1) Define and describe the transaction broker business model and discuss the eight components of the business model for this type of B2C firm.
Answer: The transaction broker business model is most commonly found in the financial services, travel services, and job placement services industries. The eight elements of a business model are value proposition, revenue model, market opportunity, competitive environment, competitive advantage, market strategy, organizational development, and management team.

The primary value proposition for a transaction broker is the saving of time and money. These sites also often provide timely information and opinion. They offer the consumer the opportunity to increase their individual productivity by helping them to get things done faster and more cheaply.

The revenue model for these firms is based upon receiving commissions or transaction fees when a successful business deal is completed. Online stock trading firms receive either a flat fee for each transaction or a fee based on a sliding scale according to the size of the transaction. Job sites charge the employers a listing fee up front, rather than when the position is filled as traditional "head hunter" firms have done.

The market opportunity for transaction brokers in financial services appears to be large due to the rising interest in receiving financial planning advice and conducting stock transactions online. Demand is also increasing for job placement help that is national and even global in nature and for purchasing travel services quickly and easily online. However, there is some market resistance due to consumers' fear of loss of privacy and loss of control over their personal financial information.

The competitive environment for financial services has become fierce as new entrants, including the traditional brokerage firms that have now entered the online marketspace, have flooded the market. In order to compete effectively, online traders must convince consumers that they have superior security and privacy procedures. The number of job placement sites has also multiplied, and the largest sites such as Monster.com, which have the greatest number of job listings, are the most likely to survive. Consolidation in all of the transaction broker markets is presently occurring, making the market opportunity and competitive environment for new firms looking to enter the marketspace bleak.

The market strategies for such firms typically include expensive marketing campaigns to convince consumers to switch from their current provider or to choose their company over other more well-established competitors, also a daunting task in the present economic environment.

Achieving a competitive advantage is crucial to firms trying to enter these industries. Possible strategies are to lure well-known names in the industry away from their present positions to head a new endeavor, giving the firm instant credibility in the market. Experienced, knowledgeable, and well-known employees may be able to give a new firm a competitive edge.

New companies may have to start out recruiting a specialized highly skilled staff, with an organizational development plan that is far more advanced than the typical startup. A strong management team will attract investors and convince investors and consumers alike that a new firm has plenty of market-specific knowledge and the experience necessary to implement the business plan.

2) Define organizational development and describe its importance in relation to the implementation of a business plan and strategy.
Answer: Organizational development is a plan that describes how the company will organize the work that needs to be accomplished in the business plan or strategy. Typically, work is divided into functional departments, such as production, shipping, marketing, customer support, and finance. Jobs within these functional areas are defined, and then recruitment begins for specific job titles and responsibilities. Typically, in the beginning, generalists who can perform multiple tasks are hired. As the company grows, recruiting becomes more specialized. For instance, at the outset, a business may have one marketing manager. But after two or three years of steady growth, that one marketing position may be broken down into seven separate jobs done by seven individuals.

All firms—new ones in particular—need an organization to efficiently implement their business plans and strategies. Many e-commerce firms and many traditional firms that attempt an e-commerce strategy have failed because they lacked the organizational structures and supportive cultural values required to support new forms of commerce.

3) Define the term *industry structure* and discuss the ways the Internet and e-commerce have changed the five forces that characterize industry structure.
Answer: The term *industry structure* refers to the general business environment in an industry. It is defined by the nature of the players in the industry and their relative bargaining power. It is characterized by five forces: the rivalry among existing competitors, the threat of substitute products, the barriers to entry into the industry, the bargaining power of the suppliers, and the bargaining power of the buyers.

The competitive consequences of technological developments often change the market share positions among the players. New forms of distribution created by new market entrants can completely change the competitive forces in an industry. The Internet, the Web, and e-commerce have affected the structure of different industries in varying, yet often profound ways. In fact, the explosive emergence of the Internet as a major worldwide distribution channel for goods, services, and even for employment is powerfully changing economies, markets, and industry structures. The universal standards of the Internet have lowered the barrier to entry for many industries, bringing a flood of new entrants. Interfirm rivalry is one area where e-commerce technology has had an impact on most industries.

The major consequence is that every business must become globally competitive, even if it manufactures or sells only within a local or regional market. The Internet has changed the scope of competition from local and regional to national and global, pitting firms that had previously been in separate geographic markets against one another. Consumers of all types of goods have access to global price information, putting pressure on many producers and suppliers in some industries to decrease their prices. On the other hand, it has also presented new opportunities for firms to differentiate their products or services from their competitors, driving prices and profits for those firms up.

The overall positive or negative effect of e-commerce technologies on firm profitability depends on the industry involved. In some industries, particularly those involved with information distribution such as newspapers, magazines, software distributors, music and publishing companies, e-commerce has completely changed the ways of doing business. New online challengers have intensified competition and increased the availability of substitute products.

In general, the bargaining power of consumers has grown relative to the providers, driving prices down and challenging the overall profitability of these industries. In other industries, particularly manufacturing, e-commerce has not greatly changed relationships with consumers but relationships with suppliers have been impacted by the aggregation of markets such those created by B2B hubs. Increasingly, manufacturing firms in entire industries have banded together to aggregate purchases, create industrial digital exchanges or marketplaces, and outsource industrial processes in order to obtain better prices from suppliers.

4) Briefly explain three B2B Net marketplace business models besides the exchange business model.
Answer: Three other B2B Net marketplace business models are e-distributor, e-procurement, and industry consortium. E-distributors supply products and services directly to individual businesses. The e-distributor operates much like its B2C counterparts, placing its catalog online and giving purchasing agents access to its product lines in a searchable format. An e-distributor is simply one company seeking to serve many customers. For an e-distributor critical mass involves having enough products and services to attract a large enough customer base.

B2B e-procurement firms create and sell access to digital electronic marketplaces. One type of B2B e-procurement firm is a B2B service provider, which sells business services to other firms. Some common B2B business services are accounting, financial services, human resources management, and printing.

Industry consortia are typically industry-owned vertical marketplaces that serve a specific industry. Industry consortia are usually funded by industry members, who pay for the creation of the site and contribute the initial operating capital. Then they typically charge firms that participate in the consortia transaction and subscription fees.

5) Discuss the implications of each of the unique features of e-commerce technology for the overall business environment.
Answer: The ubiquity of e-commerce creates new marketing channels and expands the size of the overall market. It also creates new efficiencies in industry operations and lowers the costs to firms of sales operations. By reducing the cost of information, the Internet provides each of the key players in the value chain for an industry with new opportunities to maximize their positions

by lowering costs and/or raising prices. Manufacturers can develop direct relationships with their customers through their own Web sites and bypass the costs of distributors and retailers. Distributors can develop highly efficient inventory management systems to reduce their costs, and retailers can develop efficient customer relations management systems to strengthen their service to customers. Customers can use the Web to search for the best quality, prices, and delivery methods, thus reducing their transaction costs and the prices they pay for goods.

The global reach of e-commerce lowers barriers to entry and expands the market at the same time. This lowers the costs of both industry and firm operations through production and sales efficiencies. When the operational efficiency of an entire industry increases, it helps the industry to compete with alternative industries and lowers prices and adds value to consumers.

The universal standards of e-commerce lower barriers to entry while at the same time intensifying competition within an industry. Universal standards also reduce the costs for communications and computing, enabling firms to engage in broad-scope strategies. Communications efficiencies can also enable firms to outsource some primary and secondary activities to specialized, more efficient providers without affecting the consumer. The Internet can also be used to precisely coordinate the steps in the value chain for a firm, thus reducing overall costs.

The richness of e-commerce reduces the strength of powerful distribution channels. It also allows firms to reduce their reliance on traditional sales forces and can enhance post-sales support services.

The interactivity of e-commerce reduces the threat of substitutes through the enhanced use of customization. It also reduces industry and firm costs by enabling differentiation strategies. In their totality, the differentiation features of a product constitute the customer value proposition for a firm. The ability of the Web to personalize the shopping experience and to customize a product to the particular demands of each consumer are the most significant ways in which the interactivity of the Web can be used to differentiate products.

The use of Internet technology to personalize and customize a customer's experience or product reduces threats of substitutions, raises barriers to entry, reduces value chain costs by lessening reliance on sales forces, and enables personalized marketing strategies.

The information density on the Web weakens powerful sales channels ,thus shifting bargaining power to the consumer, while also lowering the costs of obtaining, processing, and distributing information about suppliers and consumers.

The use of social technologies shifts programming and editorial decisions to consumers; creates substitute entertainment products; and energizes a large group of new suppliers.

E-commerce firms can also leverage the ubiquitous nature, the global reach, the interactivity, and the information density of the Web to differentiate products and services. Firms can make it possible for consumers to purchase a product from home, work, or on the road, anywhere in the world. They can create Web-based experiences with unique interactive content and store and process product information, warranties, and helpful hints to differentiate their product and their firm from the competition.

6) Define value chain and explain the difference between a firm value chain, an industry value chain, and a value web.
Answer:  A value chain is the set of activities performed that transforms raw inputs into final products and services. A firm value chain is the set of activities a firm engages in to create final products from raw inputs. The key steps and support activities in a firm's value chain are inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, sales and marketing, and after sales service. With an industry value chain, the chain broadens to include six generic players: suppliers, manufacturers, transporters, distributors, retailers, and customers. A value web coordinates a firm's suppliers with its own production needs using an Internet-based supply chain management system. It is a networked transbusiness system that coordinates the value chains of several firms.