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Academic Scholarship

The Coronavirus Pandemic has become a time of heartbreak and drastic changes within many communities worldwide. Many small and local businesses are facing challenges as they are making adjustments to their operations, considering the strengths and shortcomings of an online or remote platform. As small businesses transition to remote platforms there are many aspects to consider.

An online business can be an immense convenience to customers. Online businesses are available to customers 24/7 from the comfort of their home, without having to worry about store hours (What Are the Advantages of Doing Business Online?). This indicates an increase in sales for many businesses as customers are not limited to certain “store hours” to shop. Although with any online platform there are many security risks to consider. Online businesses are at great risk for scams, their websites being breached, and damaging items during delivery (What Are the Advantages of Doing Business Online?). These security risks should not be taken lightly, especially to struggling businesses. If a customer has a negative experience with a business it will ultimately weaken the customer and business loyalty and relationship.

Safety is a number one priority for businesses, employees, and customers which is a reason many are moving online. As of December 17th, 10,222 individuals contracted Coronavirus in Benton County alone (Benton-Franklin Case Count). Businesses conducting online services would significantly reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for owners and

customers. However, there are aspects that online businesses fail to maintain. The article, "What Are the Advantages of Doing Business Online?" explains, "...a physical presence staff members can interact with customers face to face." This in-person interaction allows employees to create a helpful environment for their businesses. This positive experience will encourage customers to shop at the local business, this interaction can not be found online.

Several technical challenges exist for businesses converting to remote platforms. One of the biggest technical challenges can be when a business, "[loses] time and money if, for some reason, your website goes down" (Wakeling). An online business stands prey to "website crashes" or other technical complications that can be detrimental to profits and result in customer dissatisfaction.

General Manager Michael J. Bradshaw states one of Benton REA's missions is, "to be a catalyst for good." To help the community Benton REA can create a page on its News and Features tab that includes resources to assist local businesses in their transition to an online platform. Benton REA can also feature small and local businesses on their Managers Monthly Newsletter and other advertising outlets to help businesses struggling with sales. This co-operational business can also provide portable hotspots and internet services to families who are struggling with inconsistent internet as students attend school online during these unprecedented times. Transferring to an online platform can be difficult for business as there are many elements to consider. Nonetheless, Benton REA has the potential to create a lasting impact in the community and help small businesses recover in the midst of COVID-19.

Works Cited

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