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Altri autori (Persone)	AdamAlison HowcroftDebra RichardsonHelen
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Sommario/riassunto	The last few decades have shown a remarkable reappraisal of the small business sector. Since the 1970's, the gloomy orthodoxy notwithstanding, a large number of people have set up shop and managed to survive in an increasingly global economy. Their role in the economy has been publicly acknowledged by now, as has been amply demonstrated by the drastic liberalization of their regulatory environment.