

GROWING YOUR ONLINE SALES

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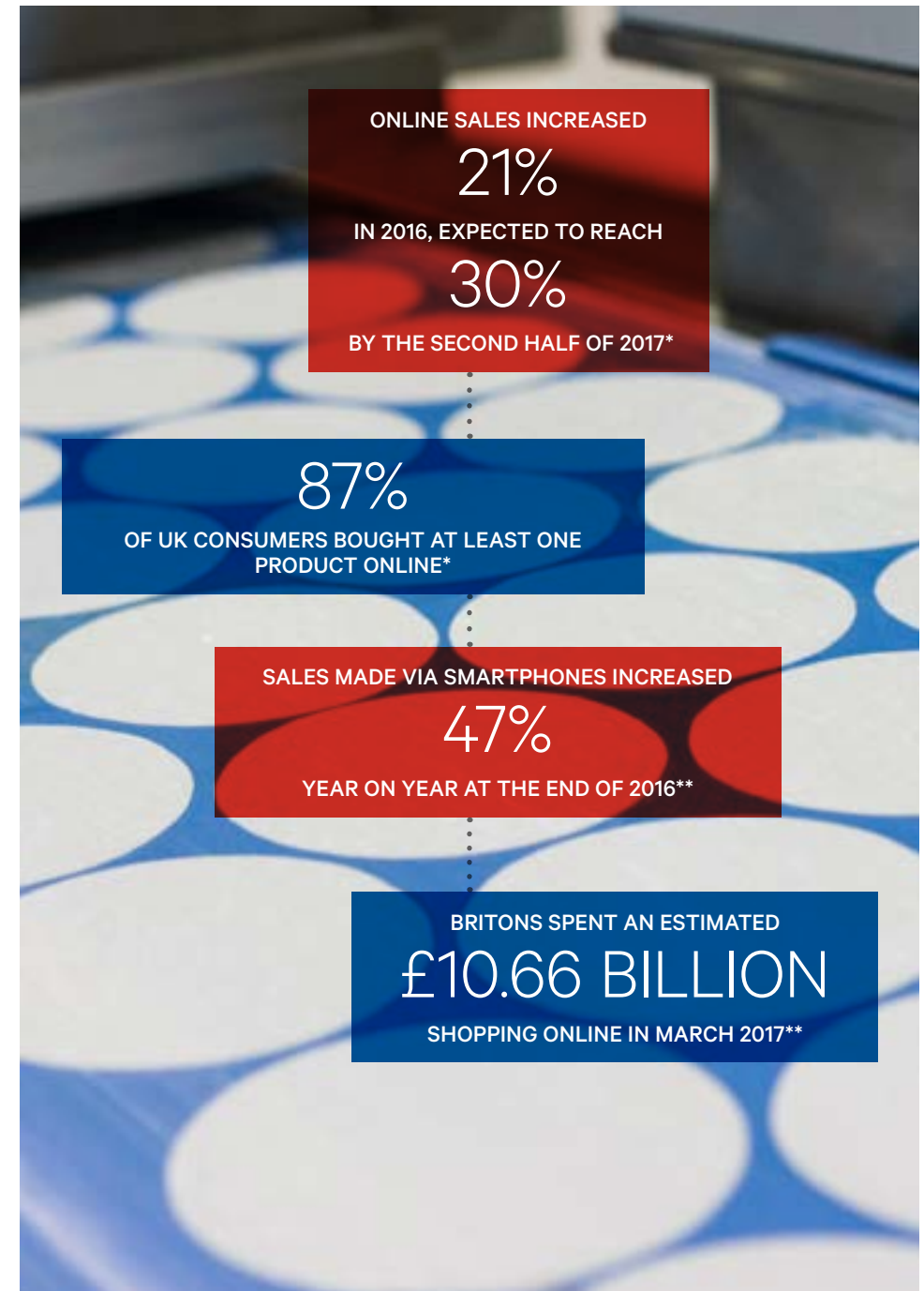
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Digital technology continues to grow rapidly, changing the way both consumers and businesses make purchases. As technology continues to advance and grow in importance, it is being integrated more and more into our day-to-day living.

Although business-to-business (B2B) companies have been slower to go online compared with their business-to-consumer (B2C) peers, digital technology is a flexible solution that presents many opportunities to:

- Expand your company's brand presence
- Reach new potential local and overseas customers
- Improve lead generation and conversion
- Create new revenue streams
- Renew relationships with inactive customers through targeted marketing campaigns

Going online means you can fit into your customers' busy lives, offering the products and services they want, when and how they want them. Our guide provides insights that will help you stand out from other online businesses and integrate digital technology into your sales activities.



* Office for National Statistics
** IMRG Capgemini eRetail Sales Index

OPTIMISE YOUR WEBSITE AND USE KEYWORDS THAT PEOPLE WILL SEARCH FOR

When customers are deciding on a purchase, they start by looking online. Your website is your shop window where customers research your product and business. So, a well-designed site can influence buying decisions by showcasing your product at its best. Here are some tips on how to make the most of your website to increase your online sales.



1 KEEP YOUR WEBSITE CONTENT RELEVANT

Your content needs to constantly evolve to effectively represent what you do. Remove information about products or services that are no longer available and ensure that your pricing information is up-to-date. Having a blog or news section allows you to share company news, relevant information and helpful advice for both existing and potential customers. It's important, however, to keep your content fresh. Google tracks how much time users spent on your page to determine how useful it was to them, so the better your content is, the higher you rank. Lengthy paragraphs, long sentences and jargon can really put people off. Along with having concise navigation, your messaging also needs to follow suit. It's recommended that you have a large, clear statement on your home page that lets customers know who you are and what you do.

2 MAKE IT RESPONSIVE

Today, more people are loading websites on smartphones and tablets (51%) than on desktop computers. Therefore, you should make sure that your website is mobile friendly so people can easily browse and find information. You can do this by using [Google's webmaster tool](#), which also gives tips on ways to improve your websites. Responsive web design makes your web pages look good on all devices because it allows a site's layout to change depending on the device being used. Google has recommended using responsive web design and crucially, rewards mobile friendly sites in their page rankings.

3 DEMONSTRATE YOUR CREDIBILITY

With 77% of customers reading online reviews before buying, a great way to show people that your business is reliable is to include customer testimonials and reviews on your website. By making purchasing an easy experience with plenty of product reviews, you're more likely to encourage a sale. Sites such as [TrustPilot](#) are a great way to compile customer testimonials that promote your products and services. You can also integrate some review sites to your social media profiles so that potential customers can read reviews when contacting you via this route.

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INCREASE YOUR TRAFFIC AND LEAD GENERATION

There are many ways you can increase traffic to your website and convert visitors into leads.

Keyword targeting – For more traffic to result in more sales, you'll need to think about how people search for your products and services. Make a list of keywords that are three words or less and another list of longer phrases which are more specific to what a user may be searching for. You can check the search volume data for each term with [Google's Keyword Planner](#) and then define your list down to the highest-trafficked, most relevant terms.

Natural, organic and earned results – To ensure that your site appears high on the list of results returned by a search engine, without having to pay for adverts, you need compelling, high-quality content on your website. This is known as 'natural', 'organic' and 'earned' results which determine relevant keyword terms or phrases and where a search engine ranks you. Your content should include one to two primary keywords per page, which are strongly related to the main topic or to the product or service you offer.

Pay per click (PPC) – PPC is internet advertising where you pay a fee each time one of your ads is clicked. The most popular source is [Google's AdWords](#), accounting for around 90% of PPC revenue. When you create an advert, you pick keywords that someone will search for based on your product or service. You bid against other businesses on how much you're willing to pay every time a searcher clicks on your ad. The price you're willing to pay for each click is called cost per click (CPC).

Paid for advertising – If you want to drive more traffic, and make more sales, consider paying for adverts. [Google Display Network](#) lets you place all types of ads – text, image, interactive and video – on a variety of websites that are relevant to what you're selling. Alternatively, because social networks gather such a large amount of user information, social media advertising means you can take advantage of users' demographic information and target your ads more specifically.

Go social – It's important to choose the social platforms that work best for your business and update them regularly with company and industry news and facts. Facebook is a good starting point, regardless of your industry. Twitter is a great tool for quickly sharing short updates. Pinterest and Instagram are visual platforms based entirely on photo and video posts. YouTube's video-sharing platform is a great way to educate your audience about who you are. All businesses, especially B2B companies, should use LinkedIn to interact with current clients and attract prospective clients. Adding a blog or news item to your website at least once a week allows audiences to share your posts and link from your social media pages to your website.

Email marketing – When it comes to email marketing, develop a list of highly targeted, quality contacts. Using permission-based email marketing, you only include people that are interested in what you're selling, meaning they're more likely to click through and read content. Shorter emails encourage more people to click through to your website to view additional details. You should always use a business email and not a personal email address for your campaigns, otherwise they are likely to be relegated to 'spam' by Google. You can use platforms such as [Campaign Monitor](#) or [Mail Chimp](#) to create, send, and optimise your email campaigns as well as adding a 'sign up' to your newsletter option on your website so people can keep up to date with all your latest news and offers.





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MEASURING RESPONSE AND SUCCESS

Measuring the effectiveness of your online strategy is key to understanding what people are interested in and what impact your activities are having.

Here are some of the most important metrics that you should measure:

Engagement on website – If you want to understand how interested people are in your business, look at your website statistics. [Google Analytics](#) is an invaluable source of data on your most popular pages and visitor demographics. The key things to look at are the number of unique visitors, average page views per visit, pages per visit, average time on site, bounce rate, exit pages, traffic sources (direct, organic, referral, campaign) and rate of return visitors.

Engagement on social – To understand if your social media efforts are being successful at attracting and engaging your audience, you will need to look at your social performance, track how your content is being shared and monitor conversations that people are having about you. [Simply Measured](#) provides data from various social networks which you can also integrate with Google Analytics. [Hootsuite](#) is another popular social media management tool, providing you with real-time social media performance.

To measure your digital performance, you should consider using [Google Analytics](#) (free to use) and Hubspot (paid service). These tools allow you to measure and analyse data in easy-to-understand reports. Google Analytics is great for granular data, but if you're looking to monitor campaigns or marketing initiatives, consider [Hubspot](#). Some of the key metrics to monitor include:

Brand awareness – If you want to know if people are interested in your business, consider online surveys on your website and social media, look at the number of likes to a post, reposts and retweets and click-throughs to your website.

Click through rates – If you're paying for adverts or sending out emails, you'll want to know how successful they've been. Look at the number of people who responded to a call to action or how many people clicked through to your website or social media pages from a particular advert.

Efficiency metrics – Again, if you use adverts, you'll want to know how much you're paying. To determine the financial success of your paid campaigns and if your ad has been cost-effective, cost per click shows you your return on investment and how much you're paying for people who click on your advert.

Conversion rates – If you want to know if people purchased from you after clicking on a sponsored ad or promoted social media ad, the conversion rate shows you the percentage of users who converted into site visitors that became paying customers.

SUMMARY

Companies should see investment in online activities as a 'must have' rather than a 'nice to have'. Expectations are changing fast, and if you're not online you're likely to fall behind and customers will shop elsewhere. Our guide aims to provide a practical source of help to enable you to take your business online and tap into the wealth of opportunities that exist. Starting with a website first and then launching your social media platforms will help you to increase your traffic and lead generation. Once you have your online activities in place, don't forget to track and measure your efforts and adapt where necessary.

ABOUT BIBBY FINANCIAL SERVICES

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We help businesses unlock working capital for a range of scenarios, including cashflow funding, new equipment purchase, growth and expansion, management buy-ins and buy-outs, refinancing, corporate restructuring and mergers and acquisitions.

Our range of financing options includes:

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- Factoring
- Lease Finance
- Export Finance
- Stock Finance
- Trade Finance
- Specialist finance for the construction and recruitment sectors
- Foreign Exchange