

8 Things You Must Do If You Want To Have A Working Ecommerce Web Site

E-commerce is a growing process that more and more businesses are realizing is necessary to have as part of their business model. Unfortunately it can be a complicated solution that requires knowledge of many back-end functional components that most entrepreneurs aren't familiar with.

This article will discuss the specific components that are required to create an ecommerce web site. It will discuss what the components are, and what they do.

1. Sign up with a quality web hosting provider

Choose a web hosting provider that gives you at least one SQL database, and can do server side scripting, such as SHTML, PHP, and/or CGI scripting. You want a service that will give you at least 300Mb of space, and will give you at least 5 email accounts if possible.

If you can afford it, you should request your own IP address, so you don't have to share your IP address with lots of other web site owners, some of who could be spammers. It only costs a few dollars extra to obtain your own IP address in most cases anyway.

2. Use a good shopping cart

The shopping cart is used to keep track of your visitors desired purchases. In order to serve a multiple number of visitors, your shopping cart needs to do the following:

- 1) Allow multiple simultaneous users.
- 2) Keep a running total of the costs.
- 3) Finalize the order.

Sometimes a shopping cart is located on the same server as your web site, and sometimes it is located on a different server altogether. There are usually many reasons for doing both.

3. Create a good database

The database is usually kept on the same server as your ecommerce site. This will usually mean that you will need to get a hosting plan that gives you a database. SQL is a typical database that comes with many hosting accounts.

The database is usually used to:

- 1) Keep customer data
- 2) Create customer personalization
- 3) Keep product data
- 4) Hold shopping cart contents
- 5) Integrate with other systems

4. Accept credit cards

You will want the ability to accept credit cards. Sure, you can run an ecommerce business by using fax, and/or requiring people to send in your checks, but you will be leaving a lot of money on the table if you don't accept credit cards in one form or another.

5. Use a secure socket layer

A secure socket layer allows encrypts the data between the customer's computer and your web server. It keeps prying eyes from sneaking a peek at sensitive data, such as credit card info. You can run a business without it, and you may get some sales, but the vast majority of people will not

purchase from your web site if they don't see the secure connection indicator on their web browser. Different browsers indicate the secure connection in different ways.

6. Use a payment gateway

A payment gateway collects the credit card info and sales info (price, customer info, etc.) and does some sort of basic fraud check, to make sure the credit card isn't stolen, etc.

It charges the customer's credit card and deposits the money into your bank account.

7. Acquire a merchant account

A merchant account allows your business to charge sales to credit cards. It is basically a type of agreement between your business and a bank.

8. Get a separate business bank account

You will need a bank account that will accept the deposits for the credit card charges. As with most everything else, business bank accounts vary in features and costs based upon the servicing bank.

Creating a Web site to sell requires complex technology, but it can be relatively straightforward. There are services that can easily provide the required functionality, and in most cases, the greatest challenge is deciding what kinds of services you need, and then being able to connect the pieces together.

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About the Author

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