Process involved in the development of an E-commerce Website

1. Start with a Strategy

2. Choose a Domain and Platform for Your Ecommerce Website

3. Design Your Store and Add Products

4. Decide on Pricing and Set Up Payments

5. Create a Great Checkout Experience

6. Market Your Growing Business

7. Improve Your Online Sales with Data

1. Start with a Strategy

To ensure success while building an ecommerce website, start with a sound strategy. Even the simplest ecommerce platforms have details that need to be just right for you and your business.

For instance, everyone says that they have excellent customer service, but you're headed into a world where your life could depend on your ecommerce website. Don't you want 24/7 customer support and friendly staff available to troubleshoot anything that might arise?

It's important to anticipate your greatest needs and challenges as your business grows. If you plan to sell physical products, decide how you want shipping to work in advance.

If you're selling digital products, think about the bandwidth and delivery options you'll need. Selling services online? List out exactly what you'll be selling, how you want to deliver it, and any payment or time limitations.

Think about the options you want AND the options you'll need for the growth of your business, and how those options will affect your bottom line.

At the end of the day, be sure to do your homework so that you're making the best long-term decisions for your business. Speaking of long-term, another very important strategy while building your ecommerce website is search engine optimization (SEO).

Develop a marketing strategy before building an ecommerce website, and start early with SEO, because it can take a year for even the best SEO strategy to show results.

2. Choose a Domain and Platform for Your Ecommerce Website

This may suffice for your ecommerce website needs. However, if you plan to sell a wide variety of products and develop or extend your brand, a custom domain is the way to go.

A custom domain gives your ecommerce store:

- A recognizable brand that belongs to you, e.g. mystore.com

- A professional email address linked to your domain where people can contact you

- Search engine optimization (SEO) benefits

- Your next step is selecting the right ecommerce platform for your growing business. You ideally want to build an ecommerce website on a platform that's flexible and easy to use. Most small business owners don't want to bother with hand-coding their website.

- Business owners and solo entrepreneurs need a platform that they can easily integrate with their existing site. Alternatively, if you don't have a site yet, you will benefit from a platform that allows you to build a site from scratch, in a few simple steps.

3. Decide on Pricing and Set Up Payments

There are three key aspects of payments as you build an ecommerce website:

- How you will price your products?

- How customers are going to pay you?

- How you are going to get those payments into your own bank account?

You may be starting from scratch or extending your local business online. Either way, the online world has different expectations for how you will put a price on your product.

There are many factors to consider when pricing your products for sale online including:

- The cost of materials per item

- Ecommerce web hosting

- Shipping

- Taxes

- Fees and percentage per sale deductions from various organizations, including PayPal, credit cards, etc.

- Flexible pricing, like pay-what-you-wish

Then decide how your ecommerce website will accept payments. In many cases, this means finding a third-party payment processor to act as the go-between.

4. Design Your Store and Add Products

Next step in building an ecommerce website, it's time to design your store. Think about what, in addition to your products, you plan to include.

At the very least, you will want to include an about page and a contact page as you build an ecommerce website to help potential buyers connect with you. You can also add video and text onto your pages.

When building an ecommerce website, be sure to include you have:

- Photograph: People like dealing with real people

- Store name: To differentiate your store from other's

- Logo: For branding and recognition

- Trustmark and payment logos: These help people feel comfortable shopping with you.

Select a theme that represents your brand and allows you to showcase your products in the best light possible. Create categories that are logical to your buyers. Learn as much about your ideal customer as you can and design your site with their preferences and ideal user experience in mind.

Remember that the way you see your customers might not be the way that they see themselves, so find a way to ask their opinions as you build your site.

Now it's time to add some products to your new ecommerce website:

- Choose your product type (physical, digital or service).

- Give your product a name and description

- Set the price and the quantities available for sale

- Create a preview of your item by uploading a photo, an audio file or even a video preview

- Choose from a range of delivery and pricing options, as well as specifying any variants

5. Create a Great Checkout Experience

Shopping cart rejection is the plague of online sales. In 2017, the Baymard Institute took the average of 37 cart rejection studies and found that the average online shopping cart rejection rate is over 69%.

Avoid cart rejection as you build an ecommerce website by:

- Enabling customers to purchase multiple items at once

- Offering free shipping if you can, or

- Being very clear about shipping costs upfront (before customers get to the checkout)

- Making sure that you optimize your checkout for mobile devices, desktops, smartphones, and tablets.

- Sending cart rejection emails anytime someone leaves without completing their purchase

Don't forget, the number of steps it takes to complete a purchase significantly affects your sales conversion rates. Test your checkout process until it is perfect and ask your friends and family to test it too.

6. Market Your Growing Business

Once you start building an ecommerce website, you need to promote your product to increase traffic and drive sales.

Many vendors choose to sell from marketplace sites like Etsy or Amazon but find themselves struggling because of high fees and other limitations.

After building an ecommerce website you'll need a solid marketing plan to bring the right customers to your site and to keep their affection for return business.

7. Look after SEO and analytics

Track the performance of your ecommerce website with an analytics solution. In addition to the business reporting, integrate with Google Analytics so that you can gain deeper insight into how your marketing efforts and ecommerce SEO are performing.

This will help you monitor your site and product pages so you can improve them for more sales, reach, and effectiveness.

Major Considerations in the development of an E-Commerce Website

1. Customization

You can bring customization to your ecommerce website as per your needs. You can even match the overall look and feel of your online store with your website. You will get a lot of design templates from the ecommerce vendor, most of them not requiring HTML5 or CSS knowledge for customization.

The color, themes and design of your ecommerce website should represent your brand. You need to lay stress on aesthetics and navigation in the layout of the site. Choosing the right colors can help you to attract visitors and make them purchase from your website.

2. Content & Images

Along with the design aspect, content is also important. It plays a significant role in attractive store visitors to make purchases. Online visitors generally have a very short span of attention during which your message should be conveyed to them and they should be convinced to buy your product. Your product descriptions should be short and crisp, yet interesting enough to evoke customers' interest.

Along with the content, product images should be clear, understandable and attractive. They should be of high-quality and have standard sizes to get evenly displayed. Unlike offline purchase, customers will not be able to see the product live until it is delivered to them. This gives rise to the need of multiple images for each product, to help them see each angle of your product.

3. Performance

If your ecommerce website is slow, you will tend to lose customers midway to a purchase. Visitors will stay at your site, browse and get interested in your products only if your site is optimized to run quickly and allows them to navigate smoothly. You can compress images, use caching and combine site's JavaScript or CSS resource files into single files to increase the loading speed of your site.

4. Responsive

Smartphone users have increased at a rapid pace in recent times, leading to a rise in m-Commerce or mobile commerce. You thus need to ensure that your website is optimized for smartphones and tablets. Having a responsive ecommerce website will enable visitors to view your products properly in their smartphones, add them in cart and checkout easily.

You should thus select a platform that can run flawlessly across various devices, helping you expand your market reach and drive more traffic to your ecommerce website.

5. Security

An ecommerce website deals with the personal details of the customer, which makes it very important for the store owners to make the purchase transaction safe and secure.

All ecommerce websites should have security protocols to protect buyers' sensitive information using encryption. SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) is such encryption protocol to protect the personal information of the customers. Make sure you get an SSL Certificate and PCI (Payment Card Industry) compliance for your store.

6. Payment Gateway

You need to have a secure online payment gateway on your ecommerce website to receive payments from your customers. For that you will need a Merchant account in a bank that can be linked directly to the payment gateway.

Through payment gateway your customer will be directed to the server which will link your website with the bank. You will be able to accept the credit cards from your ecommerce website and funds will directly be deposited into your merchant account.

7. Guests Checkouts

Ecommerce websites generally ask users to create an account to make purchases with a purpose of boosting future sales through follow-up communication. Customers who regularly purchase from your site will register for easier checkout through their saved information and for availing discounts in future. All users necessarily don't wish to go through the whole process of creating an account to buy your product. For such users, it's important to provide the feature of guests' checkouts.

8. Marketing Techniques

It is important for the ecommerce website owners to pursue Search Engine Optimization (SEO) including other organic marketing effort, leading to a higher rate of return. It is better to choose an ecommerce vendor that uses SEO automatically for your website content. Along with SEO activities it is important to have strong PPC campaigns to market your products by keeping a right balance between SEO & PPC.

It is essential to monitor and track visitors' activity on your website. Without web analytics, you will get no idea about your website's performance and what is happening on your website. You

can use Google Analytics to fetch important data for analysis purpose and Google AdWords to get targeted click results and a large traffic for your products on website.

You can carry out email newsletter campaigns to make audience aware about your ecommerce website. Sending a reminder to customers to write reviews after making purchase is an effective way to make them come to your website again. Blogging is another tool for effectively promoting your brand and ecommerce website.

Social Presence is equally important to bring traffic to your ecommerce website. You can build a huge fan base through these social platforms, helping you build and strengthen your brand image. Social platforms will allow you to interact with your customers directly and also help you to create awareness of your new products. Incorporating social media tools into your site will also help you to reach a wider audience.

9. Customers Inputs

You should have a feedback mechanism to allow buyers to submit their reviews and feedback easily. This will help you to bring improvements and also serve as a marketing tool. Positive reviews and ratings help to gain more customers. Allow your customers to share their opinions and views.

Many ecommerce services allow you to respond to your customers and even remove undesirable comments.

The above points provide a precise walkthrough of all the major considerations to build an ecommerce website. There are many more elements to consider before developing an ecommerce website as ecommerce design and development is a huge subject that requires in-depth knowledge.

Proper Product Showcase and Descriptions:

The purpose of your e-commerce site is to sell products; therefore it is only right that you should highlight your products on your website. When showcasing items, make sure that you're using high-quality images that will get the user's attention. The larger the images, the better they are. By showing quality pictures, your customers can see how well the product looks in real.

For better usability, choose a layout that emphasizes your product in every page. Don't give them a hard time finding the page for "Accessories" or "Shoes" if they've already searched or clicked on a similar item. Lack of information can make customers leave and reach to other websites.

Misinformation is even worse. When you put in a wrong size, or colour, you risk getting a bad impression and losing valuable customers. Describe your products correctly and in detail. Unlike

shopping in brick-and-mortar stores, your customers can't touch and see their items in every angle. You need to devise ways so you can give your consumers all the information they need to picture your item in their heads. This includes the type, colour, size, weight, thickness, cut and fit (for clothes), and all the necessary instructions they need to know before purchasing the item.

Shopping Cart Design:

Too many designers don't pay attention to shopping carts, but it actually is one of the most incredibly important parts of your website. A good shopping cart can enable users to add multiple items, revise order, or remove products as easily as possible. When designing a shopping cart, make sure that you include functional product images, reviews, and a convenient search bar.

It includes all the necessary features like the order summary, product recommendations, and a "continue shopping" option for those who want to add/replace items.

Easy Checkout Process

Aside from allowing transactions to be quick and anonymous, as mentioned above with the use of the guest checkout option, an ecommerce website should also make it as easy as possible for consumers to check out their items. The easier this process, the more motivation your customers will have to repeat purchase. So don't make too many pages for checkout. Try as much as possible to make it a single-page process while not being too overwhelming for consumers.

Contact Information and Support:

Let your customers know that you're simply a call, text, email, and live chat away. The best way to earn loyal customers and to encourage more confidence is to show how passionate you are in helping them. When they encounter a problem, make sure that there is always someone who can attend to help. If your website hides any contact information and other means of communication, customers see this as a red flag and they're less likely to do purchase with you.