
Preface

This book is most timely. It arrives at a time when globalisation and new technologies present major opportunities and challenges to the role of the independent small and medium sized business in economies.

Traditionally, in much of the research literature the SME is presented, rather misleadingly, as a form of business organisation which, by its very nature, is essentially parochial in outlook. The sheer scale of the SME sector and its wide diversity of activity, motivational climates, and differentiation in focus and 'ways of organising', have tended to obscure its role in building relationships across national and international boundaries. Much of the previous research has concentrated narrowly upon export performance. However, as this book demonstrates, the concept of internationalization and the facilitation of transactions across a wide range of service and relationship-building activities is a more appropriate template.

In this respect the opportunities provided by the rapidly changing world of information and communication technology and the opening-up of markets world wide, with a corresponding reduction and change in the nature of transactions costs presents a considerable challenge. A range of new management competencies are needed particularly in managing cross-cultural boundary relationships. The book's strength in dealing with many of the emerging issues is underpinned by a truly international range of contributors with a strong mix of practical as well as academic experience.

Allan Gibb
Professor Emeritus, Durham University UK