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Amazon hold event to help local businesses 'succeed in digital economy'

BY THOMASWOODS ON APRIL 28, 2017

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INTERNET retail giants Amazon took over Manchester Central yesterday as they hosted an event designed to help local entrepreneurs succeed in the digital age.

Over 450 small business leaders from across the North West attended a variety of seminars and workshops with guest speakers, aimed at assisting small and medium-sized enterprises.

Topics included the building of digital capabilities, boosting export sales through Amazon Marketplace, and bringing products to market with Amazon Launchpad.

Amazon were working in conjunction with renowned small business network Enterprise Nation, who provide expert advice and day-to-day support for over 70,000 of Britain's SMEs.

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Emma Jones MBE (pictured far right) was one of the panel who discussed whether North West England could become the UK's export capital.

One of the panellists was Enterprise Nation founder Emma Jones MBE, who discussed what the partnership had to offer:

"Today more and more people are setting up at home while holding down a day job and quite a lot of it can be guess work with success being hit and miss.

"The Amazon Academy helps address this by showing how and in what way the digital economy can play a role in every business endeavour.

"Exporting products and services to the world is a huge opportunity for small businesses and there's never been such an appetite for made or designed in Britain as there is now.

"As an entrepreneur, the best route to grow is focus on what you do best and outsource the rest and I do think that is where Amazon is a huge enabler of entrepreneurship in Britain."

Manchester is home to 7,000 businesses selling on Amazon Marketplace which together export more than £80 million worth of goods with the help of Amazon.

Business owners also had the chance to converse between seminars.

One of those businesses were represented at the Amazon Academy in Manchester by Amer Khan, owner of Love2Sleep – a successful premium bedding supplier, who spoke about how smaller businesses could follow in his footsteps and benefit by working with Amazon:

“The potential Amazon can create for independent sellers in the digital world is huge. The internet is everything and that trend is not going to slow down,” he explained.

“There’s many opportunities out there, and you’ve got to be brave at the time. There’s many hurdles to overcome, especially in the beginning, but you’ve just got to be focused, go with it and believe in yourself.

“To make the most of working with an online giant like Amazon, your business has to be able to run efficiently.

“Clearly describing products, communicating with customers and even dealing with the odd bad review are things which will help you grow and make the most out of the opportunity Amazon presents.”

Amazon Academy in Manchester, UK



Among the subjects discussed at the event was “Can we turn the North West into Britain’s export capital” and featured a panel of five industry experts chaired by The Guardian’s Emma Sheppard.

Michael Taylor, external affairs advisor to the Vice Chancellor at Manchester Metropolitan University, believes that some local flare could help the area achieve just that:

“In British culture, and particularly Mancunian culture, and the musical legacy this city’s created, is quite clearly a great exposition of our culture and a great facet that you can use to sell overseas,” he said.

“And it’s also one of the key reasons why we recruit so many students in Greater Manchester. It’s why the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan are two of the most popular universities for people to apply to.

“It’s got great magnetism.”

Amazon representatives also gave live demonstrations into their Echo range of technology, which uses a voice-prompted interface named **Alexa**, and hope that it will change the way people connect with businesses and order services.

By **Tom Woods**

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