

E-Business Predictions 2016

By Deborah M. Collier

Despite the challenging global economic and political climate in 2015, E-Business has continued to grow exponentially in terms of both online trading and innovative technologies supporting growth, efficiency, cost reduction and human engagement.

Deborah Collier, President at The Certificate in Online Business, investigates and delivers her predictions for digital business in 2016



2016 will be a very exciting year for E-Business with new technological opportunities and challenges leading change. Let's explore these in my E-Business predictions for 2016 and consider how they might affect you:

1) V-Commerce (Virtual Reality Shopping) Arrives

I have been teaching about virtual reality as a tool for engaging customers during their shopping experience since 2007, but up until now it has been an industry considered idea waiting for technology to catch up. Finally the technology is here. V-commerce is becoming a true reality, and will be led by the fashion industry. Last year, the venture capital arm of ASOS Plc invested in VR technology company Trillenium, which will help launch a shopping experience using virtual reality for ASOS.com customers.

Virtual reality which is an immersive technology could potentially enable customers to hold and interact with a product or see how a product fits in the context of their home. One of the biggest challenges has always been with the devices that enable customers to make use of this emerging

technology. Oculus Rift is an example of virtual reality head-mounted display which is launching to the general public in Q1 2016. The biggest challenge for retailers is to reach a high volume audience. The device price tag of \$599, and it's predominantly investment willing gaming users, means we may have to wait longer until device prices come down and reach a wider audience.



Above: Virtual reality experience simulation from Trillenium with headset user image courtesy of Oculus Rift.

In the meantime, augmented reality, which is an established alternative technology to VR, enables individuals to rotate and interact with products online. This will remain the media of choice for the majority of retailers until costs for both devices and virtual reality technology reduce.

2) E-Business Strategy for Mobile

In April 2015 Google adapted it's algorithms to prioritize websites optimized for smartphones. From a business perspective this has had a profound impact on sales, due to losing the race in search engine ranking for products and services. In addition, the increase in individuals using and purchasing via smartphones and mobile devices is growing at an exponential rate. Online sales via mobile devices in China, for example, is a multi-billion dollar industry. Alibaba's online payment system AliPay has over 400 million users – the majority of whom are using the system from mobile devices. If the industry follows the current growth rates in the US, I predict that by the end of 2017 a quarter of all US online sales will be made via a mobile device. In the UK retail giant John Lewis has seen a 31% increase in sales from mobile devices in 2015.

Organizations with large established web sites with and without third-party solutions for content, will face the biggest challenges in 2016. Provider technologies driving organizational web sites, need to catch up with mobile and make their systems responsive to mobile phone screens, as well as other devices. The project of translating both the platforms and the content is a mammoth task, when a business has hundreds of thousands of pages of unique content, a multitude of applications and providers. E-Business strategy must respond to both business opportunity and technological change in 2016.

3) Real-time Product and Service Preparation & Tracking

Online retailers have been offering shipment tracking for their customers for a number of years. Other businesses like Dominos Pizza have created a truly exceptional and engaging experience allowing their customers to watch the process of their Pizza order, from product preparation, entering and leaving the oven to packing and delivery to your home address. A customer I interviewed explained that by monitoring the process of his order he was able to find out if he had time to run into the shower before his Pizza arrived. At Learnebusiness.com the online book shop's shipping tracking helps customers plan for accepting the parcel when it arrives and schedule time ahead to start their self-study course training. In 2016, we'll see businesses developing more and more ways to engage their audiences through the product packing or service preparation and delivery process in a personalized way.

2) Online Marketing Gets Cleverer

According to a forecast by PageFair and Adobe, \$41.4 billion in revenue will be lost through ad-blocking in 2016, compared to an estimated \$21.8 billion in 2015. While the biggest revenue impact is to advertising platforms, the rate of growth will no doubt have an impact on advertisers looking for optimum ways to generate revenue from advertising spend. In 2016, marketers will look for alternative ways to engage their audience using both subtle and overt advertising through channels such as gaming, social media and content-led marketing.

5) Progress through Collaboration

Any good E-Business leader will tell you that to be successful at online business you need to adopt a culture of collaboration among your teams and suppliers - but what about the industry as a whole? I predict that organizations will look more and more to learn from competitors and collaborate more closely with indirect competitors in 2016 and beyond. For example, a manufacturer selling gaming products will have the same or similar audience as a digital storage provider. Organizational transference of knowledge has always taken place, but social media and focus on more specialist online communities such as Learnebusiness.com, can facilitate that knowledge-sharing and collaboration at a greater rate. This is particularly useful in difficult economic times, where generating sales is challenging and when collaboration can help the greater good.

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Deborah is the founder of the Certificate in Online Business™ (COB) series of globally-recognised industry qualifications, which were established in 2008. She developed the reputation of the programs among well-known brands gaining testimonials from Directors and managers at government organisations and leading companies such as Mars, Schneider Electric, House of Fraser and Procter & Gamble. Deborah leads the strategic direction of the training programs and company. In addition, she oversees marketing, partnerships and licensing.



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