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## CHOOSING FROM AMONG THE MANY MERCHANT SERVICES

Being able to offer your customers as many payment options as possible can make your business grow in a huge way. By giving them the ability to pay for merchandise with their credit cards, especially if you are an online business owner, you give them an ease and flexibility of shopping that will have them returning time and again to make purchases from you. And with the popularity of online shopping higher than it has ever been, the demands to make your business better are just as great. The vast majority of shoppers prefer to pay for their orders with credit cards, so it makes good business sense that you would offer that option to them. By opening a merchant account with one of the many merchant services available to business owners, your customers will enjoy the simplicity and speed of paying by credit card, and you will see your profits soar.

Merchant service firms provide merchant accounts to business owners. A merchant account allows a business to accept credit cards as a form of payment from customers. A merchant account is not the same as a bank account. Rather, a merchant service works to make sure the credit card is verified and that the funds are transferred from the customer you're your business bank account. It used to be that merchant services were only available through banks and providers to retail establishments that were located in a physical location, like a mall. But the demands of online shopping have caused many merchant account providers to begin to provide merchant services to online business owners. There are many online merchant account providers that offer reliable and secure services particularly to merchants that sell their products on the Internet. Because there are so many merchant service providers available, it is important to be familiar with all characteristics of merchant services, especially the potentially high costs, so that you don't lose your profits. It is also important to find a merchant account provider that is dependable, trustworthy, and offers secure services for you and your customers.

If you open a merchant account for your online business, the type of payment processing usually offered by a merchant account service is real-time processing. Real-time processing is the best solution for online business owners since the charge from the customer's credit card is promptly processed when an order is placed. The customer receives an email notification that the order has been processed and the fund transfer is approved by the credit card company, upon verification and approval of the credit card. You will see the profits from the sale in your bank account within a few days.

The potential fees put upon you for merchant services can be numerous. Since not all of the fees are necessary, and not all merchant service providers charge them, check around with different providers until you find one with reasonable fees and monthly charges. Some of these fees include an application fee, a monthly statement fee, a discount rate and transaction fee (these are deducted with each and every sale you make), an annual fee, and a refund fee. There are also other miscellaneous fees that individual merchant service providers might charge you. There are many potential costs associated with opening an account with a merchant service provider. Try to compare services before you make a decision. It's also a good idea to try to estimate the monthly costs by using your current sales figures to project expenses.

Your relationship with your merchant service provider should last the duration of your business, if possible. You should trust your provider implicitly. Your merchant service provider should offer quick and secure processing of your credit card sales, and they should offer additional services to offer your customers even more payment options. Not only should they accept several types of credit cards (Visa, Mastercard, Discover, American Express, among others), but they should also provide your customers with added payment alternatives, like PayPal. Your merchant service provider should have a good reputation for having excellent service and reliability, as well as having a name for excellent customer relations. They should be equipped to deal with any issues or problems discreetly and quickly. The merchant services provider you choose to make a relationship with can make or break your business between its fees and service. Make sure you know the facts about merchant services and the providers so that you don't lose your dream of being a successful business owner.

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