# business trends

## Staying Ahead Of The Game

(NAPSA)—If time is money, knowing the future may be priceless. Companies that identify business trends can help shape their future, rather than having the future shape them. For example, every six months one company releases the newest version of its Future Scan. The report is meant to help companies identify trends in their earliest stages. 2002's report includes:

• The Network Knows Where You Are. New devices are available that are automatically "aware" of a user's location. One cell phone company, for example, alerts users when a friend or family member is within about half a mile. The Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Center for Business Innovation (CBI) report suggests companies can use new location-aware devices to integrate employees, customers and logistics with the "back office."

• Indirect Competitors and Unexpected Allies. The CBI says the concept of open source—cooperative behavior of a group to create a product whose goal is not primarily profit—will revolutionize business, as it did software in the 1990s. The group cites the example of the music-sharing site Napster. The site's conflict with the recording industry demonstrates that networks can harness their collective powers to improve products, satisfy customers and court new ones.

• Disputed Boundaries of Intellectual Property. The ability to track and trade intellectual property enables more assets to be licensed and shared—and that can lead to higher profit margins. IBM, for example, licenses and shares its intellectual property. The philosophy helped the company turn a 1.7



**Identifying new business trends can help companies succeed in the future.**

billion dollar profit in 2001. Companies that share licensed intellectual property can find new markets for previously unused ideas and raise the profit margins of existing ideas.

• Security Beyond Prevention. The CBI says companies will focus less energy on building "impenetrable" borders and instead create an infrastructure that adapts to unforeseen threats. For example, researchers are working to develop firewalls that behave more as immune systems than barriers.

• Useful Data Becomes a Scarce Resource. The more information an organization accumulates, the harder it becomes to determine what data is valuable. Companies that need to solve specific problems will begin to rely on sensors that detect and analyze relevant information and ignore extraneous "noise." GE, for example, uses medical-sensing technology to monitor airplane engine performance in the air. They use sensors to "mine" accumulated information for potential problems.

For more information visit www.cbi.cgey.com/research/future-scan/index.html.