

Building CBD Sites on BigCommerce

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When hemp-derived CBD was made federally legal in the United States through the passing of the 2018 Farm Bill, this opened the doors to a new growing market for CBD. The removal of hemp and hemp-derived products containing not more than 0.3 percent tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) from the Controlled Substances Act created the possibility for merchants and manufacturers to begin legally selling and distributing their CBD products online.

Despite the recent transformation in federal policy, businesses looking to sell their CBD products online continue to face a number of challenges and restrictions. With the market for CBD sales in the United States expected to exceed [\\$20 billion by 2024](#), there is a growing need for these legitimate businesses to find reliable ways to sell their products online with the support of a strong eCommerce platform and agency partner.

In this blog post, we will tell you about the recent eCommerce site we built for [CBDistillery](#) on the BigCommerce platform and share best practices that developers and agencies should know about developing a CBD site and launching a successful online storefront for this industry vertical.

Working with CBDistillery

As a BigCommerce Elite Agency Partner, our team at [Silk Software](#) was enlisted by CBDistillery to guide its site migration from WooCommerce over to another eCommerce platform. CBDistillery needed a robust eCommerce solution to power its online sales and generate revenue for its business. The goal was to deliver one online storefront capable of handling both the company's direct-to-consumer and wholesale operations.

Looking to solve various problems with reliability, security, and overall performance on its existing site, CBDistillery identified a critical need to move to an alternative platform with the right features and tools required to support its business. Wanting worry-free server maintenance and supported shipping and payment methods, CBDistillery needed an eCommerce platform it could rely on to support its growth.

Selecting BigCommerce

After evaluating several eCommerce platforms, CBDistillery discovered BigCommerce would be able to provide the performance capability, features, reliability, security, and strong network of partners it was looking for. As the first full-featured platform to serve hemp and hemp-CBD merchants at all stages of growth, [BigCommerce for Hemp & CBD](#) brings together merchant service providers, payment gateways, shipping solutions, and other tailored resources that widely support CBD sales on the platform.

On its existing platform, CBDistillery found it was difficult to make product updates and there were potential security loopholes with their current site that could leave it vulnerable. Its own tech team was also responsible for fixing the server, which CBDistillery was looking to move away from having to manage due to site performance concerns. Deciding to make the move from WooCommerce to BigCommerce, CBDistillery was ready to quickly get to market with a fast and reliable eCommerce solution.

Building the Site

Our team got to work tackling the challenge of bringing CBDistillery's new site online. Taking into consideration the data imports, 3rd party applications, subscription, payment, shipping, and CMS components needed for the site in conjunction with the different legalities and rules surrounding the CBD industry, we worked closely with the BigCommerce platform to successfully develop the site.

1. Gather data/research.

Our team first began with designing the critical path for migration. After understanding the architecture of CBDistillery's existing site and determining the necessities that needed to be carried over to the BigCommerce platform, our developers put together a clear platform migration

plan. It was decided that WordPress would be kept for the blog to maintain its SEO, but all other eCommerce components would be migrated over to BigCommerce. Maximizing the capabilities of both platforms, blog content would be managed on WordPress and eCommerce would be managed on BigCommerce.

2. Assess tooling and approaches.

A key deciding factor for CBDistillery to select BigCommerce as its platform of choice to sell their CBD products online was the suite of tools available on the platform to support merchants in this industry. Utilizing customer groups and tier pricing features in addition to BC shipping and square payments, our developers set-up the stable environment on BigCommerce for CBDistillery to manage its optimized CBD store.

3. Implementation.

The passing of the 2018 Farm Bill does not mean that all the barriers and restrictions to the production, sale, and advertisement of CBD products made from hemp has disappeared. Certain payment processors continue to deny CBD merchants from using their services in addition to shipping carriers who have their own set of rules on whether or not CBD products can be sent to consumers using their solutions. Marketing CBD also has restrictions on things that can't be said or advertised.

A light gray rectangular callout box with rounded corners. Inside, the text "Access to all of it." is displayed in large, bold, black font. Below it, the text "Become a Medium member for unlimited reading." is in a smaller, regular black font. To the right of the text is a large, stylized yellow outline of a jagged mountain peak. In the bottom right corner of the box is a dark gray rounded rectangle containing the white text "Upgrade now". Small yellow starburst icons are positioned at the top and bottom right corners of the box.

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Keeping all of this in mind, our team got to work on setting up the BigCommerce site. Utilizing BC's data sync, we synced over all the customer and order history so that users could retrieve data on past orders. Properly mapping all the product data was also important for an accurate import. A reverse proxy was used to maintain the same site links and ensure the smooth flow of network traffic. We used BC shipping as a category-agnostic solution to help get CBD products in the hands of customers and implemented a trusted payment gateway on BigCommerce that accepts hemp and CBD transactions without additional penalties, reserves, or fees.

Ensuring the smooth integration of existing 3rd party plugins and apps was another key consideration. We worked to integrate CBDistillery's site with their Ordergroove subscription program to manage recurring orders. For reviews, referrals, and reward programs, we brought in an integration with Yotpo and Swell utilizing a series of data mapping, imports, and exports to bring over reviews and other information from the old site onto the new site. We stayed in close

contact with relevant partners to make sure all of the data was properly mapped and brought over from the different marketing platforms and providers CBDistillery was utilizing in its marketing strategies and seamlessly integrated into their new site.

4. Release.

After an extensive round of testing, QA, and feedback, once all the required site elements were reviewed and thoroughly checked, we pushed the site live on BigCommerce to begin receiving orders and launched CBDistillery's path to successfully selling online.

What We Learned

Through the implementation of this project, we learned a lot about the complexities CBD merchants looking to sell online are facing and were able to greatly explore both the capabilities and limitations of building an eCommerce site to accommodate.

Key Takeaways:

1. Make sure systems are in place to ensure compliance throughout the eCommerce site and be mindful of each state's laws around CBD.

Whether its utilizing certain payment processors, implementing specific product-based shipping restriction rules to ensure products stay within allowed shipping zones, or using only approved marketing channels such as referral marketing and content creation to raise brand awareness, it's important to keep in mind what is currently supported and which areas have tougher CBD restrictions when working with different partners and vendors.

As a hosted SaaS solution, BigCommerce is able to offer multiple layers of security, bandwidth, and fast speeds for CBD sites to focus on building their brand, rather than spending resources on monitoring and maintaining security and compliance on the site.

2. SEO, content, and page loading speed are particularly important to the success of a CBD website.

Due to the different restrictions and rules surrounding CBD, messaging and marketing efforts are conducted with caution. Curating internal content and paying close attention to search engine optimization is important for driving traffic.

In addition to affiliate marketing, influencer marketing, and email marketing, there are a variety of 3rd party applications that need to be integrated into the eCommerce site to maintain a powerful marketing engine. Ecommerce websites on the BigCommerce platform are search engine optimization friendly out-of-the-box and support these integrations with email providers and other marketing channels to help with engaging online shoppers.

Conclusion

Since making the move to BigCommerce, CBDistillery has experienced a high conversion rate and traffic with over 20K orders a month. The company no longer has to worry about maintaining its own servers or the site unexpectedly going down. Our aim was to deliver an innovative site complete with the features and functionality the company needed to sell its CBD products online and this was successfully achieved.

As more shoppers move from purchasing CBD from brick-and-mortar stores to shopping online, this ever-changing industry will continue to grow exponentially. Following the positive reception of this initial site launch, our team looks to continue to support CBDistillery in its future eCommerce endeavors.

Visit the website: <https://www.thecbdistillery.com/>

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