

E-Business Predictions 2017

By Deborah M. Collier

While the historic political events of 2016 will create uncertainty for 2017, E-Business opportunities will continue to thrive despite the challenges.

Deborah Collier, President at The Certificate in Online Business, investigates and delivers her predictions for digital business in 2017.



2017 will be a dynamic year for E-Business fuelled by organisations responding to political change, currency volatility, regulatory uncertainty and technological opportunity. Let's explore these challenges and opportunities in my E-Business predictions for 2017 and consider how they might affect you:

1) **V-Commerce (Virtual Reality Shopping) Becomes Accessible**

In my [e-business predictions 2016](#), I discussed the arrival of **V-Commerce** (virtual reality shopping experiences using a headset and mobile phone, connecting to an online store). At that time the biggest obstacle for retailers was the high price tag of VR headsets. Gamers or those with a budget and interest in the other benefits associated with VR headsets and associated VR apps, were those with access to the devices, and not the everyday consumer.

In mid-late 2016, a number of manufacturers launched cardboard and other lower cost VR headsets priced from as little as a few dollars. There has been a marked increase in advertising of VR headsets pre-Christmas, and the joys of virtual reality and virtual reality apps are spreading through word-of-mouth. Advertisers, supported by retailers and other industries should invest in educating customers about what VR is, how easy, accessible and enjoyable the experience is.

In 2017, V-Commerce strategy will be a hot topic for retailers seeking the competitive edge. They will not only investigate the technologies to produce a virtual reality shopping experience for their customers, but also the viability, costs and benefits of V-Commerce for carefully selected products in

the short-term, and a wider range in the long-term. Online marketplaces such as EBay and Alibaba are already leading the way with v-commerce.



Above: Cardboard Headset from Google

2) Online Businesses Focus on Child Protection

Social networks and online media platforms are not doing enough to protect children against bullying, grooming and crime. In 2017, this will form an important part of online strategy, and a key element of corporate and social responsibility.

In the ['Growing Up in Digital'](#) report from the Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longford, she recommended that children learn about their rights and responsibilities online, that social media companies rewrite their terms and conditions so they are child, as well as user, friendly, and that a government body is appointed to represent and support children with the removal of unwanted content about them.

Just as accessibility is a critical ingredient of online content strategy, the monitoring and responsible action on unacceptable user-generated content is absolutely critical to the reputation of any organization. For organizations who have not implemented a policy for the appropriate handling of user-generated content, whether this be in relation to child protection or other sensitive areas such as terrorism, this should be a priority in 2017.

3) 4G Delivers Content to a Wider Audience in Asia Pacific

While South Korea's SK Telecom in partnership with Nokia is planning to launch a trial of 5G which will enable the download of a movie in just a few seconds, India and China are broadening access to 4G. Around 90% of Indians have access to 4G, according to reports, and China Mobile is aiming to have over 4 billion 4G subscribers. In India, in particular where broadband speeds are abysmal, this will open up

great opportunities for online business, particularly in terms of online content delivery. The challenge, of course, is to ensure that data downloads and 4G mobile packages are affordable to the consumer. This the success of e-business in 2017, will require close liaison and strategic negotiation between the telecoms giants, key online media players and government.

4) Bitcoin Blooming

On 4th January 2017 [Bitcoin](#) the cryptographic digital currency used to purchase online, surpassed the price of gold. Individuals and businesses have rightly been skeptical about the ill-regulated and volatile currency, however acceptance from the likes of Microsoft, Dell and CEX, and prominent vendors of SME e-commerce storefront solutions, such as instant online solution Shopify, are paving the future of Bitcoin as a credible online payment method. The predominant demographic of 35-45 year old users, in Estonia, USA, Denmark, Sweden, South Korea, Netherlands, UK, Finland and Australia, are also making purchases through sites such as Amazon, Nike, Walmart and Target with gift cards purchased with Bitcoin. We can expect to see an upwards trend in Bitcoin adoption and acceptance of the currency in 2017 and beyond.



5) Travel and Tourism - Opportunity and Turbulence

2017 will be a year of both opportunity and challenge for the travel industry, who will need to assess and prepare an agile response to the outcomes of Brexit and the Trump presidency in the years to come. According to The Economist, spending on tourism will increase by 4% in 2017, driven by competitive airfare pricing, as result of lower costs airfares particularly in Asia. There will also be new journeys and travel opportunities increasing revenue potential. Airlines have traditionally been clever with not only dynamic price offers online, but also advertising. In the near-term advertisers will look for new and innovative ways to beat their competitors - by delivering the right price, powerful branding, innovative new online advertising and marketing ideas. Rewards, community and customer loyalty will be integral to gaining the competitive edge in 2017 and the years to come.

Deborah M. Collier

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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. Deborah leads the strategic direction of the training programs and company. In addition, she oversees marketing, partnerships and licensing.



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