

E-Business Predictions 2018

By Deborah M. Collier

Historic changes in legal frameworks and trade agreements, alongside immense opportunities in Asia, will shape the landscape for digital business and business strategy in 2018.

Deborah Collier, President at The Certificate in Online Business, investigates and delivers her predictions and advice for digital business in 2018.



2018 is the year of change for e-business, during which organisations must prepare carefully for risk, uncertainty and business growth opportunities. Let's explore these challenges and opportunities in my E-Business predictions for 2018 and consider how they might affect you:

1) E-Risk Takes Centre-Stage

Europe's enhanced data protection law 'General Data Protection Regulation' (GDPR) comes into force on 25th May 2018. This legislation, which also applies to organisations outside the EU offering goods or services to individuals in the EU, will have a global and far reaching impact. E-Business Law which is more advanced in some countries and near non-existent in others, will mean both a larger responsibility for organisations globally, but also a heightened risk. Existing key and enhanced features of European data protection will need to be addressed immediately, alongside newer legislation on areas such as child data protection and the use of cookies. The use of cookies, for example, will have a huge impact on both advertising, but also on on-site use and promotion. Why? Because any cookie that uniquely identifies a device or the person using that device, or is capable of identifying an individual or treating them as unique without explicitly identifying them, is counted as the processing of personal data. The battle for advertising platforms, advertisers, web site managers and marketers is ensuring that those cookies are accepted by the user immediately. E-Risk management has become more complex, and this is likely to impact on advertising strategy for advertisers and revenue modelling for

advertising solution providers. Those who did not prepare in 2017, will need to move quickly in time for the May deadline, as well as consider other business modelling and marketing strategies.

2) The India Impact

According to Leo Abruzzese of *'The Economist Intelligence Unit'*, economic growth for India will be 8% in 2018, greater than any other nation. The huge growth opportunities in India, low labour costs and skilled developer workforce, will support the digital business revolution in India. In particular, advertising spend alongside new business opportunities will catapult both the industry and nation through 2018 and beyond. Businesses outside India wanting to participate in and benefit from *'Boom India'*, as I call it, should focus their attention on services and solutions they can offer to the country which it does not already have.

3) E-Commerce Strategy Rethink for Great Britain



Turbulent times lie ahead for UK businesses uncertain about cross-border trade agreements to the European Union. According to our sources, 62.71% of cross-border e-commerce trade from the UK during the 2 years to July 2017 was to the EU. This staggering percentage of online sales from both UK e-commerce and multi-channel businesses, could mean a catastrophic impact on businesses who do not prepare by the autumn, for both a *'Brexit No-Trade Deal'*, which defaults to World Trade Costs. The issue for exporters is customs levied on products, (and services), exported to the EU from the UK. Will customers bear the burden or the seller?

If a retailer, for example, reduces its costs to cover the customs tax payable by the consumer, then this considerably impacts profit and revenue. In addition, businesses must consider that customers do not want to worry about an additional cost on receipt of goods, or the inconvenience of being available, either on delivery (or by other method), to pay the customs duty. In reality, the customs duty levied on import of goods from the UK, would likely mean customers turning to alternative vendors within the EU or countries where imports do not incur customs duty. If a deal is reached, UK businesses still need to be flexible and agile to respond quickly to whatever levies and outcomes are applied. A versatile or solid e-commerce business strategy needs to be defined and tailored, which might include creation of subsidiaries, different production and shipment locations, and EU web site(s) and online stores, for example. It might include focus of selling outside the EU. The planning, as well as implementation for such endeavours, is immense and requires significant risk management, as well as other strategic, financial and implementation planning.

4) Subscription Services Join Forces

Subscription of media content such as film, TV and music is on the rise, and led by organisations such as Netflix, Amazon and Shopify. However, with the volume of media providers with desirable and monetisable content, wishing to sell subscriptions online, this will suddenly become complex and challenging for the consumer, not only in terms of having multiple accounts, but also financially. Competition will grow and providers will be fighting for

its share of the market. In 2018, and beyond, there will be an influx of content subscription services and providers should consider strategic partnerships with other content providers, to provide joint subscription fees with content from multiple providers, ideally with both single-sign-up and single sign-on for customers.

5) Artificial Intelligence Marketing Evolution

Artificial intelligence has already started to take a major place in digital marketing, through what is known as programmatic marketing (the delivery of marketing content, based on what is known about a web site visitor, making real-time decisions). In online chat, chat bots are making decisions about responses, based on a customer's questions. Combined with the context of where a visitor has come from, where they have visited the site, where they are now, previous visits and other known information, AI can give intelligent responses in a contextual way, rather than simple across-the-board responses. AI for digital marketing, content delivery, web merchandising and sales will not only refine and evolve in 2018, but will reach a much wider audience of retail and other business customers, wanting to maximize their sales.

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Deborah is the founder of the Certificate in Online Business™ (COB) series of globally-recognized 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 organizations and leading companies such as Mars, Schneider Electric, House of Fraser and Procter & Gamble. She leads the strategic direction of the training programs and company, and oversees marketing, partnerships and licensing. She also serves on boards as a Non-Executive Director.



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