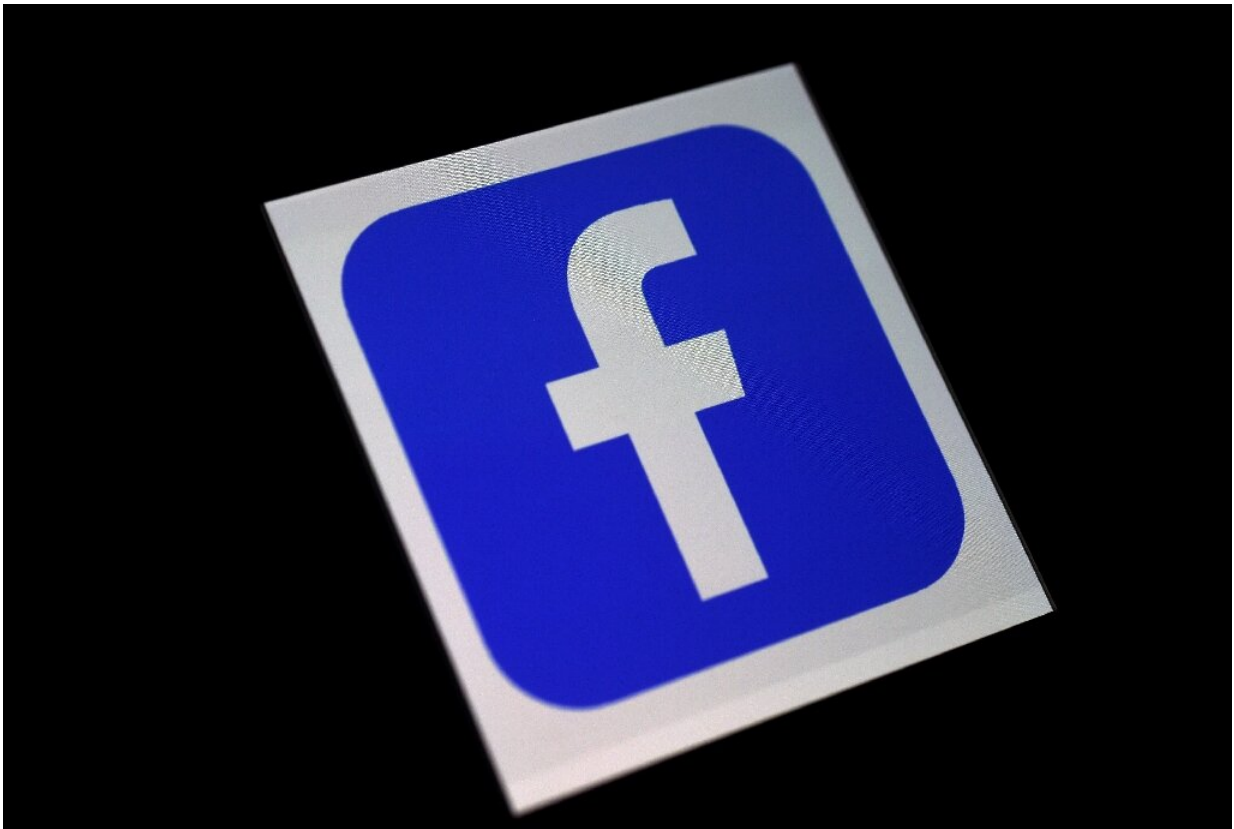


Facebook to help struggling retailers create online stores

May 19 2020, by Glenn Chapman



Facebook is offering free tools to retailers to create online shops which can operate on the social network

Facebook on Tuesday unveiled free tools for retailers hit by the pandemic to create online storefronts at the social network and

Instagram.

The initiative by the massive social network aims to assist the retail sector, which has been crushed by the coronavirus lockdowns around the world.

Merchants can easily set up shops on Facebook and Instagram, customize looks and display products, according to the California-based internet giant.

"This is the biggest step that we've taken yet to enable commerce across our family of apps," Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said.

"If you're running a small business or if you're thinking about starting one even from your living room, you have a whole suite of tools available that can help."

The primary focus of Facebook's "Shops" is to make it easy businesses to have online storefronts to survive during the crisis and ride the online shopping trend into the future, according to Zuckerberg.

"We really hope that our commerce solutions help businesses not only survive but thrive during coming months, and adapt to new consumer behavior," said Instagram Shopping product lead Layla Amjadi.

Facebook is already involved in e-commerce, with a Marketplace for selling goods and as a venue where businesses court customers through pages at the social network or Instagram.

Businesses have an option to buy Facebook ads to direct customers to their online shops. Sales can be consummated at websites off the social network.

Merchants in the US can use a Facebook checkout service to handle transactions, paying a nominal fee.

Shops will roll out in coming months to some 160 million businesses that already use the social network.



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, seen in a 2018 picture, said new tools for retailers can help merchants ride out the pandemic and move into online commerce

Virtual dressing rooms

Zuckerberg said information about what people buy will be kept private unless shoppers want to tell friends about purchases.

Facebook plans to eventually weave Shops into its Messenger and WhatsApp communication platforms.

Facebook is also working on ways to sell products hawked during live video broadcasts, a popular form of content at the social network.

"People have been using live video on our apps to showcase products for years, from shoe stores announcing new sneakers to beauty influencers trying on different lipsticks," Facebook said.

"Now, we're making it easier to shop for products in real time."

Facebook is also working on free tools including augmented reality to let shoppers see how they will look in outfits, cosmetics or other items for sale, according to Zuckerberg.

"I hope that we can at least help build some of the infrastructure that businesses need not only in this moment but going forward as well," Zuckerberg said.

"Because even when this period and the lockdowns pass... we're going to continue living more of our lives, and doing business, online."

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