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Small businesses that operate in highly local communities may not think e-commerce can help their business, but there are several good reasons why they should embrace it.

Projections show that e-commerce sales account for \$1 of every \$10 spent on discretionary purchases in the United States. While big retailers account for about 67 percent of that money, local small businesses could slowly be creeping in.

Small businesses that operate in a community may not be as local as they think. That doesn't mean that there are people using your business from out of town that you don't know about – it means that there could be people who want to use your business that you don't know about. By going online, you never know who you'll impact.

Using e-commerce isn't just about advertising and putting your business online. It can also improve the experience for your existing customers. A local hair salon may start to let its customers schedule appointments online. A running coach might open a website and let people buy gift certificates for services. It's a convenience that lets your customers have the option to buy services from anywhere in the world.

Many small business owners are already using some form of e-commerce. Those owners own a smartphone that they use to track order shipments. They use those smartphones for their convenience – why not open the same convenience to your customers?

The biggest hope of e-commerce is to attract new customers, but by serving existing customers with a better experience, you can still gain new customers. If you're hyper-local, word of mouth around town is great advertising.

What are some easy ways to utilize e-commerce for your small business? There's many different channels to take advantage of, but don't just settle on one. You can start a Facebook or Twitter page. Maybe you want to create a dedicated webpage. Customers are everywhere and want multiple options, so it's important to take advantage of all of those mediums. Facebook and Twitter are great channels, but what about your older customers who are just using the internet for email and web surfing. An email campaign or dedicated webpage could also help reach them.

If small businesses are feeling the threat of major big box stores, having an online presence is critical and the return on investment could be huge. In order to compete against the big box stores online, it's important to keep it simple.

Don't publish your entire inventory in an online store, just focus on your top-selling items. Fill your webpage with SEO-rich content related to those products and drive potential customers to your sight. If a potential customer sees a product at a local store compared to a big box retailer – and the price is near the same – the local business should have the leg-up on the sale.

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Small business owners wear many different hats and typically head the one-man marketing team, but adapting an e-commerce strategy can help push that a [small business](#) to its next level. Whether its social media, a dedicated website or email campaign, e-commerce, even the most local-dedicated small business can benefit greatly.

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