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Module 4: Assignment 2: Choose and Plan your E-Business

My e-business will be called “Tolkien Treasures” and will be a Business-to-Business e-distributor. My company will be a one-stop-shop for everything related to J. R. R. Tolkien and his works, whether that be books, fan art, jewelry, weapons, maps, and more. My company will be like Amazon in that small, local companies can sell their wares on my site for an annual fee. Tolkien Treasures will get a 10% royalty from any items sold by outside companies. Along with publicizing other vendors, my company will sell its own locally homemade wares for immediate revenue. Tolkien Treasures will start off as a medium sized business, able to host a few hundred items and will increase in size as needed.

The marketspace Tolkien Treasures will occupy would be literature and specialty/handmade items within the genre of fiction and fantasy. While the literature side of the marketspace is large, the specialty/handmade items marketspace is scattered. There are some sellers on places like Etsy, and some who have their own personal website to advertise their wares, yet the ability to find them can be difficult unless you are personally aware of the seller. As one who has purchased Tolkien-related items, it is sometimes difficult to find items that are well crafted, and not cheap replicas like those that can be found over mainstream search engines. My goal is to have one website where many Tolkien sellers can post their wares without worrying about being lost in the shadow of larger mass-production manufacturers. The main competition would be [Weta Workshop](https://www.wetanz.com/) [1], who is responsible for creating the props seen in the Tolkien films. Hard-core fans may want to buy directly from the artists that made the original pieces. My advantage would be the price. Many smaller crafters can make something that looks almost identical to the original for a fraction of the price that Weta is asking. I plan on promoting my company through a well designed and easy-to-use website, along with creating social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) to gain followers and spread the awareness of Tolkien Treasures. Word of mouth among family and friends will also help spread awareness of the company. Asking local crafters and sellers if they would be interested in being a part of my website to boost their sales would help gather vendors to the website.

For Tolkien Treasures to be successful, I would need someone to manage the website. Website maintenance would involve updating items for sale, the metadata on the items that would allow them to be searched for, and ensuring that the search and shopping cart were functioning properly. I would also need someone to oversee the vendors: creating the contract for working with the vendors and deciding what vendors with which to create a partnership. I would need someone to run the financials: how to make sure the vendors get their money, how my company receives its royalties, how much to charge the vendors for an annual fee, taxes, cost of shipping and returns, and how much to pay the employees of Tolkien Treasures. My customer service representative will manage any emails and phone calls we receive about returns, broken or missing items, or noncompliant vendors. A social media manager will run the social media channels and post updates, new items, and important announcements for our followers. I would like the Website Manager, Vendor Manager, and Finance Manager to have some previous experience and training (between three to five years) in those respective departments. If the website is going to be maintained through WordPress, I would like the Website Manager to be familiar with WordPress and know how to use plugins. The Website Manager will also need to be familiar with HTML, CSS, and PhP so they can adjust the databases, make changes to the blocks, or customize something within WordPress if needed. The Customer Service Representative will not necessarily have to have previous experience since they can be trained, but I would like someone who has a good recommendation from their previous employers and is able to maintain professionalism while responding to calls and emails. They will need to be able to handle many different types of personalities and potentially stressful situations. Being a quick and creative thinker will also aid in keeping any annoyed or angry customers appeased if the Customer Service Representative is able to quickly think of a way to resolve issues or come up with a compromise that keeps the customers buying from us. The Social Media Manager will need to be familiar with the social media apps that Tolkien Treasures will be on—Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This person will need to be a good multitasker and able to answer questions that may be asked about products posted online. The Social Media Manager’s job will require coming up with creative ways to post new products, gain followers, and keep followers interested in what we are selling, including: Facebook live product videos, Instagram stories that have fun polls, Q&A, or giveaways, and Tweets that showcase new items and important information. While most of the time the Social Media Manager will be managing posts and coming up with creative ideas for new ways to advertise, there will also be times where they will need to reply calmly and professionally to comments, tags, and DMs that may be angry or frustrated. Since everything on social media will be noticed, Tolkien Treasures needs a Social Media Representative who will show the world the best face of the company and uphold a good reputation on the internet.

The business objectives for Tolkien Treasures requires the store to display the items and their product information, show the proper search / filter results, accept payments, create customer accounts, provide shipping and tracking information, and manage inventory. To do this, the system will need to have the following functions: a catalog of the items, a database with the product information, a shopping cart and payment system, a customer database, a sales database, and an inventory management system. My business is going to need the following information functionalities: a catalog for the items that can store dynamic (easily changeable) text and images and a dynamic inventory that holds product descriptions, stocking numbers, and inventory levels. I will need connection with a secure third-party credit card processing company (like PayPal, ApplePay, or GooglePay), along with other payment options. The site will need to be accessible with discount extensions like Honey and be allowed to process gift cards and coupon codes. The store will need to have access to a customer database that will store customer account information (randomized customer ID, name, address, phone, and email). The sales database will need to store the customer ID, the product, date of purchase, payment method, shipment data, and estimated arrival date. The inventory system will need to be able to be accessed by the vendor to change the amount of a certain item they have in stock. This change will be reflected on the webpage for that item. The inventory will also store the vendor ID, the contact information for that vendor, and the time that the inventory update took place.

The website will be built using WordPress since it contains most of the software and CMS required for a website. WordPress can connect to PhP database systems, and contains the resources needed to allow for multiple administrators and dynamic page buildouts. PhPMyAdmin [2] will be used to build out the databases as it is easily connected to WordPress and allows for a backup database to be connected to the main database in case information is accidentally deleted. WordPress allows for multiple administrators to have access to only their designated pages. While a vendor can change the information to their items, each submission will be reviewed by the Website Manager to check for suspicious activity. Although the initial building of the website may be outsourced, the maintenance will be in-house. Any additional hires for maintaining the website will need to go through WordPress training if they do not already have previous experience with WordPress.

WordPress offers a free (but upgraded with payment) shopping cart option for e-businesses called [WP EasyCart](https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-easycart/). EasyCart works with most major payment options and automatically creates pages for the store, cart, and account. It is customizable to the currency and language wanted and comes with a shipping and taxes calculator that can calculate the prices based on location, weight, size, and different mail carrier rates. EasyCart also allows my company to print sales receipts, packaging slips, view order information, email customers, and add shipping notes. EasyCart comes with the ability to edit the SEO (search engine optimization) on every product and category within the website. One of the paid upgrade options includes allowing gift cards, coupons, and an abandoned cart system (if a user puts items in their cart and them decided to leave without purchasing anything). WordPress offers a few options for where to host the website including [BlueHost](https://www.bluehost.com/special/wordpress?utm_source=wordpress.org&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_campaign=affiliate-link_wordpressorg_Open%20Source). BlueHost has everything a WordPress site requires and has add-ons available for e-business sites. The very [basic price](https://www.bluehost.com/help/article/shared-hosting-prices) is $26 a year but can quickly get more expensive with more add-ons and needs. Starting off, Tolkien Treasures will be a browser-based store only. WordPress implementation allows for the website to be responsive on mobile, tablet, and desktop. As the company grows, and the popularity increases, a mobile app may be considered, but until then, the easiest version of the store to be built will be a browser store. If an app is developed it will be built and maintained through an outsourced company.

References

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