

10 Things Every Business Owner Should Know About E-commerce

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1 What you look like is important: When you meet someone in person for the first time, within seconds they have made decisions about who you are and whether they like you – simply by looking at you. It's a survival skill as old as mankind.

The same thing happens online. If your store looks shabby, unorganized and hard to navigate, your customers will go elsewhere, as quick as a mouse click.

2 You are not Amazon – but that does NOT matter. No, you don't have amazon.com's multi million dollar development budget. Your customer does not care. They are used to seeing advanced features and expect you to have them too.



3 E-commerce is here to stay. The first recorded purchase using a credit card happened in 1994. Today, it's 10% of the retail economy.



4 Online sales figures don't tell the whole story. While online sales are growing, the Web's influence is growing as well. Nearly 1/3 of all purchase decisions are "web-influenced."

How many times have you researched products on the web, then gone into a store to actually purchase it? Your online store can be a wealth of information for your customers.

5 It's not (necessarily) all about price. When e-commerce first started, everyone thought it was going to be a price war. As it turned out, e-commerce is like regular sales.

For retail, people want to know they are making the right purchase decision. They want to know they are buying the right product from the right company.

1-800 lines or online chats in conjunction with a strong online store are a powerful sales combination.

6 E-commerce can be a salesperson's best friend. Businesses always worry that it will compete against their existing sales channels. Just like in the retail example mentioned above, a great online store can help the salesperson when visiting their business customer.



7 Online sales can be taxing. One of the biggest advantages to shopping online is that you often don't have to pay sales tax. This will be changing.

States are looking for more revenue, and different sources of revenue. You had better be prepared to accurately calculate and report sales tax in the coming years.

8 Taking the order is just the first step. The online store is just the tip of the iceberg as far as customer satisfaction is concerned. Promptly shipping the right items and billing them correctly are just as important to the customer as a great user experience on the website.



9 This is not your father's Search Engine. In the "good old days" of the early 2000s, all you had to do was get a good ranking on Google, and you were guaranteed to be found.

Now, it's a very "social" game out there. Facebook, Twitter, blogs, newsletters, email campaigns all drive traffic to your site. Customers want to have confidence in you and your company. The more you can put a "face" on your company, the better.

10 Be ready to succeed. Many companies start off with a simple e-commerce system and then find they have to switch in mid stream.

Switching out computer systems in an ongoing business is probably the most difficult trick to pull off successfully. History is full of stories of businesses damaged when this did not work well.

To avoid this, start out with strong, flexible systems and vendors that can grow with you. If you must make a change, team up with someone that has done it before.