

Move into ecommerce could transform the Scottish economy

Colin Donald

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A lack of support for Scottish businesses moving into ecommerce is blocking a relatively straightforward route to "transforming" the Scottish economy, according to a new industry report.

The survey, published by Ecommerce-Excellence, in partnership with the ICT trade body ScotlandIS and supplier Indez, contacted 35 online-trading companies who were asked about their own perceived skills and competence across different aspects of ecommerce.

They found that a solid majority (63%) of Scottish businesses rate their international ecommerce skills as "poor", while 30% say their ability to capitalise on domestic ecommerce opportunities are poor.

INDEZ chief executive Dr Peter Mowforth said: "According to the UK Government's latest figures, ecommerce is worth more than £220 billion in the UK alone and is growing at 35% per annum. This makes it larger than oil and gas and it is increasing at four times the growth rate of China. Although it is clearly of significant importance to the national economy, there's more skill support for specialist hobbies than ecommerce. Somebody somewhere has got their priorities wrong."

Polly Purvis, executive director of ScotlandIS, said: "Ecommerce is now a major force in the UK economy. The latest results from the IMRG Capgemini e-Retail Sales Index show that total ecommerce sales continue to grow substantially, with consumers spending £4.5 million online last month alone.

"Addressing this skills shortage would help transform the Scottish economy. If many more small businesses were trading online, we could lift our exports substantially.

"It's essential to ensure there are people with the right skills available to ecommerce businesses and the specialist suppliers that work with them, to take advantage of this vibrant channel to market. Establishing high-quality ecommerce training courses would be a great first step. Scotland benefits from internationally competitive, specialist suppliers, working with companies to help the transition to the online marketplace.

Jenny Lockton of [www.bohemia.com](#) commented: "There is such a large number of factors that affect online sales so getting the right advice and guidance is critical. Unlike other professions, there are no standard ecommerce courses and no standard qualifications – which seems odd given how important online trade is for modern business."

