Business community pledges to help 1 million more small businesses become digitally active in 2017

Thursday 19 January, 2017

Leading players in the UK's digital economy have made public pledges today to help an additional one million UK small businesses becoming more digitally engaged during 2017.

At an event staged by independent, not-for-profit campaign, 'Do It Digital', eBay UK was the first to make a public pledge towards reaching the one million target. Its Senior Director of UK Trading, Murray Lambell, announced the launch of 'eBay for Business', a new UK campaign to help British SMBs to get online in 2017. eBay also pledged to reach out to small businesses across the country offering support, guidance and access to tools and resources as well as training on a range of topics, from visual merchandising to becoming a fully online retailer.

Others included Google, which will expand its digital skills training programme to make five hours of free digital available to everyone in the UK, with specialist training for small businesses. The Google Digital Garage will expand to 100 cities and towns adding on online courses for those who wish to train at home.

The British Library and its national network of Business & IP Centres and Enterprise Nation are aiming to train 10,000 and 20,000 small business this year respectively; The Good Things Foundation pledged to support 10,000 small businesses through its community digital skills programme with Google, as well as building new partnerships and growing existing ones to extend its reach even further, and the Federation of Small Businesses, which FSB will support its 200,000 members in 2017 with a range of digital initiatives. This includes partnering with Facebook on #shemeansbusiness campaign to inspire women to start their own business and improve digital skills, using webinars and videos. It will also provide its members with free cyber-security insurance to drive confidence to expand online safely.

Matthew Hancock MP, Minister of State for Digital and Culture, attended the event in London to add his backing to the call for pledges, saying:

"Digital knowhow can help firms save money, increase profits and improve productivity, yet too many firms still do not use websites, trading platforms or social media channels.

"It is essential we take every opportunity to create the world-leading businesses of tomorrow, so I welcome Do It Digital's campaign and pledges from other organisations to increase digital skills in small businesses."

Michelle Ovens MBE, Director at Do It Digital, says:

"All evidence supports the belief that there are clear financial benefits for small businesses embracing digital. But we also know that many don't have the time or access to the expertise to take advantage of what's available to them. We want to help change that, one step at a time, by showing that digital needn't mean a leap into the unknown by giving them access to support and guidance on how to engage in a way that is best for their particular business."

New research produced by eBay UK[1] and published today suggests that the UK economy could be £8.4 billion larger if the final fifth (23 per cent) of small businesses without key digital capabilities closed the 'digital gap'.

Small businesses in Britain without digital infrastructure including a website, social media channels or a presence on an online marketplace are missing out on £20.2 billion in revenue each year, according to the research. This equates to £20,000 in increased revenue or efficiency savings per business, across all sectors from retail to manufacturing.

The Do It Digital campaign not only aims to help people take their first steps online but also encourages those already online to engage further and expand their digital horizons. This could include anything from a simple web presence and social media to being able to access a wider market for selling online. The campaign says that

digital engagement is crucial for all aspects of business, not just marketing, from recruitment and stock management to banking and accounting, including tax returns online.

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About Do It Digital

Do It Digital is a campaign to share, signpost and celebrate all things that help small businesses get more out of digital. It is an independent, not-for-profit campaign that looks to highlight resources around the UK, online and off, that can help small businesses take the next step in digital, what ever their current level of skill and engagement may be. Greater digital engagement strengthens small businesses, and no matter what level of digital confidence you have - Do It Digital can point towards the most appropriate next steps.

For more information visit www.doitdigital.co.uk , on Twitter @doitdigitaluk , and at www.facebook.com/doitdigitaluk

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[1] **About the research:**

Polling based on YouGov Business Survey, conducted December 2016

Economic research conducted by Development Economics Ltd, January 2017

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