



# Building An Online Shop

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## Introduction

Every day we are bombarded with the opportunity to buy online. It is almost mandatory for retailers and producers have an online shop and it is becoming common for service-based organisations to sell online. For those companies that sell electronic products/services, it is a business-critical aspect of their operation. If you want to sell globally or 24x7 of course it is vital.

### **How easy it is to build your own online shop?**

As you would expect, the answer is that it depends on the requirements of your business and customers. We suggest that you start with some good online shop software but start simple. Adding new features later is not a bad thing - in fact it is a good thing as customers like to see innovation and new services. You can get early feedback from customers which will help to determine what can be improved and how to prioritise the next round of features.

Of course it is essential to have it built by people who have experience. There are many complexities to be navigated and pitfalls to be avoided.

We may recommend solutions from high-end eCommerce solutions like Magento, cart plugins for Wordpress or Umbraco content management systems, simple cloud-based solutions such as Pay Pal's Mini Cart or feature-fat cloud solutions such as Shopify.

## Convert Browsers to Customers

The primary path for the user is: Arrive > Intrigue > Inform > Decide > Buy. Our aim is to maximise the number of people who make it to the end of the path. How do we do that?

- Arrive - top quality Search Engine Optimisation and other marketing
- Intrigue - engaging site design and content plus great and relevant products!
- Inform - products and related information should be relevant, engaging and easy to find
- Decide - sales techniques
- Buy - easy online payment

### Easy Access

Make it easy for your customers to find what they want. If they can't find the product, they can't buy the product.

- Ensure that search engines pick up your web-site, index your products and rank you high up in their results - so customers can find your website
- Intuitive navigation, page layouts and creative design
- Simple categorisation hierarchy
- Efficient and accurate searching
- Good connections from social media and other websites to relevant pages.

Navigation and search should support several customer use-cases:

- Customers who know what product they want and just want to find and buy it.
- Customers who know their requirements but do not know your products. They need to assess the features of your products to match their requirements.
- Customers who are looking for a bargain.
- Customers who don't know what they want and are looking for ideas e.g. gift

### Confidence

Give your customers the confidence that they will not regret buying from you.

- Professionally designed web-site with high-quality content
- A no-quibble money back guarantee
- Detailed images, description and sizing
- Tools to visualise the purchase further e.g. a 3-D view, photos of customers using the products, dynamic flash animations showing how the product might look in different surroundings.
- Online and phone sales assistance
- Real customer reviews
- Loyalty programme

According to Jakob Nielsen, over half of failed online shopping experiences were due to bad (incomplete or unclear) content describing products.

## Easy payment

Make it extremely easy to pay.

- Do not force your users to register to obtain shipping costs
- Do not force your users to register
- No surprises with the retail tax and freight
- Accept payment from most credit cards and paypal if necessary

## Sales Techniques

Use traditional sales techniques to increase the sales value of each customer.

Use time-limited discounts to draw customers to the shop and to create a sense of urgency to complete the sale. Loyalty bonuses keep customers coming back.

A minimum order price or carefully structured shipping costs can encourage customers to buy more. Free shipping over a certain cart value is very effective.

There are lots of cross-selling techniques to encourage the customer to buy more products:

- Other customers also bought xxx
- Suggest accessories
- A featured product
- Global and per-category bestseller lists
- Related products by associating products with each other

Up-sell by promoting the value of the next model up, but be careful as this can confuse the customer and delay/lose the sale).

Encouraging loyalty will bring repeat business. Jakob Nielson found that 71% of people who accessed online shops directly went on to buy. Only 29% of people who found the shop through a search engine purchased.

## Common Pitfalls

What are some of the pitfalls to look out for? Put simply: anything that disappoints your customers. Examples are listed below.

### Site Design & Build

- Difficulty navigating the site or finding the right product
- Forcing users to register and forcing them to register to find out shipping costs - at least give them a shipping calculator up-front
- Not accepting the right payment methods or not being able to accept international payment methods
- Your shop is too slow to use
- Complex user journey to get from browsing to payment
- Ensure that the technical components (e.g. cart) have been evaluated to meet the requirements of your business

### Security

- Do not store credit card information - it's not worth the risk. If you have reoccurring payments use direct debit or contact the customer each time - every contact is a sales opportunity.
- Ensure that appropriate security is in place for gift cards / vouchers.
- To help to detect fraudulent behaviour and assist with customer problems, log user interactions - particularly around payment, whether successful or unsuccessful.

### Content

- Ambiguous information
- Out-dated or incorrect information e.g. on inventory or delivery time
- Don't make the rest of your website too interesting or the user will browse instead of buy!

### Process

- If orders are passed directly on to a supplier, make sure they are actually capable of dealing with your anticipated volumes
- Know and abide by the laws of the jurisdictions that you operate in - returns policy, information privacy, sales tax etc
- Make sure all of your technical components and your business processes are able to service anticipated volumes of enquiries and sales.
- Interface with business systems to log orders and synchronise inventory - otherwise you might be selling items online that have already been sold in your physical shop

# Online Shop Feature-list

We have compiled a list of all the possible shop features that we can think of. We have left out those that relate more to content management. You might use this list if you are thinking about what to include in a new online shop.

## Non Functional

- Performance and scaling
- Secured environment using SSL
- Multi-lingual
- Multi-currency
- Hosting considerations
- Disaster recovery

## Catalogue

### Categories and/or Product Type

- Hierarchy of categories and subcategories
- Store image and other data for categories
- Multiple-categorisation of products

### Products

- Multiple images for each product (with lightbox display)
- Attributes on products that do not affect price e.g. colour and size - these may have pick-lists
- Store weight and/or size against product or product type
- Featured product(s)
- RRP & savings
- Temporarily hide or disable products and out of stock indicator
- Reorder or filter by price or brand
- WYSIWYG editor with spell-check

## Cart

- Mini-cart
- Store user-entered text against an ordered product or an order such as special delivery instructions
- Shipping address and billing address - single entry where required

## Tax & Freight

- Local tax calculation, international tax exemption and tax exemption for certain types of product
- National and international shipping zones
- Freight calculation - based on weight/size or a lookup table by product type or an external calculator service.
- Freight calculation should cater for multiple items.
- Provide a tool to calculate freight before checkout.
- Pickup option

## Discounting

- Single or multi use discount codes
- Waive shipping cost
- % discount by product type, by product or across everything
- % discount for orders over a given value
- Date and single-use expiry of discounts
- Discount on purchase of additional items
- Special offers

## Gift Cards

- Purchase and activation
- Redemption with balance preservation
- Security PIN

## Registration

- Checkout with minimal personal information and no user account
- User registration/account, including changing details and forgotten password
- View past orders
- Maintain a list of delivery addresses and a billing address

## Payment

- Real-time processing for standard credit cards, also Amex and Pay Pal. Security to check validity and balance.
- Unique Confirmation Number
- Email printable invoice / order acknowledgment



## Cross-selling & Up-selling

- Other customers bought these products
- Global and per-category bestseller lists
- Related products by associating products with each other e.g. accessories
- Minimum order price

## Tools

- Effective searching for products, e.g. an advanced search or keyword search
- Pick-up incomplete orders when returning to the site - useful if they are not quite ready to purchase or if payment is not possible for some reason
- Wish-list
- Send-to-a-friend
- 'Like' on social media etc
- Product ratings & reviews
- Contact us about a product or live-chat
- Subscribe to products to receive related emails/newsletters
- Loyalty program - earn points on purchases and redeem on checkout
- Request a product form

## Inventory & Delivery

- Automatic adjustment of inventory on sale completion or shipping
- Print picking list
- Email upon dispatch

## Electronic Products

- Downloaded purchases, including delivery by email or download link or online inbox
- Restrict digital downloads to a specified number of downloads, or hours.

## Customer Service

- Add private comments to each order, or comments that the customer can also see.
- Template emails to confirm order and shipment.
- Registered customers can view their order history and order statuses
- Address-book for multiple shipping addresses.

## Reporting

- Web-stats reporting e.g. who is sending traffic to the shop
- Payment/cart statistics with graphs e.g. by product or category

## Systems Integration

- Google Base
- POS or other business systems
- Existing product catalogue
- Web content management system
- Subscription system