

BUSINESS EXTRA

www.firstbankak.com • Winter 2013-14

Ready to take your business online? Consider costs first

Online retail sales continue to grow, spurred on at least in part by consumers' rapid adoption of smartphones and tablets. The sector was expected to reach \$262 billion in 2013, and forecast to increase with a 10 percent compound annual growth rate through 2017, according to Forrester Research.* E-commerce could be a brilliant way to grow your retail business.

MAKE A PLAN

Before you rush to put a shopping cart on your website, it's wise to consider how your costs might increase, then create a budget to help your business grow strategically, without drying up cash flow.

Inventory — Will your current space be able to handle increased inventory? You may need more warehouse space or the services of a fulfillment house. Will you need a new inventory tracking system?

Shipping — Which carrier(s) will you use, and at what cost? Will the volume be high enough to allow you to negotiate bulk shipping discounts? Also consider costs for shipping materials and their storage.

Taxes — There has been much debate about proposals to require online retailers to collect sales taxes in



states where they have no physical presence. The federal government is still considering the issue, but in the meantime, some states have adopted legislation to require sellers to collect the tax.

Customer service — Customers may have different needs and expectations when shopping online rather than in person. They may want more detailed information about products than they can glean from your website (be sure to use product photos prominently). And they likely expect a prompt response when they send an email with an inquiry or complaint.

Photography — High-quality photos and videos (if appropriate) of your products are key when customers are unable to see or feel the product

directly. As you add to or update inventory, you'll need to update the photos, as well.

Marketing — You may need new online marketing channels to promote your online business, such as social media, blogging, paid and/or organic search engine optimization (SEO) and email marketing.

PARTNER WITH US

Online shopping cart gateway services from First Bank make accepting card payments online easy. With our equipment and supplies, you can be up and running in a flash, and we offer exceptional service and support. Contact our merchant card services department at **888-220-4446** to learn more.

* Source: Forrester Research news release, March 13, 2013, www.forrester.com.

5 smart financial resolutions

“Manage finances wisely” is a popular New Year’s resolution. But it can be tough to stick to a goal this vague. Here are some *specific* ways to help you be money-smart in 2014.

1. Maintain an emergency fund. Many financial experts recommend having three to six months’ worth of living expenses in a liquid savings account. Set up automatic transfer to your First Bank savings account to help make saving easy, as well as easy to access.

2. Save for retirement. Making regular contributions to an employer-sponsored retirement plan or an individual retirement account (IRA) can make a big difference when you reach your

retirement years. Automatic paycheck transfers, if available, can help you stick to this resolution with ease.

3. Pay off debt. If “pay off” seems too lofty, focus on whittling *down* debt by paying more than the required minimum amount. Refinancing to a lower interest rate (such as for a home or car loan) may also help you pay down debt faster.

4. Build great credit. Making on-time payments and handling credit responsibly will raise your credit score, a number that is considered for a large loan such as a mortgage, or even getting a job or apartment in some cases. First Bank’s online bill pay service can help you make payments on schedule.

2014

5. Talk about estate planning. It’s not the most fun topic to think about, but it is important for your family’s future. Make it a goal to talk about estate planning with aging parents and/or your spouse to help you make decisions and form a plan.

Look to First Bank for more ways to save, pay off debt, manage loans and prepare for your future. Visit www.FirstBankAK.com or stop by a First Bank branch today.



Online business banking

Manage business finances anytime, anywhere

First Bank supports the entrepreneurial spirit that makes small businesses succeed and brings greater prosperity to our communities. One way we support our local businesses is by making business banking easy and convenient.

Online business banking puts your accounts at your fingertips. You can manage your business finances safely and securely from the convenience of your home or office, 24/7. Out of town for the holidays or unexpectedly stuck at

home? You can still keep close tabs on your business accounts. Working late? Online banking is only a few clicks away, even in the middle of the night.

Take advantage of all that online business banking has to offer:

- Check real-time account balances on deposits and loans.
- View check images.
- Transfer funds between accounts.
- View account history or a specific transaction.
- Initiate stop payments.
- Pay bills electronically.

HAVE IT YOUR WAY

First Bank believes in your business and wants to see it succeed. We know that sometimes you want convenient services, like online banking, that help you operate more efficiently. And other times, you want the in-depth knowledge and expertise that an experienced business banker can provide. Either way, we’ve got you covered. Visit www.FirstBankAK.com or stop by your local First Bank branch today.