

E-Business Predictions 2012

By Deborah Collier



The year 2011 has been another challenging year economically for Western Europe and North America. However it has offered a year of opportunity and growth for countries such as Brazil, China and Russia, as well as some of the more politically stable territories in the Middle East. There is one theme however reigning globally – that mobile and the web, are becoming the prevailing channel for retail sales and other business transactions.

Deborah Collier Chief Strategist and Managing Director at Echo E-Business investigates and delivers her top 5 predictions for digital business in 2012

With organisational strategies focused on cost reduction, maximising sales and increasing efficiency, the forthcoming year is all about the speedy transaction and customer experience. Lets take a look at my E-Business predictions for 2012 and consider how they might affect you:

1) **High Volume Sales, Supply Chain and Customer Service at Heart of Retail Strategy**

In the face of economic turmoil, business competition heightens in Europe and the United States. The majority of consumers spend less on luxury and higher priced goods. Those with the same spending budget seek more products, services and added value for their money, and those with lower budgets focus on essential item purchases. The growing need for retailers to focus on fast moving consumer goods and other low priced item choices and services, may indicate more product sales and therefore a heavier focus on fast and efficient supply chain management. Whether the sale is via web, mobile, in-store or mail order, the ordering process will need to be fast.

With online sales increasing year on year, continued focus on online customer engagement is key. The most profitable of retailers will find the right balance between offering customer discounts, and focusing on branding and customer experience.

2) **Mobile Payments Evolution**

Mobile phone sales and transactions are increasing, particularly in the UK where according to a recent industry report, nearly a third of mobile phone users have purchased via their mobile phone this year. Mobile phone users are looking for a faster, easier and more secure transaction than what a web site store can offer. They want to buy without the need to enter payment and personal details. With this in mind businesses will be focusing more and more on the mobile channel. Payment solution providers and mobile phone operators will be looking for the best ways to offer one click secure payment options. Watch out for some great facilities in 2012.



3) The Leaner Government

We hear that European governmental austerity measures have only just begun. The impact has already hit public sector workers and government suppliers both financially and socially. Both the government and their staff are looking for increased efficiency and reduced time wastage on everyday tasks. Some of the biggest challenges governments face are bureaucracy and paperwork, out of date and disconnected systems and inefficient processes. E-Business strategy falls high on the agenda of governments wishing to reduce costs, maintain a happier workforce and retain staff by ensuring a better work life balance. E-Business will enable leaner government units to operate effectively, with leaner and but more powerful systems and processes in place.

4) Social Design



Social design in e-business is about designing online applications and web sites to allow collaboration, tagging, discussion and other social interaction. There are still a number of sectors such as finance, government and the health and medical sectors, which are not fully enabling social and collaborative functionality within their online or mobile offering. However, with any social design and social media strategy, the risks and rewards need to be weighed up, and each strategy, if any, will depend on the nature of each business or organisation.

One thing is clear however, whether social design is implemented for brand building, gathering insights and feedback from customers, encouraging repeat business, generating advocacy or supporting increased search engine ranking, social design will continue to be at the forefront of e-business strategy in 2012.

5) The Success of Multi-Channel is Cross-Channel

Over the last few year's marketers, retailers and publications have been discussing multi-channel, but many have failed to focus on something even better – Cross-Channel. In 2012 retailers looking at increasing efficiency, increasing sales and enhancing customer experience will be working to the following targets:

- A single integrated cross-channel ordering system
- A single customer profile for in-store, mail order, phone, mobile and internet orders
- A streamlined approach to product fulfilment through any channel
- Collaboration amongst staff working in all channels

You can read more about this subject in my 2008 article 'Retail Strategy for Grown-ups – Cross-Channel Selling'

http://www.learnebusiness.com/retail_strategy_for_grownups.html

I hope my predictions for 2012 have been insightful and interesting to you! If you would like any help with your online strategy, e-commerce or team training, call us today on:

UK: 0845 838 4869
838 4869

North America: (+1) 91 176753479

International: +44 845

Or contact us via www.echoebusiness.com and www.learnebusiness.com

Deborah Collier Managing Director and Chief Strategist

Deborah is the founder of Echo E-Business, a consultancy specialising in e-business strategy, marketing and e-commerce.

She has worked with a number of blue-chip organisations, as well as SME's and is regularly consulted by the press. A public speaker, author and trainer, Deborah's creative and strategic insights will help you increase your profits using the Internet.

Follow Deborah on Twitter: www.twitter.com/echoebusiness

Learn from Deborah: www.learnebusiness.com

