

E-Business Predictions 2014

By Deborah M. Collier



2014 is a year filled with promise in terms of the economy, business and online initiatives. Further to a lengthy recession, the economic recovery in the US and Western Europe enables enterprises to invest in perfecting organisational e-business. Organisations in emerging economies are catching up with the West to achieve secure, automated and paperless transactions. Opportunities in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America are immense in terms of both innovation and localisation of e-business practices and models.

Deborah Collier, President at The Certificate in Online Business, investigates and delivers her top 5 predictions for digital business in 2014

With strategies focused on achieving excellence and the competitive edge, organisations are constantly looking at tactics to maximise efficiency, agility, automation and return-on-investment. Lets take a look at my E-Business predictions for 2014 and consider how they might affect you:

1) **West invests in Ultimate E-Business**

In 2013 successful online retailers in the West focused their attention on generating brand loyalty, as well as exporting abroad. With a low salary to cost-of-living ratio this year, in countries such a Britain, online retailers will continue with this trend. The recession has had the positive effect of pushing businesses to acquire and nurture business from alternative markets, widening their audience and spreading their risk. Governments and other institutions having focused on austerity, now look to e-business to maximise efficiency and help meet targets. The UK's Ministry of Defense recruitment program is one such example. According to news reports, they are set to invest significantly in their online recruitment drive and careers web site.

The West being generally around 10 - 15 years ahead of emerging markets in terms of online business implementation and management experience, are in an ideal position to invest in perfecting their online presence, digital marketing, e-commerce and other e-business transactions. It's all about fine-tuning this year!

2) **Big Data Brain**

'Big Data' which is a collective term describing the mammoth volume of digital data generated, managed and analysed, has been a hot topic in 2013, and will continue this year. In 2014, the West will need to focus on tools that not only analyse the data they hold about consumers,

subscribers, transactions and social media discussion, but that enable dynamic and/or automated intelligent response.

3) All Eyes on Brazil

According to the *'Sustainable Brazil, Social and Economic Impacts of the 2014 World Cup'* produced by Ernst & Young, the FIFA World Cup will generate R\$112.79 billion (Around US\$48.12 billion).

The report indicates a significant growth in the domestic consumer market, as well a rise in services such as business services, travel and tourism, and information services. It's a 'Win-Win' situation for the government, businesses and consumers.



In a country where English is not widely spoken, retailers, government organisation's and travel and tourism providers will need to invest in online services in English, as well as Latin languages, to ensure they maximize their reach to a wider audience outside Spanish, Portuguese and Italian speaking countries.

It will be interesting to watch what happens with regards to digital marketing, e-commerce and the wider arena of e-business in Brazil and Latin America in 2014, towards the Olympics and beyond.

4) Africa Potential

According The Economist's South Africa correspondent John O'Sullivan, Africa's low rate of inflation will support its position as a destination for investment. Nigeria, set to establish itself as Africa's biggest economic power will be particularly attractive. Electronic business, is a strong area of interest in sub-Saharan Africa, both for entrepreneurs and investors, not only for retail, but for the services and manufacturing industries

There are a number of challenges for e-commerce such as online security, fraud and secure delivery. Entrepreneurs and established businesses wanting to invest in e-commerce, will need to invest in secure payments, as well as navigate cash-on-delivery transactions. Mobile and voucher payments will greatly aid the potential of e-commerce in some of the more challenged countries in Africa. Government and part-government organisations aspiring to support growth, and decrease poverty will continue to offer and develop services in this area. Telecom companies will be a major player in enabling the e-commerce industry in the continent as a whole.

5) Social Advertising Matures

In 2014 social and business networks will continue to develop innovative ways for businesses to generate traffic and sales through advertising. Targeted ads will continue to have their

place, but the greatest value will come from features such as Facebook's 'Boost Post' and LinkedIn's 'Sponsor Update', which enable publishers to push their value-add content (as well as ad related posts), directly into the social updates and feeds of a wider targeted audience. We will see online networks expanding their targeting reach to international audiences.

Whether you are a government, service provider, retailer or startup entrepreneur, the key to success in 2014 and beyond is to plan, implement and continue to perfect your online presence. Remain agile, and whatever you implement ensure it is future-proof.

Deborah M. Collier

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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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