

Going Virtual Playbook



A step-by-step guide
to take your business virtual

A message from AT&T Business



Dear friends,

Over the past few months, the world as we know it has changed. How we interact with one another, work, communicate, and travel; the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect of our lives. The unique nature of this crisis has posed new challenges for small businesses across the world, with fewer customers coming through the front door, new customer expectations, and challenges to keeping your business up and running. Physical distancing and state-mandated shutdowns have created a contact-less world and accelerated the need for small businesses to “go digital.”

For small businesses to succeed today, they must embrace technology and harness the power of digital to meet customers where they feel most comfortable, bring new value outside of a physical store, and create unique experiences for them. While many small businesses understand the need to adopt digital ways of working, the question we hear most from our customers is, “Where do I begin?”

We, at AT&T Business, are here to help small businesses in a big way. With so many choices and decisions to be made, AT&T Business is with you every step of the way, providing the right technologies to keep you connected and help your business thrive. That is why we have created the ‘Going Virtual’ guide. Through this step-by-step guide, you will learn everything from opening an e-commerce store to digital marketing and managing virtual teams. We hope this resource helps remove complexity and provides you with the tools you need to drive your business through recovery and beyond.

Stacey Marx

President, National Business and Channels, AT&T Business

Going Virtual Playbook Contents

Why Should you Take your Business Virtual?	4
An introduction to virtual businesses.....	4
Your customer has changed.....	4
A step-by-step guide to taking your business virtual	5
Ecommerce – Creating an Online Store	6
Register a domain name	6
Choose a website platform.....	7
Design your site.....	8
Marketing – Driving Traffic to your Store	10
Building a social media presence.....	10
Email marketing.....	12
Virtual events	15
Pop-up stores.....	18

[More chapters to be released soon](#)

Why Should you Take your Business Virtual?

An introduction to virtual businesses

Virtual business is one that conducts most or all of its transactions and business online or remotely. Virtual businesses are inexpensive to set up and run, and they provide great flexibility. Because a virtual business exists primarily online, you have the ability to conduct your business from nearly anywhere – whether you are at your home office or on a beach. Being virtual also allows you to reach a broader customer base without physical restrictions.

If you already have a brick-and-mortar store, you do not have to close it down to have a virtual business, but rather you can consider complementing it with an online presence and other virtual functions. Having this omnichannel can create a seamless experience for your customers by giving them a choice on how to interact with you.

While having a virtual business might be the right move for you, you need to ensure you have the right tools, technology, and resources in place to set up your business successfully.

Your customer has changed

Today's customer has evolved. The COVID-19 pandemic, physical distancing regulations, and stay-at-home orders have forced customers to rethink how they shop. There was an accelerated adoption of digital technologies by consumers. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, 63% of U.S. consumers have bought goods online that they had not considered before, with the high-income earners and millennials leading the way.¹

What does this mean for your business?

As consumers shift to online shopping, a business, no matter the size or industry, needs to consider digital transformation to meet their customers where they are and provide the experience customers expect. Many of these long-term consumer behaviors are still being formed, providing small businesses like yours the opportunity to shape what the 'new normal' is and succeed in it.

¹ (A Look at How U.S. and U.K. Shoppers are Responding to COVID-19, 2020)

Ecommerce – Creating an Online Store

Over the past few months, customers have genuinely embraced online shopping. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce data ...



These statistics suggest that having an online store is becoming more critical for a business's success. To get started, you will have to create an e-commerce ready website, list products, and set up payments.

² (Digital Commerce 360 analysis, 2020)

1. Register a domain name

- A domain name is your internet address, typically ending in “.com”, “.org”, or “.net.” Registering a domain name is the first step in moving your business online. Here are some tips to keep in mind when choosing your domain name:
- **Keep it relevant.** Ideally, your domain name will be close to your business name.
- **Keep it short.** Like you want customers to remember your store name, you want them to remember your website name.
- **Keep it simple.** Remember, customers have to type out your domain name. Avoid unusual spellings, hyphens, or other complex characters.
- **Target your locals.** You can use your city or state as part of the domain name to appeal to locals. Also, consider using local extensions, e.g., “.ca.”

Once you have a list of domain names to choose from, do a quick search to ensure whether it is available and isn't trademarked or copyrighted.

To use the domain, you need to register it. Registering a domain is like leasing it for a specific time. Domains typically cost \$15-\$20 per year. You can also check your e-commerce platform provider for registration options.



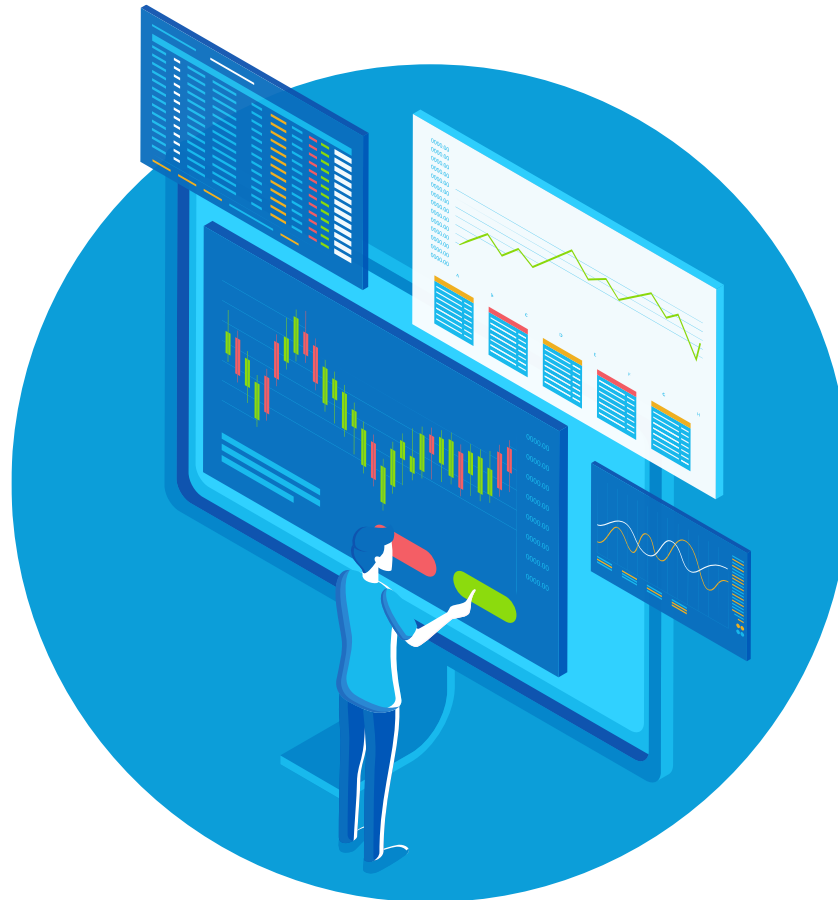
2. Choose a Website Platform

A website platform allows you to easily manage your website, marketing, sales, etc. It is the virtual home base for your business.

Before choosing your platform provider, think about what your business is and the expectations you have from your website, because each platform provider has its strengths. Ask yourself some of the following questions to understand the needs for your website:

- Do you want to sell products online?
- Would you like customers to schedule appointments online?
- Will you be writing a blog for your site?
- Will you accept electronic payments?
- Are you going to design the website by yourself, or will you hire a professional?
- What is your budget?

Based on your responses, you can find the best platform to suit your needs.



AT&T Website Solutions

With AT&T Website Solutions,SM we can help you get the most from your online presence. Build your professional-looking website with our easy-to-use tools, or work with our website design professionals, and we can build a website for you.

- The mobile-friendly website builder makes creating responsive, mobile-friendly websites easier than ever
- It's easy to set up, whether you create your website yourself or you allow us to design the website for you
- U.S.-based technical support is available 24/7
- Get detailed reports about your website traffic through our web analytics

[Learn More](#)

3. Design your site

It takes 50 milliseconds for visitors to form an opinion about your website.³ Hence, it is essential to create a visually appealing site with easy navigation. Whether you are designing the site yourself or hiring a professional, there are a few fundamentals to consider:

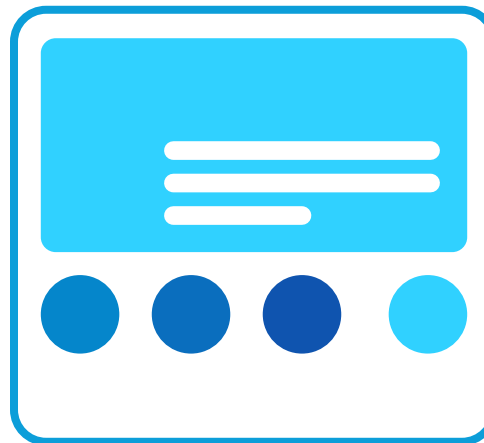
Site layout.

This is the visual structure of your pages. Based on the purpose of your website, you can decide how much content you would like to include and how to structure it across the website. While each business is different and their needs unique, there is some information that all websites should consider having:

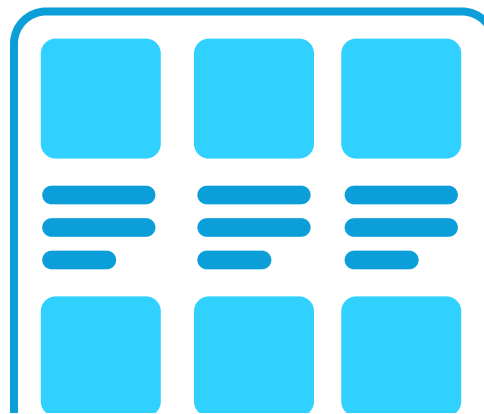
Homepage – This is the first page that visitors see when they land on your website. Keep the homepage clean, eye-catching, and straightforward. It should include who you are and what you do. Make sure this page consists of the most crucial information: the name of your business, your logo, and a button(s) for visitors who wish to browse further.



Product/service page – This page defines what you offer and explains why customers should buy from you. On this page, you should include high-quality product pictures, engaging product descriptions, and any additional information relevant for a customer wanting to make a purchase.



Your story – People buy from people. While you might not be in front of your customer physically, they want to hear your story and your values. Make this page personal and informal. You could even add a picture of yourself or your team! This page is about building relationships from behind the screen.



Contact information – You want to make it easy for your customers to reach out. Add your phone number, business address (if you have a brick-and-mortar store or a mailing address), and social media account for customers, so they can get in touch with you. Consider adding live chat options for visitors who want immediate responses.

³ (First Impressions Matter: Why Great Visual Design Is Essential, 2020)

Content.

Your content could include high-quality images, videos, text, and more. You can have a mix of your content and sourced content. Remember that if you use third-party content, you should take steps to confirm that you have the appropriate approval from the third party to use it.

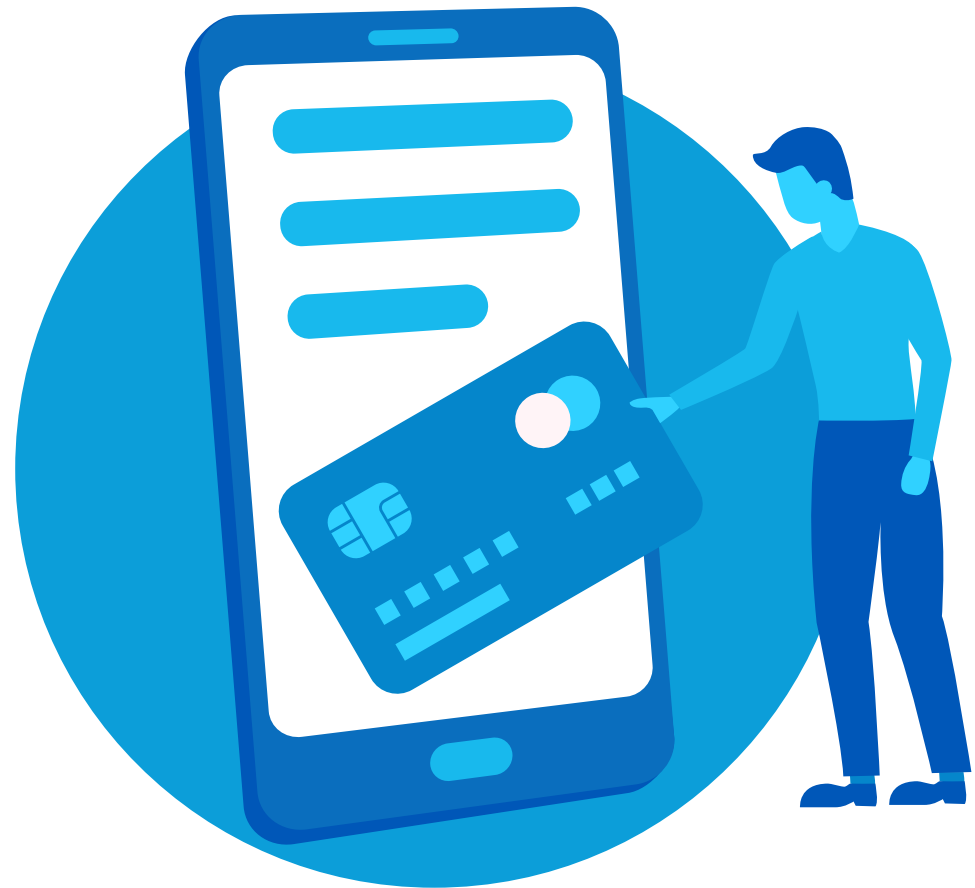
Your website is an extension of your brand, so as you design your content, remember to incorporate your brand look, feel, and voice. Your website should reflect your logo, brand colors, fonts, and style.

Mobile-ready.

A majority of users likely browse your site with a mobile device. Therefore, you want to create a positive experience for your visitors who visit via mobile as well as by desktop. Make sure that your small business website is optimized for smartphones and tablets to provide virtually seamless customer experiences. Most website platforms automatically optimize your site for mobile, or if you are working with a professional, ask them to do this for you.

Your website is now ready to be assembled. Once you have the initial design ready, share it with a few trusted friends and family to gain feedback and make relevant changes.

Once you're ready, it is time to launch your site!



Marketing – Driving Traffic to your Store

You now have a beautiful site setup with high-quality images and great products. However, this is not an “if you build it, they will come situation.” You have to find ways to reach your target customer. We will share four practices that can help you drive traffic to your online store.



Social media marketing

It is more than likely that your customers are spending time on some social media platform. 70% of the U.S population has at least one social media account.⁴



Email marketing

It allows you to speak directly to your leads and past customers at a time that is convenient for them.



Virtual events

They are more critical now than ever. Virtual events remove health and safety risks while letting you engage with your customers worldwide.



Pop-up stores

A low-cost way to interact with your customers in-person and create an offline experience.

⁴ (15 Reasons Why Marketing Through Social Media is a Must For Every Small Business, n.d.)

1. Social media marketing

Chances are, you've already built your company's basic social media presence. But it is time to focus on how this can help you grow in this new socially-distanced landscape. It is important to remember that social media can do more than help your customers locate and contact your business. There are ways to help boost your presence on social media platforms to generate awareness, increase sales, authentically connect with your audience, and ultimately help your business thrive.

Here are five steps to help you establish a strong social media presence:

1 **Develop a social presence** – The first step to creating a social media presence is to conduct basic research. Who are your ideal customers, and where can you reach them? Once you have identified your customers, think about the message you want to share about your business and what tone to use that resonates best with your customer.

2 **Understand social platforms** – The social media world is evolving every day, and with several platforms out there, it can get overwhelming when deciding what is right for your business. There are no one-size-fits-all in the social media world. Focus on one or two platforms that best suit your business needs.

3 **Create content** – Robust content development is a crucial component of building an engaging social media presence. Content quality and variety has evolved through the years, and today it can include everything from a beautiful picture on Instagram to a video on Facebook. Whatever your content, make sure it lines up with your business goals and that it resonates with your target audience.

4

Expand audiences – While you might have great content, you also need an engaged audience to interact with the content. An engaged audience could be the difference between having a customer or having an active advocate for your brand. Advocates can be the voice of your brand, helping to grow your business. Make sure to thoroughly research your audience to understand what they are looking for and what they react to. Once you have identified the right content, you can start developing an online community that appreciates your brand.

5

Measure success – The last step is to continually measure your success. Identify the best metrics to help you understand whether your social media tactics have been working. Regularly, look at how your content has performed, which platforms your customers are best reacting to, identify high performing and struggling content, and evolve your strategy to improve your social media marketing.



Helpful tip:

AT&T Business and Fullscreen Media have developed a powerful playbook to assist you with each of the above steps. By using this playbook, you can help your small business:

- Develop your company's tone of voice
- Find your competitive positioning
- Build and strengthen connections with a social media audience
- Foster a community of creativity
- Learn critical strategies behind using paid media, and much, much more

[Download the Social Media Playbook.](#)

2. Email marketing

Email marketing is a highly effective way to reach your customers and promote your brand, whether you want to sell a product, share news, or tell a story. Effective email campaigns can convert prospects into customers and one-time buyers into loyal fans.

1

Building an email list – To send emails, you need to build and maintain a subscriber list. Here are some ideas on how to build and grow your list:

- Create a sign-up form on your website. When people visit your website, they have shown interest in your company and products. The sign-up form gives them the option to stay in touch with your brand.
- Build your list through social media. If you have an engaged social media audience, share your sign-up form through social media channels to grow your audience base.

- Offer a discount. Who doesn't love a good offer? Incentivize people to sign-up for your email list.
- If you have a brick-and-mortar store or hosting a pop-up, put out a sign-up sheet to get contact details.

2

Choosing an email marketing service – An email marketing service allows you to create beautiful emails, schedule campaigns, and benefit from analytics.

Helpful tip: Should you buy an email list?

A word of caution! Purchasing email lists are mostly ineffective. You want to build a list of engaged customers interested in learning more about you and your products. Buying a list could lead to many of the emails being tagged as spam and result in high unsubscribe rates.

AT&T Email Marketing

Create effective email campaigns with AT&T Email Marketing, and benefit from powerful tracking tools with our easy-to-use platform. Select an affordable, scalable, business-class email solution with features to match your needs.

- Enjoy a simple-to-use solution with easy drag-and-drop templates
- Plan your email marketing schedule. Pick a time and date of when you want your emails to be sent
- Get detailed, real-time analytics including open and click-through rates

[Learn More](#)

3

Building email marketing campaigns – Now that you are ready to send out your emails, here are some best practices to create engaging email campaigns:

- **Create a marketing plan**

It is always helpful to have a strategy in place for your email campaigns. Think about who your audience is and what they would like to hear from you.

- **Develop a content strategy** – You want your emails to have purpose and value to the subscriber. Research what your customers want to hear about and turn that content into emails. Some email ideas are:

- Welcome emails sent to first-time subscribers
- Product releases
- Upcoming events
- Customer testimonials
- Emails about you and your brand
- Abandoned cart emails to remind customer to complete a purchase

- **Choose a sending frequency** – Based on your content and your audience, you need to strike a balance on how frequently you would like to stay in touch with your customer and how often they would like for you to stay in touch with them. You don't want to go overboard, and your customer might lose interest or unsubscribe altogether if you send with too high of a frequency.

- **Make a schedule** – Now that you have decided what to send and how frequently, put together a content calendar. The calendar maps out when you will send the email and what content to include. A schedule will help you stay on track.

- **Design your emails**

Similar to the website design, emails need to be visually appealing. However, you want the main focus to be on message. Keep your email short and your designs straightforward. Include your brand elements like your logo, fonts, and colors.

You are now ready to send out your first email!

3

Measure your performance – Your work doesn't end once you have sent your email. Looking at results is essential to helping you refine your strategy moving forward. Here are some results you can track:

- **Opens and clicks** – This is the most common statistic used to measure engagement. You can see how many people opened your emails and how many clicked on the links provided, for example. Compare these statistics to the industry average to see where you stand.
- **Conversions** – At the end of the day, you want to drive sales. If your email marketing service is connected to your online store, you can track how many sales were driven from the email campaign.



3. Virtual events

Virtual events were on the rise far before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the post-crisis timeframe has shown an uptick in this space as consumers turn to additional options on how to connect with businesses and brands. Virtual events are an untapped source for marketing and sales. However, there is a lot that goes into having a successful virtual event – planning, promoting, and hosting. Here are four steps to hosting a virtual event.

1

Determine the type of virtual event to have

Your virtual event could be live or pre-recorded. Based on the goal of your event, you can choose between the two.

Live-streamed virtual events allow for more human interaction and connected conversations. When hosting a live-streamed event, you want to recreate live experiences like meet and greets, Q&A sessions, etc.

Pre-recorded events provide you with flexibility; you can edit the videos to make them more polished, and your consumer has the flexibility to view in their own time.

Additionally, determine whether your event will be gated or you will be charging for the event.



2

Prepare with the right technology and equipment

A virtual event can be anything from a simple video conference or a more complex, planned out event, depending on your audience and the need. The most important thing for virtual events is audio-video requirements. At a minimum, make sure your speakers have a good Wi-Fi connection, a high-quality web camera, and a back-up plan.

A streaming platform is a service that allows you to reach your customers. There are free options in the market like Facebook Live, Instagram Live, or YouTube Live. These options are easy-to-use and straightforward but also come with a few limitations. If you need something more advanced, there are other options too.

When choosing a streaming platform, here are a few things to think about:

- Streaming quality
- Audience size
- Support
- Content management
- Distribution
- Analytics

3

Create engaging content

When customers attend your event, they take time out of their busy lives to listen to what you have to say. Make sure you have content they find interesting and valuable!

- Identify the right speakers for your topic. Check their availability.
- Find opportunities to engage your customers throughout your event with:
 - Polling questions or quizzes
 - Free giveaways
 - Gamification
 - Offer break-out rooms or networking opportunities for attendees to connect.
- For live events, offer Q&A sessions for attendees to interact with the speakers.

WebEx Calling and WebEx Meetings with AT&T

Webex Calling with AT&T: Integrates multiple communication tools – voice, single number reach, IM/chat, email, and voicemail with presence.

Webex Meetings with AT&T: Offers a feature-rich, video-first, inclusive meeting environment so you can meet and share content as if you were in the same room.

- Easy to use with flexibility to add functionality when and where you need it
- Provides a consistent user experience
- Helps protect the investment in on-premises infrastructure
- Scale with agility and flexibility to meet your business needs

[Learn More](#)

4

Promote your virtual event

Social media promotion

Share the details of your event through various social media channels. You can create a hashtag for your event that allows attendees to engage in the conversation.

Based on your budget, you could consider paid social to reach an audience outside of your followers.

[Learn more about social media marketing here.](#)

Encourage speakers to promote your event

Provide your speakers with branded material to help them promote the event. It is a great way to tap into their network and followers.

Leverage partnerships

Look into partnering with other brands or influencers in your industry to build credibility around your event.



4. Pop-up Stores

Pop-up stores are temporary retail locations that can help a business with increasing brand awareness and cost-effectively driving customer engagement. Pop-ups create a multichannel experience for your business by helping you connect with your customers offline. Lastly, due to the short-term commitments and low upfront investment, they are a good way to test out a physical presence for your store. Here are five steps on how to create an engaging pop-up experience.

Design your experience

1

Before you can dive into setting up your pop-up, it is crucial to think about the experience you hope to provide. What is your end goal from the pop-up, and how will you bring that to life for your customers? Here are a few questions to consider:

1. Are you looking to provide an immersive experience for your customers?
2. Will the pop-up be a booth-like setup?
3. Will you host special events during your pop-up period?
4. What products will you be featuring?



1

Find the right venue

Once you have identified your goals and the needs for the pop-up, search for the right location to host your experience. For example, if your goal is to decide whether a physical place is right for you, analyze your current sales data to determine where your customers are. For example, if you are a pet store and are looking for a pop-up for brand awareness, find a location that is pet-friendly so your customers can bring their furry friends.

Another factor to consider when selecting your location is foot traffic. Having a constant stream of traffic will help customers know about the business and bring them into your store. Furthermore, think about the stores nearby. Do they complement your business or compete with it?

Once you have a general idea of what kind of location you are looking for, start the research and meet with a few realtors to finalize on a place.

5 questions to ask before renting a place

1. What is the cost to rent the place?
2. What is included in the rental cost? Are utilities separate?
3. What is the layout of the place? Can anything be modified?
4. Are there any special permits or insurance required?
5. What are you liable for from a cost perspective?

Smart pop-up stores with AT&T Business

Smart pop up stores are just one example of how technology and connectivity, combined with targeted promotional advertising from our data-driven media platforms, will help brands deliver services and experiences beyond just selling a product.

Smart pop-up stores with AT&T Business allow brands to develop new marketing, consumer engagement, penetrate or test new geo areas, and gain exposure to targeted or new audience segments to expand the business.

Technology transforms the way brands interact with their customers and opens up new campaign opportunities to drive awareness and traffic to virtual and temporary commerce experiences. With the combined assets of AT&T Business, Warner and Xandr, AT&T Business can create and deliver a targeted campaign, build the infrastructure, connect the experience, enable the transactions and fulfillment, and then provide attribution of the overall commerce experience.

[Learn More](#)

2

Picking the right technology

Consumers expect speed, transparency, and convenience from brands today. As retailers compete to survive and grow, it is necessary to partner with reliable technology providers who can understand the specialized needs of the business.

They can help eliminate some of the top challenges such as perceived data security risks, operational risks in scaling projects, providing skilled third-party human resources, and ultimately reducing the overall cost of operations.

Retail leaders have adopted this philosophy and have leveraged their technology partners to move further ahead of their competition.

3

Promote your pop-up

There are plenty of ways to create buzz around your pop-up and drive traffic to your store.

Influencer marketing is a growing channel you can use to attract new customers and create awareness. Find the right influencer for your brand and your budget. Make sure they align with your goals and needs. Here are 3 tips to consider:

1. Personalize the outreach to your influencer
2. Give them enough time to before your pop-up event
3. Have a launch party or soft-opening to invite an exclusive list of influencers and media

Social media promotion should be utilized before, during, and after the pop-up store event. This helps develop the buzz and keep it going. For more details, read our Social Media Marketing section.

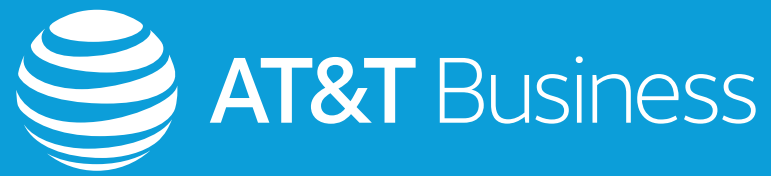
1. Create a unique hashtag for your event
2. Ask influencers to help promote your event
3. Have “Instagrammable” spots through your pop-up store
4. Leverage user-generated content to help with other marketing collateral

3

Measure Success

Once the pop-up store event is complete, it is essential to measure your success. This will help you evaluate what to do differently and whether a brick-and-mortar pop-up store is a significant channel for you. A few metrics to consider include sales, foot traffic, brand awareness, leads, etc. Also, measure the success of your marketing campaigns, including social media mentions and engagement.

• • • **Full playbook coming soon.**



AT&T Business