

A Checklist Leading to a Successful E-Commerce Website

By Bill Platt

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To succeed in e-commerce, the following eleven steps are those that every business owner should tackle when developing their new online business:

THE BASIC ONLINE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

1. Determine your products or services - Know what products and services you will be offering and define the common thread that will tie all of your products and services together.
2. Research your products and services marketplace - Find out who your competitors are and the differences in the product offerings they deliver to their customers. Find out your competitors price points and value offerings. Find out who your customers are. Find out how many customers exist in your market and how you can reach them.
3. Establish your site goals - Determine how you are going to use your website in the quest to develop your customer base. Are you going to use it as a billboard on the Internet Super Highway? Or, are you going to use your site to develop long-term relationships with your customers? Or, do you intend that your site should provide everything necessary for an immediate, one-time transaction?
4. Plan your site layout - Understand how you are going to utilize your site to the fullest of its potential. Make a pre-determination as to the different sections of your site, which will be vital to meeting your goals.
5. Plan for growth of your site - Understand that your site will grow and change to meet with the challenges of the future. Anything that you can do now to simplify the transition into future design changes will increase your overall productivity in the maintenance of your online storefront.

6. Take a quick lesson in HTML -

<http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/teachingtool/> HTML design software can help you build your website fast. Learning the basics of HTML firsthand can improve your effectiveness in modifying your website. If you ever need to make minor changes or troubleshoot display or formatting problems in a web page, you will have the basic understanding of the technology to work through those problems without outside assistance.

7. Build basic HTML template - Your HTML template should be thought of as your custom letterhead. Each page on your website will be demonstrated with a basic visual format to secure the cohesion of your website. It is this basic visual design or letterhead that you want your HTML template to represent.

8. Build e-commerce section - The payment area of your website is the most important element of your entire design. Without an effective payment processing system, your customers will not be able to pay you for your products or services. StormPay is a third-party payment processor that enables small businesses to provide secure payment options to their customers. Learn for yourself the advantages of using the StormPay program on your website: https://www.stormpay.com/?46474&ecommerce_2

9. Build customer support section - While a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page can be a very useful tool in keeping support requests to a minimum, it cannot stand alone as your customer support system. Some people need one-on-one human contact to answer their sales and support questions. As a matter of trust, some folks simply will not do business with a company that does not offer some type of human contact point --- either by email or by telephone.

10. Build site content - Once you have developed the bulk of your site structure, the time will come to tackle building your content pages, which will include your sales pages. As you conclude building your page content, it may also be helpful to undertake an understanding of the use of Meta tags with your web pages. For a quick tutorial on the subject, visit: <http://searchenginewatch.com/webmasters/meta.html>

11. Begin Promoting - There are simply dozens of ways in which you can promote your website --- both online and offline. We simply do not have enough space here to go into all of the methods available to a website owner for the purpose of promoting their website. Our primary goal is always to sell products or services through our business. Online or offline, it is important to remember that sales cannot happen where there is no traffic. To draw traffic to our business, we must promote our business.

My hope for you is simple. I hope that you will be able to develop your own online business and you will be profitable in doing so. It is my hope that this checklist will serve to help you reach that end.

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Bill Platt owns The Phantom Writers, a company committed to helping people to establish an Internet presence & promote their businesses through the use of Free-Reprint Articles and Press Releases. Articles are distributed to 6,500+ publishers & webmasters as part of the package. <http://thePhantomWriters.com>

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