

Chapter 6

Designing The Powerful Website

Steps To Launch Your First E-commerce Website

- Start-up website is the heart & back bone of the online e-commerce or m-commerce business.
- With online retail sales increasing year after year, now is the best time to start one's own e-commerce website.
- Online retail sales increased roughly 20% in 2014 when compared to the previous year while total retail sales only grew by 4.4%.
- This means....more and more people are purchasing from their home or mobile device instead of driving to the store.
- Starting an e-commerce website might sound like a huge undertaking, but its not so hard as you may think.

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- Online shopping is becoming an increasingly popular outlet for shoppers to browse.
- With 40% of the global online user base involved in online purchases and sales increasing by almost 20%, businesses are shifting their attention to e-commerce/m-commerce platforms.
- This market change for highly competitive environment since your competitor is just a click away.
- You can offer quality items at great prices, but this is only one piece to the puzzle.

Steps To Launch Your First E-commerce Website

Step 1: Choosing The Right Product & Growing Industry

- Choosing the right product to sell online can have a huge impact on whether or not your e-commerce website is successful.
 - But with millions of different products available, how do you know which ones to sell? Here are a few things to consider when choosing an industry and product.
1. **Price:** how much does the product cost? If it is too low it will be challenging to reach a positive Return On Investment. If it too high Rs.2000/- + there is a good chance customers will want to speak with someone over the phone or through live chat prior to purchasing. This additional customer support requires added time and money but can pay for itself 10 times over. Many have found the Rs.5000/- to Rs.10,000/-

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price range to be the sweet spot for online sales, since the majority of people are comfortable placing an online order in this range without any hesitation.

- 2. Margin:** what is the margin on every sale? Many products sold online have a margin around 30-40% however this can change drastically depending upon the industry. E.g. electronics typically have thinner margins while phone accessories are often marked up 100% to 200%+. Before settling on a product, make sure you know the margins and trade competition. Many a times this requires contacting the manufacturer directly or signing up with a distributor.

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- 3. Local Availability of Product:** can you buy this product locally? Generally speaking it is easier to drive sales online when the product can not be bought in local stores. Why? Simple, if they can not get it locally then they must go online to purchase.
- 4. Shipping Size:** how big & heavy is the product? Bigger & heavier products tend to have high shipping costs which can negatively affect sales. Most customers not only want free shipping, they expect it. For this reason it can be difficult to sell a product with a hefty shipping fee.
- 5. Passion about the Industry:** how interested are you in this industry? This last one is often overlooked but is usually a strong indicator of success. Starting and growing an

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e-commerce website typically comes with a series of obstacles & frustrations. Passion for your industry can be a great source of motivation to push through challenges that arise.

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Step 2: Finding Manufacturers With Great Products

- Once the Product & Merchandising are being finalized & now that you have identified which products you want to sell, its time to find out who the manufacturers are in these categories. There are a few different methods of finding manufacturers that can save a lot of time & reach out to the best out of the best in the following manner:
 - I. **Personal Networking & Trade Sources:** if you are working in the same trade of the product category then you must be having some contacts & networking. That works much better as you have certain professional credentials, therefore people stand by you and recognize. This can work as a foundation to sourcing of the right product category.

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- II. Google Shopping:** google shopping is a powerful search engine that only searches physical products sold online. It also has some great information on who the re-sellers are, great for scoping out competition but more importantly who the suppliers are.
- III. Best Available City/Country Directories:** there are many online directories of suppliers that make it easy to find manufacturers.
- *Worldwide Brands* – thousands of wholesalers & over 10 million products & membership fees applicable.
 - *Wholesale Central* – 1400 suppliers & over 700000 products, free services.

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- Once you have built a list of vendors/ manufacturers the next step is to start reaching out in hope of reselling their products.
- Not all vendors/manufacturers will want to work with someone who is just starting out since they don't have any track record of sales.
- Start with the vendor/manufacturers & distributors who have the least intimidating application and requirements.
- Many larger vendor/manufacturers will want to know who you are working with first, so leverage the relationships of smaller suppliers to get larger suppliers on board.
- This strategy works better in all most all the industries.

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Step 3: Setting Up The Website

- Now, you have chosen your products and found a new manufacturer to work with, seems very interesting, what next?
- Get the website up & running.
- The reason being is that it is more difficult to get manufacturers on board when the website is empty with no products versus having a website launch in the future.
- Having said that, it can still be a good idea to create a simple “Coming Soon” page.

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Choosing an e-commerce platform:

- The e-commerce platform manages all the products, categories, check-out process and other aspects involved with a functional e-commerce website.
- There are dozens of e-commerce platforms available, most of which have relatively the same functionality and features.
- Choosing the platform can be a big hang up for a lot of entrepreneurs.
- The best thing could be “Ready, Fire, Aim” mindset and just get something up & running now rather than spending hours & hours researching & testing various platforms.

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E-commerce platforms which are powerful & easy are

- Shopify has done everything they can to make setting up & running an e-commerce website as easy as possible.
- They handle all the hosting, security & credit card processing to give store owners more time to focus on promoting their websites.
- Shopify has wide range of website templates & apps.
- While there are free apps available, many have an associated monthly fee which can add up quickly.

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E-commerce platforms which are powerful & easy are

- Open Cart is a very powerful & easy to use platform which a long list of features.
- Unlike Shopify, Open Cart is open source meaning webmasters have the ability to make any changes to the design or functionality of the website.
- This also means that hosting & website security will need to be setup manually.
- Open Cart also has thousands of pre-programmed “extensions” that allow users to easily customize the website without hiring a developer.

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Bottom Line:

- If you want to get started as quickly & easily as possible, choose Shopify.
- However if you are somewhat technical and want more control over the look & functionality of the website, choose Open Cart.

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About Domain Name & Hosting of the Website

- Every website needs a domain name for their brands and server for hosting.
- However, e-commerce websites also need what is called an SSL, secure sockets layer certificate to encrypt sensitive data such as credit card numbers & personal information.
- To make the process of getting a domain name, hosting account & SSL certificate as easy as possible, there are many third party service providers, choose the best fitting in to the bill.
- This is not applicable if you are choosing Shopify as your e-commerce platform but required for Open Cart platform.

Website Logos, Layouts and Web Design Plan

- A website's design, layout and branding can have a huge impact on how often website visitors purchase.
 - Hiring a designer and having a website custom designed can cost Rs.50,000/- or even Rs.5,00,000/-.
 - If you want to minimize start-up costs, there are a few solutions to ensure a good looking website without breaking the budget.
- 1. Purchase a Website template of choice:** online marketplaces such as Theme Forest offer thousands of different templates, themes for website. They also have themes specific to Open Cart, Shopify, as well as a number of other e-commerce platforms.

Website Logos, Layouts and Web Design Plan

Many of these themes are beautifully designed and mobile friendly. They usually only cost Rs.1,000/- to Rs.3,000/- which is a fraction of what it would cost to pay a designer. Best of all, these themes typically have built in customization options which make it easy to customize the website the way you want.

- 2. Get a Logo at a cost effective price:** a logo is an important component for any branding & marketing efforts. Again, hiring a professional graphic designer is not the cheapest route. Instead, take a look at 99Designs (\$299+) and 19Dollar Logos (\$19+). 99Designs is a crowd sourced design platform where dozens of designers submit their logo designs and only the one you like best gets paid.

Website Logos, Layouts and Web Design Plan

The quality is great especially when you provide detailed instructions on what you are looking for. 19Dollar Logos on the other hand is much cheaper but only has a few concepts and revisions.

don't be fooled by the price tag & ugly website, these guys do great work for \$19. The quality is not nearly as good as 99Designs, but it is a strong solution for those on a budget.

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Adding future ready Mobile Apps for M-Commerce

1. Mobile first single page architecture
 2. Moving to next level of applications, Mobile Responsive Themes.
 3. Mobile apps integration & development
 4. Various seamless mobile applications add more zing to the business.
- Technology Designed to Perform on Mobile Devices. These are service providers in this area like, StoreHippo boasts of using the latest blazing fast technology stack that is LEAN and MEAN literally.

Adding future ready Mobile Apps for M-Commerce

- Get the advantage of truly mobile ready stores powered by single-page architecture (SPA) to ensure faster page load.
- Leverage our web & mobile development expertise to optimize your web & mobile sites & maximize customer conversion.
- StoreHippo is the new age e-commerce platform that provides you everything that you need to sell your products or services online.
- Powered by the most advanced technology stack, StoreHippo allows you to create future ready stores with an unmatched ease of use.

Adding future ready Mobile Apps for M-Commerce

- Create fast & intuitive Mobile Apps in no time. There are easy readymade solutions available in the market today in tune with the budget, traffic and network solutions.
- No need to recruit a team of IT Engineers , web & mobile app designers during the start-up to roll-up stage of the business.
- These services can be availed in the market from a third party at a low cost budget to achieve optimum productivity and cut dependency on one's own team.
- So that the same level of energy and efficiency can be invested in business development to achieve growth.
- The very interesting aspects of the m-commerce platform can be added as mobile utilization in India is growing at 40% per annum.

Adding future ready Mobile Apps for M-Commerce

The value addition mobile apps are:

- No need to write single line of code
- Automatic incremental updates for all platforms
- Push notifications
- Design in tune with your store
- Complete control on design and functionality
- Track app users

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Adding future ready Mobile Apps for M-Commerce

Why choose m-commerce & e-commerce combined together?

- Big boom in mobile sales
- Easy access from anywhere and anytime
- Moving upwards in Global Mobile Usage and the growth rate
- Online Payments – a rising trend day by day
- Create use friendly sites to increase customer frequency of visit & productivity

Adding future ready Mobile Apps for M-Commerce

Get the check list ready before proceeding to the development stage redefining objectives and goal to be achieved while developing the start-up e-commerce websites.

- Skills & knowledge required to design the website
- 24*7 great customer service, all of the time, regardless of the size of your business.
- All websites to have a flexible control panel for updation of the site.
- Friendly support from consultants who are happy to give you good advice.
- Feature packed e-commerce solutions that will grow with you & your business.

Creating First Impression of the Website, Usability, Safety & Security

- Remember first impression has a long lasting impression, so try to give the best impression.
- When someone enters your site, you need to immediately hook them with a compelling call to action statement.
- It can be a short phrase or a few sentences, as long as you illustrate what your company is all about & why the customer should be interested.
- It is also wise to think about the placement & design of your signup & social media button links, so they are aesthetically pleasing & stand out.
- Business typically ask a customer to register to their site.

Creating First Impression of the Website, Usability, Safety & Security

- If you ask the user to sign up before a purchase, no one wants a long informational list.
- Make the process easy as you only need to know their email and password to begin with.
- A clever way to increase customer satisfaction is to ask if they want to register after a purchase in order to make their next shopping experience hassle free.

Creating First Impression of the Website, Usability, Safety & Security

It starts with the looks – Sleek Design all the way

- Let's say someone is browsing on Google to find a promising site to purchase a new shirt. They find your business and as the page loads their eyes are greeted with a bland page covered with content clutter. This is a great way to have customer click out of your site.
- In this day & age, buyers appreciate a minimalist web layout that presents a welcoming clean atmosphere. Some thought should be put into styling the frame and layout of your site, as it will embody your business's core theme and culture.
- Content is one way to illustrate who you are, however the other side of the coin is presenting a mood.

Creating First Impression of the Website, Usability, Safety & Security

It starts with the looks – Sleek Design all the way

- A sleek layout appearance that makes use of enticing images, which clearly showcase your items, along with clear typography, is a good way to start.
- E.g. an e-commerce site that uses a creative and sleek style to its benefit is the Italian e-commerce startup ITLY.
- Other things to factor in are color scheme and picture choices for static and interactive items such as buttons & background options.

Creating First Impression of the Website, Usability, Safety & Security

Customer Friendly Usability

- You need to lock the customer in your converts it to the website per se.
- Therefore, select the best e-commerce platform that suits a small to medium business and converts to the big business you are looking forward.
- Nothing shuns a customer away from your site to never return again than web features that are not intuitive and don't work well.
- A guaranteed method to make for a great user experience is a navigation path. Your site's virtual breadcrumb path should be intuitive for the user.

Creating First Impression of the Website, Usability, Safety & Security

Customer Friendly Usability

- They shouldn't have to work very hard to find exactly what they want.
- Free people, an e-commerce site for clothing accessories is a clear example of doing it right, with simple and crisp navigational elements.
- Once a user finds an item of interest, all relevant product information should be available in a clear & precise manner.
- The entire buying process should be streamlined with a one-step checkout process, making the item discovery & checkout speedy quick.

Creating First Impression of the Website, Usability, Safety & Security

Security & Ease of checkout is the need of the hour of the busy lifestyle

- First and foremost, gaining the customer's trust is key to a sale.
- Before a buyer even gets to shopping; it is always good business etiquette to reassure your customer of their security.
- It can be as simple as menu link to a privacy page or a small sentence reassuring the customer that they are in a safe place.
- Lastly, during checkout process, the steps need to be simple while giving the customer enough options to maintain a sense of control.

Creating First Impression of the Website, Usability, Safety & Security

Security & Ease of checkout is the need of the hour of the busy lifestyle

- You have gotten the customer to the last step of the sale, to keep them from running away, be forthcoming and transparent by not having associated hidden cost/fees.

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