Playbooks for Building Women-led Firms’ Capacities for Ecommerce Directly and via Platforms

Dr. Kati Suominen
Founder and CEO, Nextrade Group
March 30, 2022
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area supported</th>
<th>Governments</th>
<th>Private sector</th>
<th>PPP and/or international organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ecommerce development          | • SME Corp. Malaysia’s Netrepreneur  
                                   • Mexico’s Women in digital transformation  
                                   • El Salvador’s PROESA workshops  | • eWomen by eCommerce Institute  
                                   • Easy onboarding for Indian artisans  
                                   • Shopify’s Women Entrepreneur  | • Alliance for eTrade Development with USAID  
                                   • World Bank’s WeFi for women in MENA  
                                   • Panama and UNDP Mujer Emprende export  |
| Export promotion                | • ProChile’s Export Woman  
                                   • Uruguay XXI Women Exporter workshops  
                                   • Canada’s BusinessWomen in International Trade  | • UPS Women Exporters program  
                                   • DHL’s GoTrade Initiative  | • ITC SheTrades  
                                   • EU/ITC/DHL Link Central America WBEs with global markets  |
| Supplier development            | • South African women procurement program  
                                   • India’s Womaniay eMarketplace  
                                   • ChileCompra’s Mercado Público  | • Cargill Diverse Supplier program for women and minorities  
                                   • Coca Cola supplier diversity program  
                                   • P&G supplier program for Indian women-led firms  | • PepsiCo and USAID PPP to support women in agricultural value chains  
                                   • Boyner Group and IFC promotion of women-led firms in Boyner value chains  
                                   • UNOPS Possibilities Program  |
| Financing and incentives –      | • Singapore SG Women in Tech Community  
                                   • Start-Up Chile S Factory  
                                   • Startup India for women-led tech innovation  | • South Africa’s Dazzle Angels  
                                   • FirstCheck Africa  | • Inter-American Development Bank’s WeXchange  
                                   • ADB-private sector She Loves Tech Annual Global Startup Competition  |
| women-led tech companies        | • Indonesia’s programming courses for home makers and domestic workers  
                                   • Morocco’s “Infitah for Her”  
                                   • SME Corp. Malaysia’s Women Netrepreneur  | • Developers in Vogue coding camp in Ghana  
                                   • CodingGirls in Singapore  
                                   • Mastercard’s Girls4Tech  | • Women ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI) by UN Asian and Pacific Training Center for ICT for Development  
                                   • Laboratoria Bootcamp for Women in Latin America  |
| Digital skills development      | • Singapore’s SG Women in Tech Community Platform  
                                   • Start-Up Chile has S Factory to support first-time women entrepreneurs  | • Google’s Internet Saathi program  
                                   • Microsoft Women Digital Future  | • Inter-American Development Bank’s #100K Challenge  
                                   • Women ConnectAmericas Virtual Accelerator 2.0  |
| Digital transformation support  | • Botswana Women’s Economic Empowerment Program  
                                   • Mexico PRONAFIM women financing facility  | • Visa She’s Next  
                                   • Women on the Move by JPMorgan Chase  
                                   • RisingTide Africa  | • World Bank WeFi  
                                   • Women Entrepreneurship Development Project (WEDP)  
                                   • SEAF Women’s Opportunity Fund  |
| Financing – all firms           | • India’s Women Entrepreneurship Platform  
                                   • Chile’s Mujer Emprende  | • Grow with Google  
                                   • Visa She’s Next  
                                   • Visa Practical Business Skills and Visa Practical Money Skills  | • U.S. government’s Women’s Global Development and Prosperity Initiative (W-GDP)  
                                   • UNESCAP’s Catalyzing Women’s Entrepreneurship  
                                   • EU’s Accelerating Women’s Enterprise (AWE)  |
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                                   • EU’s Accelerating Women’s Enterprise (AWE)  |
What are “women-led” firms?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>Social seller</th>
<th>Use Facebook</th>
<th>Use Instagram</th>
<th>Use Whatsapp</th>
<th>Have own online store</th>
<th>Marketplace seller</th>
<th>Sell on a global marketplace</th>
<th>Use Amazon</th>
<th>Use eBay</th>
<th>Use no platforms on social media</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Micro (0-10 employees)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>61%</td>
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Digitization journeys appear to start with mobile and digital payments and online banking.
Firms e-export readiness

Exports and growth

LEVEL 5 - Global marketplace seller; digital enterprise
Firms that sell on Amazon, eBay, Upwork, etc.; integrate all channels (stores, marketplaces, social media); extensive digital transformation

LEVEL 4 - Local marketplace seller
Firms that sell on Jumia, Konga, Souq, etc.; building more sophisticated online capabilities

LEVEL 3 - Online seller
Firms that have online stores with digital payment capabilities

LEVEL 2 - Social seller
Firms that market on Facebook, Instagram; interact with customer using Whatsapp, mobile payments, cash

LEVEL 1 - Digitized but offline seller
Firms that may have websites but do not use social media or have online stores

~5% of firms

~60%

~20%

~15%

<10%

Source: Nextrade Group.
Gains from digital channels

- New domestic customers
- Increased revenue
- New international customers
- Become more profitable (better margins)
- Improved customer experience
- Improved cash flow
- Increased sales to existing clients, this time online
- Exported to new markets
- Found better suppliers
- Cut operating costs
- Improved interactions with our vendors
- Cut time managing payments and invoices
- Diversified into new products and services
- Increased hiring
- Contracted new services like logistics and IT services
- Increased offline (by phone or in-store) sales
- Streamlined our workflows and operations

Legend:
- Mature digital enterprise
- Emerging digital enterprise
- Somewhat digitized social seller
- Incipient digitizer
"To what extent have the online tools you use benefited your business to:"

Both highly and less digitized firms have gained from online tools; for early digitizers, benefits are about gaining confidence and skills; for late digitizers, about revenue, customers, and financing.
Men vs. women in ecommerce
Building women-led firms’ capacity for ecommerce: Playbook
Alliance’s 360 ecommerce capabilities to augment impact on MSMEs
I. Set goals for and tailor approaches by digital maturity

- Build digital enterprise
  - Scale and diversify global sales

- Start to export online
  - Double online sales, get on a marketplace

- Build an online store
  - Get on social media and website

- LEVEL 5 – Global marketplace seller; digital enterprise
  - Firms that sell on Amazon, Etsy, eBay, Upwork, etc., integrate all channels (stores, marketplaces, social media); extensive digital transformation

- LEVEL 4 – Local marketplace seller
  - Firms that sell on Lazada, Shopee, etc.; building more sophisticated online capabilities

- LEVEL 3 – Online seller
  - Firms that have online stores with digital payment capabilities

- LEVEL 2 – Social seller
  - Firms that market on Facebook, Instagram; interact with customer using WhatsApp, mobile payments, cash

- LEVEL 1 – Digitized but offline seller
  - Firms that may have websites but do not use social media or have online stores

Source: Nextrade Group.
## What’s the aim?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired result for a firm</th>
<th>Adopt and apply a specific tool or service in the ecommerce sales cycle</th>
<th>Build online sales channel and execute ecommerce sales cycle start to finish</th>
<th>Digital transformation to move up the digital maturity ladder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Content examples**      | • Set up an online store  
• Onboard a marketplace  
• Use a specific payment method | • Onboard a global marketplace  
• Adopt and use specific tools for the entire ecommerce sales cycle (marketing, payments, logistics, etc.) | • Define corporate pain points and functions to digitize  
• Define potential solutions  
• Test solutions and tools |
| **Answers**                | • Applying: “How to do x”  
• Operationalizing: “What exactly to do and how, what are best practices” |                                                                             | • Problem-solving and choosing from many options: “What to do and why, what works” |
| **Type of endeavor**       | • Defined: Adopt and optimize | • Semi-defined: Select and manage | • Open-ended: Research, test, develop  
• Self-paced lab  
• Executive education, coaching  
• Strategy consulting  
• Demos of solutions  
• Peer-learning |
| **Delivery methodologies** | • Microlearning, 2-10 minute dosed  
• Gamified learning | • Microlearning  
• Peer-learning  
• Gamified learning  
• Adaptive delivery, precision training | • Top priority for CEO and board  
• Vision about technologies and pain points they could solve  
• Readiness to invest in resources in transformation |
| **Criteria for firms**     | • Commitment to ecommerce, evidenced by investment of staff time and resources  
• Vision for how the platform or technology can enhance business outcomes | • Strong commitment to ecommerce, evidenced by investment of staff time and resources  
• Existing online sales  
• Staff capabilities to execute  
• Ideally a number of products and existing exports | | |
| **Opportunity to mass-customize** | • Very high | • High | • Medium |
| **Results**                | • Faster service to existing customers  
• Customer satisfaction  
• Time savings and efficiencies | • Greater revenue  
• New customers  
• New markets  
• New suppliers  
• New higher-skill jobs and wages | • Efficiency gains  
• Cost savings  
• New ideas for ways to leverage technology to solve pain points, create new services |
10 steps to build impactful program for women-led firms in ecommerce

1. CLEAR GOAL
   - Right approach: Ask about commitment and willingness to pay; sensitise to gender
   - Bad assumptions: Most firms benefit one way or another
   - KPIs at firm- and cohort-levels: It is not for everyone

2. RECRUIT
   - Broadest funnel possible: Traditional channels work
   - KPIs at firm- and cohort-levels: Most firms benefit one way or another

3. RIGOROUS SELECTION
   - Data-driven, product level: Select by digital and export maturity, product-price-platform fit
   - KPIs at firm- and cohort-levels: Most firms benefit one way or another

4. PARTNER
   - Your Text Here: You can simply impress your audience and add a unique zing and appeal to your Presentations.
   - KPIs at firm- and cohort-levels: Most firms benefit one way or another

5. OPTIMIZE CONTENT
   - Focus on results and adaptive learning: Applied and customized learning
   - KPIs at firm- and cohort-levels: Most firms benefit one way or another

Focus on results and adaptive learning.
10 steps to build impactful program for women-led firms in ecommerce

6. **OPTIMIZE DELIVERY**
   - Integrate it to firms’ work
     - Adaptive, self-paced, customized
   - Right approach
     - Compartmentalized binge learning
   - Bad assumptions
     - Firms apply even some of knowledge accessed

7. **LIMIT ATTRITION**
   - Resource continual engagement
     - Focus on committed firms focused on results; incentivize performance
   - Participants consider the program central to their businesses and schedules

8. **MEASURE LEARNING**
   - Make data stream
     - Instant feedback, continued data on KPIs
   - Measure content absorbed

9. **MEASURE IMPACT**
   - Disaggregated data through various methods
     - Control groups, contingent method surveys, econometrics
   - Surveying perceptions is only way

10. **ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY**
    - Hit KPIs during program
      - Get at KPIs during program → more incentives to invest
      - Break market failures
### Success drivers of e-exporters and “elite e-exporters”: findings from big data

1. Select the right firms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Beginner</th>
<th>Expert</th>
<th>Elite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Number of online sales channels</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>&gt;4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Existing online stores</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. % of online sales of all sales</td>
<td>1-10%</td>
<td>11-50%</td>
<td>&gt;50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Number of products to sell online</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>11-100</td>
<td>&gt;100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Number of staff for e-export</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>&gt;3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Exports as % of sales</td>
<td>1-10%</td>
<td>11-50%</td>
<td>&gt;50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. English fluency</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Strong demand on online channels</td>
<td>Not established</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Obvious fit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Delivery – applied, adaptive, micro-learning and bit-sized doses

- Integrate training to flow of work
- Make delivery adaptive: tailored to participants’ goals, capabilities, pace
- Ensure contents and delivery methods are sensitized to gender and accessible to women

Bad assumptions:
- More information is better
- Compartmentalized binge learning = absorbed and applied
- Improved knowledge = improved business outcomes
- Program will be transformative to participants
Applied microlearning to deliver – “how would you like to learn about doing ecommerce?”

### A: Mature digital enterprise
- Short videos (2-15 minutes) to answer a specific question I have about doing ecommerce
- Online courses for 1-5 days, for example on specific digital marketing tools
- Learning from other business owners or my team
- Applied learning: One-on-one mentoring on using digital platforms and ecommerce
- Online courses of say 1-3 weeks
- Webinars (~1 hour) to learn a specific skill or idea relevant to ecommerce
- Applied learning - In-house teacher to sit with us for a couple of weeks to answer any questions
- Just doing and learning by doing as I go, I figure it out

### B: Emerging digital enterprise
- Short videos (2-15 minutes) to answer a specific question I have about doing ecommerce
- Applied learning: One-on-one mentoring on using digital platforms and ecommerce
- Learning from other business owners or my team
- Online courses for 1-5 days, for example on specific digital marketing tools
- Online courses of say 1-3 weeks
- Just doing and learning by doing as I go, I figure it out
- Webinars (~1 hour) to learn a specific skill or idea relevant to ecommerce
- Applied learning - In-house teacher to sit with us for a couple of weeks to answer any questions

### C: Incipient digitizer
- Short videos (2-15 minutes) to answer a specific question I have about doing ecommerce
- Learning from other business owners or my team
- Online courses for 1-5 days, for example on specific digital marketing tools
- Applied learning: One-on-one mentoring on using digital platforms and ecommerce
- Just doing and learning by doing as I go, I figure it out
- Webinars (~1 hour) to learn a specific skill or idea relevant to ecommerce
- Applied learning - In-house teacher to sit with us for a couple of weeks to answer any questions
- Online courses of say 1-3 weeks

### D: Somewhat digitized social seller
- Short videos (2-15 minutes) to answer a specific question I have about doing ecommerce
- Learning from other business owners or my team
- Online courses for 1-5 days, for example on specific digital marketing tools
- Applied learning: One-on-one mentoring on using digital platforms and ecommerce
- Just doing and learning by doing as I go, I figure it out
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- Webinars (~1 hour) to learn a specific skill or idea relevant to ecommerce
- Applied learning - In-house teacher to sit with us for a couple of weeks to answer any questions
- Online courses of say 1-3 weeks
3. Partner for impact and sustainability

PHASE I - 2021
KPIs: (1) 75 e-export-ready sellers on global marketplaces; (2) ecommerce export volume.

PHASE II – 2022
KPIs: (1) more online sellers; (2) first online sales

Enabling environment for ecommerce

Sophisticated ecommerce ecosystem

Early-stage ecommerce ecosystem

LEVEL 1 – Digitized but offline seller
Firms that may have websites but do not use social media or have online stores

LEVEL 2 – Social seller
Firms that market on Facebook, Instagram, interact with customer using Whatsapp, mobile payments, cash

LEVEL 3 – Online seller
Firms that have online stores with digital payment capabilities

LEVEL 4 – Local marketplace seller
Firms that sell on Linio, MercadoLibre, etc. and building more sophisticated online capabilities

LEVEL 5 – Global marketplace seller; digital enterprise
Firms that sell on Amazon, Etsy, eBay, Upwork, etc., integrate all channels (stores, marketplaces, social media); extensive digital transformation

MSME digital transformation

Source: Nextrade Group Ecommerce Maturity Model (2019)
Enable women-led firms’ ecommerce indirectly by working with platforms
Overcome the biggest dilemmas in training - with technology and platforms?

**Firm-level**
- **Return on investment**
- **Sweetspot**
- **Time spent**

**Program-level**
- **Customized to each firm**
- **Sweetspot**
- **Scalable to many firms**
12 ways to go beyond the standard practice of enabling women-led firms onboard platforms

1. Onboard users/sellers; build users capacities to onboard platform
2. Support users in leveraging platform
3. Provide users offline services (like training)
4. Finance platforms, their scaling and their women initiatives
5. Build platform executives’ capacity to service women-led firms
6. Promote platform’s measurement of impact on women-led firms
7. Onboard buyers
8. Onboard complementary / embedded services (e.g. financing for marketplace sellers)
9. Enable developing country government agencies to work with platforms
10. Improve interoperability of platforms with each other
11. Measure women-led firms:
   - Pain points to onboard and use platforms
   - Development impact on women-led firms that use platforms, their employees, and communities
   - Economic effects and productivity gains from platforms
12. Improve policy and regulatory environment for platforms and their users:
   - Safe harbors for internet intermediaries
   - Free data transfer
   - Low taxes on digital transfers

Promote regulatory convergence across countries to facilitate platforms’ regional and global expansion

Source: Nextrade Group
SEE OUR

Roadmap to Empower Women-Led Firms in Ecommerce and the Online Economy
https://www.allianceforetradedevelopment.org/women-led-firms-in-ecommerce

Alliance Policy and research hub
https://www.allianceforetradedevelopment.org/etrade-policy-center