

BUSINESS NEWS

Laredo Chamber of Commerce closing on McPherson property

COURTESY OF LAREDO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce signed closing documents on 5702 McPherson Road Suite# 8 A&B, on June 9th.

After several months of searching and evaluating offers from private and public sector for the Laredo Chamber's long-term home, the final decision was made, and an offer presented to the property owners of 5702 McPherson Road Suite# 8 A&B.

On February 16th, the Chamber issued an open solicitation to the community to submit letters of interest after reaching an agreement with the Laredo Independent School District. As the oldest and strongest business organization in the

city, the Laredo Chamber has been housed at 2310 San Bernardo Avenue for over 45 years.

This esteemed organization, founded in 1915, represents essential industries, ranging from financial institutions, and retailers, to transportation, logistics, and service providers.

The future for the Laredo Chamber of Commerce in this new building is bright. As the organization has enhanced its service delivery with programs catered exclusively for small and local businesses, this new location allows for greater benefit of becoming a Laredo Chamber of Commerce member. The plan is to build on the existing legacy and continue to be the

anchor for high-level meetings with international dignitaries, trade-related engagements and enhance business development in the area. Staple programs such as Business Development Certification, Business Spotlight, Cola Blanca Contest, School Bell Awards, Youth Leadership Laredo, Bola Blanca, Vision Conference, Women in Leadership, G13, B2B matching, the execution of certificate of origins, and notary services, will continue to take place at the McPherson property starting August 1, 2022.

Gabriela Morales, President & CEO of the Laredo Chamber of Commerce quoted: "These are exciting times for the Laredo Chamber of Com-



Courtesy photo/Laredo Chamber of Commerce

Carlos Garza, Sara Garza, previous owners of the building, Mike Marasco, Laredo Chamber of Commerce Chairman of the Board of Directors, Gabriela Morales, President and CEO of Laredo Chamber of Commerce, Debbie Salinas y Parker Neel of Neel Title Corporation.

merce, and our stakeholders. We know this new chapter will bring plenty of opportunities for the business community."

Mike Marasco, Chairman of the Board of Directors stated: "Our new location will open doors to even more collaboration and community engagement with business-

es in Laredo, Webb County, and beyond."

About the Chamber

Founded in 1915, the Laredo Chamber of Commerce is Laredo's and Webb County's longest running business organization. Headquartered at 2310 San Bernardo Ave. since 1974, the Laredo Chamber has been an ad-

vocate for the local business community for over a century. With almost 700 members representative of every industry in the community, the Laredo Chamber is accredited with 5 stars by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Only 200 chambers out of 7000 across the country are accredited by this organization.

OP-ED

Benefits of selling online can broaden business horizons

By **Norma L. Rodríguez**
DIRECTOR OF TAMIU SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

If you run a small to medium enterprise and are looking to broaden your business horizon, an E-commerce platform has become highly viable for reaching customers. While the Pandemic changed the way people shop, E-commerce was already on the rise before COVID-19 arrived.

The food and personal care industry saw the highest growth in the E-commerce space in 2020, according to data from Data Reportal. Shopify reports that E-commerce experienced a 10-year increase in just three months, and their searches peaked at the height of the Pandemic when E-commerce was the only option for many businesses. By 2024, it's estimated that online shopping will be responsible for 22% of all retail purchases globally.

Through a collaborative partnership with the SBDC centers of the Texas South-West SBDC Network, the TAMIU Small Business Development Center will soon present an assortment of E-commerce webinar topics brought to you at no cost through CARES Act funding.

Shopify 101 (2 part series) June 20 and June 21, 2022

Starting an E-commerce Business on June 20, 2022

The Secret Weapon to Peak Sales Performance June 22, 2022

Shopify 201 on June 23, 2022

Sizzling Summer Ideas using Google June 23, 2022 To register for the webinars, visit the TAMIU SBDC website at www.tamiu.edu/sbdc or call 956.326.2827.

In advance of those seminars, here's an enticing and comprehensive list of the most significant E-commerce benefits as identified by Spyrosoft E-Commerce, a software engineering company focused on bridging the gap between technology and business.

Some highlighted benefits below are obvious, some not so much...but all have the potential to figure prominently in helping small businesses achieve greater sales and business success.

1. Increased Sales

24*7/365 availability of goods and unlimited customer reach generate more sales. When you aren't limited to the local market or to physical store capacity, you automatically sell more and can adjust your stock to your customers' needs. You can provide your services or sell goods abroad by adjusting prices to the global market. By spending less of your budget running a store and making more capital at the same time, you can save a significant amount of money and expand your business faster.

2. Reduced Operational Expenses

E-commerce is the most economical way to grow your retail business. It doesn't require high levels of initial capital and it's very cost-effective. Most of

the investment is repaid by early sales profits.

From a long-term perspective buying a domain and hosting or paying for web development and good E-commerce service is less expensive than buying or renting physical business premises.

3. Increased Product/Service Availability

With products and services listed online, retailers have a better chance to reach out to their customers and promote their businesses. Your products and services are constantly visible as E-commerce platforms offer online listings and price comparisons. Moreover, you can serve those who couldn't find items locally and decided to turn to the internet to source the product. Online stores also give you limitless opportunities to aesthetically present your items and stand out from the crowd.

4. Broader Customer Range

E-commerce platforms help sellers reach buyers globally and sell their goods to a wider market. Scaling the business globally and being online means one can sell to people all over the world. Broadened business horizons can only earn you more money and help your business grow.

5. Simplified Buying Process

The most convenient aspect of E-commerce is that the customer can purchase directly from you after searching for an item on-

line, without leaving home or interacting with a salesperson. That's what makes E-commerce an attractive alternative for them. As a retailer, you need to meet them online and provide what they're looking for.

6. Automation

E-commerce platforms offer full automation, including finance systems, inventory, shipping, and customer service. That means everything is in one place and can be easily managed by one person at their convenience. Chatbots and artificial intelligence can provide a personal touch to communication. This gives you more time to grow your business and keep customers happy...without hiring additional team members.

7. Derive Benefit from Customer Advocacy

Whisper marketing from influencers works very well online and helps spread the word about your brand globally. People depend heavily on reviews and others' opinions. The Digital

Marketing Institute's research shows that 49% of consumers rely on influencer recommendation...and 40% have purchased goods after seeing them on social media.

8. Lower Advertising Costs

Customer advocacy and increased brand awareness help reduce marketing and advertising costs. As word spreads quickly on the Internet you can reach potential customers



Courtesy photo/TAMIU

Norma L. Rodríguez

with every review of your product or opinion about your brand left on Google or other independent consumer review websites. There is an entire set of affordable tools available for you to promote your products. E-commerce platforms are very well positioned in Google and the algorithms help ensure strongly ranked search results.

9. Flexibility

According to KPMG, the main reason people buy online is that they can do it whenever they want from anywhere on the planet. This feature makes the shopping experience very easy and convenient and allowed E-commerce to thrive during the Pandemic. Solutions like service automation or AI software give retailers more freedom when selling online.

10. Consumer Behavior Analysis

Imagine being able to

predict what and when will be bought from you. Imagine you can tailor offers to each customer's needs and guide them to certain products. A variety of analytics tools and the newest AI software provides insights into consumer buying habits and helps you personalize offers and respond quickly to their needs and changing trends.

Sound interesting to you? Our E-commerce Webinars await.

Visit the TAMIU SBDC website at www.tamiu.edu/sbdc or call 956.326.2827.

Norma L. Rodríguez is the Director of Texas A&M International University's Small Business Development Center (TAMIU-SBDC). For over 33 years, the TAMIU-SBDC has provided essential services to businesses across the tri-county area. She leads the Center's advocacy and service to small businesses



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