



PIFS E-COMMERCE
BUSINESS TOOLKITS

USING E-COMMERCE TO HELP THE KAVA INDUSTRY IN TONGA 2024

A guide to getting more customers online





CONTENTS

FOREWORD FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT	4
SECTION 1: WHY MOVE ONLINE, WHY NOW?	5
SECTION 2: WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT OPTIONS TO GO ONLINE?	6
SECTION 3: WHAT COSTS SHOULD YOU CONSIDER TO TAKE YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE?	9
SECTION 4: GETTING NOTICED ONLINE.	12
SECTION 5: GETTING PAID ONLINE.	13
SECTION 6: GET MOVING: PACKAGING, SHIPPING, DELIVERY, RETURN.	15
SECTION 7: COMPLYING WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS.	16
SECTION 8: SECURITY TIPS.	18
SECTION 9: FURTHER INFORMATION.	19
INDUSTRY REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS	20



FOREWORD FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

Over the past few years, E-commerce has become a focus for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. We are working hard in this space because we believe that E-commerce has the potential to help Pacific businesses overcome their structural challenges and gain a competitive advantage over global competitors.

Our activities and those of our partners are carried out under the umbrella of the [Pacific E-commerce Initiative](#) and guided by the Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap. This aligns with the Technology and Connectivity thematic area of the [2050 Strategy](#) and its implementation plan.

As a regional organisation, our role is to help our Forum Members work together to achieve their objectives, as working together can help us save time, money, and achieve better results. The Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap notes the need to work together to develop E-commerce skills for our small businesses. The preparation of E-commerce business toolkits is a practical way to do this. Our toolkits are now a well known series in the region and continue to support Pacific businesses in their online journey.

Kava drinking is deeply embedded in Tongan culture. The Pacific Regional Kava Development Strategy supports the kava industry to grow stronger and sustain the people and businesses of our region, particularly for kava-producing countries like Tonga. Given its cultural significance and its substantial market and export potential, kava is one of the three priority E-commerce toolkits for Tonga.

Based on a common methodology, which is how we work together, our toolkits have benefitted from the skills of local experts and business leaders to ensure that each toolkit responds to the real needs of the target audience and sector.

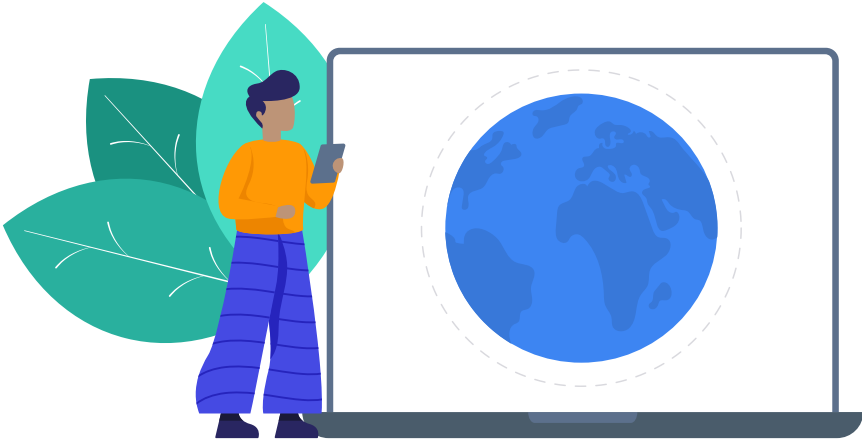
I commend this progressive public-private partnership and wish our small business every success in their digital journey.

Zarak Khan

Director Programmes and Initiatives
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

1

WHY MOVE ONLINE, WHY NOW?



In Tonga, Kava is widely consumed as part of traditional rituals. It is estimated that Tongan men consume kava an average of 2–3 times per week. Of the 75% of households in Tonga that live in rural areas, over half are involved in kava production.

Kava consumption is not restricted to the domestic market. Indeed, in March 2024, the Australian government highlighted that Tonga is the leading exporter of kava to Australia. It is estimated that the global kava root and basal extract market will grow from USD 1.18 billion in 2022 to USD 3.41 billion in 2029.

Worldwide, E-commerce sales grew by 60% from 2016 to 2022. This growth creates many new opportunities for businesses in both domestic and international markets.

The government is fully supportive of this digital transformation. Notable initiatives include the [Tonga E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap](#). New key services, such as bank payment gateways and mobile payments, are now available. An increasing number of companies are enhancing their web presence through social media, marketplaces, and even their own websites.

Towards the end of 2024, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) will deliver E-commerce training to Tongan micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). This series of three half-day workshops, led by E-commerce experts and national digital service providers, will motivate entrepreneurs to advance their digital efforts. Grants for E-commerce projects and specialised coaching are also available.

With a well-developed domestic market and a growing international market, now is a good time to invest in your digital transformation and begin selling more kava online!

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT OPTIONS TO GO ONLINE?

There are three main ways to establish an online presence, each with distinct models, costs, and target audiences.

1. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram provide access to a vast global audience – 3 billion and 2 billion users, respectively. As of 2024, users spend over 2.5 hours daily on social media. Setting up a business page is free and straightforward, making it an accessible entry point for businesses. For example, the kava brand [Kavafield promotes its products on Facebook](#), where it has 17,000 followers.

The Facebook group [Tonga Trading Selling Buying and Exchange](#) has 14,000 members. There were 73,000 Facebook users in Tonga in December of 2023, which accounted for 66% of its entire population.

2. Standalone websites tend to have less impact than Facebook because many Tongans spend more time on social media than visiting individual websites. The Tongan kava brand [Kavafied uses its own website](#) (based in Florida, U.S.A.) to promote and sell its products. Shopify, Wix, Weebly, WooCommerce are famous E-commerce platforms. A standalone website's effectiveness largely depends on strong marketing efforts and advanced online functionalities to drive sales. This option is usually more suitable for businesses that already manage social media and marketplaces channels effectively.

3. Marketplaces allow you to sell products without the need to develop your own website. For example, [Tongan kava products are available on Amazon](#). A regional example is [Siuhuu](#), which collaborates with over 200 suppliers across the Pacific, including Tonga. In New Zealand, [Uber Eats](#) delivers kava, and [TradeMe](#) is the largest online auction and classifieds website. Your presence on the Google search engine is important, including your business description, location, and user rating.

Lastly, a functional email address is essential for managing your business online. It allows you to communicate with customers and register for tools such as [Meta Business Suite](#), marketplaces, and other business solutions.



Main pros and cons of the available channels:

	Main pros	Main cons
Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Affordable to implement.- Simple setup.- Facilitates direct and personal interaction with your audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Offer only basic features.- Payment gateways in Tonga cannot be integrated with social media.
Own website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- May be connected to your bank account in Tonga.- Full control over design, content, user experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Requires significant investment for both initial setup and ongoing maintenance.- Not easy to integrate with other solutions (accounting, stock, emails), which can complicate operations.
Marketplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reach a broad audience with low financial commitment.- Include built-in payment options for seamless transactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Restricted ability to customise branding, customer experience, and product presentation.

CASE STUDY: MOANA KAVA FARM

The screenshot shows the Moana Kava Farm website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Kava Powder, Instant Kava, Package Deals, About Kava, About Us, Our Blog, and Preparation guide. A shopping cart icon shows a total of \$0.00. Below the navigation bar, the breadcrumb trail reads 'Home / Tonga Kava'. A 'JUDGE.ME' badge indicates 428 verified reviews with a 4.5-star rating. Filter options are available for Product by Categories, Price, and Weight, with a 'SHOW FILTER' button. The main heading reads 'Buy Tonga Kava in Australia with confidence'. Three product listings are displayed:

- KAVA POWDER, TONGA KAVA Moana Premium**: 25 reviews, 4.5 stars. Price: \$239.50 (original) / \$191.50 (discounted, -20%). Available in 1kg increments. Offered by Afterpay.
- Coconut Kava Shell**: 4 reviews, 4.5 stars. Price: \$7.95. 64 in stock. Offered by Afterpay.
- Kava Straining Bag**: 28 reviews, 4.5 stars. Price: \$12.95 (original) / \$10.05 (discounted, -15%). 242 in stock. Offered by Afterpay.

Moana Kava is one of Tonga's renowned plantations for traditional Kava based in Vava'u. The farm wholesales kava to North America, Australia, and South Asia.

On social media, the farm showcases beautiful photos on an [Instagram page](#), shares interesting posts on its [Facebook page](#), and features attractive videos on its [TikTok page](#).

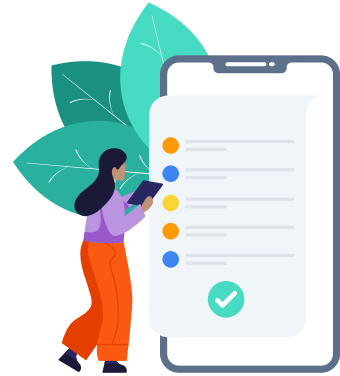
Their social media platforms drive traffic to their standalone website, [MoanaKava.com.au](#), which provides more information about the farm and includes a form for wholesalers. The website also features links to marketplaces such as [AustraliaKavaShop.com.au](#), where their products are available for purchase online.

3

WHAT COSTS SHOULD YOU CONSIDER TO TAKE YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE?

Common costs to all channels:

- First, remember that the E-commerce journey is **time consuming**. Whatever the channel, some time will be required for writing descriptions and updates about your service, uploading new banners, managing orders, answering customers' requests, and analysing online customer behaviour.
- Other cost components to anticipate include **logistics**-related expenses, such as packaging, labelling, inventory management, delivery, duties, and returns (see Section 6 for more information).
- **Content production**: costs for creating photos, videos, and translations. If you decide to create a video for marketing your business, the minimum cost is TOP 1,500 per video if the production is done by a company in Tonga.
- A reliable **internet connection** is essential. With speeds below 1 Mbps, basic activities such as sending emails or uploading photos can become very slow, hindering communication with customers.
- You also need to consider the additional cost of **international transfers** and exchange rates.



Example of internet costs:

Internet provider	Estimated cost for 35GB per month including Wi-Fi device	Unlimited data plan
Tonga Communication Corporation	TOP 70 per month.	Depends on speed and internet device but will be at least TOP 1,000 per month for unlimited data plan per month.
Digicel Tonga Ltd	TOP 138 per month.	Depends on speed and internet device but will be at least TOP 1,000 per month for unlimited data plan per month.
Starlink	Starlink only has an unlimited data package.	Equipment is approximately TOP 1,000 and unlimited data plan is approximately TOP 250 per month.

Costs specific to social media:

- You may need to allocate a budget for **advertising**, particularly on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok, to effectively reach and engage your target audience. You should start with a TOP 2 budget per campaign to understand how it works.

Costs specific to marketplaces:

- **Commission fees** can be charged as a percentage of each transaction, or as a cost per unit sold.
- International transfers and exchange rates: additional costs associated with transferring funds and currency conversion.

Costs specific to your own website:

When requesting detailed quotations from potential suppliers, consider the following key components:

- **Web development:** This includes the creation of the website according to agreed specifications, such as key functionalities and language support. This may cost for instance TOP 1,000 for a basic website development.
- **Maintenance:** This includes costs for licences, hosting, domain registration, additional plugins, and security certificates. This may cost TOP 200 per month.
- **Bank commission fees:** Up to 4% of the transaction amount with payment gateways provided by BSP or ANZ.

CASE STUDY: MADEINTONGA.COM

The screenshot displays the 'MADE IN TONGA' website. The header includes a 'JOIN OUR NEWSLETTER' button, social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Pinterest, and a search bar. Navigation links include 'SELL', 'LOG IN', 'SHOPPING CART: 0 ITEMS - \$0.00NZD', 'ABOUT US', 'ABOUT TONGA', 'MARKETPLACE', 'CUSTOMER SUPPORT', 'SHOP ONLINE', and 'CONTACT US'. The main content area is titled 'SHOP ONLINE' with a breadcrumb trail 'home > shop online > kava'. A red arrow points to the 'Kava' product category. Below this, there is a large image of kava roots and a text block: 'Email now orders@madeintonga.com to buy kava. Click here orders@madeintonga.com'. The text describes Kava (*Piper methysticum*), its Latin name, and its traditional use in Tonga. A 'Read More' button is present. At the bottom, three product cards are shown: 'Wooden Kava Bowl (Kumete) \$275.00', 'Kava Powder 1kg (Piper Methysticum) Specials from \$80.00', and 'Large 20L Kava Bowl (Kumete)'. A sidebar on the left contains 'PRODUCTS', 'SHOP BY' (keyword and supplier search), 'SHOP ONLINE' categories, 'WHY SHOP WITH US' (Tongan Made, Shipping, Warranty, Safe Shopping), and 'SHOPPING CART' (SUBTOTAL: \$0.00, VIEW CART, CHECKOUT).

Just like Tinopai farm in Tongatapu, local businesses sell their products, including kava, through madeintonga.com.

This website is fully integrated and hosted in New Zealand. They incurred a one-time cost of about TOP 27,600 for website development and, currently, pay approximately TOP 145 per month for hosting and domain name services. Additionally, they pay a 3% commission on every sale made through their website, which goes to the New Zealand-based e-payment company that manages their online payment system.

Producers that have authentic Made in Tonga products can join their marketplace for free.

Once you are online, it is important to get noticed and attract attention. In the Retail and Consumer Goods industries, worldwide, approximately half of sales occur after a digital interaction between the customer and the company (such as through social media, email, web searches, or SMS). This means that it is important to use digital marketing well to drive online sales. This can be achieved in various ways.

- **Email signature:** Create an email signature that includes links to your social media pages and your personal website, if available.
- **Social Networks:** Focus on the quality of your posts by using high-quality photos, relevant tags, hashtags, and emojis. In Tonga, an advertising budget of as little as TOP 2 per day on social media can effectively increase your audience and provide a good return on investment.
- **Direct Marketing:** Use tools such as [Mailchimp](#) to send targeted emails to your clients. Effective direct marketing involves well-designed flyers, segmented campaigns, and automated emails (such as welcome messages or birthday offers).
- **Search Engine Optimisation (SEO):** SEO influences your ranking in search engine results. It depends on factors such as keywords, content quality, and internal links.
- **Google Ads:** You can improve your visibility with [Google Ads](#).
- **Analytics:** Use analytics solutions across your online channels to track and increase the number of visitors you attract (audience acquisition rate) and how many of these visitors are becoming customers (conversion rate). Monitor which campaigns drive traffic, identify where customers drop off (leave the website), and address issues such as shopping cart abandonment, since two-thirds of online carts are abandoned.



5

GETTING PAID ONLINE.

In Tonga, most people still use cash to pay. “Buy Now Pay Later” is a good option to start selling your kava online. But remember, it ultimately depends on the customer’s willingness to complete the payment. Cash handling has disadvantages, such as the time required to reconcile invoices and deposit funds, as well as the risk of losing money through theft or misplacement. Also accepting digital payments may be a gamechanger for your business.

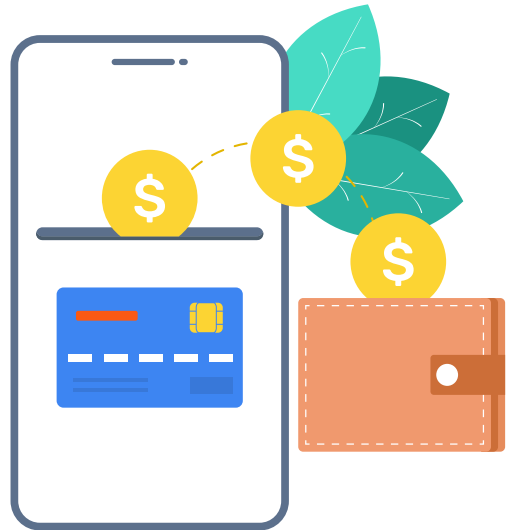
One option is to allow customers to make **bank transfers** to your Tongan bank accounts. While this method is easy to process, it typically takes a few business days for the funds to reach your account, and banks charge fees for the service. The cost for bank transfers between local banks in Tonga typically ranges from TOP 5 to TOP 10. For receiving international transfers, fees generally range from TOP 10 to TOP 30. However, additional costs may apply, particularly for currency conversion or exchange rate margins, which can increase the overall cost of receiving funds from overseas.

In the kava industry, a common practice is to receive payments via bank transfer from your marketplace after the customer has paid online.

If you have your own website, customers can pay directly through your **payment gateway**, with the funds being deposited into your Tongan bank account (ANZ or BSP).

Another option is **mobile payment**, which has been provided by Digicel in the last few years.

Using QR codes is a convenient option, to generate bank transfers or mobile payments. You can create a QR code to make it easy for your customers to pay for their kava in just a few clicks. Your customers will simply scan your code, enter the price, and validate the transaction.





CASE STUDY: BSP BANK PAYMENT GATEWAY

The BSP's Internet Payment Gateway (IPG) enables businesses to offer online payment options using major credit and debit cards.

Customers can purchase your products, such as kava, through your online store. Once the store is set up, customers can proceed to the checkout and choose BSP as their payment option. After entering their payment details, BSP validates the information, generates an online receipt for a successful transaction, and transfers the funds to your nominated BSP account.

The transaction fee is up to 4% of the total amount.

Available payment options in Tonga:

Payment option	Main pros	Main cons
Cash on delivery (COD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are no additional fees for you as the seller. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Payment depends on the customer's effective arrival and willingness to pay, which can lead to potential issues.
Bank transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easily accessible with all local banks. - Simple to use. - Often, lower transaction fees compared to credit cards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does not integrate with websites or apps for streamlined operations. - Up to 3 working days for processing. - Can be costly for international tourists.
Mobile payment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affordable. (It is currently free if transfer is from Digicel to Digicel number). - Easy for customers in Tonga to use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does not connect with other systems. - Hardly used by customers overseas.
Payment gateway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clients can complete their payment without leaving your e-shop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commission up to 4% of the transaction amount.

6

GET MOVING: PACKAGING, SHIPPING, DELIVERY, RETURN.

E-commerce success relies on efficient logistics and delivery services.

- **Packaging:** Before starting online sales, decide how you will package each product. Think about materials, labels, and any necessary warnings.
- **Shipping kava overseas:** Shipping can be time-consuming, labour-intensive and costly. Ensure compliance with both local and international customs regulations.
- **Delivery policy:** Be clear about how you will deliver products (capabilities and options), such as global shipping, click-and-collect, or home delivery. Let customers know how long delivery will take and how much it will cost to manage their expectations effectively.
- **Return policy:** Clearly outline procedures for returns, specifying what happens if the product is late, damaged, or not as expected. Specify when customers can raise a complaint, whether they need to return the product, and who bears the cost.
- **Refund policy:** If you offer refunds, detail the process for claiming a reimbursement, including required information, methods of reimbursement, and financial responsibility for the costs.
- **Disclaimer:** Consider including a disclaimer advising customers to verify product acceptability with their local customs..

CASE STUDY: TONGA POST

Tonga Post provides domestic inter-island shipping of products, and export of products to international markets.

- **Inter-island shipping** with Tonga Post starts at TOP 25 per kg and additional TOP 5 per additional kg.
- Tonga Post's standard overseas shipping rates (in TOP):



Weight	Aus	NZ	USA
0.5kg	29	31	74
1kg	58	45	109
5kg	373	215	460
10kg	680	390	850

7

COMPLYING WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS.

Starting your online business involves ensuring that your business operations comply with national laws and regulations. Here are key elements for your legal checklist:

Registration: You can register your business online or in person. The Business Registries of Tonga are now fully online, making registration easy ([link](#)). To process your company registration, it usually takes 3-5 working days. For sole proprietorship registration, your application form must be submitted to the company registrar together with a fee of TOP 100.

Business licensing: Every business, whether it's a sole trader, partnership or company, must have a business licence to operate in Tonga. You can apply for this licence either in person or [online](#). Processing time depends on the type of business, however, you can expect it to take 3-5 working days.

Tax registration: Consumption tax (VAT) in Tonga is 15%. Apply for a Tax Identification Number (TIN) at the Ministry of Revenue and Customs. More information is available through this [link](#).

Data protection and privacy: Make sure to clearly explain your privacy policy by answering these questions: What information are you collecting? Why are you collecting this information? How can consumers see and change their information?

Consumer protection: Tonga's Consumer Protection Act (2000) requires businesses to issue receipts, avoid misleading practices, and ensure quality care.

Customisable templates for your E-commerce business' **terms and conditions** are available online, for example [here](#). Your business website should include clear policies on:

- Customer complaints, dispute settlement
- Payment terms and conditions
- Disclaimer of liability: this is a notice that limits what your business is responsible for if something goes wrong with your product or services.

Tonga is currently updating its legal and regulatory framework as part of the implementation of the [National E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap](#).

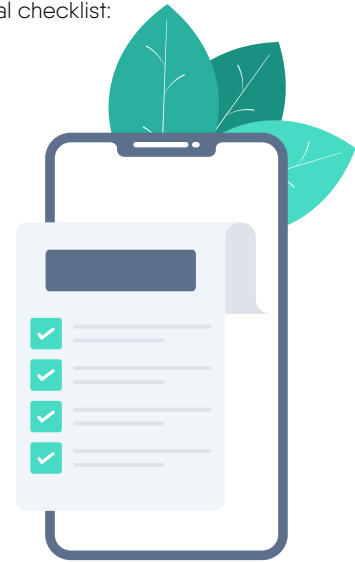


Illustration of information from Tonga Trade Portal, with a focus on kava export: for a specific objective, such as kava export by plane, one can see the summary of the procedure, with its corresponding required documents, estimated costs, total duration, and laws or regulations.

The screenshot displays the Tonga Trade Portal interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Tonga Trade Portal logo and links for 'About us', 'Contact us', 'Disclaimer', and 'Select Language'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'HOME', 'PROCEDURES', 'LEGISLATION', 'KINGDOM OF TONGA GOVERNMENT PORTAL', and 'ASYCUDAWORLD TONGA'. The main content area is titled 'Trade in goods' and 'Tariff', with a search bar and a dropdown menu for 'Choose regime' and 'Products'. The breadcrumb trail shows 'EXPORT > Kava > Full procedure for exports of Kava (Airport)'. The main content is divided into three sections: 'Steps (9)', 'Summary of the procedure', and 'Required Documents (12)'. The 'Steps (9)' section lists the following steps: 1. Apply for Export Permit, 2. Receive Export Permit, 3. Obtain Business License, 4. Apply for business license, 5. Conduct Physical Inspection, 6. Receive Business License Certificate, 7. Obtain Phytosanitary Certificate copy, 8. Kava Consignment Inspection, 9. Pay & Receive Kava Phytosanitary Certificate, 10. Obtain airway Bill, 11. Obtain airway bill, 12. Customs and Biosecurity Clearance, 13. Hire Customs Broker (OPTIONAL), 14. Submit Declaration. The 'Summary of the procedure' section shows 'Institutions involved (4)' with images of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Food (x4), Ministry of Trade and Economic Development (x3), Airline Agency, and Ministry of Revenue and Customs. The 'Results (1)' section shows a 'Business License Certificate'. The 'Required Documents (12)' section shows a grid of 12 PDF documents: 1. Application for Export Permit of Plumbago, 2. Import Permit (Australia Only) (x 2), 3. Application for a Business License, 4. Valid Identification, 5. Business Inspection Form, 6. FIC Certificate, 7. Accreditation Code, 8. Customs Export Entry, 9. Exporter Authorization Form, 10. Customs Inspection Form, 11. Phytosanitary Certificate-Kava, 12. Airway bill.

8

SECURITY TIPS.

Security tips: protecting your business online

As you venture into E-commerce, it's crucial to protect yourself from the increasing risk of online scams and cyber threats. Security breaches can lead to major disruptions, including lost sales, compromised customer data, and damage to your business reputation - costs that can be avoided by taking preventive measures.

Security tip	Action	Reason
Upsize your passwords	Use strong, unique passwords with at least 12 characters, including letters, numbers, and symbols. Avoid easily guessable information. You can use a service such as LastPass or 1Password to upsize your password.	Longer and more complex passwords are harder to crack, providing an essential layer of security.
Upgrade to two-factor authentication	Enable two-factor authentication on all important accounts, involving a code sent to your phone or email.	Adds an extra step, making it significantly harder for unauthorised users to access your accounts, even if they have your password.
Update your apps regularly	Keep software, apps, and operating systems up to date. Enable automatic updates if possible.	Updates often include security patches for newly discovered vulnerabilities, protecting your systems from attacks.
Uphold your privacy	Be mindful of the information shared online. Adjust privacy settings on social media to limit access to sensitive data.	Reduce the risk of your information being exploited for scams or unauthorised access.
Upscale your data and systems backup	Regularly back up your data using both local and cloud storage solutions. Test your backups to ensure they work.	Ensure you can recover from data loss due to cyberattacks, system failures, or accidental deletion, allowing business operations to continue with minimal disruption.

For more information: <https://pacson.org/cyber-smart-pacific/cyber-smart-pacific-2023>



**Digicel mobile
payment solution**

[www.digicelpacific.com/
mobile/to/apps/mycashton](http://www.digicelpacific.com/mobile/to/apps/mycashton)



Made in Tonga website

www.madeintonga.com



Post office delivery solution

www.tongapost.to



PHAMA Plus Program

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**Pacific Horticultural and
Agricultural Market
Access plus**

phamaplus.com.au



Pacific E-commerce portal

pacificcommerce.org

National E-commerce Strategy

[pacificcommerce.org/reports/tonga-
national-e-commerce-strategy](http://pacificcommerce.org/reports/tonga-national-e-commerce-strategy)



Tonga Trade Portal

tonga.tradeportal.org



**Web developer solution,
Tonga Web Host**

www.tongawebhost.to

**Tonga top kava exporter
to Australia (article)**

[www.fbcnews.com.fj/
business/tonga-top-
kava-exporter-to-australia](http://www.fbcnews.com.fj/business/tonga-top-kava-exporter-to-australia)



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WITH MANY THANKS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS:

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