

# Shopping vs. Buying

The difference between shopping and buying has taken center stage," retail consultant Steve Dennis wrote in January on *Forbes.com*. "Buying is task-oriented, more chore than cherish," as when people buy garbage bags or toilet paper. But "shopping" is different. "It's experiential, social and tactile," Dennis wrote. Retailers have to be both types since pro painters need to check off a chore, while DIYers want to have an experience. The trouble comes, Dennis wrote, when retailers don't understand the distinction.



## FBI Warns of 4 Cyber Threats

A senior director in the FBI's cyber division, Howard S. Marshall, cautioned Congress in January that cyber attacks against small businesses are on the rise. Marshall identified the following four areas of concern: **business email compromise**, where a criminal may pose as a vendor or contact to trick the victim into paying an unauthorized invoice or transferring payroll records; **ransomware**, where documents and files are encrypted making them unreadable until a ransom is paid; **criminal data breach activity**, where cyber criminals break into a company's network and steal financial information; **internet of things**, where criminals hack smart devices, such as locks and lights, in order to gain access to computer systems. Marshall explained in great detail how the FBI has dramatically increased its efforts over the past year to protect small business owners from cyber threats. Victims of cyber crime can report it to the FBI at [ic3.gov](http://ic3.gov).

21%

The portion of online traffic made up of "bad bots."

\* Bad bots are computer applications or scripts designed to hurt businesses by damaging their SEO rankings, copying and reusing their content, and stealing their financial information.

- Source: [SmallBusinessComputing.com](http://SmallBusinessComputing.com)

## Sixteen Months of High Hopes

Small business owners overall level of optimism has stayed remarkably bright for at least 16 consecutive months, according to a perennial survey from a small business research group. The survey's results for each of those 16 months show readings that rank in the top five percent of all readings the index has recorded since it began in 1973. The survey is done by the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) Research Foundation, which collects data about small business economic trends.



## The Trouble With Facebook

Facebook has been embroiled in an ongoing scandal that could affect how effectively independent retailers can market themselves on the social media platform. The scandal emerged after a British political consulting firm was revealed to have collected private information on Facebook from about 50 million users without those users' permission. A March report from *NBC News* speculated that fallout from the scandal could damage independent retailers since they and other small businesses rely so heavily on the data that Facebook collects. The Menlo Park, California, company could lose as many as 45 million users, according to a technology business consultant quoted in the report, and many of the ones who stay may tighten their privacy controls in a way that limits the benefits of advertising on Facebook for small businesses. CEO Mark Zuckerberg was called to testify before Congress in early April about this and other issues. Fines and regulations against Facebook could be forthcoming.