

**Transcript of:**

307 What is the most important thing we learnt in eCommerce in 2020? Our eCommerce Experts discuss

**[00:00:01.560]**

It's the eCommerce MasterPlan Podcast here to help you solve your marketing problems and grow your eCommerce business, cutting through the hype to bring you inspiration and advice from the eCommerce sector and beyond. Here's your host, Chloe Thomas.

**[00:00:18.510] - Chloe Thomas**

Hello and welcome to this episode of the eCommerce MasterPlan Podcast. I'm Chloe Thomas the creator and host of this multi-award-winning show, and it's my aim in every episode to help you to find ways to improve your eCommerce business. This is the second of our 2021 eCommerce growth series sponsored by Klaviyo. And I know it's one of your favorites. Yes, this is one of our expert episodes. I spent the end of 2020 getting the opinions of eCommerce thought leaders from around the globe about both what we learned from 2020 and their top tips for success in 2021.

**[00:00:57.030] - Chloe Thomas**

Now you can have to wait to the end of this month to find out what they're predicting you need to work on in 2021 for success. But right here, right now, you can find out what they're taking as the key lessons from 2020.

**[00:01:11.130] - Chloe Thomas**

And boy, is there a lot here?

**[00:01:13.170] - Chloe Thomas**

Well, there was a lot, a lot, a lot going on in 2020, wasn't there? Plenty to learn from. And the good news is that whilst we are looking back at 2020, there's an awful lot here that's going to help you to be more successful in 2021.

**[00:01:27.780] - Chloe Thomas**

All right, coming up, you are going to hear from some of the world's top eCommerce podcasters. Yes, I have been making friends with my peers. You're also going to hear from some of the world's top eCommerce consultants and coaches and also some of those awesome people who work for your favorite software programs.

**[00:01:44.910] - Chloe Thomas**

Now, obviously, an awful lot happened in 2020 and an even bigger amount seemed to happen in eCommerce and retail in 2020. So my guests for this episode had plenty to draw on. Broadly, their tips fall into these content areas, resilient retail, marketing and selling, omnichannel and the offline-online amalgamation I suppose, risk mitigation, that's a big topic coming up, backend systems, including carriers on all of this with a big dose of look after and learn from your customers.

**[00:02:19.710] - Chloe Thomas**

The insight is about to come thick and fast at you. So you're going to be glad to know that we've put lots of links to the things mentioned and our experts, and plus a few free resources that they've been kind enough to make available to you. We put all of that, plus the full transcript of the episode. Yes, every word that's spoken in a written PDF that you can download and read later, that is all in the show notes.

**[00:02:47.850] - Chloe Thomas**

And you will find those on our website at [eCommerceMasterPlan.com/podcast](https://ecommercemasterplan.com/podcast). Go there, look for this episode and that's where you will find all that stuff to help you make the most of what's coming up. Right. We're about to get stuck into it, but before we do, please do check out the sponsors.

**[00:03:08.760] - Chloe Thomas**

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**[00:03:40.950] - Chloe Thomas**

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**[00:04:07.960] - Chloe Thomas**

Right then, we've got lots of themes and lots of experts coming up, so let's get started with Jessica Totillo Costa. She is from the top podcast, eCommerce Badassery.

**[00:04:19.270] - Jessica Totillo Coster**

The eCommerce industry is still in its infancy. And there is tremendous room for growth when you are in the business, you feel consumed by it and it's easy to assume that everyone else's too, right? We think everyone is shopping online already.

**[00:04:38.950] - Jessica Totillo Coster**

But the increases we saw in eCommerce when brick and mortar shut down shows us that it's still a very small percentage of all retail revenue in the scheme of things. Now, I don't think brick and mortar is ever going to truly go away. There are some products that no matter how hard you try, you won't be able to replicate that buying experience. And there's actually just the joy of shopping as an activity. I like to go shopping with my friends, family, you grab lunch, you peruse the stores, or it's just a way to spend some time with yourself.

**[00:05:14.080] - Jessica Totillo Coster**

But there will be and already has been a fundamental shift in the way people shop. And you have a lot of people who are overall just more comfortable shopping online now because they've done it and realize like, hey, this is pretty cool, my credit card is safe. I can keep doing this. And there are a ton of statistics out there, none that I'm going to quote. But the numbers speak to the rate at which eCommerce grew and it was way beyond what was predicted and that will likely continue to happen.

**[00:05:46.840] - Jessica Totillo Coster**

So we know that it's grown. We can see there's still a lot of room for growth, but what does that actually mean? So I see two major lessons here. The eCommerce space is going to become even more competitive. Not only do I expect more entrepreneurs and DTC brands to pop up in the space because the barrier to entry is so low.

**[00:06:09.730] - Jessica Totillo Coster**

But large retailers are going to be shifting their resources to their eCommerce business, if you think about chain retailers who had large brick and mortar presences, they're taking this opportunity to not renew leases and they don't plan on reopening all of their locations. So their physical footprint is going to be smaller, which means they're going to be able to invest more in their eCommerce growth. And the second thing is the technological advances that we've seen, new platforms coming out, partnerships like that of Shopify and Facebook is just the beginning.

**[00:06:46.080] - Jessica Totillo Coster**

I expect to see a lot more innovation come out of this pandemic. Shifting their focuses in the way that they do business. So if you thought the Internet moved quickly before, I would say brace yourself.

**[00:07:00.670] - Chloe Thomas**

Wow, what a way to start and Jessica is totally spot-on, 20/20 has just shown us how much bigger eCommerce has yet to get, but that, of course, does mean there's going to be plenty of change and pivots to come.

**[00:07:12.970] - Chloe Thomas**

And if you're interested in improving your tech stack, then do check out our episode on just that, that went live yesterday on our sister podcast, Keep Optimising. And that's an episode we've recorded with one of the guests coming up later in this episode, Derric Haynie. OK, Jessica mentioned that competition is going to increase. So how on earth do we deal with that? Well, we get better at our marketing and plenty of our experts had reflections on 20/20 that relate to marketing.

**[00:07:39.970] - Chloe Thomas**

We'll kick that off with Ian Hammersley from Smart eBusiness. He's also one half of the Hammersley brothers and he reflects on the huge demand changes we all saw in 20/20.

**[00:07:52.360] - Ian Hammersley**

So the biggest thing we learned or saw in 20/20 was the opportunity to recruit new customers was huge. You know, we were seeing really game-changing growth for lots of eCommerce businesses. I mean, initially, it was anything that was in or around the home did incredibly well. But then laterally during the lockdown, it was all eCommerce businesses, even clothing and fashion ones that new things you were wearing to go out because there were less people wanting those products, but there were a lot less places to buy them because they couldn't get them on the high street.

**[00:08:33.370] - Ian Hammersley**

So it was a, it was an unrivaled year for eCommerce growth and it manifested itself through a very strong return on adspend and a very strong conversion rate. So, you know, it was time that you really could push your budgets of recruitment, paid traffic, much much further. It was almost like the run-up to Christmas every day or Black Friday every day. And the emotion behind it for online consumers was that they had an element of scarcity and an element of urgency.

**[00:09:14.630] - Ian Hammersley**

So scarcity and urgency with things that were driving to buy online, they didn't want to miss out that fear of missing out principle. You know, the scarcity was that they thought the slot was going to go and the urgency was was weak, that they needed it because they couldn't get it anywhere else. So and that's really what everybody played on. So but fundamentally, it was like Black Friday every day since the lockdown started.

**[00:09:43.560] - Chloe Thomas**

Black Friday every day, I think that's that's a line which really does sum up 20/20.

**[00:09:48.360] - Chloe Thomas**

For I know a lot of you, it's been a long, hard slog 20/20, but great recruitment opportunity. Of course, if you could get in the stock and then get the stock out to the customers will be coming onto more of that later on. For now, though, let's get a bit more into how the pandemic changed customer behavior with Rand Fishkin from SparkToro.

**[00:10:10.530] - Rand Fishkin**

Offline behavior, is strongly influential over online behavior, and I know that sounds like an obvious thing, but it is incredibly powerful to see how culture and society, how the situation around us, what we consume and read, what we are living in our day to day lives impacts how we behave in the online world. And that includes, obviously the pandemic, that includes elections and politics. It includes our social connections. It includes how platforms change their behaviors and nudge us to change ours.

**[00:10:51.200] - Rand Fishkin**

And I think that eCommerce is obviously a huge part of, a huge beneficiary from that this year. And we'll we'll see what happens next year.

**[00:11:02.950] - Chloe Thomas**

Well, we certainly will. Now 20/21 is going to be an interesting one, interesting, too, to get a perspective from outside our eCommerce world proper there with Rand, because we've certainly been one of the luckier industries. OK, next up, Kunle Campbell builds on the eCommerce impact of the pandemic and how it's changed what consumers buy online.

**[00:11:25.390] - Chloe Thomas**

And if you're not familiar with Kunle's work, he's the host of the 2x eCommerce podcast and an outsourced CMO and adviser.

**[00:11:33.790] - Kunle Campbell**

I don't think we can talk about the year 2020 without talking about the pandemic and the pandemic has not only impacted us from a health and lifestyle standpoint, it has significantly changed shopping habits and shopping behavior in general. And what it did was to reinforce the importance of eCommerce in our lives. And it has also helped develop habits and shoppers around the world and consumer habits to say, OK, we can buy toilet paper online.

**[00:12:16.570] - Kunle Campbell**

We yes, we can. You know, we used to be able to shop for like consumer electronics all the time. We thought the only specific things we could do, we could buy, you know, online. And now it's really, really opened up the range of products of things we can buy, whether it's services or even if you're talking about, you know, ordering a takeaway from a restaurant, a lot of businesses were forced to digitally transform very, very rapidly.

**[00:12:54.970] - Kunle Campbell**

And I think the one word about 2020 and eCommerce and just commerce in general has been digital transformation, rapid digital transformation from a shopper behaviour standpoint and from a business adoption standpoint. And that is the most important thing. We have been forced to rapidly change our habits in all aspects of commerce in 20/20 and the next decade is just going to be super exciting and in the world of eCommerce.

**[00:13:29.450] - Chloe Thomas**

Well, I think we can all completely agree with Kunle that the next few years are going to be really interesting, but hold your horses.

**[00:13:37.160] - Chloe Thomas**

We are, of course, in this episode supposed to be focused on the lessons we can learn by looking back at 20/20. So let's get back to looking back with Corinne Watson from Postscript.io. They do SMS messaging if you're not familiar with them. Now, I only met Corinne late last year, but she has a really great insight on what's happening. She seems to make an awful lot of sense of it. So this is a lady we're going to hear more from in the future and and learn quite a lot from, too.

**[00:14:04.910] - Chloe Thomas**

But right now, she's going to take us a step further by getting us into how brands were successfully using emotion to drive those sales in 20/20.

**[00:14:15.560] - Corinne Watson**

I feel like this is actually a pretty easy one to answer. I definitely feel as though the most important thing that I learned for eCommerce in 20/20 is that empathetic branding means more than ever, matters more than ever.

**[00:14:28.280] - Corinne Watson**

The, I was reading an article from The New York Times this morning about buzzwords and marketing, and one of them was Humaning. It's something that we've, has been floating around for a while. One of the founders of the Oreo brand actually coined it, but it basically is defined as a unique, customer centric approach to marketing. And I think that by definition actually gives it a disservice. I feel as

though human marketing should not only be applying a customer lens to all of your marketing, it should be applying customer lens to every single facet of your organization, whether that's applying it to your product by asking for feedback or reviews or user-generated content from the people who are shopping with you, through to the way that you're communicating with customers.

**[00:15:15.620] - Corinne Watson**

We just published our results in the PostScript platform that outlined the success of regions that used SMS during Cyber Week last week, literally hit the presses yesterday. And it's pretty remarkable to see how some brands took a lot of time to double down on empathetic communication rather than just like blasting out promotions to their customers. So those are the brands that we're doing to two way chat, checking in, sending like nice messages to make sure everyone's doing all right, tips and tricks to use the products.

**[00:15:46.220] - Corinne Watson**

And those are actually the messages that weren't the ones that saw the highest engagement rates, the ones that had less subscriber churn. Another stat that I thought was really remarkable was that 19 percent more customers responded to a text messages during cyber week compared to a comparable period in the fall. So Cyber Week was definitely an area or a time period where customers were eager to communicate with brands. And I know that you said one of the most important things that I would kick myself if I didn't mention that.

**[00:16:17.030] - Corinne Watson**

We also learned that retailers and brands are really hearty and resilient, especially in the pandemic times, especially with brands that aren't really digitally native that are more brick and mortar. I feel like here in Austin, Texas, every day, or at least every week, I was hearing about a retailer, a local retailer that was really putting boots on the ground and quickly innovating to get their products available online to continue to please their customers, even though we had no idea what was going on, especially at the beginning of covid times over here.

**[00:16:52.000] - Chloe Thomas**

Humanise. Well, remarkably, the first time I've heard that phrase was as we were recording what you've just heard from Corinne there. So I mean, I'm loving that term. Expect me to be saying an awful lot more in the podcast coming up in the next couple of months. And Lisa Bloom is going to be touching on it later in this episode too. Right now, though, we're going to get deeper into the resilience of retail next. Before we do that, I just wanted to say that we've added the links to that New York Times article and the Black Friday roundups that Corinne mentioned in the show notes. You can get them via [eCommerceMasterPlan.com/podcast](https://ecommercemasterplan.com/podcast/), where you will also find the whole transcript of this episode.

**[00:17:31.060] - Chloe Thomas**

That's a PDF you can download with everything written down. I imagine you're already kind of going, whoa, there's an awful lot here.

**[00:17:38.050] - Chloe Thomas**

We try to make it as easy as possible for you to make use of it all by making the show notes as rich as possible and also giving you that full transcript so you can go and review that, peruse it as you will. Plus, also, you'll find via [ecommercemasterplan.com/podcast](https://ecommercemasterplan.com/podcast/), some great free resources from many of these expert guests we've got on the show for you today. So lots for you in this episode. Right, I think we've got the impact of the pandemic on eCommerce customers wanting product, we had it and that it's been generally good for us.

**[00:18:13.050] - Chloe Thomas**

But what it's also happened is it's been a lot harder as Karen started to get into there for those businesses that usually rely on face to face selling via events, physical retail markets, wholesale, etc.. So let's explore with our experts who collude to highlight that as their key lessons from 20/20. Let's do that next. Well, let's start with Derric Haynie from eCommerce Tech. And yes, I mentioned him earlier because he's our guest this week on Sista podcast, Keep Optimising talking about your tech stack.

**[00:18:44.880] - Chloe Thomas**

But right now in this episode, the one you're listening to right now, he's getting into how you have to join up your online and offline activity.

**[00:18:55.740] - Derric Haynie**

Two thousand and twenty has been an interesting year for eCommerce businesses, and I'll take it a little bit further. Obviously, retail businesses learned something extremely painful, which I knew for many years, and it was that they were not taking advantage of their in-person real life experience. They weren't taking the proper advantage of that to bring it online in the right way.

**[00:19:20.550] - Derric Haynie**

So I'll give you the example of Express because I've shopped there in the past when it was open and they do this really well.

**[00:19:28.140] - Derric Haynie**

But a lot of brands just really missed the mark, especially small boutique shops. Maybe you have a small boutique and an online presence and you're selling through both a lot of bakeries and other other kind of restaurants. We're kind of doing both as well. What Express does really well that others don't because they get your email address or phone number at the point of sale and then they

incorporate that into their email and SMS and ongoing loyalty and marketing strategy for you afterwards.

**[00:19:57.210] - Derric Haynie**

And I think that once retail disappeared overnight, many of these brands are scrambling to start focusing on eCommerce. And they hadn't realized that they had, the opportunity was there the whole time. They just you know, they were like, well, retail, we're making this much and eCommerce we're making this little. And so I think that the biggest learning from 2020 is that you need to tie, the omnichannel experience needs to be there and that you need to invest in everything.

**[00:20:28.050] - Derric Haynie**

At the same time. It was it was really a mistake and diversification that left these retail businesses open to high risk things that we considered outliers. Shutting down the global economy seems like an unlikely thing to have happen. But there are a lot of different reasons why retail could go out of business and you would want to have a strong eCommerce presence simultaneously. Furthermore, it is not just like icing on the cake for retail. It's actually profit maximizing, which means like you're getting the foot traffic, make more money from these customers.

**[00:21:00.540] - Derric Haynie**

It's your duty to give them more of what they want to make it easier for them to buy. And both what we already know in twenty nineteen and eighteen and seventeen people are buying in-store and then they're re buying online. So we need to make sure that we're we're really bridging the gap. And I know that's supposed to be more about eCommerce, but I want to talk about like retailers failures in eCommerce over 20/20. It really frustrates me because it's billions of dollars of missed opportunity that they're only seeing in hindsight and I've known about for years.

**[00:21:37.000] - Chloe Thomas**

Well, it certainly has been frustrating watching offline businesses fail to succeed with the integration and the pivot to eCommerce in 20/20. It's frustrating for those of us who could kind of see it coming, I guess. And he knew it was something that I would put on my radar if I was an offline business. But it must have been even more frustrating and a lot harder working in such a business. So all of you who struggled with that in 20/20, I feel for you.

**[00:22:03.850] - Chloe Thomas**

Now, Derric was talking big business there. But of course, offline selling has traditionally been key for many small businesses too. So building on those lessons learned in 2020. Here's Sue Monhait, the host of the GiftBiz Unwrapped podcast, to address it from the smaller business angle.

**[00:22:22.610] - Sue Monhait**

Wow, 2020 has been a year that I think none of us will forget for the group of people who are working with me, I define them as gifters, bakers, crafters and makers.

**[00:22:34.940] - Sue Monhait**

And that's important as you listen to what my answer to this question would be. So in the past, before twenty-twenty happened, most people within my community were out at craft shows or they have brick and mortar shops. So the majority of sales are coming in when people are face to face with each other, interacting with each other and getting a vibe and learning and shaking hands and hugging and all of that went away. And so one of the biggest things that we all learned in 2020 is that you have to have all the different foundational elements in place for your business.

**[00:23:13.430] - Sue Monhait**

And when I say all of them, what I'm talking about is for my community, which won't relate to everybody. But yes, you want those face to face interactions to be able to take place. But you also need your social media sites ready. Not every single one, necessarily the top one or two, ready and active. You need to have an online presence with a shopping cart, that works. So someone could buy from you online. You need an email collection strategy.

**[00:23:46.880] - Sue Monhait**

So somehow we're, because these will be your prospects that are coming in. And then, of course, communicating with them through an actual email campaign. So these four, these are the four things that I pretty much call the foundational elements for any business social media site, website with shopping cart, a way to collect emails for lead generation, and then a continual communication strategy in addition to with my folks face to face interactions. And that is what's happened this year, but in a very hectic way and by necessity because of what we've just lived through.

**[00:24:25.010] - Sue Monhait**

So. The thing that I like about having all of this in place, think of these as levels, so heaven forbid this ever happens to us again where we have to hunker in and only rely on online promotion eCommerce we can increase those levels and decrease face to face interaction if we have to. We can up email collection strategy or capturing information through social media sites. All of this really works together, but these levels can be tweaked and increased or decreased based on the situation at hand.

**[00:25:04.500] - Sue Monhait**

But the way to make this really work and to be able to flip the switch quickly is to have them all in place. So the summary is the most important lesson that we learned this year is you have to have all these foundational elements in place.

**[00:25:20.020] - Chloe Thomas**

Loving the advice from Sue there, and of course, she's, she mainly talks to those small gift crafting businesses, but equally relevant, no matter how big your business is, some really core fundamental advice there. One thing we certainly can't do if we look back at 20/20 is to ignore how the customers telling us they want to blend their online and offline experience.

**[00:25:43.090] - Chloe Thomas**

So here's Rytis Lauris from Omnisend to explain more on that.

**[00:25:47.960] - Rytis Lauris**

We learned that you can't ignore industry trends. I would say this is a key learning for commerce in general. We saw currently a lot in those in those past years, a lot of retailers, traditional retailers, which were happily selling on their brick and mortar stores, may be having a small online presence, but deprioritizing it and not seeing a lot of value in it. We saw that now they're in way worse position compared to those who were equally prioritizing their digital presence, their online stores, their digital marketing activities and all those things.

**[00:26:22.940] - Rytis Lauris**

So I think this is the key learning and what actually has happened in twenty-twenty. So I believe the main disruption of commerce and retail market in general, I was estimating already for a while that in the period of seven to ten years, there will be a total blend of traditional commerce or retail and the eCommerce and there will be no boundaries between. That will be just omni channel commerce where Us, Shoppers, Customers will be able to buy from any channel we prefer in any way we prefer.

**[00:26:55.550] - Rytis Lauris**

So I think that 2020 and the covid has accelerated this by much. And this is the key learning I have from 2020.

**[00:27:04.990] - Chloe Thomas**

Well, the expert perspectives have been coming thick and fast in this episode, and so far we've got into customer behavior changes, the online, offline merging that needs to happen. But there's a lot we haven't yet touched on. And that's going to be coming up in a moment for you. But first, here's a reminder of our sponsors.

**[00:27:24.990]**

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**[00:27:33.000] - Chloe Thomas**

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**[00:28:07.990] - Chloe Thomas**

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**[00:28:18.460] - Chloe Thomas**

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**[00:28:44.000] - Chloe Thomas**

Let's change tack a little with Lucy Bloomfield from 10,000 Customers.

**[00:28:49.910] - Lucy Bloomfield**

I think there are two things that I really had big distinctions around in 2020, and it's this. Anyone who tells you that it's inappropriate to talk to your customers about what is going on in the world and sell them product through that conversation has massive, massive, massive sales fear and also really toxic ideas around sales.

**[00:29:14.960] - Lucy Bloomfield**

So one thing that I saw in Australia a lot was people were like, it's disgusting that people would write Facebook ads where you talk about covid and then at the end you make an offer about your product. And all that says to me is that these people have no idea how to sell things because what was on everyone's mind? There was an entire paradigm shift when covid hit and everyone's lives changed immediately.

**[00:29:41.330] - Lucy Bloomfield**

We didn't care about going on holidays. We didn't care about clothes and fashion. We cared about having enough food because the supermarkets were empty and we cared about being safe because we had no idea what a pandemic looked like, because we've never been through it before. And so if you were to go out into that environment and keep talking about, oh, would you like a nice holiday or would you like these shoes, people are going to respond to that.

**[00:30:05.150] - Lucy Bloomfield**

Really, what covid should have taught everyone is that there's never been a better time to have meaningful conversations with people about what is actually going on in their lives and using those conversations to sell product.

**[00:30:18.440] - Lucy Bloomfield**

That's not wrong, that's sales.

**[00:30:22.170] - Lucy Bloomfield**

The other thing I think as well, while I'm thinking about like the ramifications of clients that had really successful conversations.

**[00:30:32.040] - Lucy Bloomfield**

Around covid and selling their product as a result of those conversations is you need to risk mitigate your supply chain. That's not a nice to have, that's a must have. Because if China shuts down or you can't get your stock into your country because everything's locked down, because no staff at the airports like in the US, you're screwed.

**[00:30:53.490] - Lucy Bloomfield**

And it's not a matter of like, well, we'll do that sometime in the future. We don't know when this will happen again. Scientists have been saying for years that SARS and viruses like this are going to become more and more common. And you know what they are, and you know what the scientists are right? Because they also said that they were going to become more intense. This is the most intense virus that we've ever experienced, and there's the potential that it'll keep happening.

**[00:31:19.720] - Lucy Bloomfield**

So risk mitigation is not something that you do sometime in the future. It's something that you do now.

**[00:31:26.000] - Chloe Thomas**

We've been skirting around it in several of our expert opinions, but this year has been tough for many and I expect a lot of you wished you spent more time on risk mitigation and backup plans back in 2019. So you are more ready to pivot and make those changes you had to make last year easier. Ah, the joy of hindsight.

**[00:31:47.270] - Chloe Thomas**

Now, one of the key areas that's been negatively impact is going to be focused on by our next expert guest, who's Ben Woodward from smartFreight.

**[00:31:56.470] - Ben Woodward**

Look, integration is the key 2020 has taught us that we can't rely on people running into stores, that people are buying more online, but buying more online, there are more deliveries going from warehouse to customer rather than business to business in pallets. So without integration, the shipping platforms and other platforms, your eCommerce business has no hope of getting goods from your warehouse into a consumer's arms.

**[00:32:28.120] - Ben Woodward**

So being fully integrated and removing the manual effort within your business and your eCommerce environment is crucial.

**[00:32:39.070] - Chloe Thomas**

Now, we did a whole episode on this with Ben and Tash from SmartFreight few weeks ago, number three hundred and three, 303, if you want to get stuck into that more and continuing the theme of risk mitigation, here's our regular expert contributor. I think this is the fifth or sixth year Chris has done this for us. It's Chris Dawson from TameBay.

**[00:32:59.010] - Chris Dawson**

I think the most important thing we learned in eCommerce in 2020 is, quite frankly you can't rely on anyone, and I don't mean that necessarily in a bad way. But the pandemic obviously shook everything up this year. And the first thing we saw were companies like the mighty Amazon closing FBA to incoming products and actually even extending delivery days out to a month or more. And yet in the past, everyone has known the Amazon are the biggest and best eCommerce operation going.

**[00:33:33.150] - Chris Dawson**

And people ran their entire business on FBA. We've also seen courier struggling obviously, I feel for them, but with social distancing and everything and the sudden deluge of parcels that came their way, they just couldn't cope. Would have been literally operating Black Friday capacity for nine

months of the year. And just about every business out there struggled to cope. And I know that everyone's listening that their own small businesses would have struggled, but the large businesses struggled as well.

**[00:34:06.330] - Chris Dawson**

The likes of eBay, for example, eBay, have been brilliant with all of the support they've rolled out that even they for their own internal customer support, they suddenly had to migrate, everyone working from home. So you couldn't actually ring customer support for a while and until they got a chance to get themselves sorted. And I think that really is the lesson that you literally have to be prepared for everything. In another years, we'd have been talking about, well, when it comes down to peak in nine months time and it's the Black Friday, maybe you should have a reserve career contract ready to go just in case.

**[00:34:43.620] - Chris Dawson**

But this year, it's been totally different and you've needed emergency plans for the whole year. And even so far as for some people, your staff, they may have been forced to self isolate at home if they'd come into contact with someone. And suddenly, where did you get spare staff from at the drop of a hat? Do you have friends on standby for small business? Do you have a contract in place with a recruitment agency that can provide temps? I think that the whole industry has learned a lesson this year, and that is literally you can't rely on anything anymore.

**[00:35:18.420] - Chris Dawson**

You need to have an emergency recovery plan for everything. And yes, this year is a once in 100 year event. So the politicians tell us.

**[00:35:28.440] - Chris Dawson**

But there will be minor things after the pandemic in the future where things go go wrong again and you basically have a backup for your backup plan is my best advice. And I think that's the biggest lesson we've learnt this year.

**[00:35:44.930] - Chloe Thomas**

A backup plan for your backup plan. Well, I know I definitely don't have one of those. That's something that's got to go my to do list for the next couple of months. Right, that all got a little depressing and a little workload heavy.

**[00:35:56.930] - Chloe Thomas**

So let's lighten things up with our next expert contributor. He's Matt Edmondson, host of the eCommerce podcast.

**[00:36:05.930] - Matt Edmundson**

The most important thing we learned about eCommerce in 2020 is that I think it is bulletproof, and what I mean by that is, it's kind of the only thing in business that seems to have survived the pandemic well.

**[00:36:23.480] - Matt Edmundson**

It's kind of it's done well with lockdown, hasn't it?

**[00:36:26.430] - Matt Edmundson**

And so I think, I think it's the resilience of eCommerce and the fact that you can do it and get online quickly and you can pivot and you can change your business strategy and you can get going with eCommerce super quickly, much quicker than anybody anticipated.

**[00:36:48.380] - Matt Edmundson**

And so I love that. I love the fact that, like, restaurants have gone and got online and they've put their menus online and they've done click and collect. So it's now diverse, isn't it? I love the fact that the little corner shop has gone and said, no, no, no, don't shop at Tesco. Well, we'll get your groceries in and we'll hand deliver them to your house at 4:00. Just go and order them online.

**[00:37:07.970] - Matt Edmundson**

And so I think actually eCommerce has become accessible to just about everybody in every business in 2020. And so it's bulletproof, but it's bulletproof without being crazy and accessible for people. It's become totally accessible for people. And it's given us a new way to think about business, to do business, to pivot our businesses and to grow into those areas. And so people have been taking advantage, maybe to take advantage is the wrong word, people have had to pivot, haven't they, and do digital.

**[00:37:41.780] - Matt Edmundson**

They've had to do eCommerce for their business, businesses to survive. And I've lived to see that. I mean, my own business, you know, it's been a fascinating season. Sales shot through the roof had sort of locked down, some are they just almost disappeared and now they're sort of picking back up again. And so it's been, it's been a quite tumultuous, I think, 2020. But we figured it out. And I, that for me has been the big takeaway, which is kind of bulletproof, but it's become a lot more accessible.

**[00:38:14.420] - Chloe Thomas**

And our final positive word goes to another eCommerce podcaster a Kurt Elster from the Unofficial Shopify podcast.

**[00:38:23.440] - Kurt Elster**

The thing we learned about eCommerce in 2020 was how absolutely resilient it is and how phenomenal merchants were at pivoting in adapting like their name was Bear Grylls. They adapted, improvised and overcame the pandemic restrictions so quickly. And that was a blessing because it turned out that eCommerce was a lifeline for so many people. And ultimately that led to Black Friday being eCommerce biggest revenue day in history.

**[00:38:59.290] - Kurt Elster**

And I don't think you can unring that bell. So ultimately, the thing we learned about eCommerce in 2020 is that it is really at this point, an unstoppable force.

**[00:39:15.580] - Chloe Thomas**

So how on earth to summarize all that? Well, I suppose the key things I take from our experts insights and from my own experience in 2020 is that it's a year accelerated a lot of the trends we were already talking about and already experiencing by about five to 10 years.

**[00:39:32.380] - Chloe Thomas**

That means that the most advanced and farseeing of us are now playing catch up even they are playing and catch up. The rest of us who are maybe ignoring those trends can't afford to do it anymore. But that does mean that it's a great opportunity for you to take your business to another level by capitalizing on these big changes. And what are these big changes? Well, customers like to shop wherever they can, and more of them are liking the online experience.

**[00:39:55.930] - Chloe Thomas**

So that means we're going to be seeing more and more money spent online by more people. But it also means there's going to be a greater expectation of a seamless cross-channel experience. They want that good experience. They want to be able to buy from your brand as and when and where they want to.

**[00:40:12.520] - Chloe Thomas**

Relying on one marketing channel, one route to market is dangerous. You need to find ways to diversify in order to mitigate that risk. You also need backup plans and a set up that enables you to pivot and be flexible, which all means we all have to do more, which means we also need to find ways to streamline our processes and systems to make life easier and let tech take the strain. We're

really lucky to be in an industry that fared pretty well in 2020. So now's the time to build on what we've learnt, what we've been forced to adapt to in order to make things even better in 2021.

**[00:40:49.060] - Chloe Thomas**

Now, as I've mentioned a couple of times in these episodes, this episode even, there's a lot in this episode. So I suspect you're going to want to go and grab the notes from today's show, which includes the links to our experts and various free resources they've got for you that relate to what they've been talking about. Plus, you'll get a full transcript of the episode.

**[00:41:06.190] - Chloe Thomas**

You can go and access all that, download it all, etc. by heading to [eCommerceMasterPlan.com/podcast](https://ecommercemasterplan.com/podcast/), where you will see a link to this episode or click on the link to all the episodes and then you'll find this one, and that's where you'll find all those goodies there.

**[00:41:23.110] - Chloe Thomas**

You can also add yourself to our email list so you don't miss out on any of the other things we share to help you improve your business.

**[00:41:29.440] - Chloe Thomas**

Hopefully this episode has inspired you rather than left you feeling overwhelmed. But either way, us here eCommerce MasterPlan are here to help you.

**[00:41:38.770] - Chloe Thomas**

And there's three ways that I can help you to make the most of the opportunity 2021 provides. Firstly, this month on the eCommerce MasterPlan podcast, that's the one you're listening to right now. We are bringing You are eCommerce Growth series sponsored by Klaviyo. That's eight whole episodes. So we're going live on Mondays and Thursdays, each of which dives into a different way. You can make your business better in 2021. That's the first one. Listen to the eCommerce MasterPlan podcast and our series this month.

**[00:42:08.230] - Chloe Thomas**

Number two on our sister podcast, Keep Optimising. We are getting into four foundational aspects of eCommerce. That means you can learn how to make your business stronger and ready to face the opportunities and challenges lie ahead. One topic in each of the four episodes we're putting live this month over there. You want to find that? Just search Keep Optimising on Google or your podcast player of choice in order to find us.

**[00:42:33.700] - Chloe Thomas**

A number three is our very special 2021 planning webinar, because this month we're going to be giving you so many ideas that you could use to grow your business. But we all know that success is going to come from working out which of those ideas you should actually do. And that's what our 2021 planning webinar is going to be all about. I'll be joined by some very special guests and we will be telling you more about what's going to be happening in that as the month goes on.

**[00:43:01.090] - Chloe Thomas**

Right now, I can tell you two key things about it. It's going to be happening in the first week of February, which means you can get Christmas and the January sales fully out of your hair before we really get into the detail of what you should be working on in 2021. And you can save your space for free right now by going to [eCommerceMasterPlan.com/webinar](https://ecommercemasterplan.com/webinar).

**[00:43:22.510] - Chloe Thomas**

Well, thank you for tuning in to this and every episode of the eCommerce MasterPlan Podcast and make sure you stay tuned for the rest of our 2021 eCommerce growth series sponsored by Klaviyo. I bring you a new interview every week because I want to inspire and help as many eCommerce business owners as possible to succeed and thrive with their business. So please do tell the other eCommerce business owners, you know about what we're up to because I'd love to help them too.

**[00:43:49.570] - Chloe Thomas**

I hope you have a great week, Keep Optimising.

**[00:43:55.100]**

Thank you for listening to the eCommerce MasterPlan podcast. Find out more at [eCommerceMasterPlan.com/podcast](https://ecommercemasterplan.com/podcast).