

Marieke van der Donk (PricewaterhouseCoopers)



“Paying close attention to organic growth will remain an important factor”

“Adapting business models to the digital world”

Publishers of business information are achieving great success by marketing their content in digital form. The strong growth of not only these information conglomerates, but also subjects such as digital rights management, online payment systems and e-readers, will present business publishers with significant challenges, says PricewaterhouseCoopers media expert Marieke van der Donk.

“Business publishers have shown in recent years that they have been very good at adapting their business models to the digital world. A large scale player such as Wolters Kluwer has been able to develop itself in a short time from a traditional publisher into a business where half of their revenue is driven through the Internet - via the Kluwer.nl web portal for example - and that is unusually smart and agile. Especially by implementing systems for content management and Customer Relationship Management, the business publishers are succeeding in offering

product-market combinations that are optimally tailored to match what the professional wants.”

“The growth and development of the major business publishers is also derived from acquisitions of smaller, innovative companies, varying from software developers to consultancy and training businesses. That is evidence of some insight and daring, but at the same time it demands a major effort in order to integrate a multitude of activities into a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. It has rather often appeared to be a challenge to export concepts that have been acquired to the parent business that must coordinate them. Paying close attention to organic growth will remain an important factor for a successful future, in my opinion. Furthermore, publishers of business information will also do well in the current challenging economic period to take a close look at their portfolio and carefully decide in which market they want to create a distinct profile for themselves.”

“Digital rights management is a subject that is deservedly receiving a lot of attention. Business publishers understand that making content accessible online is vital in order to provide information efficiently to the client, but the example from the music industry - that is waging an unprecedented battle against illegal content dissemination - is giving

nightmares to many a business publisher. There is continuous work going on regarding security measures that will not affect content accessibility for paying customers. The same - perhaps apparent - paradox between convenience and security is applicable to the development of online payment systems, so that simple transactions can be conducted easily but securely.”

“The development of e-readers is also vital, especially for business publishers. Many professionals will be glad to exchange their briefcase full of yet unread reports for a portable device, as soon as they can obtain one which allows them to read and search through all that information as easily as they can with the paper variant. The technology of e-readers is sure to improve greatly. Business publishers will do well to follow these developments closely and form partnerships with companies that are developing these devices at an early stage. A choice whether the standard will be open for access or not will be of strategic importance to the manufacturers of the devices and the publishers together.”