

Most Small Businesses Don't Have an App – Here's Why That's a Big Mistake



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In today's fast-paced digital landscape, it can be difficult for small businesses to compete with large retailers as new technologies emerge and consumer expectations shift. Big-box brands have larger budgets, resources and a robust ecommerce strategy that SMBs lack; however, smaller retailers can embrace ecommerce and invest in digital capabilities to stay agile in today's retail environment.

Developing and launching an ecommerce app can be a beneficial business decision to stay relevant and provide a new stream of revenues for SMBs. Having a strategic, clear ecommerce business plan and utilizing the right tools can help an app

launch be successful, profitable and amplify brand recognition in the marketplace.

Challenges for SMBs

First, we must recognize that while there are immense amounts of opportunities for small businesses when it comes to emerging technologies, they face many unique challenges stemming from today's economic, political and digital-focused environment.

SMBs are built on small, fierce teams with an entrepreneurial mindset; however, many lack the digital skills and talent needed to grow their business. Most do not have a team of engineers or software developers to assist them in creating an ecommerce platform. Further, SMBs must be open to changing their business model while embracing technology, rather than fearing it. Change can be difficult for many owners who have been operating their businesses for decades; however, it is necessary to stay relevant and competitive in the industry.

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Opportunity with ecommerce apps

For SMB retailers, there is an opportunity to expand their business online to create an extension of their shop to the digital world through an ecommerce website or app. In 2024, 58% of small businesses do not have a mobile app, with 28% planning to develop one in the future. There is significant opportunity here for small business retailers to reach their audience in a new, simplified way and to capitalize on the fact that the majority of consumers own and consistently have a smartphone in hand.

A dedicated app for a business can strengthen a brand's voice, build brand recognition, grow loyalty amongst customers and

keep a small business competitive. This may sound like an expensive undertaking for SMBs; however, by choosing an ecommerce app that you own rather than an online marketplace, you won't run into the added fees that some marketplaces charge per month or per sale.

Creating an ecommerce business plan

You wouldn't head on a summer vacation without booking your flight and hotel, doing a bit of research on your destination and packing up your suitcase, right? The same can be said for creating an ecommerce business plan. Doing some background research, laying out what you need and identifying objectives and operational details can be helpful for not only SMB owners, but also for investors or other team members who can assist in launching an ecommerce business off the ground. A well-thought-out plan provides clear direction and goals, can identify potential risks, helps to allocate resources and can attract investors for external support.

How to launch an ecommerce app

Once an ecommerce business plan is fleshed out and complete, it is now the exciting point of building an ecommerce store. First, find a team with the skills and experience needed to bring an idea to life. This team will help with the design process, project management, quality assurance and to do the heavy lifting in the developmental phase.

Next, identify what platform the ecommerce business site will live on whether it's an app or website. Think about the products or services you're selling and consider what target customers may prefer. That being said, many consumers today prefer shopping on an app due to its intuitive nature and ease of use, and nearly 74% of retailers agree that mobile apps are driving profitability.

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Ecommerce apps

If an SMB is going the app route, it may be daunting to think about the development process, timing and budgeting. Thankfully, there are many no-code software development tools that utilize AI so that business owners with little or no coding experience can build their own retail apps. This tool can be a guide in the development process, managing the process from start to finish. Custom features can be added like secure payment processing, product recommendations, customer reviews, loyalty program integration and more. Plus, SMBs will have access to customer data to view their habits and preferences, allowing you to tailor their app experience and ultimately drive sales.

Overall, SMB retailers must stay agile in today's market and invest their time and resources into growing their ecommerce business. They face many unique challenges and uncertainties; however, by having a set plan that drives back to their vision, they can be set up for success to expand and grow their business's footprint online. With a mobile ecommerce platform, SMBs can generate revenue, stay competitive and understand their customers in a new way.

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