One method to maximize sales (and success) of your small business is to offer various payment options. By doing this, you are giving your customers choices and also capturing every sale you possibly can. While everyday there seems to be a new way to pay, this guide will help you sort through the numerous options out there and determine which payment solutions best fit your business needs.

**Cash**

“Cash is king” as they say, but is this the best option for your customer base? Many businesses choose to be a “cash only” business for various reasons. Some businesses choose to operate on a “cash only” basis so that they can (illegally) report less on tax documents. Be aware, however, that this can make you a bigger target for tax audits. Other businesses do so because they can’t afford the merchant fees that come with processing credit and debit card payments. Accepting cash at your small business should always be the starting point, but you should not stop there. Check out this list of pros and cons for accepting only cash from the Small Business Administration (SBA).

**Checks**

Accepting checks seems to be an outdated and risky way of accepting payment, but many businesses still do so. It’s difficult for small businesses to verify whether checks are good or if the account has insufficient funds. Having a check “bounce” will not only hurt your business’s bottom line, but can incur additional fees depending on your financial institution’s policy. If you ultimately decide to accept checks, follow these procedures from the SBA to safeguard your business.

**Credit Cards**

Credit card payment is the leading method of payment in the world next to cash. This method, however, often comes at a cost. Many credit card companies charge transactional fees (assessed per transaction), flat fees (assessed per month), and incidental fees (assessed under certain situations such as charge-backs). Visa and Mastercard dominate the market as they are widely accepted worldwide. American Express and Discover are the next big players, but have a lower acceptance rate given their higher processing fees. Cardfellow provides a great breakdown of the various fees by credit card company.

In addition to traditional credit card processing services, a number of companies have popped up offering mobile solutions to credit card processing such as Square and PayPal Here. Check out this quick comparison of the different mobile point-of-sale (POS) systems...
Customers have started to expect businesses to accept at least some type of credit card and your small business would be at a disadvantage if it did not follow suit. Recently, credit card companies, in an effort to combat fraud, have begun providing their customers with “smart cards” or credit cards with EMV chip technology. With this trend, liability for fraudulent transactions can fall on your small business if you are not EMV compliant. In addition to EMV chips, near field communication (NFC) technology has emerged and gained popularity such as Apple Pay.

**Online Payments**

Online payments are going to be the future of convenience and security. The SBA lays out some of the advantages and disadvantages of choosing to adopt this early trend. Online payments will offer businesses a cheaper, faster, and reliable way to do business. Companies such as Venmo (traditionally a peer-to-peer payment platform that was acquired by Paypal in 2013) and Square Cash have become increasingly popular with small businesses.

Another online payment option that some businesses have adopted is Bitcoin. Bitcoin, a secure payment solution based on blockchain technology, has been slow to adoption, but may provide an innovative way of innovating business. Here is a guide to accepting bitcoin at your small business.