

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for small businesses and entrepreneurs across America and around the world. Supporting the vibrant eBay seller community during these difficult times has been central to eBay’s corporate mission. As we celebrated our 25th year anniversary in 2020, eBay was more committed than ever to tirelessly using technology to empower people, foster recovery and create economic opportunity for all. We have actively engaged with national, state and local governments to offer our partnership and advocate on behalf of small businesses during this challenging time. While the world has forever changed, we are inspired to continue to do our part to help the United States emerge with a stronger, more resilient, equitable and inclusive economy.

This report explores how independent small businesses and entrepreneurs across America were able to turn to eBay’s online marketplace during the initial months of the pandemic and use ecommerce to connect with consumers across the country and around the world. eBay helped small businesses, both existing and new to online commerce, meet growing consumer ecommerce demand and compensate for oftentimes declining local, in-store traffic. The eBay marketplace allowed small businesses to quickly adapt to changing conditions. Some small businesses who were already ecommerce veterans ramped up their efforts, many others shifted their focus from storefronts to ecommerce, while others joined online markets for the first time. In the six months following the initial pandemic lockdowns of March 2020, the number of eBay-enabled small businesses in the United States grew 34 percent over the same time frame in the previous year. Sales by eBay-enabled small businesses grew by an even greater 38 percent compared to April – September of 2019. As evidence of the value of eBay’s marketplace platform, 84% of eBay-enabled small businesses said that eBay was essential to keeping their business open and connected to consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, more than 99 percent of the eBay-enabled small businesses in America, operating from communities in every state and nearly every county, sold to customers outside their home state in the first two quarters of the pandemic – proving ecommerce’s critical role in helping small businesses reach customers remotely to sustain themselves through this global health crisis.

The ability of small retailers to turn to the eBay marketplace during the pandemic is a striking example of how ecommerce can empower small businesses to weather extreme shocks in their local economy. However, small businesses using online marketplaces to reach beyond their local economies has paid quieter, but equally important dividends for years by turning them into successful global traders and delivering outsized economic growth in otherwise stagnant rural and economically challenged communities. The eBay marketplace allows even the smallest businesses to create a storefront online and compete for the business of nearly 200 million customers in markets globally. A massive 96 percent of eBay-enabled small businesses in the United States exported in 2019, the most recent year for which this data is available. Reaching distant consumers is also especially important for small businesses operating from more economically challenged regions, including rural communities. These counties have suffered from stagnant economic growth for many years. While the number of rural business establishments in America was essentially flat from 2011 to 2018, growing just 0.4 percent, that was not the case on eBay, in which the rate of growth in the number of small businesses in rural counties was a far more robust 13.7 percent.

During the First Six Months of COVID eBay-Enabled Small Businesses Grew*:

34% in Number

38% in Sales

*YoY April 1, 2020-September 30, 2020

84%

of eBay-enabled small businesses said that eBay is essential to keeping their business open and connected to customers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Share of Enterprises Exporting (2019)

96% eBay-Enabled Small Businesses

compared to only

0.9% Traditional Businesses

Growth in the # of Enterprises (2011-2018)

31.1% eBay-Enabled Small Businesses

compared to only

7.4% Traditional Businesses

We greatly appreciate your interest in this report. If you have any questions, comments or feedback – please do not hesitate to contact:

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Thank you!