Secrets of E-Commerce Success
Understanding Needs and Marketing

Special Edition for Business Owners, CEO's, CFO's and CMO's

Updated 05/03/12
Version 3.1

A Plan for Increasing Sales Revenues in Six Months

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Ecommerce Primer and Secrets

What's your point?

With continued explosive growth, e-commerce can provide your potential consumers a lot of what they want. This includes a broad assortment of products, the ability to comparison shop, gathering product data, and the convenience to shop anytime from anywhere.

Will your store be competing with other e-vendors, or is the point to make the process easier for existing clients? Sorting this out up front can save you a lot of heartache down the road.

To successfully compete with the traditional bricks and mortar companies, all e-commerce has to do is offer the same products, ensure order accuracy, allow for consumers that might want instant gratification with overnight shipping, and be somewhat competitive price wise.

These characteristics of Internet retailing are driving the e-commerce supply chain to be as flexible, fast and low-cost as the Internet itself — but traditional retailers may find the transition to the online world difficult.

Here then, are some basic concepts that may help with the shift from bricks and mortar to e- commerce.

1. **Is your product well positioned to sell online?** Not all products make for good e-commerce sales. Do you really want to try to ship a head of lettuce? Common sense and a small bit of research go a long way into helping with this decision. If you are going to sell inexpensive goods that can easily be bought in a next-door supermarket - you might want to reconsider. But: if you find an industry with little competition, you might have a winner.

2. **Poor Web design is a success killer.** This is true of e-commerce more than anywhere else. The moment a user arrives at your site, they will begin making assumptions about you and all aspects of your business. Are you trustworthy? Can they buy easily? Is your site too confusing? If your Web site looks like it was created by your nephew (no offense to your nephew), how likely is a consumer to buy something? With something as simple as a click of the "back" button, someone can be gone in an instant, back to the search engine that brought them to your site in the first place. Remember, first impressions count.

3. **Usability matters.** Have you heard of "user-friendliness"? This is the right place and right time to prove you know what it is. Don't force people to register in order to place a simple transaction. Make sure the checkout process is simple, easy to understand, and only request the necessary information needed for the transaction. Do you know how many people have abandoned your cart?

4. **Content is King.** Information is the key to educating your client base. It's what keeps an interested party interested. Yet, many on line e-tailers forget to post return policies, warranty information, customer service phone numbers, and the all important privacy policy. A clearly stated private policy will immediately raise your level of credibility.

5. **Fulfill your orders and keep your customers informed.** Do you know that one negative feedback spreads faster than ten positive ones? Thus, before you start selling online, ensure you have a trusted delivery service that is able to fulfill your customers' orders in a timely fashion.

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6. Customer Service. Satisfied customers will do more for the growth of your company than any other factor. They come back and buy more. They spread the word and tell others. MAKE the time to respond to your customers and offer them surveys and feedback forms. Get creative and offer incentives that force interaction. They will appreciate it, and so will you.

7. Did I mention Content is King? How long has it been since you've updated your blog? News items, new information, and new offers are critical to the long-term success of the site. And while you're at it, it's time to make sure your product offerings are as current as your site information.

8. Test, test, and re-test! I cannot stress this point enough. Orders that get lost, broken links, time- outs, typos in your descriptions, and many other simple things that might go wrong can cause a potential buyer to lose confidence, leave your site, and never come back. Once your site is on line and available, have friends and family jump on and try to buy something. You'd be amazed at what you might discover with a fresh set of eyes.

9. Don't forget to market your site! BEFORE your site is ready and your warehouse is stuffed with product, you need to get your marketing gears in sync. Choosing a web developer who has an in depth knowledge about e-commerce can be a huge benefit because they can help you through the process. A good developer is one who understands your business model, not just someone who can build a pretty site.

10. Research. Ummm...what are your competitors doing out there anyway? I strongly encourage you to find out what is being done around the virtual block by spending some time (and yes, actually ordering some product) on your competitors Web site. Don't just look for what they might be doing better than you, take some time to see what they are doing poorly. It might spark an idea on what you can do better as well!

11) Online advertising. If you are a business that has yet to establish a Twitter account, perhaps the time is now, because the platform is becoming a great place for marketers to promote specials and new products. Branded Twitter and Facebook pages are free to set up. For free, the marketer can start following Twitter users with hopes that they follow back. While that is one way to get the ball rolling, brands can also test Twitter's ad units, Promoted Accounts and Promoted Tweets. Marketers bid on keywords, akin to Google AdWords, and the ads start appearing when users either perform a Twitter.com search or in their news feeds. Promoted Accounts, in particular, are designed to grow a company's audience on the site. In the last several months, Twitter pages have been enhanced to enable product videos and other multimedia marketing capabilities. Additional information on Twitter marketing opportunities can be found via business.twitter.com.

Also, Submit your site to directories like Yahoo! Classifieds, where businesses can post about products and services at no charge. This tactic works particularly well for getting sweepstakes to go viral on the cheap.

12) Advertise your URL on everything. Whether it is a direct mail piece, a Yellow page ad, business card, an email campaign, or the signage in front of the building, always promote the website. The free

impressions your company's properties can create should not be underestimated.

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13) Merchant Accounts. Understanding how your clients will pay for products and services, and how the PayPal and Credit Card and Gateway fees are structured is important. Applying for these accounts can be arduous, so it's important to understand how they work up front.

What you can do about it. Call now for a no obligation, in person, one on one meeting with one of our custom development experts. This no costs analysis of your needs, tactics, and strategies will provide a baseline for immediate improvement. Let our team provide real insight, strategy, and a plan, while allowing you to capture new business today.

We can be found on the Web at ImageWorksLLC.com, or via telephone at 860-647-7725.

About ImageWorks

ImageWorks, LLC is a full service web marketing and technology company. We help businesses bridge the gap between their marketing and technology needs. ImageWorks, LLC is privately held and funded, and based in Vernon, Connecticut.

ImageWorks, LLC designs and implements cross-platform business workflow solutions that solve critical business problems and improve productivity for our clients. We help our clients by providing customized, single source, Web site design and hosting services in harmony with the focus and operation of their business to maximize ROI.

Founded in 1997, ImageWorks became an LLC in 1999. What began as a cottage industry selling advertising on a local town website quickly evolved into a Web design leader.

As a Web design company with over 14 years experience, our products and services now include: Full web design, database integration, social media, e-commerce, e-mail marketing, hosting, custom application development, and web site redesign.

As an inbound marketing agency we view our process as collaboration with our customers, not a product sale. We are looking for relationships with customers who want to succeed in inbound marketing, and we hope that we can create one with your company.