

Social media outages hurt small businesses—so it's important to have a backup plan

March 6 2024, by Mae Anderson



This undated photo provided by Laura Levitan shows herself in a self portrait. Levitan, the owner of Mod L Photography in Addison, Texas, uses Facebook and Instagram to correspond with potential clients. When the Meta outage happened on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, she was in the middle of posting and replying to inquiries. Credit: Laura Levitan via AP

To businesses that rely on social media platforms for advertising, client communication or direct sales, Tuesday's Meta platforms outage was more than a communal inconvenience.

Experts say that whenever there's an [outage](#)—be it social media or other software [we've come to rely on](#)—it's a reminder that [small businesses](#) need to make sure they aren't reliant on one platform and have [contingency plans](#) in place—like an [email](#) database—when an outage does occur.

Cheyenne Smith, in Salt Lake City, Utah, founder of [Dakota Ridge](#), an e-commerce company selling children's shoes, relies on Meta's platforms, primarily Instagram, to grow her customer base, via a mix of unpaid Instagram posts and paid ads.

She said she couldn't quantify specifically how many sales she lost during the outage, but anecdotally said when the site went down, sales flowing to her e-commerce site stopped completely. But she says she has no plans to end her reliance on Meta's platforms, because they drive more sales than other social media sites she has tried.

"We are trying other social media channels, we just haven't been able to crack the code on them just yet, like we have on the Meta platform," she said. "So it's kind of, in my opinion, a necessary evil for us."

Still, experts say it's important to look beyond one site, particularly when it comes to growing a customer database.

"Yesterday was a wakeup call to many, many [business owners](#)," said Ramon Ray, a small business consultant who often speaks publicly about marketing. He advised small business owners to use the outage itself to goad customers into providing their email addresses, so there's more than one avenue for communication.

"For customers, if you're only communicating with them on Facebook say—'Listen, Facebook was out yesterday, we want to ensure we can always serve you,'" he said. "'Could you fill out this form with your cell number, first name, last name, email so we can start to serve you better?'"

Laura Levitan, owner of [Mod L Photography](#), in Addison, Texas, uses Facebook and Instagram to correspond with potential clients. When the outage happened, she had been in the middle of posting and replying to inquiries.

"I lost valuable time creating posts and Reels on Meta Business Suite, all of my progress was deleted," she said. "I wasn't able to get back to several inquiries in a timely fashion. This may or may not influence my ability to earn their business."

However, she was able to use her email list and website to communicate with other clients. She doesn't plan to shift away from any Meta platforms—but does plan to continue to build up her offsite communications.

"Because the outage was so pervasive I'm not sure what else I could do besides continuing to build my email list and website presence," she said. "When we own our email list we aren't as dependent on social media to prop up our communications and marketing."

David Lewis, CEO of HR firm Operations, Inc., which advises small businesses, said that as we grow ever more reliant on the Internet to do business, outages are just a reality that small businesses have to get used to.

"You just have to accept the fact that there's going to be these kinds of disruptions and be more appreciative of the fact that it doesn't happen

more often than it does," he said.

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