

October 28, 2020, Small Business Webinar.

*****DISCLAIMER!!!*****

THE FOLLOWING IS AN UNEDITED ROUGH DRAFT
TRANSLATION FROM THE CART PROVIDER'S OUTPUT
FILE. THIS TRANSCRIPT IS NOT VERBATIM AND HAS NOT
BEEN PROOFREAD. THIS IS NOT A LEGAL DOCUMENT.
THIS FILE MAY CONTAIN ERRORS.
THIS TRANSCRIPT MAY NOT BE COPIED OR
DISSEMINATED TO ANYONE UNLESS PERMISSION IS
OBTAINED FROM THE HIRING PARTY.

SOME INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN MAY BE
WORK PRODUCT OF THE SPEAKERS AND/OR PRIVATE
CONVERSATIONS AMONG PARTICIPANTS. HIRING
PARTY ASSUMES ALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SECURING
PERMISSION FOR DISSEMINATION OF THIS TRANSCRIPT
AND HOLDS HARMLESS TEXAS CLOSED CAPTIONING
FOR ANY ERRORS IN THE TRANSCRIPT AND ANY
RELEASE OF INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN.

*****DISCLAIMER!!!*****

>> I'd like to thank you all for joining us. I can

see we have quite a few people in already and a lot of people joining at a fast rate, so thank you for making time to be with us today.

while we're waiting for everybody to continue to join and settle in, I will move on to our accommodations notice. We have accommodations for people who are hard of hearing, a captioning service. You can access that by copying this URL from the featured feed. If you click on the featured feed it's in the upper right-hand corner of your screen, you will see my colleague has published this link there. You can cut and paste that into your browser and you can access our captioning service.

So just want to raise awareness that this is there for anyone who needs it.

Also transcripts of this event are available on our website about 48 hours within this event. Anyone who has attended today will receive an email with links to that as well as the slide deck that we are using today.

while we're waiting for people to come in, I'm going to ask you again to look in the featured feed. You can access that through the icon which is in the upper right-hand corner of your screen. It looks like two

speech bubbles, one with a question mark on it. If you click on that you will see two feeds. One is the featured feed. Please click on that. That's actually where the link to the captioning service is but also you will see two statements published in that feed. The first statement is I want to tell online. And the second statement is I already sell online. So could you please like the statement that is most pertinent to you or your business and where you're at right now? We want to get a sense of how many people are selling online and how many would like to. Please like that while we're waiting for people to come in. And thank you for joining in.

It's time to formally open the event. I'm going to open it up to our executive director Adriana Cruz. She's the executive director of the economic development and tourism office of the Governor. Over to you.

>> Thank you, Kelly and good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for joining us today. I'm Adriana Cruz, the executive director for the economic development and tourism office in the office of Governor Abbott. And on behalf of his office and all of us in the tourism I want to thank you for joining us today for our 13th Governor's

Small Business Webinar. As many of you know our small business team has been putting together these small business webinars since mid April and we're always changing up the topics and looking for things that will be of interest to our Texas small business owners. And our goal is to provide you with the information that you need and to connect you with resources to help you be successful on your entrepreneurial journey.

Today we're excited to talk about how to optimize online marketing and selling. And we're going to be joined by some great panelists who will be hearing from in just a few moments. You know, Texas continues to be ranked as the top in the country, the top place to start a business, the top state for business, top place to be an entrepreneur, as well as for job creation and economic vitality and that's a testament to you, all of our state's small business owners and entrepreneurs.

So we want to thank you for everything that you do to keep our economy going. And please know that here at the economic development and tourism office, our small business assistance team is here to help.

I know many of you have joined us on these webinars

before and if you're return to go this webinar, thank you for coming back. And if you're new to the event, thank you for joining us today.

Please be sure to give us your feedback as we're always trying to improve these webinars and give you the best service possible.

And now I'll turn it back over to our office's small business advocate, Kelly Spillane.

>> Great. Thank you, Adriana. We are interested in your feedback. You will be receiving an email from us asking you to fill out a survey. We would like you to take a few minutes to do that thank you in advance for that. Before we kick off I'm going to let you know that we have put two more statements into the featured feed. Again it's in the upper right-hand corner. You can click on that icon and these graphics on the bottom of the slide help you identify that link to click. The two statements that we're publishing are, I want to learn how to use social media to promote my business. Or I already use social media to promote my business. And again, please like the one that's closest to where you are.

We're interested to know what level of activity our

audience has with social media, but also in general with eCommerce.

So please like which of the two statements pertain to you and we have two pairs of statements in that feed, so please click two different ones that are relevant. We are grateful for you letting us know where you are at at this point in time.

So I'm going to share with you today who our panelists are. We have Diana Doukas, the manager for economic impact and also U.S. policy in Facebook and Instagram.

We have Lois Rouder, she's the senior business development manager for Amazon business.

And we also have Jessica Garcia, she's a tax compliance specialist with the Texas comptroller of public accounts.

And so moving along to the core of this event or the first half of this events, let's say, it's all about the frequently asked questions that our panelists get asked and we want to share that information with everybody so that you can hear potentially the main information that you're looking for, the main things that are on your mind. The second half of this event is about the live questions

and we'll open the live Q&A a good distance into these FAQs so you can then ask your question if we haven't already tackled it with these FAQs.

Without further adieu I am going to introduce you to Diana Doukas from Facebook. Thank you for joining us, Diana?

>> Thanks for having me.

>> We're delighted to have you. Delighted to have Facebook. We've had Facebook join us before and it's been great and it's great to have Facebook join us additionally today.

Let's get straight into the questions. We're going to talk a little bit about social media marketing and eCommerce. The first we have for you to is it's all about your programs. Facebook has a big focus on small business. Please tell us about your new programs where businesses can find useful resources online to help them optimize Facebook.

>> Great, thank you. And thank you to all of you for joining and to the Office of the Governor for having us and connecting this panel.

We all know that small businesses are the backbone

of the economy and we at Facebook have been dedicated to supporting small businesses for a long time, starting about a decade ago we started really investing and looking back into how we can make sure that small businesses find value on the platform. Not just in terms of how they can leverage the tools to create and grow their businesses, but what are we giving back to allow them to actually leverage the tools that we provide.

We are honored to be considered a supportive platform for small businesses, many have -- consider us a core lifeline during the pandemic, especially as so many are transitioning to online platforms. With that honor comes a lot of responsibility to make sure we are supporting small businesses and educating them to best use our platform so they can survive the pandemic and hopefully thrive in this new reality.

So we have translated all of our in-person programming. We have something called boost with Facebook. And we have -- which traditionally had gone around the country and bringing together hundreds of small businesses in different communities together to learn about our latest tips and tools and trainings in the new

products that we have. We've translate and brought them all online and hopefully we will -- we did actually have a boost in Austin earlier this year and hopefully we'll be back in Texas again.

But we also have digital marketing resources and other educational resources online through our free digital marketing partner called Blueprint. So we'll make sure that you get all these resources after this webinar.

And as we look to the holidays we know that small businesses are starting to feel the holiday crunch and knowing it is a very important time of year where many small businesses use this opportunity to grow awareness, audience and sell their products. We will be launching on October 30th, the end of this week, our season of support, which will be a multi-week training and opportunity for small businesses to learn how to use our new products, our new tools, how to use your ad service, how to really optimize our personal sized services, ad services that allow for small businesses to curate their content and products for their specific audience. We're very proud of that.

Also launching on Friday is our buy Black Friday initiative, which is a new initiative and we hope that many join us in this. It's a new initiative that we've launched to encourage consumers to find and support their local black-owned small business on every Friday of the holiday season. So we are trying to capture the moment of the holiday and that retail day and really connect people with their black-owned small businesses and drive the consumer and business relationship, and we're very excited about that.

we'll also have events starting every Friday starting this Friday to really herald the stories of black owned small businesses and provide tips and tools and trainings for the small businesses themselves and also for consumers.

>> Great. Thank you so much for that. I love the new programs. They're so pertinent to the program and I bet are going to help so many small businesses. Looking in our featured feed I can see actually that twice as many people are not selling online yet or are not using social media and want to, which is great. Half our audience potentially -- I guess over half our audience are not

engaging with us yet so this is going to be great, great information for them. Hopefully they can use it.

So the second question, Diana, please tell us about Facebook's eCommerce services and how they differ from other platforms and why a small business might choose it.

>> Sure. For all of you that are thinking about diving into the digital media place, come on in, the water is warm. We're here to make it as easy as possible for you to have a digital presence. And what we really pride ourselves in Facebook and Instagram is one, making it as easy as possible, but two to make your online presence feel like you as much as you possibly can. Translating your physical storefront and your physical foot traffic and bringing that into a virtual storefront and trying to recreate your virtual foot traffic.

And so there are multiple ways that you can use our platforms to engage with customers and to set up your accounts. Please sign up on Facebook, or on Instagram to establish your business page, which is a really easy way for consumers to find you and look at the platforms and the products that you might be selling. If you're a restaurant, communicating to your networks whether you're

open or what your change of operations may be, encouraging customers to come on in. It's a really great way to communicate with your customers. And through COVID we have really tried to listen to the business community and be both proactive and reactive in terms of how we can best support through our products.

So at the height of -- the beginning I should say, the beginning of the COVID crisis, we knew that we needed to act and so we created a couple of different products that you might find helpful now. We have a tool called temporary service change which allows for your community to know if your operations have changed, if your hours have changed, if you're offering delivery or pickup service and all the different ways that you might want to communicate the things that you might want to communicate to your audiences.

We also established a gift cards and personal fund-raising tool so that we know that especially during these times small businesses need to diversify their income as much as they can. And so these tools were really designed to bring communities together to support the small business community and the small businesses that

they love to patronize.

We also launched something called Facebook and Instagram shops, which was a really exciting product and really goes to the fact of what I mentioned earlier of bringing your personalized self online, which means -- it can seem daunting, it can seem like a challenge, but really through shops we have tried to recreate the consumer in-store experience. So you as a small business would fully set up your Instagram or Facebook shop. You can make it perfectly personalizable and customizable to really show off your personality. You can choose up to 30 products that you would want your certain audience to find.

You can use our targeted marketing tools to be able to curate exact products that you want a particular audience to see. And what's also great about this is that it's its ease of your customer as well.

Once they're shopping with you they don't have to -- when they go to pay they don't need to move to another payment platform. Everything is done in the Instagram or Facebook shop. So really making this a one-stop shop for your customer and online customer to visit your

online -- your online shop.

And we're trying to make it easier as well. We have something we just launched something called business suite which actually brings together the messaging services of Facebook, Instagram, and what's app that allows for a small business to manage all of the incoming emails or pings or messages from your various different platforms. We know that sometimes it's hard to bounce between platform to platform to platform to manage your customer needs.

This way we're allowing through business suite allows for everything to be done in one place. And we'll continue to iterate and create new products to make it easier for small businesses to have a presence online.

For those of you who are again thinking about getting online or new to it, please visit our Facebook resource hub for small businesses and again we'll make sure to send out this link, but please visit it because it does have step by step guidelines and encouraging resources to really show you how to set up your business page, your shop, and any other way you want to use the platform.

>> Excellent. Thank you so much. And I just want

to echo what Diana just said. All of the links that she's referring to will be in this slide deck. We'll show them to you later, but you will have access to them after the event through a link in an email that we will send to you. So don't worry, you will have access to all of this information.

And the final question today for Diana is about Instagram. Instagram is a very innovative platform and can be a really powerful brand building tool for businesses. Can you share with us some key online resources to help companies make the most of Instagram?

>> what makes Instagram such a great platform is it really allows for small business to even more so show their personality, their interests, create a community like we do on Facebook, really create a community of loyal customers and that relationship between the small business and the customers because it really allows for your -- for your business to showcase its personality, to -- to best serve your audience in terms of what are the right products. It allows for you to use short-term videos. We launched something called Reels earlier this year which really allowed for a quick and more interactive

experience between the business and the consumer.

We are consistently looking at how else to really engage in what's most of interest to the audience and how do you again look to create that online community.

Again, I will send out the different things that you can use to go through all the various opportunities for Instagram, but it really also skews towards a younger audience and so that's something to remember as you're looking to again expand your audience as you're a small business and really again connect with the consumers in your community.

>> Okay. Thank you so much, Diana. That was great information and people in the audience will have a an opportunity to type a question into the live Q&A feed and ask Diana a question during the second half of the event. Thank you. We're going to move along now and we're going to talk to Lois Rouder. Thank you, Lois for joining us. We have a couple of questions for Lois and we'll get straight into that now.

Please, Lois, the first question is can you tell us about some useful tools and resources that small businesses can use to optimize Amazon for their

businesses?

>> Yeah, I can. And thanks so much, Kelly. And I also want to thank the Office of the Governor and your team for bringing us together today.

So Amazon and Amazon Business for those of you that don't know about it, Amazon Business actually started about five years ago as a way for businesses to basically start to buy on Amazon. But all of our sellers, whether they're selling on Amazon or Amazon Business have access to a ton of different tools and resource and those it be things like our small business academy. Our small business academy is actually a website where small businesses can go to take courses that can help them with their education on how to sell online. These are free courses that are available. Whether or not you have an Amazon Business account or not. They're available to you to take. They're recorded classes as well as there are scheduled classes every single week. So it's a definite great location that you can go to and take courses and again we'll make sure that you have all that information and resources.

We also have put together a lot of tools and resources

that are highlighting our small and certified businesses. So one that we are really, really proud of is our black-owned business website. So right now on both the consumer side as well as on the Amazon Business side, there's a site which hosts our black-owned businesses. It's got a curated collection of businesses and products that are available and we definitely are proud of that and would welcome everyone to go there and check it out. Again, it's both on the consumer side and on the business side.

We also have a lot of tools that are specifically set up so that as our customers are searching for small business that they're able to find you. So on Amazon we have 300 million customers that have a high intention to buy, that are looking on Amazon Business everyday. So having people on there that have a certification, we are able to actually surface that to buyers so as they're looking to support small, local, certified sellers, we have a way for you to be able to upload your certifications, whether those are state certifications or national certifications, and allow buyers to be able to find you within, you know, all of the other sellers that

are out there.

And then also, on a site that's called Build Your Business, there are a tremendous number of tools available and those span from people that potentially want to become Amazon Kindle publishers. So if you've written a book and you want to publish it you can do it for free on Kindle publishing. Or you want to be a service provider. Let's say you want to become one of our service delivery partners, you can do that as well and the build your business website has all of that listed there as well.

And then lastly if you are interested in maybe selling your handmade goods, so you have, you have pottery, jewelry, anything handmade, we have a department there for anything that's handmade. So there's a variety of different websites that you will be directed to that all have a place, whether you're again a publisher, you're an app developer, you want to become a service provider, you've got handmade goods, we have a place for you and we would welcome you on to our marketplace.

>> That's fantastic and actually when Lois is finished with this next question that I ask her we have a slide and I'll show you briefly. Again, allowing you

access to those things that she's referred to after the event.

And so the second question, Lois, and I'm interested in this and I know we all think of Amazon as consumers for your amazing B to C, business to consumer offering, and amount of vendors and products to deal with, but we're particularly interested in hearing today about Amazon for Business and how that's changing how businesses sell to other businesses.

>> Yeah, that's great. Again, about five years ago we basically came out with Amazon for Business. So the tagline was everything you love about Amazon, but for business.

So it is a B to B marketplace. It's about five years old. Three careers ago we released financial figures on that. So in 2018 we were about a 10 billion-dollar part of Amazon, the fastest growing part of Amazon and we are obviously selling to all different types of customers. So we have large government agencies that are purchasing on Amazon, we have local populous governments that are buying here, hospitals that are buying in record numbers because -- especially during the pandemic they've come to

us to find PPE products.

We have educational institutions. 75,000 non-profits are buying on Amazon Business. So there's a tremendous number of business customers that are here buying products.

And one in particular that we're really proud of, just recently Amazon was awarded a GSA contract. So it's for micro purchases under \$10,000. It's about a six billion dollar contract. And obviously the reason I'm bringing it up is for all of these small businesses that are interested in getting to the federal government and finding those buyers, they're buying on Amazon today. So by being a small -- registered small, women owned, veteran owned or any certified business, you will be found by the federal buyers that are purchasing. And you don't need to go out and get your own contract. You're actually able to reach those customers through Amazon Business.

And again, they're searching for you based on that certification so we want to have you upload that, but they're here buying.

So you know, we're changing the way that businesses are buying, we're providing them with all of the

convenience of Amazon so they have access to all of the products that Amazon sells, but the business products in particular are of value to them because they can obviously save money by buying those products here, we're able to offer quantity discounts, or our sellers are able to offer quantity discounts to the customers. They're able to offer palletized shipping, different types of shipping methods to the customers. And business buyers really are gravitating towards this because of the convenience that it offers, because of the selection that we're able to offer them, and the fact that, you know, they know that they're going to be receiving a great value for their purchasing dollars.

So that's just a few of the ways that we're changing how businesses are selling to other businesses, and just wanted to kind of open up the fact that there's a tremendous number of businesses that are here buying today, looking specifically for small and certified sellers.

>> That's great. Thank you so much, Lois. That's really interesting and pertinent information.

I'm just going to move on to that slide I mentioned.

This has a lot of information on it. I'm just showing it to you that you will have access by the email link that we will send you so you can dig into all of the information that Lois has referred to.

I'll also announce that our live Q&A feed is now open up you will find that feed in the upper right-hand corner of the screen where that icon is with the two speech bubbles, one with the question mark and you will see my questions and you can type in questions that you might have if any of our panelists.

So while we talk to our next panelist, who is Jessica Garcia, you guys can be typing your questions, and we're going to talk to Jessica Garcia from the comptroller's office. Thank you very much for joining us today.

>> Yes, thank you for having me again.

>> Yes. It's great to have you again. You were fantastic the last time and we know you will be great today. You have so much really relevant information for people, especially given the amount of people who aren't online selling, but want to be. So this great information you're going to share with us today is going to be relevant to them. And I'll kick off with the first question.

So when am I responsible as a vendor for reporting sales taxes to my business -- sorry, I'll say that again. What am I responsible for reporting sales taxes that my business incurs, Jessica?

>> So when you have a sales tax permit we'll set you up either as a monthly, quarterly or yearly filer depending on how you apply for the application, but you will always file your report even if you had no sales for that particular period or if you didn't collect any tax due to the situation, but just remember you've always got to file your report. So I have to tell people, we don't know what you're doing until you report it and then it's logged in.

But if you're permitted you have to file your report.

>> Okay, that's great to know, especially if you're just beginning, great to get off on the right foot.

Our next question is -- and you might actually define this for me before you kick off, but how can a marketplace provider certify that it will collect and remit tax for third-party sellers? So you might let people know what a marketplace provider is. And then the second part of that is is there a special form required to do this?

>> Sure, great question. So a marketplace provider is going to be either an entity that owns or operates a marketplace and they process the sales and payments on behalf of the marketplace seller, which is you guys. And this is stuff like Amazon, Etsy, eBay, just a few. Those are what we call marketplace providers. Now, there is no special form required by the marketplace provider to give you as a seller that they are collecting or remitting the taxes for Texas.

Now, the seller can be made aware of this by maybe the terms in the agreement or in their contract, however they got that set up, but there is no need to have a separate document that shows that this marketplace provider is remitting the taxes for you.

>> Okay. Thank you for that. We have a third question, and before I ask that I'll just mention to everybody that there will be links again on the second to last slide in this deck to guides and information that can help you get into more detail on these answers that Jessica is giving.

And our final question for Jessica today is: If I live in Texas and sell only through a certified

marketplace, do I need a sales tax permit?

>> The answer is yes. Since you are a Texas seller and you have physical presence in this state, you've got to have a sales tax permit and still file your report.

>> Okay. And that's a straight answer. Thank you for that. And again, more details available on all of that information for people when this event is over.

So we finished our frequently asked questions piece. Thank you to my three panelists for joining with me to do that. I'm going to hand over now to my colleague Jarvis Brewer. Jarvis is going to deal with the live questions and answers -- the live questions and he will field them to the panelists to get answers. Over to you, Jarvis.

>> Thank you, Kelly so much for that introduction. And I see that we do have a lot of questions coming in.

Because we went so quick with the Texas CPA a lot of them hadn't had the chance to get publish, but continue to submit your questions and as mentioned before, if you see questions that you like and you would like to have answered by our panelists, do like those questions the same way you did with the questions earlier in the event.

So I'm just going to start with some of the ones that

have just recently been submitted. The question is for Amazon. Does Amazon collect taxes for states other than Texas from its customers? So I will pass this on to you, Lois.

>> Okay, great. Yes, Amazon does that. And actually when you sign up for your seller account, one of the things that you're going to be setting up is your tax profile.

So in there if a state requires that we collect tax and we will collect the tax and remit it on your behalf, if a state doesn't require that, but you still want to do that, then you're able to do that as well.

So again, when you set up your seller account, that will all be part of that and again for the State of Texas since they require that we would collect that and remit that.

>> Thank you, Lois for that explanation.

This next question is pretty straightforward and I'm going to throw it to you, Jessica. It's a tax-related question and the question comes anonymously and says: Do you have to charge a sales tax?

>> Um, that's a pretty broad question. If you are

selling taxable items in the State of Texas, yes, you've got to charge sales tax on that item you sell.

>> Okay. And I'll try to elaborate a little bit further on what I think the questioner is asking.

So maybe they're referring to products that are going to be on one of these platforms, these social media or platforms such as Amazon and you mentioned Etsy and whatnot. How are those sales tax collected?

>> So if you're selling through the marketplace provider, such as like Amazon, they will be collecting the taxes for you, but you will not file that on your report. Because they are reporting it for you. We don't want to double the information of sales, I guess you could say.

That's if you sell through a marketplace provider. But if you're selling through your own website that you have, you still file those sales taxes on your taxable sales. You collect it and remit it to the state.

>> Thank you, Jessica.

Moving right along, this question comes from Lloyd, and this is a question for both Facebook and Amazon. So the question is: what opportunities do Facebook and Amazon have for black-owned companies that provides

professional services such as I.T. or staffing? So Lloyd provides services such as I.T. or staffing and he's wondering what opportunities do Facebook have for those type of companies?

I'll provide this question to Diana and then we'll move forward to Lois?

>> Sure. And that's a great question. So there are a couple of different ways to answer that. So we certainly have a supplier diversity initiative where we have committed to over a billion dollars in supplier diversity. And making sure to hit that over the next three years. That's a commitment that we have made. We actually made internally a long time ago, but we've just more publicly announced that.

We also have a tool called businesses nearby. And within that there's a tool to discover black-owned businesses. And so what that allows for is in businesses nearby a consumer can look within a radius of one mile and five hundred miles to find businesses near them. And within that tool it is a fully opt-in opportunity for black-owned businesses and minority-owned businesses, but within the tool there is an opportunity for you to

designate and self-verify yourself as a black-owned business. This then allows the businesses nearby to use the tool for search for black-owned firms that they may be able to work with.

>> Thank you. I'll move on to Lois if you have anything additional for Amazon.

>> Yeah, I think we too have an internal program that's available. So I'd love to just get a follow-up email with the information and be able to help connect the dots, if you will, to our internal team.

I think from an external perspective if you're looking to sell professional services online, typically we would be accepting applications for that and we would thereafter have you in our network of service providers. Right now however our services are on pause and they're on pause because we're not able to put people in people's houses, deliver services or into a business to deliver services.

So for the time being we're not accepting new applications for service providers, but again, we want to know who you are, we definitely have that as a capability and as soon as we take it off of our pause we will be

allowing people to register and to provide services to our customers.

So hopefully that helps, but we'd love to hear from you and love to connect the dots internally for anybody that's interested.

>> Thank you, Lois. And I'll stick right here with you for this next question as it both relates to Facebook and Amazon once again.

A simple question once again. I think it is a question that everyone is interested in. The question is how do we garner hits on Facebook and Amazon? Lois?

>> So Amazon, that's a great question. Obviously customers come to Amazon and they type in information that they search for. So they don't necessarily look for a product, but they might look for a description of a product.

So as a seller when you're putting together your catalog and you're putting together the product information in there, having the right key words is going to be critical for customers to be able to find those products.

So we allow for every single product that you want

to sell on Amazon, there's about a 250 key word area for you to be able to fill out and that's how customers are going to be able to find you is with that.

So that's the first way that you will be able to do it.

The second thing is that we offer things like sponsored products. So sponsored products allows you to create ways for customers to find you and for you to be able to rise up in the rankings among those products.

So as a seller on Amazon you will have access to sponsored products, you will have access to the key words that are part of your product offering, and that's how customers are going to find you and that's how you're going to be exposed to these customers.

And then the third way again, and we talked about it earlier, is through certifications. So your certifications that you have are things that our customers are searching for. So we allow our business buyers that have business prime to create what we call diversity credentialed policies. And those policies are set up so that if you are, let's say, a William-owned business or a -- a woman-owned business or a minority-owned business,

there would be a policy whereby any time they were searching for a product, if the product was sold by a minority business or a woman-owned business, it would come up in the search results. So that's a great way for a business to be able to raise themselves up in that search result by utilizing those certifications and then obviously our buyers are enabling certification policies that make it easy during the normal search process and buying process to highlight those businesses and buy from those businesses with those certifications.

>> Thank you, Lois. I'm going to come back to that certifications in a second, but I like to see if Diana has any way to again how this -- how does a person garner hits through Facebook or Instagram?

>> It's really all about community and using our ad services. So one of the things that we're proud of, especially in supporting -- allowing for businesses to transition online, but then also better their business online and leverage the tools that we have is through the -- our educational resources because it will take you step by step through how to find your audience. And so what are the right tags, what are the right -- what are

the most resonant photos, what is the audience you're looking for? You are a tailored chocolatier, let's say, how are you find the chocoholics, and it's using the platforms and the targeting that we enable for small businesses and then the differing various platforms, so like shops, engage in businesses nearby and the various different ways that we allow for small businesses to promote themselves and really work within their community is the best way to do it.

I will say that so many of our products are free in terms of our tools and trainings and the products at large, which makes Facebook and Instagram a really attractive way for small businesses to enter the market and really start to get their name out there, find new audiences and really work within their communities.

>> Absolutely. Taking advantage of free tools is something we all can do.

So I mentioned a second ago that I would come back to a question about certifications. And this question was submitted specifically about how do we get the certification of woman-owned and what qualifies? So I'm going to equally submit this question to my colleague

Kelly. I'll probably tag on to the end of it.

But again, Kelly, the question is how do we get certification of woman-owned and what qualifies?

>> Okay, that's a broad question. I'm going to give you some general information and I'm sure Jarvis will have information to add to that. And if the person who asked that doesn't feel they got enough information, you can reach out to us after the event and we can help you get more detail on your specific circumstances.

But there are several organizations that will certify you as a woman-owned business. It depends on where you want to do business. Do you want to do business with state agencies, then it is the comptroller's office has the HUB program, the underutilized business program that will certify you as a woman-owned business that is considered historically underutilized, woman-owned business are in that category. So you can go to the comptroller's office and get that information there.

You may find larger cities in Texas have their own woman-owned business certifications. They would be the main areas that I would guide people and I would tell them to ask themselves that, with which owing or what level do

you want to do business? Is it city level, state level or federal level if it's public procurement on your mind often that is the reason why people get those certifications.

As our panelists here have been talking about, both Facebook and Amazon have ways to highlight woman-owned business. I know they would highlight any outside certifications you have. I think it's mainly the outside certifications that you get that will help you stand out as a woman-owned business on those platforms. And I'll pass it to Jarvis in case he has additional information there.

>> Yes, Kelly. You actually answered pretty much what I was going to say as well. The first would be identifying who do you want to do business with? If you're wanting to do business with state agencies or state universities then the HUB certification is the certification that you would want to obtain. The HUB certification applies to many protected classes including women owned, people with disabilities, veteran owned, and certain races have fallen into the category of the HUB certification.

So again, that's only for state universities and state agencies.

If you're looking to do business with your local government, obtaining a local certification may be an option for you. For example, if you're in Dallas you may want to obtain a Dallas woman-owned business certification, which is specific to that city and local area. So again, identify who you would like to do business with and then see if there's a certification for that government.

And with that, another question just came up. The question is: For those of you who are just beginning the selling online journey, is there a webinar that covers the basic steps of how to stand up a business and what you are legally required to have in place?

I will actually refer to our starting a business webinar, which I believe we had it in early September, but that webinar was about just general starting a business. A lot of their information referenced in that webinar is relative to both online as well as physical brick and mortar businesses. So that's a great webinar for just looking at general information for starting a business as

opposed to online some of the same requirements such as setting up your business, the business structure, the first thing you will want to do is choose whether you want to be an LLC, a sole proprietorship, a partnership. So that would be through the Texas Secretary of State, setting up what your business structure or business entity would be.

And then as far as taxing, that's exactly why we have Jessica Garcia here who can answer some of those questions related to sales tax and what you may have to do with your marketplace.

So just wanted to throw that out there and answer that question right away.

Our next question comes from Robyn. Many of the products that you mentioned are our competitors. How can we be sure that we will not be blocked, censored, moved to the bottom of the search, etcetera?

So I'm going to throw this question to Lois. It seems like it's more of an Amazon question. So Lois, do you have anything for Robyn?

>> So can you read that again?

>> Absolutely. Many of the products that you

mentioned are our competitors. How can we be sure that we will not be blocked, censored, moved to the bottom of the search, etcetera?

>> Right. So I think that is a really good question and I think probably a lot of people are wondering that. Within Amazon obviously there's hundreds of millions of products and there's millions of sellers as well. So the chances are very high that whatever product you're selling, somebody else is already selling it on Amazon. But the opportunity is still there for sellers that have -- they're certified sellers.

Maybe you're offering a product that many other sellers are selling, but you're certified and they're not so that's going to help you to raise yourself up within the search criteria and obviously expose those products to millions of new customers.

So I think that there's a lot of opportunity. You know, we have sellers that are coming online everyday and they are selling the same products, but what differentiates them is the same thing that differentiates them offline, whether it's their customer service, whether it's their ability to get products to customers

more quickly than others. Whether it's that they're certified and others are not.

So whatever helps you to differentiate yourself offline can help you to differentiate yourself online. So I think you have to kind of think of those things in tandem.

And then just remember that customer service matters no matter what. The way that you promote your products matters, the way you present those products matters, the way that you address your customers and get back to them with information, whether they have a problem with their product and they need technical support or whatever, your ability to service that customer is going to be, you know, as important online as offline. And those things are part of what's going to help you to continue to be raised up in the algorithm so that you are exposed to many, many new customers.

And no matter what, you know, with 300 million online customers that are searching with a high intent to buy, you're going to get somebody that's interested in the product.

So I think there's a large opportunity here and it

seems to be growing.

>> Absolutely.

So competition will exist regardless of if you're selling online or in person. So thank you so much, Lois.

I will actually stick with you for this next question, but before I ask this question, I do want to say our colleague Michael Treager has posted in the chat the link to the YouTube recording of our starting a business webinar. So if you're looking and interested in that, Michael has submitted that link.

So moving forward, Lois, this next question is also for you and Amazon. The question is: Can Amazon help businesses selling to utility companies, oil companies and heavy industry businesses?

>> Yeah, that's a great question. So yeah, we actually have an entire part of our Amazon Business sales team that is selling into those same accounts.

So it's I think it's a great opportunity if you have a product that's specific to that type of customer, then we have a sales team that's also selling to those customers. So I think it's a great opportunity for us to be able to work together to bring your products to the

marketplace and obviously attract those buyers that are also from those industries here to be able to purchase those products from you. So yeah, I think there's a great opportunity to do that.

>> Absolutely. Thank you so much.

So Diana, I have a question for you. This question comes from Gregorio, and the question is what strategy is used in small businesses in small towns like San Angelo for Facebook, Instagram, etcetera?

>> I go back to really being the platform that Facebook and Instagram are really community-oriented platforms. So it's about making sure that you know your geographic targets. Knowing where you're looking to operate. Knowing what kind of audience you're looking to attract. What kind of consumers you're looking for. And it's really all about -- I would say this goes whether you're a national seller, international seller, smaller. It's all about communication. And really having a presence showing up, but then communicating with your customers so that they know thousand to best, one, they can find you, and two, they know that you are taking their interest into mind. And as you're setting up your shop,

as you're setting up your business page, what kind of products are you showcasing? Especially during Facebook and Instagram shops, you can customize it per audience. So you can make sure that a certain customer can see five to 30 specialized products really for them. Again it's about using the communications tools to really create the relationship with your consumers, making sure they know how to support you, how you're operating, especially if you're a restaurant. Really trying to create that community especially in those smaller markets.

>> Thank you, ma'am.

All right, moving forward so this question came in when we mentioned some of the black-owned businesses, some of the programs that both Facebook and Amazon have. This question comes anonymously and asks: Is there also a Latino business owner website or product. So I'm going to submit this to Diana or Lois to see if either Amazon or Facebook, Instagram, has anything for Latino I'll start with you, Diana?

>> Happy to stop. So when talking about black-owned businesses, the tool is actually for all minorities and underrepresented groups or underserved. So yes, there is

the ability to distinguish yourself and self verify on the platform.

what I also want to -- I should have mentioned this earlier, but we have a program called Elevate, which is specifically designed to address the needs of black owned and Hispanic and Latinx owned businesses. We have our tools and educational resources translated into Spanish. We really look to meet the small business where they are and have culturally relevant material. We make sure that there are access to all of the educational resources and it's designed specifically to help equalize and provide opportunity for black owned businesses and Latinx and Hispanic businesses.

So we'll make sure to get that link out there as well, but Elevate is a great resource if you're looking for, whether how to get online for the first time or you have more experience and you want to continue to grow.

>> Thank you. I think many people will be interested in what Elevate has to offer.

Moving to Lois, same question, are there anything for Latino business owners with Amazon?

>> Yeah. Again, from a [indiscernible]

perspective, we absolutely want to know all minority businesses, we want to have their certifications uploaded and presented to our customers.

From an actual landing page perspective, the landing page that we have right now for our black-owned businesses is specific to that community.

And we will be expanding that in 2021 to all minorities. Today however that is a very focused website and it is specifically for our black-owned businesses. So look for that to change as of 2021, but right now we know that when we look at the businesses that are most impacted by COVID, are most impacted by the political unrest, it's our black owned businesses. So we are definitely focused on that community. We want to be able to provide them with the resources and the attention, and again, as we move forward into 2021, that will be expanded, but today that is the focus area for us.

>> Thank you for that clarification.

I'll stick right here with you, Lois, for this next question as well.

The question is are any of the platforms suitable for selling only B to B products or can the offerings include

services? If so what would you expand on what would work and what would not? So I believe you touched on this a little bit with Kelly in the FAQs, but the question is more about selling B to B, what would work and what would not?

>> So yeah, so Amazon Business is our B to B website, and again, for customers that are on there purchasing products, they're looking for things that are related to their business. So maintenance repair and operations type products would be great category to offer. I.T. products. Hospitality products, things like that that -- office products that are very focused on businesses or what the business buyers are there purchasing.

So I think the top categories would be I.T., office and MRO. Those are three very high demand categories that would be great for anybody to offer.

And then obviously when you're offering those products to our business customers, you can also offer that same product to a consumer. So you're able to set up your pricing model so that you're offering it to either consumers and business customers or potentially only business customers if that's your desire. So it's really

up to you as to how you want to sell.

And then in terms of services, I think we kind of touched on that earlier where it's on pause right now. If you've gone on Amazon, you know that you can buy services online. We have housekeeping services, we have product installation services. From a B to B perspective, the services that we will allow to be offered when this kind of freeze is lifted will be things like -- let's say that a business wanted to have monitors installed, TV monitors in a hotel, that could be a service. Or you could help somebody go out and put together a chair or desk or whatever kind of service that you have, I.T. services.

But again, right now those are on pause, so we're not accepting any applications at this time, but when we do, definitely want to have these service providers come back to us and offer those services on our marketplace.

>> Absolutely, thank you so much for that.

I'm going to move with Jessica. I have a question related to taxes for you.

This question is which services are considered taxable and which are not considered taxable. Without going through a whole list, web design, virtual services,

online services, would those fall into taxable products or services?

>> That is a great question. I would say take a look at our publication. It's publication 96-259. We talk about taxable services because there are 17 broad categories and we do give examples in each category. If you still don't find your answer there you can email us your question, give specific information, that's being done and all and we can get back to you with an answer.

Our email address is tax.help@cpa.texas.gov.

>> Thank you. I am going to have you repeat that as well as the email address for people who may want to take that down because I think it's very important. So could you again repeat the email address and the publication?

>> Sure. So first the publication is number 96-259. It's titled taxable services.

And the email address if you have any additional questions or you can't find your answer there, you can email us directly at tax.help@cpa.texas.gov.

>> Thank you for that. This last question I am leaving it open for our panelists for whoever has great advice.

[Captioning has to end at 2:00 p.m. for scheduled time].

It seems that it is advantageous for products to be sold on Facebook, Instagram, Amazon. Please correct me and tell me if I have a service, how can I properly advertise and sell and market my service through your platforms? Don't have an order of who would like to answer that first. I don't know if I see a hand or someone willing to -- I'll go with you, Lois. You're chuckling there.

>> well, unfortunately I don't have a good answer for that in that we're on pause right now when it comes to service.

So again, when we accept applications, then yes, we would love to have the services back online, but until COVID's over and we're able to deliver that service into a business or a home, we're just not accepting applications at this time.

Sorry.

[Captioning service is ending at this time, 2:00pm].