COURSE OUTLINE

Course:	Professional Certificate in E-Commerce for MSMEs
Contact Hours:	24 Contact Hours (Eight 3-hour sessions)
Pre-requisite:	None (No prior technical or e-commerce experience required.)
Level:	Introductory

About this course

E-Commerce Fundamentals for MSMEs prepares participants to plan and operate an e-commerce business within Trinidad and Tobago. It focuses on the practical decisions behind online selling, from assessing an opportunity and choosing where to sell, to payments, fulfilment and customer care.

Designed for both product and service businesses, the course can be applied to an existing business or business concept. It is vendor-neutral, with principles that transfer across e-commerce platforms and sales channels.

Participants apply what they learn to build an **E-Commerce Operating Kit** for their own business or concept. Developed over eight weeks, the Kit brings together the key decisions, tools and plans developed throughout the course.

Course learning outcomes

On successful completion, participants will be able to:

1. Evaluate an e-commerce opportunity and assess evidence of customer demand.
2. Compare sales channels and platforms and select options suited to the needs of the business.
3. Apply an understanding of buyer behaviour to the structure and content of an online store.
4. Develop a structured, platform-portable catalogue of products or services.
5. Identify the legal, regulatory, data protection and security considerations affecting an e-commerce business in Trinidad and Tobago.
6. Explain how online payments work and evaluate the payment options available to small businesses in Trinidad and Tobago.
7. Evaluate fulfilment options and develop appropriate approaches to customer care, returns and other operational risks.
8. Develop and justify an E-Commerce Operating Kit for an existing or proposed business.

Assessment

Continuous assessment — 35%. Applied work as produced in session across Modules 2–7, and contribution to discussion and group work.

E-Commerce Operating Kit — 50%. The assembled and revised Kit and supporting rationale, submitted after Module 8.

Capstone presentation — 15%. Participants present and justify the key decisions in their Kit and respond to questions about their reasoning and readiness.

E-Commerce Operating Kit

The E-Commerce Operating Kit is developed throughout the course and brings together the participant's research, decisions and operating plans.

It includes:

- Demand evidence
- Business model canvas
- Channel and platform decisions, checklist and order path
- Product or service catalogue
- Customer policy set
- Risk register
- Payment approach
- Fulfilment and customer care
- Decision rationale

Earlier sections may be revised as participants progress through the course and develop a fuller understanding of their business.

Delivery approach

Each three-hour session combines direct instruction with applied work, discussion and practical activities. Participants work individually on their own business or concept and may also work with peers to review ideas, explore scenarios and challenge assumptions.

Focused home activities extend the learning beyond the session through observation and research that feed into subsequent modules.

Practical work in Module 5 uses a supplied store environment. No platform account, software purchase or payment provider registration is required.

Participants require access to a computer, internet, spreadsheet application and Copilot.

M O D U L E S

Eight modules delivered over eight weeks, one evening per week.

Module aim, learning outcomes, lesson summary, and in-class activities.

MODULE 1

Introduction to E-Commerce and the Local Market

Week 1

Aim

To introduce e-commerce and the conditions shaping it in the Trinidad and Tobago market.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Define e-commerce and compare common trading relationships and revenue models.
- Explain how market conditions in Trinidad and Tobago influence how an e-commerce business sells to and serves its customers.

Module breakdown

Course orientation. Participants are introduced to the course, what they will learn, and how each module contributes to their final, reusable E-Commerce Operating Kit. They will also identify the key questions they want the course to answer, which will be revisited in Module 8.

E-commerce and its business models. What does it actually mean to do business online? This lesson explores where e-commerce happens. Participants are introduced to common trading relationships, including B2C, B2B, D2C and C2C, and explore different ways e-commerce businesses operate.

Local e-commerce realities. Selling online in Trinidad and Tobago comes with its own opportunities and challenges. This lesson explores the local conditions that influence how MSMEs operate and what these realities mean for the choices they make when developing an e-commerce business.

In-class activity

Activity 1. Storefront review: Participants assess two local e-commerce storefronts and one international benchmark, recording observations that are revisited in Module 5.

Homework for Module 2

Participants identify two businesses selling something similar to their idea, locally or internationally, and note what they sell, how they price it, and how customers order and pay.

MODULE 2

Planning an E-Commerce Business: Vetting the Idea

Week 2

Aim

To enable participants to assess whether a business idea is viable for e-commerce, examine evidence of customer demand, and identify what must be validated before committing time or money.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Assess whether a product or service is viable as an e-commerce business.
- Use a Business Model Canvas to plan how the business could operate.
- Distinguish evidence from assumption, encouragement and opinion.
- Select validation methods appropriate to the resources available.

Module breakdown

Assessing viability. Not every product or business idea is suited to selling online. This lesson explores how to assess whether an idea has e-commerce potential. Participants are also introduced to the Business Model Canvas as a practical tool for thinking through how the business could operate.

Evidence, assumptions and validation. A good idea still needs to be tested. This lesson explores how to separate what you know from what you assume, and how to gather useful evidence before investing too much time or money.

In-class activity

Activity 1. Business concept and assumptions: Participants define and present their business concept, then use group feedback to identify assumptions that need to be tested.

Activity 2. Business Model Canvas: Participants draft a Business Model Canvas for their e-commerce idea.

Kit contribution. Demand Evidence Statement and Business Model Canvas.

Homework for Module 3

Participants identify where their intended customers could find and buy similar products or services and which channels their business could realistically use.

MODULE 3

Sales Channels and Platform Selection

Week 3

Aim

To enable participants to evaluate sales channels and platforms, select the most suitable options for their business, and plan how customers will find and buy from them.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Compare sales channels based on cost, control, reach and operational requirements.
- Distinguish between channels that capture existing demand and those that require the business to create demand.
- Assess the suitability of sales channels and platforms for their business.

Module breakdown

Channel selection. Where should the business sell? This lesson explores the different channels available to an e-commerce business and the trade-offs involved in choosing between them. Participants consider factors such as cost, control, reach and operational effort, and assess which options best suit their business and customers.

Demand and the order path. Different channels play different roles in helping customers find and buy from a business. This lesson explores how channels capture or create demand and reviews the customer journey from discovery through to post-sale.

In-class activity

Activity 1. Channel and platform assessment: Participants adapt a supplied checklist to their business needs and use it to compare their options.

Activity 2. Channel decision and order path: Participants select and justify their sales channels and map the path from customer discovery to a confirmed order, request or booking.

Kit contribution. Channel Decision, channel and platform checklist, and order path.

Homework for Module 4

Participants review the terms, returns and privacy information on two e-commerce sites and note anything they find important, unexpected or unclear.

MODULE 4

Trust, Risk, and the Legal Environment

Week 4

Aim

To enable participants to understand the legal, regulatory, security and customer trust considerations affecting an e-commerce business and develop policies and risk controls suited to their operations.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify business risks and appropriate measures to mitigate them.
- Identify the legal, regulatory and data protection requirements affecting e-commerce businesses in Trinidad and Tobago.
- Identify security concerns and explain the risks they present to the business and its customers.
- Draft customer-facing policies suited to how their business operates.

Module breakdown

Legal, regulatory and security considerations. What does an e-commerce business need to consider before it starts trading? This lesson explores the legal, regulatory, consumer protection and data protection requirements affecting e-commerce businesses in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as practical security considerations for protecting the business and its customers.

Trust as a commercial consideration. Trust can influence whether a customer chooses to buy. This lesson explores the information, business practices and policies that influence customer confidence and purchasing decisions.

In-class activity

Activity 1. Customer policies: Participants use supplied templates to draft the policies relevant to their business and customise them to reflect how the business operates.

Activity 2. Risk register: Participants identify key risks to their business and possible measures to mitigate them.

Kit contribution. Draft Policy Set and Risk Register.

Homework for Module 5

Participants gather the information and images needed to build their product or service catalogue.

MODULE 5

Store Structure and Buyer Psychology

Week 5

Aim

To enable participants to understand how customers behave and make purchasing decisions online, and apply this understanding to the structure and content of their online store.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Explain how conscious and subconscious cues influence the way customers navigate and interact with an online store.
- Organise a catalogue to support how customers find and evaluate products or services.
- Produce complete catalogue records with listing content, options, prices and availability, using AI where it helps and correcting its output.

Module breakdown

Buyer psychology. How do customers decide whether to buy from an online store? This lesson explores how customers behave when shopping online, what they look for or overlook, and the factors that influence their confidence and purchasing decisions.

Store structure and content. This lesson explores how the organisation and content of an online store help customers find, understand and purchase products or services. Participants consider store structure, navigation and catalogue content, and how information is presented and maintained. AI is introduced as a tool to support content development, with an emphasis on reviewing and refining its output.

In-class activity

Activity 1. Catalogue development: Participants build and organise their product or service catalogue using a supplied template.

Activity 2. Store review: Participants load their catalogue into a supplied store environment and review it from the customer's perspective, identifying any gaps in their catalogue records.

Kit contribution. Platform-portable product or service catalogue.

Homework for Module 6

Participants speak with two or three small businesses to learn how they accept online payments and what their experience has been with the methods they use.

MODULE 6

Payments In: Systems and Access

Week 6

Aim

To enable participants to understand how online payments work, evaluate the payment options available to MSMEs, and select an approach suited to their business.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Explain what happens between a customer making a payment and the business receiving the funds.
- Compare the payment options available to small businesses in Trinidad and Tobago.
- Select and justify a payment approach suited to their business and level of access.

Module breakdown

How online payments work. What happens when a customer pays online? This lesson explores the payment process, the parties involved, and what happens between a customer making a payment and the business receiving the funds. It also examines where and why payments may be delayed, fail, or be abandoned.

The local payment landscape. This lesson explores the payment options available to small businesses in Trinidad and Tobago and the advantages, limitations and requirements of each. Participants consider how access, cost and business needs influence which payment options are suitable.

In-class activity

Activity 1. Payment scenario: Participants review a series of payment scenarios and identify what may be happening, what the customer sees, and what the business needs to know or do.

Activity 2. Payment approach: Participants compare the payment options available to them, drawing on their homework findings, and select and justify an approach suited to their business and current level of access.

Kit contribution. Payment Approach and updated Risk Register.

Homework for Module 7

Participants research how businesses offering similar products or services manage fulfilment, including what happens after a customer places an order or makes a booking.

Orders Out: Delivery and Customer Care

Week 7

Aim

To enable participants to determine how a product or service can be delivered to the customer and how the business should respond when something goes wrong.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Compare fulfilment options for products and services and assess their suitability for the business.
- Explain how returns, cancellations, refunds and other losses affect an e-commerce business.
- Develop appropriate and sustainable responses to customer problems.

Module breakdown

Getting the product or service to the customer. How does an online purchase reach the customer? This lesson explores the different ways products and services can be fulfilled and what each requires from the business. It also examines the local delivery landscape and how it influences the options available and what a business can reasonably promise its customers.

Customer care, returns and losses. What happens when things don't go as planned? This lesson explores how businesses manage customer problems, returns, cancellations and refunds, the costs and losses that can result, and the role of customer policies in guiding the response.

In-class activity

Activity 1. Fulfilment comparison: Participants compare how selected businesses handle fulfilment and returns and identify practices that could be applied to a small business.

Activity 2. Customer problem: Participants respond to a customer problem using their Policy Set and consider the impact on the business and what could prevent the problem from recurring.

Kit contribution. Fulfilment and Customer Care, completed Policy Set and updated Risk Register.

Homework for Module 8

Participants assemble their E-Commerce Operating Kit and prepare to present and justify the decisions it contains.

Consolidation and Capstone Clinic

Week 8

Aim

To bring the preceding modules together into a complete E-Commerce Operating Kit and enable participants to evaluate and justify the decisions they have made.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Present the decisions contained in their E-Commerce Operating Kit and explain the reasoning behind them.
- Identify what could prevent their e-commerce business from launching or operating and prioritise what needs to be addressed.
- Evaluate an e-commerce plan and ask relevant questions about its evidence, decisions and assumptions.

Module breakdown

Structured review. Participants revisit the questions they recorded in Module 1, review what they have learned across the course and identify anything that remains unresolved.

Capstone preparation. Participants organise the decisions and supporting evidence in their Kit and prepare to explain their proposed business, the choices they have made and any areas that still need to be resolved.

In-class activity

Activity 1. Kit clinic: Participants work on their E-Commerce Operating Kit with guidance from the facilitator.

Activity 2. Capstone presentation: Participants present and justify the key decisions in their Kit and respond to questions and feedback from their peers and the facilitator.

Kit contribution. Completed E-Commerce Operating Kit and decision rationale, finalised after the session to incorporate relevant feedback.