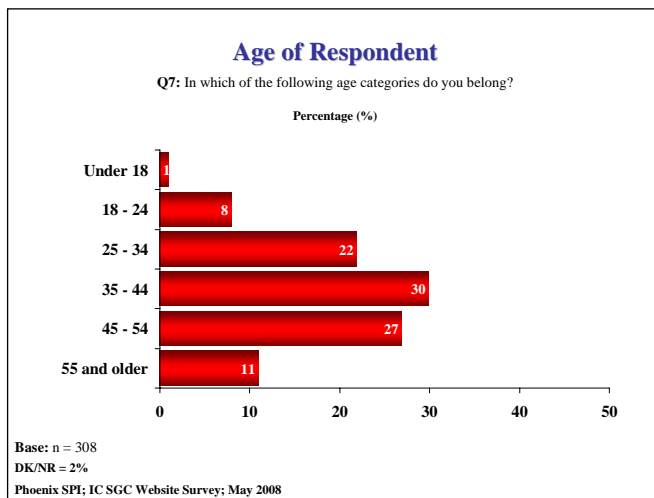
### Two-thirds Live in Urban/Suburban Locations

Two-thirds (67%) of SGC visitors are located in an urban or suburban location. Among the rest, one-quarter live in towns or villages, and 7% in rural or remote locations.



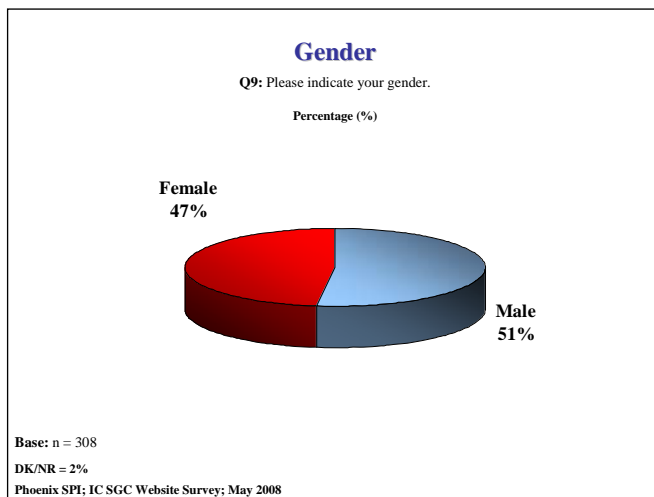
### Most SGC Visitors Were 35 Years of Age & Over

Most SGC website visitors were at least 35 years of age (68%), with a majority (57%) between 35 and 54, and 11% being 55 and older. Among the rest, 22% were 25 to 34 years of age, and 9% were younger than this.



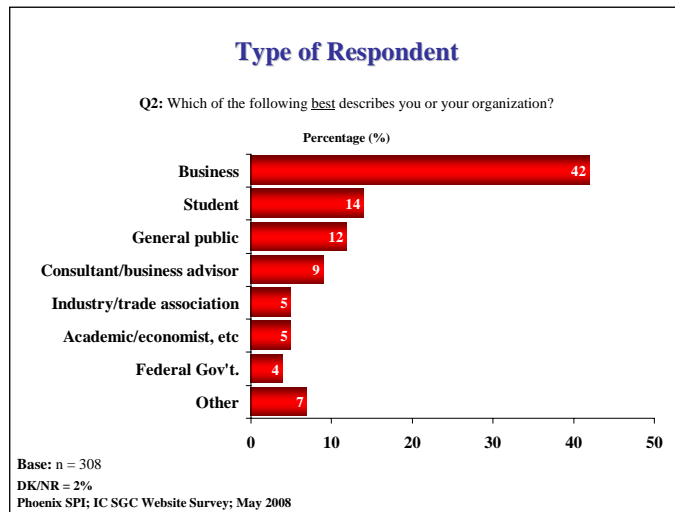
### Gender

Just over half of SGC website visitors were men (51%), while just under half were women (47%).



**Businesses Most Likely Users of Steps to Growth Capital Website**

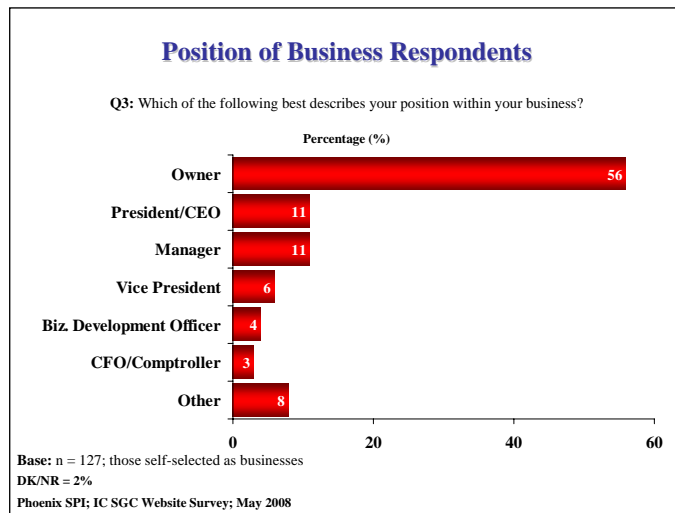
Visitors to the SGC website were much more likely to represent businesses (42%) than any other group. Following this were students (14%), the general public (12%), and consultants or business advisors (9%). Other professions or organizations were much less common (4-5%) and include industry or trade associations, academics, professors, researchers, or economists, and federal government employees.



Professions or organizations included in the ‘other’ category were restaurants, potential investor, charities, independent worker, potential buyer, and child care provider.

**Over Half of Business Representatives Were Owners**

More than half of surveyed business visitors to the SGC website (n = 127) identified themselves as business owners (56%). All other positions were identified by much smaller numbers (11% or less). These include presidents and CEOs, managers, vice presidents, business development officers, and chief financial officers or comptrollers.

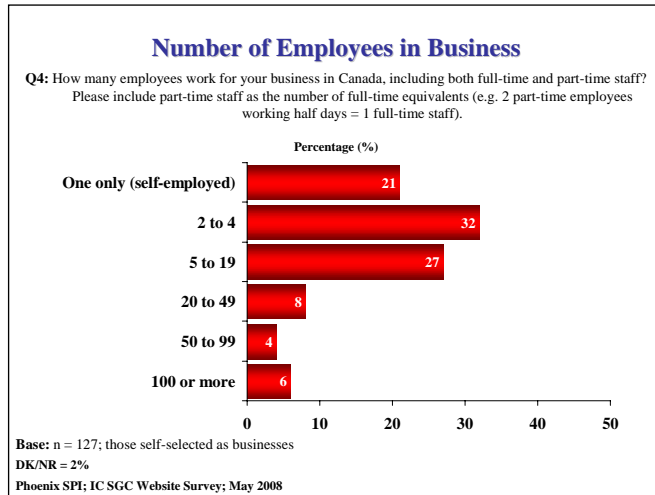


Positions in the ‘other’ category include professional naturopath, industrial technician, and evaluator.

### Most Businesses Have Fewer Than 20 Employees

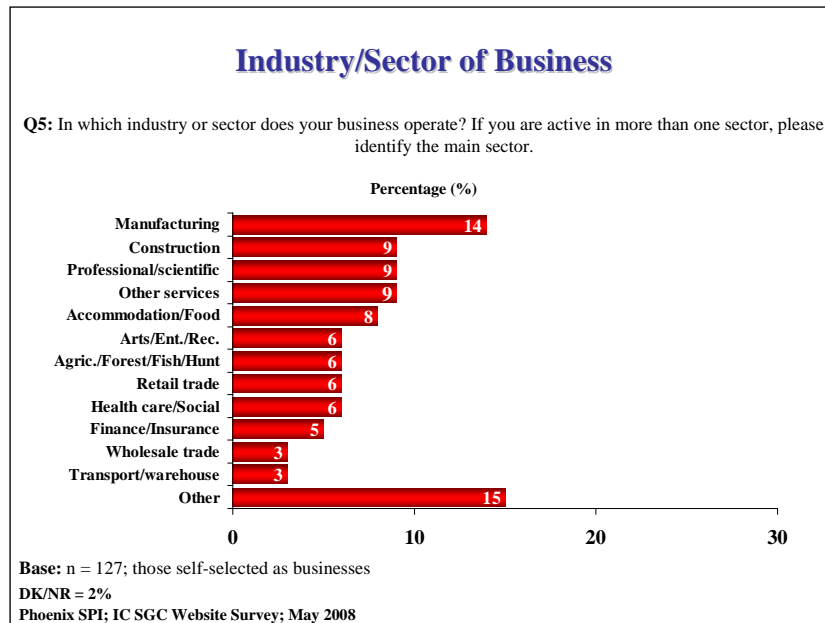
Fully 80% of those who work for businesses (n = 127), work for firms with fewer than 20 employees. This includes 27% with 5-19 employees, 32% with 2-4 employees, and 21% that are self-employed.

Among the rest, 8% work in firms with 20-49 employees, 4% in firms with 50-99, and 6% in companies with at least 100 employees.



### Businesses Operate in Varied Sectors

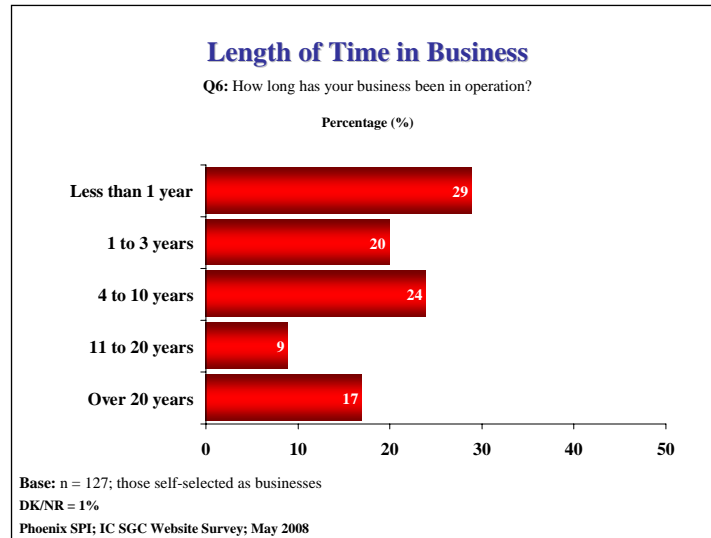
Business visitors (n = 127) to the SGC site work in companies operating in a number of industries or sectors. They were most likely to operate in the manufacturing sector (14%), followed by construction, professional and scientific services, other services (excluding Public Administration), and accommodation and food services (8-9% each). Other industries and sectors were identified by relatively few (3-6%) participants and include arts, entertainment and recreation, retail trade, health care and social assistance, finance and insurance, wholesale trade, and transportation and warehousing.



Industries or sectors included in the ‘other’ category are exports, photonics, environmental work, and publishing.

## Many Work in Relatively Young Companies

Almost three-quarters of those visitors who identified themselves as working for a business (n = 127) work for companies that have been in operation for no more than 10 years. This includes 29% that have been operating for less than one year, 20% for 1-3 years, and 24% for 4-10 years. Among the rest, 9% of surveyed firms have been operating for 11-20 years, and 17% for more than this.



## Roles & Responsibilities

A total of two in-depth interview participants were recruited for this research. Both were intermediaries working with start-ups and small businesses. One works for a municipal government department – the Small Business Enterprise Centre – and the other is a private business consultant. Both provide information to their business clients in terms of referrals, market research, and other relevant information depending on the clients’ needs. Both have been providing this information for approximately seven or eight years.

## Information Needs

Participants’ information needs vary depending on their clients. However, the following information is sought with relative frequency by one or both participants: regulatory information, business planning, sourcing suppliers, how to start a business, market research (including the size of a market for a given product), how to do business research in general, and government programs available to small businesses.

## Information Sources

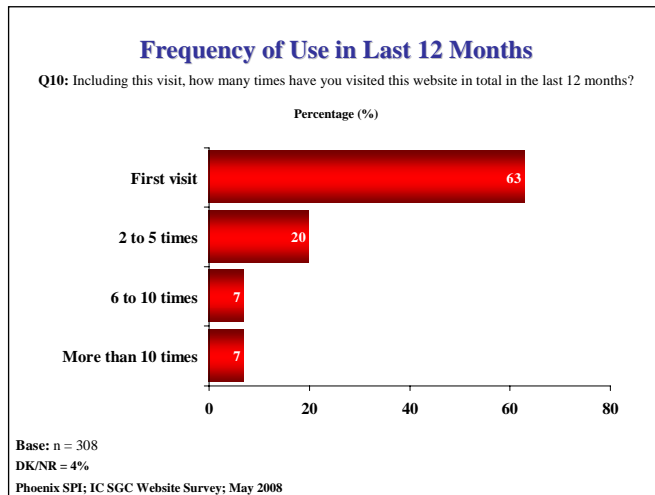
Both intermediaries rely considerably on government resources, particularly websites. This includes sites for Industry Canada, *Strategis* specifically, provincial governments, and government agencies in general. Other sources include ‘Google alerts’, and websites of associations, colleges, and foundations. One noted that they use whatever information they can find to serve their clients’ needs.

## USE OF SGC WEBSITE

This section describes visitors' use of the Steps to Growth Capital (SGC) website in terms of frequency of use, reasons for their visit(s), familiarity with the site, and satisfaction with it. Questions in this section were asked of all survey respondents (n = 308), unless otherwise specified.

### Most Were First Time Visitors

This was the first visit to the Steps to Growth Capital website, at least in the last 12 months, for nearly two-thirds of survey respondents (63%). Following this, 20% had been to the site 2-5 times, and 14% had visited it more than this, with 7% having done so more than 10 times in the last year.



### Frequency of Visits

Current use of the site varied. One has visited the site a few times a year to verify that information is still there or to look for something specific before sending the URL to a client. The other had initially used the website every day for a month when it was first discovered, and now visits it quite rarely – depending on clients' needs.

### Participants Visited Site for Range of Reasons

SGC visitors pointed to numerous reasons for visiting the site. The most widely held of these were to use the Self-Study Guide (30%), learn to write proposals (24%), help plan for growth (23%), to prepare to meet investors (22%), and to brush up on their knowledge of growth capital (20%). These were followed by identifying or resolving capital growth issues (17%), and learning to negotiate a deal (15%).





Reasons given by small numbers of visitors (5-6%) included translation, obtaining general information, and looking for specific information.

Other reasons were identified infrequently and included internships, co-op programs, and preparing course material.

### Perceived Purpose of Site

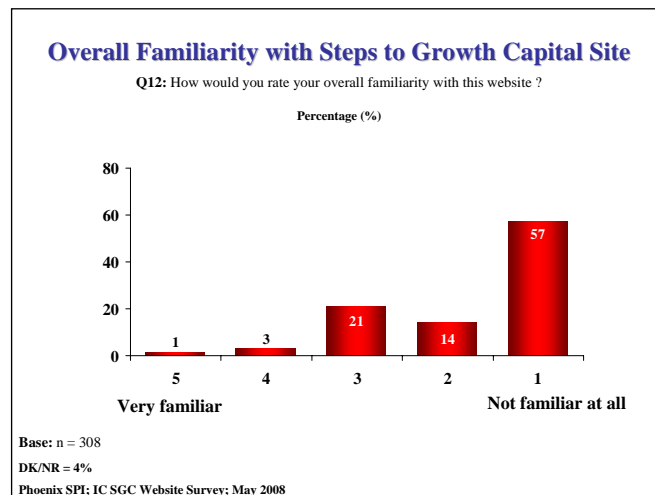
Based on their experience, intermediaries perceived the purpose of the website to be to provide businesses with a way to assess their readiness to grow. One characterized this as 'a model for a business plan for growth'. The other added that the site is meant to help businesses understand what they are asking for when they try to attract investors for their business.

### Clarity of Website Purpose

Participants were read a short description of the purpose of the SGC site (see appendix). Both found the description to be clear and accurate. However, one felt that the purpose is not always clear to their business clients. Some do not see this tool as a means for preparing a business for investors, but rather as a place to get quick information to use in planning activities or starting a business.

### Low Familiarity with Steps to Growth Capital

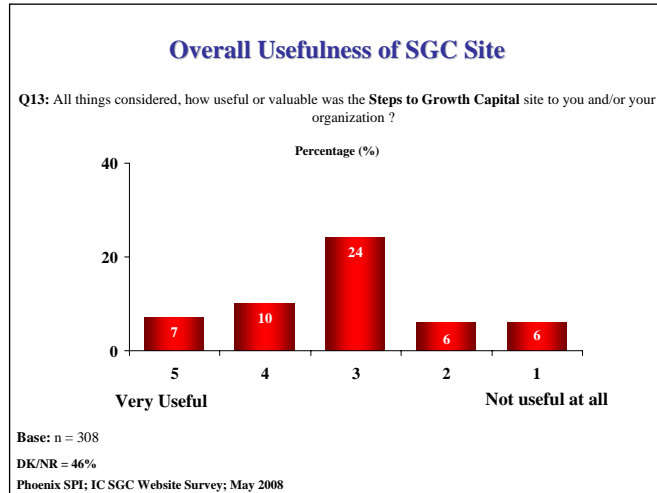
In total, 71% considered themselves to be unfamiliar with the website overall (scores of 1-2 on 5-point scale). Moreover, the majority were not at all familiar with the site (57%). This is undoubtedly related to the previously-mentioned finding that, for 63%, this was their first visit to the site at least in the last 12 months.



### Mixed Perceptions of Usefulness of SGC Website

Website visitors provided mixed reviews in terms of the perceived usefulness of the SGC site to them or their organization. In total, 17% rated the site as useful, while 24% held a more neutral or middling view (scores of 3). Only 12% considered the site to be of little to no use (scores of 1-2).

Almost half (46%) were unable to rate the website's usefulness.



### Overall Usefulness or Value of SGC Website

All things considered, intermediaries found the site to be useful and valuable to them and to the businesses they counsel. Reasons given for this include that the information is perceived to be credible (i.e. government sources), and that it helps to clear up misconceptions about financing. One added that being able to direct people to a website that provides this information in a clear manner, and that is known to be trustworthy, is a considerable help in providing information to new business people.

One participant suggested that to make the site even more useful, Industry Canada should return to producing brochures so that these could be handed out as a primer to website visitors that come to intermediaries for information.

### New to Website – Top Reason Site was Not Seen as Useful

In total, 82% of visitors did not rate the usefulness of the SGC site positively (n = 312) – 36% held neutral or negative views, while 46% gave no response. The most common explanation as to why the website was not useful to these visitors was that they were new to the website (28%). Other reasons were given much less often and can be divided into usability and information issues. The former includes difficulty using or navigating the site (8%),



information or tools that were not useful or relevant (8%), and tools and resources that were difficult to use (3%). Turning to information issues, some viewed the information as incomplete (6%), in conflict with information they received from others (6%), or overly technical or unclear (5%).

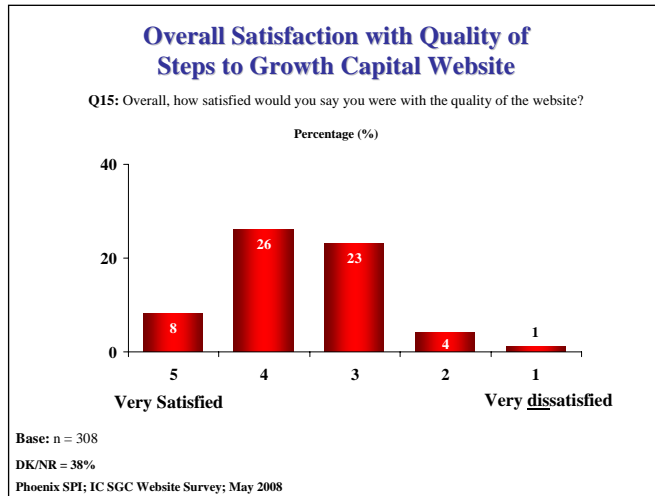
Reasons included in the ‘other’ category are difficulty using the search feature, not looking for what was available, and having other resources.

Many respondents (40%) could not say why the website was not useful to them.

### Moderate Satisfaction with Overall Quality of SGC Site

In total, approximately one-third (34%) expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of the website (scores of 4-5), and satisfaction was more likely to be moderate than high. Moreover, 23% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and just 5% were dissatisfied with the overall quality of the SGC website.

It is worth noting that 38% were unable to rate their satisfaction with the quality of the website.



## ASSESSMENT OF WEBSITE CONTENT & TOOLS

This section explores visitors' assessments of the Steps to Growth Capital (SGC) website content areas and tools. Questions in this section were only asked of those who completed Part B of the online questionnaire (n = 72-76).

### Most Learned of SGC Website via Google/Search Engine

Discovering the SGC site through Google or another search engine was the most widespread way of learning about the site (55%). Other online methods included Government of Canada websites (17%) and private sector websites (4%). A few first heard of SGC through word of mouth from colleagues or co-workers (7%), the Canada Business Network (4%), a Government of Canada mailing list (4%), and industry or trade associations (3%).



Some visitors first heard of the site through 'other' means such as surfing the Internet in general, linked from Trinidad and Tobago government site, and by accident while looking for something else.

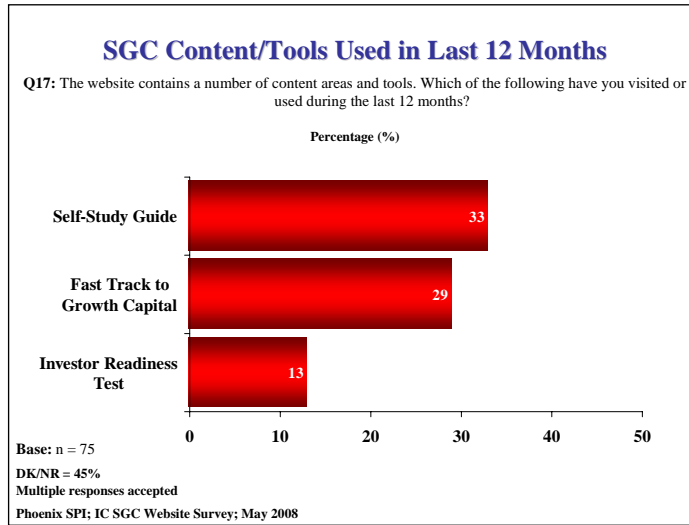
### First Heard of SGC

Both intermediaries happened upon the SGC website by chance while doing research for a client several years ago. One had been looking through the Industry Canada main site, while the other was exploring *Strategis* at the time. They were impressed with the content of the site and its applicability to their needs, and have continued to use it to varying degrees since.

### Fast Track & Self-Study Guide – Top Content Areas Used

The SGC website contains several content areas and tools. Among these, visitors were most likely to have used the Self-Study Guide (33%) and the Fast Track to Growth Capital (29%) sections in the last 12 months. In fact, these content areas were mentioned at least twice as often as the Investor Readiness Test (13%).

Almost half of SGC visitors (45%) were unsure or gave no response.



### Assessment of Content Areas & Tools Among Users

Website visitors were asked to rate how useful or valuable each of the content areas and tools that they had used during the last 12 months were to them or their organization. To do this, they used a 5-point scale (1 = not useful at all, 5 = very useful). As relatively few could recall which tools they used (n = 10-25), this data is presented as the actual number of respondents that rated each content area or tool in the table below (i.e. not the percentage).

Most visitors considered the Self-Study Guide (n = 19) and the Fast Track to Growth Capital (n = 9) to be useful. Those who did not find the Fast Track to Growth Capital to be useful were split between negative and neutral viewpoints. Feedback regarding the Investor Readiness Test was mixed.

Perceived Usefulness of SGC Content/Tools					
	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Self-Study Guide</b> (n = 24)	11	8	5	-	-
<b>Fast Track to Growth Capital</b> (n = 17)	3	6	4	3	1
<b>Investor Readiness Test</b> (n = 9)	2	1	4	1	1
<b>NA (removed) = 1-5</b>					

### Assessment of Key Content Areas & Tools

Interview participants found all key content areas and tools on the SGC website to be useful in some way:

- **Self-Study Guide:** This section was seen to be useful as an introduction to the subject matter. It was described as well organized (i.e. the hyperlinked chapters and subject headings) and clear. One participant explained that it ‘breaks things

down into manageable chunks for the reader'. However, it was suggested that this be made more prominent on the site, so that new visitors go to this section first.

- Investor Readiness Test: This tool was considered to be useful by both participants, and especially so for one. The latter noted that the test helps business owners to put their company in perspective when looking for investors. That is, it helps to give the owner an outside perspective on the health of their company. Both found the section to be well-explained and easy to read.
- Fast Track to Growth Capital: Only one participant had used this section, although upon reviewing it both judged it useful. The user perceived this section to be well-organized and easy to follow.

#### **Perceived Usefulness of Investor-Readiness Test (Tool)**

Both participants felt that the Investor Readiness Test tool was useful. One based this on relaying the experiences of business users that found the tool helpful, while the other had created fictitious profiles and presented them as scenarios to a client. That said, this person added that the Test was of secondary importance to the other information contained in the site.

## PERCEPTIONS OF SGC WEBSITE

This section explores visitors' perceptions of and satisfaction with various aspects of the SGC website. Questions in this section were only asked of those who completed Part B of the online questionnaire (n = 72-76).

### Most Offered Positive Perceptions of SGC Site

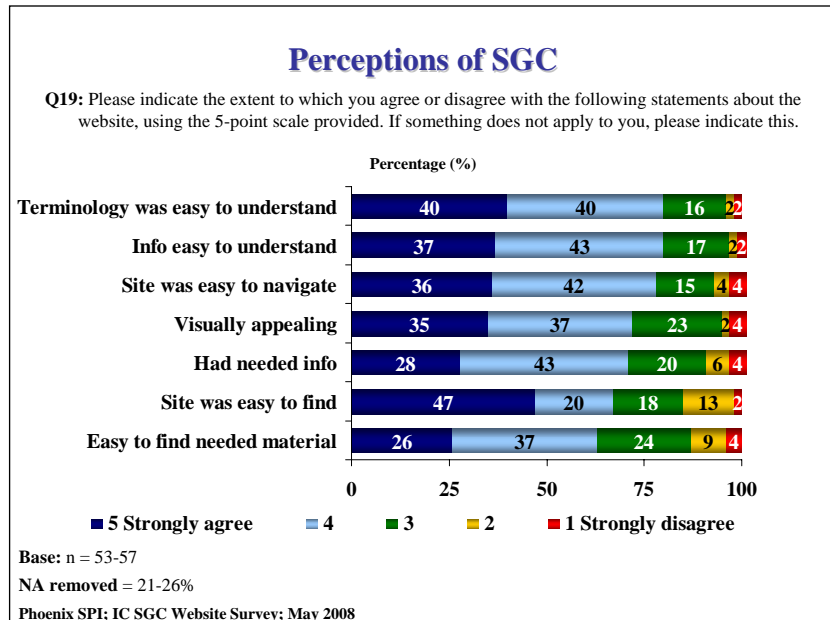
Visitors were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements about the SGC website, using a 5-point scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree):

- It was easy to find what you were looking for.
- The site was visually appealing.
- The site had the information you needed.
- The information was easy to understand.
- It was easy to find the site.
- When accessing information on the site, it was easy to move from section to section.
- The terminology used on the site was easy to understand.

Considerable majorities held positive perceptions of each aspect of the SGC site, ranging from 63% to 80%. In terms of content, strong majorities (80% each) found both the terminology and information to be easy to understand. A further 71% agreed that the site contains the information they needed. Turning to usability issues, significant numbers found the site to be easy to navigate (78%), and visually appealing (72%). In addition, smaller majorities agreed that the site itself was easy to find (67%), as was the content they were looking for (63%).

Positive perceptions were generally split between strong and moderate.

Among those holding less positive views, perceptions tended to be neutral rather than negative.

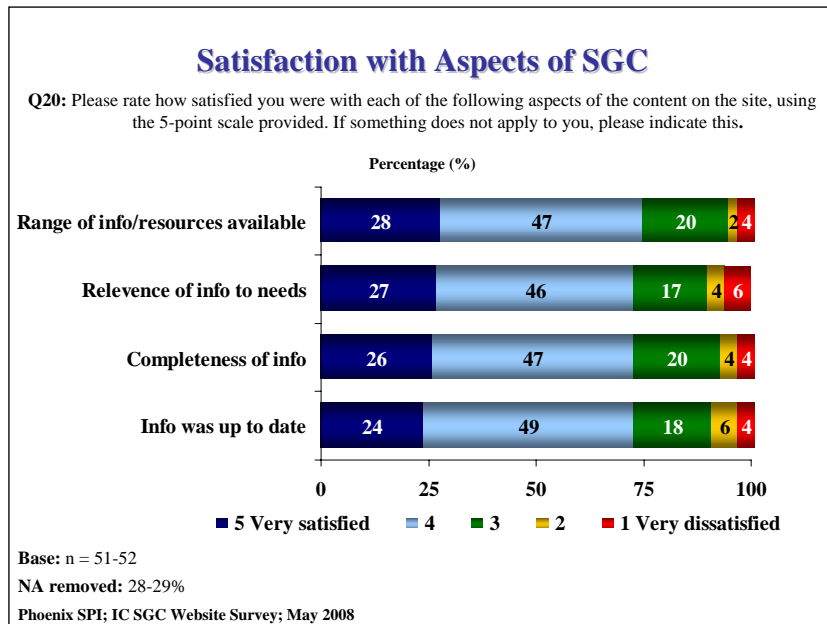


### Widespread Satisfaction with Aspects of SGC Content

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with each of the following aspects of the content on the SGC site using a 5-point scale (5 = very satisfied, 1 = very dissatisfied):

- The extent to which the information was up-to-date.
- The completeness of the information.
- The relevance of the information to their needs
- The range of information and resources available on the website.

Large and similar majorities of SGC visitors were satisfied with each aspect of the website’s content (73-75%). Moreover, satisfaction was more likely to be moderate than positive with each area. More specifically, approximately three-quarters of visitors were satisfied with the range of information and resources available (75%), the relevance of the information to their needs, its completeness, and that it is up to date (73% each). Among those less satisfied, perceptions were much more likely to be neutral, with relatively few expressing dissatisfaction (6-10%).



### Overall Impressions of SGC

Interview participants have positive impressions of SGC overall. The website was seen to be easy to read and easy to use. It was also considered an excellent resource, particularly for those who do not really understand financing.

### Perceived Main Strengths of Website

Participants considered different parts of the website to be its main strength. One attributed the website’s main strength to the Investor Readiness Test, viewing it as a good checklist for businesses to follow, and helpful because it is customizable. The other felt that the main strength was that the site, by way of the Self-Study Guide, helps businesses more clearly understand the different types of financing they can pursue.

### Aspects in Need of Improvement

Only one participant identified aspects of SGC in need of improvement. He felt that there needs to be a short description somewhere on the site about what it means for one’s



business once they have investors. The concern was that businesses do not normally realize the implications in terms of profit sharing and controlling the direction of the company.

### Structure & Organization of Website

Both participants found the website to be well organized and easy to use. Once on the site, they are able to find the information they are looking for, each remarking on the logical structure of the site. That said, one suggested that there should be a way to easily print off each section or all parts of the Self-Study Guide at once. Currently, pages do not print easily for future reading.

Both found the various categories to be clear and intuitive, finding the type of information they would expect behind each one. Neither identified categories or labels they felt were missing.

### Overall Look & Feel of SGC Website

In-depth interview participants described the overall look and feel of the site in generally positive terms. That said, both pointed to separate layout issues of concern. The first was that the visual presentation of the site makes it look as though it is more work than it actually is to read the information. This intermediary noted that some clients (i.e. businesses) were discouraged at first, but once they started reading they realized it is easy to get through and well-organized. The other concern was the considerable white space that appears inside the web-page frame, which was described as ‘visually irritating’.

### Satisfaction with SGC Content Overall

Both expressed satisfaction with the content of SGC overall. They found the information that they used to be complete, up-to-date, and relevant to their needs. Participants found the text and content that they read to be clear and easy to understand. Both cited the appropriate vocabulary used and the length of the texts as reasons for this. Regarding the length, one described it as ‘ideal’.

### Some Unable to Find Needed Information

Just under one-third of visitors (31%) were unable to find information on the website that they were looking. Meanwhile, 35% each either had no such difficulties or were not looking for any specific information.

Those who could not find what they were looking for (n = 22) identified a number of unmet needs, the most common of which was how to obtain information on subsidies, grants or investors (n = 5). Other missing pieces of information were identified by no



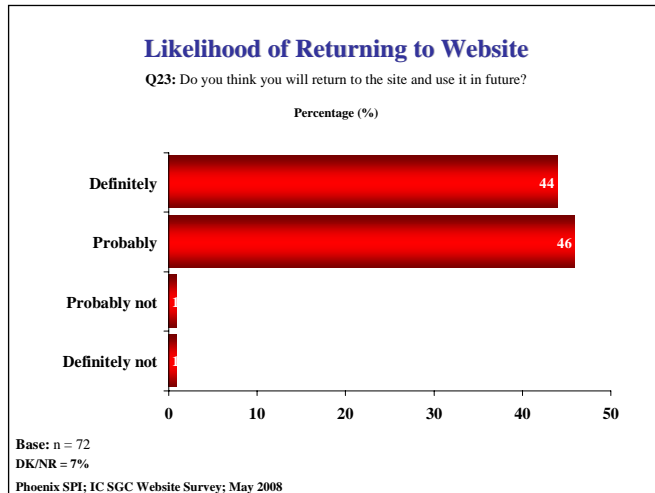
more than one or two participants each and included business profiles, consequences of investing, product licensing, translations for terms, and how to turn an idea into something marketable with little money.

In total, seven visitors did not know or gave no response.

### Almost All Plan to Use SGC Site in Future

In total, 90% of SGC visitors plan to return to the site and use it in the future. These visitors are split almost evenly between those for whom this is definite (44%) versus probable (46%). Only 2% do not consider a return to the site to be likely.

Seven percent did not know or gave no response.



### Likelihood of Returning to SGC in Future

Both intermediaries plan to return to the website in future. One continues to visit the site every few months and directs business clients to it regularly. The other will use it the next time he/she has a client in need of this kind of information. One took this opportunity to reiterate that he/she thought the website was ‘excellent’ and should be maintained.

### Awareness of Similar Websites

One participant was aware of a website with similar information and services, pointing to the Business Development Canada website. Although this was seen to have similar information, the SGC website was the preferred site and the one business clients are referred to.

## PERCEIVED IMPACT OF SGC WEBSITE

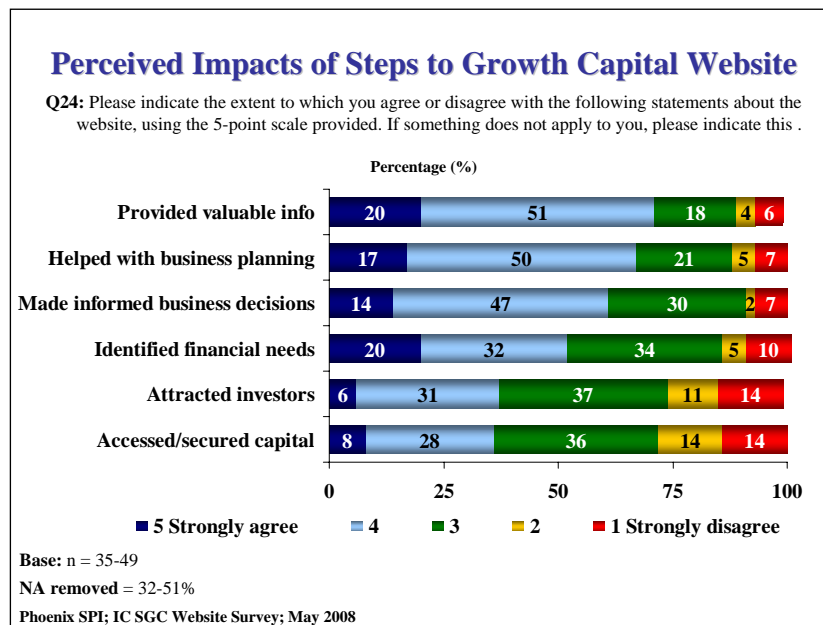
This section explores the perceived impacts of the SGC website on respondents' businesses. Questions in this section were only asked of those who completed Part B of the online questionnaire (n = 72-76).

### Provided Valuable Info, Helped Business Planning – Top Impacts of SGC Site

Website visitors were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements about the impact of the website, using a 5-point scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree):

- The information and resources helped you to improve your business management skills.
- The diagnostic tools helped you to assess your businesses strengths and weaknesses.
- The site helped you to make more informed decisions for your business.
- The site helped you solve or assisted you with a business issue.
- The site provided you with or directed you to valuable information you might not have otherwise found.

Agreement that SGC helped to achieve the above impacts ranged considerably from a low of 36% to a high of 71% (scores of 4-5). Visitors were most apt to find that the site provided them with valuable information (71%), and helped them with their business planning (67%). Following this, smaller majorities agreed that the site helped them to make informed business decisions (61%), and identify their financial needs (52%). These views were more likely to be moderately than strongly held.

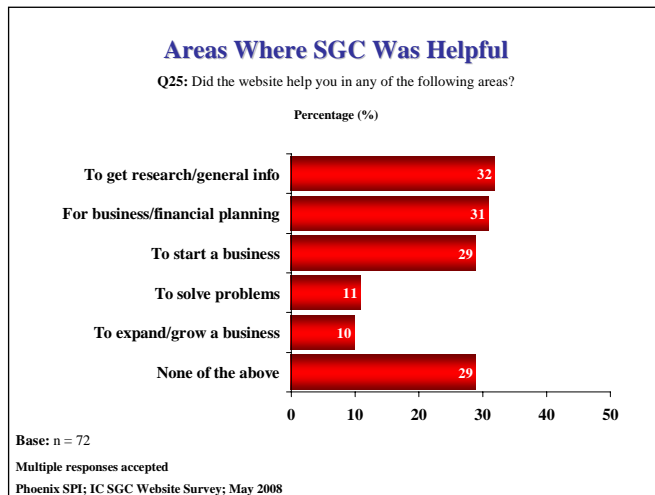


Visitors were similarly likely to agree that the site helped them to attract investors and gain access to and secure capital (36-37%).

Significant proportions of visitors did not feel that impacts in these areas applied to them. This was as high as 51% in terms of attracting investors, followed by 50% for accessing and securing capital, 43% for identifying financial needs, 42% regarding business planning, 40% in terms of making more informed decisions, and 32% in terms of providing valuable information. Once again, it is important to note that many respondents did not work for businesses, as was the case for the other websites being assessed.

### Obtaining Research, Planning, Starting a Business – Most Common Benefits of SGC

SGC visitors were asked if the website had been helpful in a number of specific areas. The site was most likely to have been of assistance to visitors in terms of helping them obtain research or general information for a business (32%), business or financial planning (31%), and starting a business (29%). Other beneficial outcomes were cited less often and included solving business problems (11%), and expanding or growing a business (10%).



For a further 29%, the website was not helpful in any of these areas.

### Perceived Impact of SGC on Businesses

Intermediaries offered mixed views of the overall impact their use of the site has had on the businesses that they serve. One considered the impact to be positive by virtue of the information provided by the site. The other felt the impact was difficult to determine since he/she can only assume that the clients (i.e. businesses) used the information they were provided with through the site. On this point, it was indicated that client businesses were happy to have the information and were likely to have used it to help grow their businesses or to get ready before meeting with potential investors.

### Use of Information Found on SGC

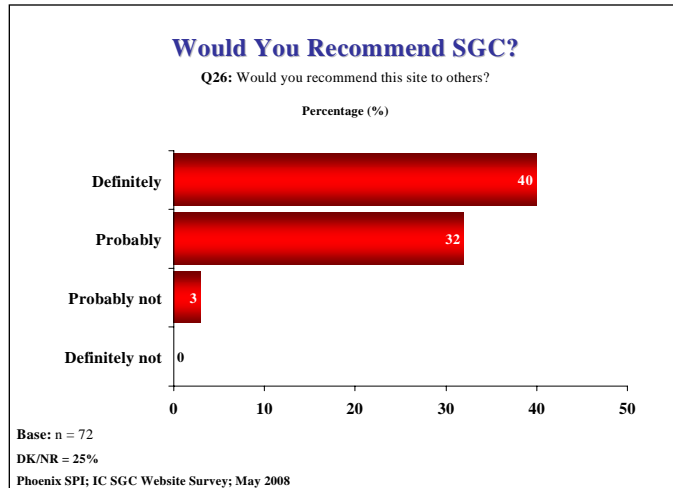
Intermediaries used the information on the SGC website to inform their clients' businesses. This was generally done either as a referral to specific components of the site deemed to be of value to them, or by providing client businesses with a summary in document form of the information that was most relevant to their situation (e.g. how best to access financing options). Asked specifically about whether or not the information was helpful in terms of operational planning, both intermediaries thought that it was but could not confirm this.

### Perceived Completeness of Information

Both interview participants combined the SGC information with additional sources to help them meet their clients' needs. One found this necessary in order to provide industry-specific information. The other typically includes information from banks regarding venture capital, growth financing, and the contents of presentations made by venture capitalists.

### Nearly Three-Quarters Would Recommend SGC to Others

Almost three-quarters (72%) of SGC visitors would recommend the website to others, with 40% feeling strongly about this. Among the rest, 3% would probably not recommend the site. A further 25% were unsure.



### Perceptions of SGC Concept

Both intermediaries agreed that the concept of a website like SGC is a good idea. They were impressed enough with the site to continue to recommend it to others. One added that being able to order the website on CD (a feature once available but recently cancelled) was useful for getting the information into the hands of businesses. It was suggested that this feature be brought back.

Both participants were adamant that Industry Canada should continue to invest in websites such as this one. One participant emphasized that the website provides a service to new business people that do not yet understand how to access money for their start-up business. This participant explained that there is a misconception among new business people that there is a shortage of venture capital in Canada. The reality is that such capital is abundant, but new business owners simply do not know how to access it. The SGC website helps these businesses learn how to access that capital.

**Suggestions to Improve Usefulness of SGC Site**

Relatively few visitors provided suggestions to improve the website. In fact, 75% did not provide a response to this question. No single suggestion was offered by many visitors. That said, suggestions cited by more than one visitor included providing more information (n = 5), and adding recent information (n = 2). A further seven visitors suggested that they would have preferred taking the survey after their visit to the website was finished.

Suggestions included in the 'other' category included adding more business specific information, having easier searching and navigation, creating awareness for the site, and ensuring that it is bilingual.

**APPENDICES**

### **Age of Business – Sub-group Analysis**

This section presents the results for ‘age of business’ sub-group analysis in terms of number of visits, overall familiarity, perceived usefulness, and overall satisfaction for each website. For this analysis, business respondents were divided into two groups: firms three years and under (younger firms) and those over three years (older firms).

**Caution should be exercised when interpreting these results as the sample sizes are relatively small (n = 134 for Performance Plus, n = 158 for Managing for Business Success, and n = 127 for Steps to Growth Capital).**

#### Performance Plus:

- Younger businesses were more apt to be first-time visitors (70% vs. 61%).
- Younger businesses were more apt to be unfamiliar with the website overall (78% vs. 65%).
- Older businesses were more likely to consider the site to be valuable or useful (26% vs. 16%).
- Older businesses were more apt to be satisfied with the overall quality of the site (40% vs. 26%), with younger firms more likely to be unable to answer (51% vs. 40%).

#### Managing For Business Success:

- Younger businesses were more apt to be first-time visitors (81% vs. 57%).
- Younger businesses were more apt to be unfamiliar with the website overall (91% vs. 72%).
- Older and younger businesses were similar in terms of their perceptions of the overall value of the site to their organization.
- Older and younger businesses were similarly satisfied with the overall quality of the site.

#### Steps to Growth Capital:

- There was no clear difference in terms of frequency of visits.
- Younger firms were more likely to be unfamiliar with the website (77% vs. 70%).
- Younger firms were slightly more likely to consider the site to be valuable or useful (19% vs. 13%); older firms to see the site as somewhat (score of 3) valuable to their organization (28% vs. 13%).
- Older firms were more apt to be satisfied with the overall quality of the website (41% vs. 23%), with younger firms more likely to be unable to answer (47% vs. 36%).



**Industry Canada  
Evaluation of SBPB Small Business Websites**

**Program Version**

**Text for Survey Redirect Window (on IC site)**

Industry Canada wants to better understand who visits this website. We ask that you **please complete this short 2 minute online survey.**

Your responses will be completely confidential – no individuals or organizations will be identified in any way. This survey is being conducted by Phoenix SPI, an independent research company. This survey is registered with the national survey registration system.

**Start Survey**

**Text for First Page of Survey (on Phoenix/subcontractor site)**

Thank you for agreeing to complete this short survey about the [**Managing for Business Success/Performance Plus/Steps to Growth Capital** AS APPROPRIATE] website.

This research is being conducted on behalf of Industry Canada by Phoenix SPI, an independent research firm. If you have any questions about the survey, or encounter technical difficulties, please contact Philippe Azzie of Phoenix by phone (613-260-1700, x 222) or email ([pazzie@phoenixspi.ca](mailto:pazzie@phoenixspi.ca)).

For more information about Phoenix's privacy policy, please see our [Privacy Statement](#).

**PROGRAMMING NOTES:**

- LINES INDICATE SCREEN BREAKS.
- DON'T KNOW RESPONSE OPTION TO BE INCLUDED WHERE APPROPRIATE
- THIS SURVEY WILL BE USED TO EVALUATE THREE SEPARATE WEBSITES. CAREFUL ATTENTION TO BE PAID TO PROGRAMMING NOTES IN TERMS OF CONTENT EVALUATED.
- THE SURVEY CONTAINS TWO PARTS. PARTICIPANTS WILL BE INVITED TO TAKE PART B ONCE THEY HAVE COMPLETED PART A.

**Part A**

**SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND CHARACTERISTICS**

These first few questions are about you and/or your organization. They will be used for background purposes only and all responses to these and other questions in the survey will be kept confidential.

1. Where are you located?

Add list of provinces/territories [ ]  
Outside Canada. Please specify country: \_\_\_\_\_ THANK/DISCONTINUE\*

\*EXIT SURVEY. **MESSAGE:** UNFORTUNATELY YOU ARE NOT ELIGIBLE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH BECAUSE THE FOCUS IS ON DOMESTIC USERS IN CANADA ONLY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THIS WEBSITE.

RETAIN DATA FROM THIS QUESTION [IMPORTANT 'DEMOGRAPHIC' MEASURE].

2. Which of the following best describes you or your organization?

Business\* [ ]  
Industry/trade association [ ]  
Consultant/business advisor [ ]  
Academic/professor/researcher/economist [ ] CHECK ONE ONLY  
Federal government public servant [ ]  
Other government in Canada [ ]  
Student [ ]  
General public [ ]  
Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

\***PROGRAMMING NOTE:** CODE AS 'BUSINESS' AND ALL OTHERS AS 'NON-BUSINESS'.

ASK BUSINESSES Qs 3-6 (OTHERS SKIP TO Q7):

3. Which of the following best describes your position within your business?

Owner [ ]  
President/CEO [ ]  
Chief Financial Officer/Comptroller [ ]  
Vice President [ ]  
Manager [ ] CHECK ONE ONLY  
Business Development Officer [ ]  
Chartered or general accountant [ ]  
Lawyer [ ]  
Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many employees work for your business in Canada, including both full-time and part-time staff? Please include part-time staff as the number of full-time equivalents (e.g. 2 part-time employees working half days = 1 full-time staff).

One only (i.e. self-employed)	[ ]	
2 to 4	[ ]	
5 to 19	[ ]	
20 - 49	[ ]	CHECK ONE ONLY
50 to 99	[ ]	
100 or more	[ ]	
Not sure	[ ]	

---

5. In which industry or sector does your business operate? If you are active in more than one sector, please identify the main sector.

Accommodation and Food Services	[ ]	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	[ ]	
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	[ ]	
Construction	[ ]	
Educational Services	[ ]	
Finance and Insurance	[ ]	
Health Care and Social Assistance	[ ]	
Information and Cultural Industries	[ ]	CHECK ONE ONLY
Management of Companies and Enterprises	[ ]	
Manufacturing	[ ]	
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	[ ]	
Other Services (except Public Administration)	[ ]	
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	[ ]	
Public Administration	[ ]	
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	[ ]	
Registered charity	[ ]	
Retail Trade	[ ]	
Transportation and Warehousing	[ ]	
Utilities	[ ]	
Wholesale Trade	[ ]	
Other. Please specify: _____	[ ]	

---

6. How long has your business been in operation?

- Less than one year [ ]
  - 1 to 3 years [ ]
  - 4 to 10 years [ ] CHECK ONE ONLY
  - 11 to 20 years [ ]
  - Over 20 years [ ]
  - Not sure [ ]
- 

7. In which of the following age categories do you belong?

- Under 18 [ ]
- 18-24 [ ]
- 25-34 [ ]
- 35-44 [ ] CHECK ONE ONLY
- 45-54 [ ]
- 55 and older [ ]
- Prefer not to say [ ]

8. Would you say that you are located in...?

- An urban or suburban location [ ]
- A town or village [ ] CHECK ONE ONLY
- A rural or remote location [ ]
- Prefer not to say [ ]

9. Please indicate your gender.

- Female [ ]
  - Male [ ] CHECK ONE ONLY
  - Prefer not to say [ ]
- 

## SECTION 2: WEBSITE USE

Turning to your use of the website,

10. Including this visit, how many times have you visited this website in total in the last 12 months?

- This is your first visit [ ]
  - 2 to 5 times [ ]
  - 6 to 10 times [ ] CHECK ONE ONLY
  - More than 10 times [ ]
  - Not sure [ ]
-





Thank you for your valuable feedback. We appreciate it.

There is some additional information we would like to know. If you have time, **please click on the link below to answer one last short set of questions about this website. This should take no more than 5 minutes.**

**Continue**

If not, thank you for taking the time to participate.

---

**PROGRAMMING NOTE: RETURN PARTICIPANTS TO THE [Managing for Business Success/ Performance Plus/Steps to Growth Capital AS APPROPRIATE]**

**Part B**

**Section 1: Assessment of Website Content Areas and Tools**

16. How did you first hear or learn about the site?

- |   |     |        |
|---|-----|--------|
| Government of Canada mailing                                      | [ ] | [ ]    |
| Other Government of Canada website(s)                             | [ ] | [ ]    |
| Google/search engine  | [ ] | [ ]    |
| Media/news report   | [ ] | [ ]    |
| Industry/trade association  | [ ] | SELECT |
| Business service provider (i.e. an accountant, financial advisor) | [ ] | ONE    |
| ONLY  |     |        |
| Word of mouth (colleague, co-worker, etc.)                        | [ ] | [ ]    |
| Canada Business Network   | [ ] | [ ]    |
| Other private sector website                                      | [ ] | [ ]    |
| Other: _____  | [ ] | [ ]    |

---

17. The website contains a number of content areas and tools. Which of the following have you visited or used during the last 12 months<sup>5</sup>? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

<sup>5</sup> **PROGRAMMING NOTE:**

ONLY SHOW CONTENT AREAS FOR WEBSITE CURRENTLY BEING EVALUATED

ALTERNATE TEXT IF FIRST VISIT: "Which of the following did you visit or use today?"

---

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.

**Managing for Business Success**

Finance	[ ]
Human Resources	[ ]
Operations Management	[ ]
Leadership	[ ]
Advanced Topics	[ ]
Marketing and Sales	[ ]
Administration	[ ]
Strategy	[ ]
Innovation and Technology	[ ]
Business Support	[ ]
Find Business Advisors	[ ]
Business Self-Assessment Tools	[ ]
Links to Business Magazines	[ ]
Management Success Stories	[ ]

**Steps to Growth Capital**

Self-Study Guide	[ ]
Investor Readiness Test	[ ]
Fast Track to Growth capital	[ ]

**Performance Plus**

What is Performance Plus?	[ ]
How to Use Performance Plus?	[ ]
View a Sample Case	[ ]
Build Your Own Profile	[ ]
Other Relevant Information	[ ]

---

18. How useful or valuable were each of the content areas and tools that you used during the last 12 months to you/your organization?<sup>6</sup> Please rate each of the following using a 5-point scale, where '1' is not useful at all and '5' is very useful. If something does not apply to you, please indicate this (NA = Not Applicable).

---

<sup>6</sup> ALTERNATE TEXT IF FIRST VISIT: "How useful or valuable were each of the content areas and tools that you used to you/your organization?"



Evaluation of SBPB Small Business Websites

**PROGRAMMING NOTE:** ONLY INCLUDE CONTENT AREAS AND TOOLS VISITED/USED IN PREVIOUS QUESTION.

	Not useful at all 1	2	Somewhat 3	4	Very useful 5	NA
<b>Managing for Business Success</b>						
Finance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Human Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Operations Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advanced Topics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing and Sales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strategy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Innovation and Technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Find Business Advisors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Self-Assessment Tools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Links to Business Magazines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management Success Stories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Steps to Growth Capital</b>						
Self-Study Guide	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Investor Readiness Test	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fast Track to Growth capital	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Performance Plus</b>						
What is Performance Plus?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How to Use Performance Plus?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
View a Sample Case	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Build Your Own Profile	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Relevant Information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**SECTION 2: PERCEPTIONS OF & SATISFACTION WITH WEBSITE**

Thinking about the website overall, and your use of the site during the last 12 months<sup>7</sup>,

19. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about the website, using the 5-point scale provided. If something does not apply to you, please indicate this (NA = Not Applicable). (ROTATE LIST)

<sup>7</sup> ALTERNATE TEXT IF FIRST VISIT: “Thinking about the website overall, ”

Evaluation of SBPB Small Business Websites

---

	<b>Strongly disagree</b> 1	<b>2</b>	<b>Neither</b> 3	<b>4</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b> 5	<b>N/A</b>
It was easy to find what you were looking for.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The site was visually appealing.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The site had the information you needed.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The information was easy to understand.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It was easy to find the site.	○	○	○	○	○	○
When accessing information on the site, it was easy to move from section to section	○	○	○	○	○	○
The terminology used on the site was easy to understand.	○	○	○	○	○	○

---

20. Please rate how satisfied you were with each of the following aspects of the content on the site, using the 5-point scale provided. If something does not apply to you, please indicate this (NA = Not Applicable). (ROTATE LIST)

	<b>Very dissatisfied</b> 1	<b>2</b>	<b>Neither</b> 3	<b>4</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b> 5	<b>N/A</b>
	○	○	○	○	○	○
The extent to which the information was up-to-date.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The completeness of the information.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The relevance of the information to your needs	○	○	○	○	○	○
The range of information and resources available on the website.	○	○	○	○	○	○

---

21. Was there any information you were seeking on the website but could not find?

- Yes [    ]
- No [    ] CHECK ONE ONLY
- Was not looking for specific information [    ]
-

IF YES:

22. What information were you unable to find?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

23. Do you think you will return to the site and use it in future?

- Definitely [ ]
- Probably [ ] CHECK ONE ONLY
- Probably not [ ]
- Definitely Not [ ]

**SECTION 3: IMPACT OF WEBSITE**

For the questions in this section, please think about the impact your use of this site has had on your business (business clients)/ the businesses you serve or provide advice to (non-business)<sup>8</sup>.

24. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about the website, using the 5-point scale provided. If something does not apply to you, please indicate this (NA = Not Applicable). (ROTATE LIST)

	Strongly disagree 1	2	Neither 3	4	Strongly agree 5	N/A
<b>Managing for Business Success</b>						
The information and resources helped you to improve your business management skills.	O	O	O	O	O	O
The diagnostic tools helped you to assess your businesses strengths and weaknesses.	O	O	O	O	O	O
The site helped you to make more informed decisions for your business.	O	O	O	O	O	O
The site helped you solve or assisted you with a business issue.	O	O	O	O	O	O
The site provided you with or directed you to valuable information you might not have otherwise found.	O	O	O	O	O	O

<sup>8</sup> **PROGRAMMING NOTE:** AS PER Q2. FOR ALL NON-BUSINESS RESPONDENTS, CHANGE “YOUR BUSINESS” TO “A BUSINESS” OR OTHER GENERIC EQUIVALENT FOR ALL RELEVANT ITEMS IN THIS QUESTION.

Evaluation of SBPB Small Business Websites

<b>Steps to Grow Capital</b>						
The site helped your business access and secure capital.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The site helped you to attract investors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The site helped you to identify your financial needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The site helped you to make more informed decisions for your business.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The site helped you in your business planning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The site provided you with or directed you to valuable information you might not have otherwise found.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Performance Plus</b>						
The site helped you to see how your business measured up to others in your sector.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The site helped you to make informed operational decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The site helped you to prepare a business plan.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The site helped you to improve the performance of your business.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The site provided you with or directed you to valuable information you might not have otherwise found.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. Did the website help you in any of the following areas? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- To start a business [    ]
- To expand or grow a business [    ]
- To obtain research or general information for your business [    ]
- To solve problems your business was experiencing [    ]
- For business or financial planning [    ]
- None of the above [    ]

26. Would you recommend this site to others?

- Definitely [    ]
- Probably [    ] CHECK ONE ONLY
- Probably not [    ]
- Definitely Not [    ]

27. What suggestions do you have, if any, to help Industry Canada make this website more useful to you and/or your organization?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**That completes the survey.  
Thank you for taking the time to participate.**

---

**PROGRAMMING NOTE: RETURN PARTICIPANTS TO THE [Managing for Business Success/  
Performance Plus/Steps to Growth Capital AS APPROPRIATE]**

**Industry Canada**  
**Evaluation of SBPB Small Business Websites**  
**Interview Guide**

**Final Version**

Initial contact:

- Explain purpose of research and ask if the person is willing to take part in an interview.
- Inform them that the interview will take 30-40 minutes.
- Note that responses are confidential.
- Schedule a time for the interview.
- Inform them that they will need to explore the website in advance of the interview and that they will be sent an email with a URL link to the site, along with a short set of instructions on what is required of them before the interview.
- Confirm email address.

Subsequent contact:

- Determine if the person is available for the interview. If not available, re-schedule for another time.
- Confirm that they have reviewed the website.
- Record their name, position, organization, phone number, length of the interview, and its date of completion.
- Request permission to include their title and organization on participant list (optional, but encourage; information not linked to interview responses).
- Confirm that their participation is voluntary. Responses will not affect present or future involvement with the federal government and will be administered in accordance with the *Privacy Act* and other applicable privacy laws. The report will be written to provide aggregate results only and no comments will be linked back to them or their organization.

## Background & Contextual Issues

1. First, could you please briefly describe your role or responsibilities within your organization? KEEP BRIEF

Probe:           - planning/decision-making/management/accounting  
                  - owner/CEO, etc.  
                  - finance/legal

2. Please tell me a little bit about your business/organization.

Probe:           - length of time in business  
                  - type of work and industry  
                  - scale and size

3. What type of information do you need or look for in your role within your business/organization? That is, what type of information is most important to you?

4. Where do you go for this information? Do you typically find what you are looking for? If not, why not?

Probe:           - if websites, ask for specifics

## Website Use & Assessments of Content Areas and Tools

In advance of this interview, we asked you to take some time to (re-)familiarize yourself with the [**Managing for Business Success/Performance Plus/Steps to Growth Capital** AS APPROPRIATE] website. Were you able to do this?

ENSURE THAT PARTICIPANT HAS ACCESS TO THE SITE AND IS PREPARED TO REVIEW IT TOGETHER DURING THE INTERVIEW.

5. How did you first hear or learn about the site? Why did you decide to visit it?

Probe:           - mail, email, word of mouth  
                  - had heard it was useful/just wanted to try it  
                  - was seeking information (get specifics)

6. How often have you visited the site? What do you visit this website for?

7. Based on your experience, what is the overall purpose of the site? That is, what do you think it is trying to achieve or provide the visitor with?

READ TEXT ON THE PURPOSE OF THE SITE AS APPROPRIATE – SEE APPENDIX

8. How clear was the purpose of the website to you? Based on your use of it, was it clear that this is what the website is trying to achieve?

9. The website contains a number of content areas and tools. For each content area or tool, please tell me if this is something you have visited or used, if it was useful or valuable to you, and why or why not. Let's start with .....[ROTATE ORDER, READ APPROPRIATE LIST]

**Managing for Business Success**

- Finance
- Human Resources
- Operations Management
- Leadership
- Advanced Topics
- Marketing and Sales
- Administration
- Strategy
- Innovation and Technology
- Business Support
- Find Business Advisors
- Business Self-Assessment Tools
- Links to Business Magazines
- Management Success Stories

**Steps to Growth Capital**

- Self-Study Guide
- Investor Readiness Test
- Fast Track to Growth capital

**Performance Plus**

- What is Performance Plus?
- How to Use Performance Plus?
- View a Sample Case
- Build Your Own Profile

10. Are you aware of any other websites that provide similar information or services? If so, what other site(s)?

ASK THOSE AWARE OF SIMILAR WEBSITES:

11. How does the [**Managing for Business Success/Performance Plus/Steps to Growth Capital** as appropriate] website compare to similar websites you have found? Why do you say that?

Probe: - better/worse/the same



## Perceptions of & Satisfaction with Website

Let's focus on your perceptions of the website in general.

12. What is your overall impression of the website? Why do you say that?

Probe: - positive, neutral, negative impressions

13. What do you think are the main strengths of this website? That is, what is particularly well done, if anything?

14. And what aspects of the website, if any, do you think are not very well done?

15. Overall, what do you think about the structure of the site...do you think it is well organized and easy to use? Was it easy to find the information or tools of interest to you? If not, why not?

Probe: - ability to find information sought

16. Are the various categories clear and intuitive? Did you find the type of information you expected to in the various categories? If not, why not?

Probe: - review labels that are not intuitive/ask for suggestions to improve

17. Are any categories or topics missing? If so, which ones?

18. Thinking about the website as a whole, what do you think about the overall look and feel of the site? Does it motivate or encourage you to use the site? Does the visual presentation help or hinder you as you move through the site? Why do you say that?

19. Overall, how satisfied were you with the content of the website? Please explain.

Probe: - completeness/range of resources  
- up-to-date  
- relevance

20. Thinking specifically about any of the text or content that you read, was it clear and easy to understand? If not, why not?

Probe: - appropriate vocabulary  
- length of texts

21. Did you use any of the tools available on the website? If so, which tool(s)?

- Probe:
- 'Investor-readiness Self Assessment Test', 'Fast Track to Growth Capital' (Steps to Growth Capital)
  - 'Build Your Own Profile' (Performance Plus)
  - 'Business Self-Assessment Tool' (Managing for Business Success)

ASK IF USED TOOLS:

22. Was this tool useful? Did it meet your needs? How could this be improved?

23. All things considered, how useful or valuable was the [**Managing for Business Success/Performance Plus/Steps to Growth Capital** AS APPROPRIATE] site to you and/or your organization? Why do you say that?

24. Do you have any (other) effective suggestions to make the site more in meeting your needs?

25. Do you think you will return to the site in the future? Why/why not?

### **Impact of Website & Related Issues**

I'd now like to focus on the impact of your use of this website on your business (Small business clients)/ the business you serve or provide advice to (intermediaries).

26. How would you describe the overall impact this site has had on your business (Small businesses)/ the business that you serve (intermediaries)?

- Probe:
- positive/negative/no impact

27. How did you use the information you found on the site?

- Probe:
- informed business decisions
  - actions taken/ new directions pursued

28. Did the information on the site help you in your business and/or operational planning?

29. Was the information you found on the website enough to give you what you were looking for? Did you do anything else to get the complete information you needed?

- Probe:
- consult additional sources (call 1 800 number, visit another site)
  - added to information you already had

30. Did the website help you in any other ways? If so, what were they?

31. What do you think of the *idea* of a website like this one? Is this a valuable resource to have?
32. Should Industry Canada continue to invest in this product? Why/why not?

### **Conclusion**

33. Do you have any final comments or suggestions about anything we have discussed?

**Thank you for your participation and thoughtful feedback.**

## In-Depth Interviews: E-mail Confirmation & Instructions

**To:**  
**From:**  
**Subject:** Industry Canada Website Evaluation

Dear X,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important study undertaken on behalf of Industry Canada. As discussed, the interview is scheduled for **(date)** at **(time)** and will last 30-40 minutes.

In preparation for the interview, we are asking participants to take a little time to visit the [**Managing for Business Success/Performance Plus/Steps to Growth Capital** AS APPROPRIATE] website in order to refresh their memory. We are particularly interested in your thoughts about the site's organization/ease of use, and overall value to you or your organization. In reviewing the site, please explore it generally, but also look for information/features of interest or relevance to you and/or your organization.

The site can be accessed through the following link [PROVIDE LINK AS APPROPRIATE]:

MFBS: <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/mfbs-gprea.nsf/en/home>  
Steps to Growth Capital: <http://www.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/stgc-evcc.nsf/en/home>  
Performance Plus: <http://www.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/pp-pp.nsf/en/Home>

You will need to access the site during the interview as well.

Please be assured that all responses will be treated in confidence – no individuals or organizations will be identified in any way. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me by email at [nkowbel@phoenixspi.ca](mailto:nkowbel@phoenixspi.ca) or by phone at 613-260-1700, extension 221.

Finally, please confirm receipt of this email by sending us a brief message in reply.

Thank you again for agreeing to take part in this research. It is greatly appreciated.