

## Executive summary

I can absolutely deliver a real online ordering experience for this liquor store, but I'm not going to pretend a "full-scale custom Amazon clone" is realistic for me (no backend experience) without serious risk. The only sane way I ship something reliable is **platform-first** (Shopify/Square/industry vendor), with a scoped MVP, and with compliance and operations treated as first-class requirements—not afterthoughts.

If I ignore that and try to "vibe code" a custom backend with payments + accounts + delivery + alcohol compliance, the most likely outcome is: delays, broken checkout, inventory chaos, chargebacks, and potentially legal/compliance problems.

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## What I can do (and ship) without blowing up the project

### 1) Build a legit storefront that converts

- Clean branded website (mobile-first)
- Categories, search, filters (beer/wine/spirits, brand, price, size)
- Product pages with clear pricing, size, ABV (optional), stock status
- Promotions (featured products, bundles if allowed)
- SEO basics (local keywords + pages that rank)

**What this solves:** customers can browse easily and buy without friction.

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### 2) Enable real checkout and payments safely

I can implement **real payments** using a platform checkout (not my own code).

- Card payments, Apple Pay/Google Pay (platform-dependent)
- Taxes configuration
- Refunds handled through the platform

**Why this matters:** I avoid building a fragile payment system and avoid security liability.

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### 3) Support pickup + local delivery workflows

I can set up:

- **Pickup:** time windows, pickup instructions, order status updates
- **Local delivery:** delivery zones, minimums, fees, hours
- Optional: “delivery partner” approach (depending on what they already use)

**What this solves:** orders actually get fulfilled, not just “placed.”

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#### 4) Implement minimum viable alcohol compliance UX

- Age gate on entry (basic)
- Checkout acknowledgment (“I’m 21+ / legal age”)
- Clear policy pages and banners
- Prominent reminders that ID is required at pickup/delivery

**Important:** UI is not enough. I can build the prompts and policy surfaces, but compliance still depends on how they fulfill orders.

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#### 5) User accounts (only if truly needed)

I can add customer accounts for:

- Order history
- Saved addresses
- Faster checkout

But I’m going to be blunt: **accounts are optional** for a successful MVP. Guest checkout converts better early on and reduces complexity.

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#### 6) Back-office admin that doesn’t suck

I can set up a workflow where staff can:

- Receive new orders via email/SMS/app
- Update order statuses
- Manage inventory and product pricing via CSV/POS integration (best case)

**This is where projects live or die.** If staff can't use it, the website is pointless.

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## **My recommended scope: MVP first, then expand**

### **Phase 1 (MVP): "Order online + get it fulfilled"**

#### **Deliverables**

- Storefront + catalog
- Pickup (and/or local delivery)
- Real payments via platform
- Age-gating UX + policy pages
- Order notifications + basic status handling

**This is the version I can confidently launch.**

### **Phase 2: Growth + automation**

- Loyalty / rewards
- Discount codes, promos, bundles
- Better search + recommendations
- Email/SMS marketing flows
- Review widgets
- Analytics dashboard

### **Phase 3: Advanced integrations (only if revenue justifies it)**

- Deep POS sync
- Delivery platform integrations
- Multi-location support

- Custom app features
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## **What can go wrong (and how it actually happens)**

### **A) Legal/compliance issues (high impact)**

#### **What can go wrong**

- Selling or delivering alcohol where it's not allowed
- No clear ID verification process at pickup/delivery
- Staff hands off alcohol without proper checks
- Marketing language that implies shipping/delivery beyond legal boundaries

#### **How it bites us**

- Fines, license risk, forced shutdown of online sales
- Processor bans or chargeback spikes

#### **My mitigation**

- I force a written delivery/pickup policy and "where we serve" rules before launch.
  - I push for pickup-only or tightly bounded local delivery until legal is crystal clear.
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### **B) Payments risk (high impact)**

#### **What can go wrong**

- The payment processor flags alcohol as restricted and freezes funds
- Chargebacks rise because orders are delayed / mismatched / refunded poorly
- Fraud attempts (alcohol is a common fraud target)

#### **How it bites us**

- Store loses money or access to card payments
- "We can't accept payments" = business dead

#### **My mitigation**

- Use Shopify/Square/approved gateway and avoid custom payment coding.
- Enforce clear fulfillment times, cancellation rules, and verification steps.

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## **C) Inventory problems (high impact, extremely common)**

### **What can go wrong**

- Website shows items in stock that are actually out of stock
- Prices don't match shelf prices
- Staff can't keep product photos/data updated
- DoorDash catalog and website diverge

### **How it bites us**

- Angry customers, refunds, bad reviews, chargebacks
- Staff stops trusting the site → stops using it → site dies

### **My mitigation**

- Start with a smaller curated catalog if needed.
  - Decide early: POS sync vs manual inventory.
  - Set out-of-stock rules and substitution policy.
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## **D) Delivery failures (high impact)**

### **What can go wrong**

- Delivery times are unrealistic
- No driver availability
- Orders placed outside service area
- Failed ID check at door causes returns/refunds

### **How it bites us**

- Customers blame the store (not the tech)
- Refunds + support overhead explode

### **My mitigation**

- Strict delivery zones/hours and hard cutoffs.
- Clear "ID required" messaging plus driver procedure.
- If delivery is complex, I push for pickup-only at launch.

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## **E) Security and privacy mistakes (high impact)**

### **What can go wrong**

- Weak admin passwords
- Using sketchy plugins/apps
- Collecting more customer data than necessary
- Storing anything sensitive incorrectly (especially if I build custom)

### **How it bites us**

- Data leaks, legal exposure, reputation damage

### **My mitigation**

- Platform-based auth + checkout.
- Minimal data collection.
- Only vetted apps; keep the stack lean.

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## **F) Project management failure (the silent killer)**

### **What can go wrong**

- Owner keeps adding “one more feature”
- No one is responsible for product photos/descriptions
- I get stuck waiting for approvals/assets
- They expect DoorDash-level logistics for a website budget

### **How it bites us**

- Timeline slips, scope explodes, I end up unpaid or blamed

### **My mitigation**

- I define scope in writing, with a change process.
  - I set deadlines for content delivery (photos, pricing, catalog).
  - I ship MVP first and don't negotiate against reality.
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## The hard constraints I will set (so I don't fail)

1. I will not build a custom payment system. I will use a platform checkout.
  2. I will not promise "full-scale" without defining what that means in features and operations.
  3. I will not launch delivery until zones, hours, fees, and ID workflow are operationally agreed.
  4. I will not accept "we'll figure inventory later." Inventory is the product.
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## The platform decision (what I'd pick)

If they already use **Square POS** → I'll choose **Square Online** to reduce inventory/payment headaches.

If they want the most polished storefront + flexibility → I'll choose **Shopify**.

If they want industry-specific turnkey + budget allows, I'll recommend a liquor-focused vendor.

I will not choose "custom backend from scratch" unless they pay for a real backend developer or I bring one in.

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## What I need from the store (or the project stalls)

- Their POS system (Square/Clover/Lightspeed/none)
  - Their product list (CSV/export) OR permission to build a smaller curated catalog first
  - Delivery decision: pickup only vs local delivery
  - Service area + hours + minimum order + delivery fee rules
  - Photos/branding assets (logo, colors, store photos)
  - Written policies (refunds, substitutions, ID requirements)
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## My "go/no-go" criteria before I start

I will proceed if:

- They accept an MVP scope and platform approach
- They can provide catalog/inventory source

- They agree on fulfillment workflow and compliance steps

I will walk away if:

- They demand “full-scale custom” + “do it fast” + “cheap”
- They refuse to define delivery/ID workflow
- They expect me to magically sync inventory without POS access/data