

Whitepaper

50 Ways To Grow Your eCommerce Business & Skyrocket Your Sales



Introduction

In this guide, we have compiled fifty of the most effective tips and best practices for making your eCommerce business a success. Packed with loads of ideas for raising brand awareness, engaging your customers, improving your website and marketplace listings and expanding overseas, this whitepaper has been designed to inspire online retailers to take the next step in growing their business.



Marketing Tips For Online Sellers



1. Make Use Of Retargeting

Why not leverage retargeting for your ecommerce business, by exposing past website visitors to your ads as they browse the web. With over 70% of people failing to complete a purchase, this is a brilliant tactic to re-engage and ultimately convert these users into paying customers. Two of the most effective types of ads for eCommerce businesses are those that show customers the products that have previously been added to their cart, or alternatively those that show customers the items that they have expressed an interest in.

2. Use Personalisation

The power of the internet, and in particular automation solutions, have enabled brands to provide their customers with a highly personalised approach, with minimal time and effort. Specifically, these systems enable you to track your customers through each step of their buyer's journey, allowing you to send them relevant product information and recommend products that they may be interested in based on their previous searches.

3. Offer Competitions

While this won't be ideal for every type of company, you should be aware that the use of competitions, particularly on social media, can raise brand awareness and capture a substantial amount of leads. Ideas for competitions can be anything from giving users the option to like, comment and share your post, where they will then be put into a prize draw to win a product or service, or you could drive users through to a landing page where they are required to fill out a form to be entered into the competition. If you're a [fashion retail business](#), you may even offer users the chance to win X amount to spend on your site, if they share a photo of themselves wearing one your brand's outfits.



4. Re-Engage Lost Customers

Make it easy for customers that have [abandoned their shopping cart](#) to re-convert, by saving their items in the basket and reminding them of these items upon their next visit to your site. Alternatively, consider sending a follow up email to known customers, informing them that their products are still saved. This can instil a sense of urgency, simply by mentioning that there is a risk that the item could go out of stock.

5. Leverage Paid Marketing

Pay-per-click marketing through Google AdWords, Google Shopping or Facebook ads, are all highly effective ways of promoting your products and driving traffic to your site. It is crucial, however, that you are effectively tracking and monitoring your campaigns, as they can be a hefty investment, and you must be sure that it is worthwhile to your business.

6. Boost Customer Loyalty With Discounts

Offer your existing customers discounts on their birthday (alongside a personalised message), as well as around seasonal events – Halloween, Christmas, Valentines Day etc. This is not only a nice touch for the customer, but is also proven to enhance sales transactions.

7. Leverage User-Generated Content

Are your customers posting images of your product(s) on social media? If so, this is great news for your brand, and if you're not jumping on it then you're missing out on a huge opportunity! To identify these customer advocates, monitor social media channels for mentions of your brand and re-post, share, comment on and like these posts, after all potential customers like nothing more than to be reassured by other happy customers.

8. Invest In Content Marketing

As an eCommerce company, you might be wondering what exactly you can create content around. Now while the answer to this question will depend entirely on your product and industry, there are huge opportunities for the majority of businesses to create content in a range of formats, with the intention to increase social engagement, drive website traffic, establish thought leadership, increase email subscribers, and ultimately generate sales.

9. Consider Social Shopping

Social commerce is increasing in popularity amongst online buyers, with platforms such as Google, YouTube, Facebook and Pinterest all now enabling users to purchase from sellers, directly from their sites. With more and more companies leveraging the power of social shopping, in-turn reaching new audiences and growing sales, why not achieve similar results by [setting up a Facebook store](#).

10. Talk To Your Customers

This may seem obvious, but it's amazing how under-utilised this tactic is. At the end of the day, your customers are the people who will have the biggest opinions on your company (good or bad), and by understanding what you're doing well, what could be improved and generally any feedback about their experience, you will have great insight for helping you to improve your offering. If you sell solely online, why not create an automated post-purchase email asking buyer's to submit feedback on your company and product (you could even throw in a discount code for their next purchase), or if you have a brick-and-mortar store maybe even talk to your customers face to face.

11. Use Wish-List Reminder Emails

If you enable customers to add products to a wishlist on your website, and you're not sending wishlist reminder emails, then you're missing out on a huge opportunity. This type of email is highly effective, as it can successfully convince the customer to take the final step in buying a product that they've already had the intent to purchase.



12. Incorporate Social Into Your Strategy

As an online retailer, it's highly likely [your customer's are active on social media](#), so if you're not, you're missing out on a huge opportunity for brand awareness and potential sales.

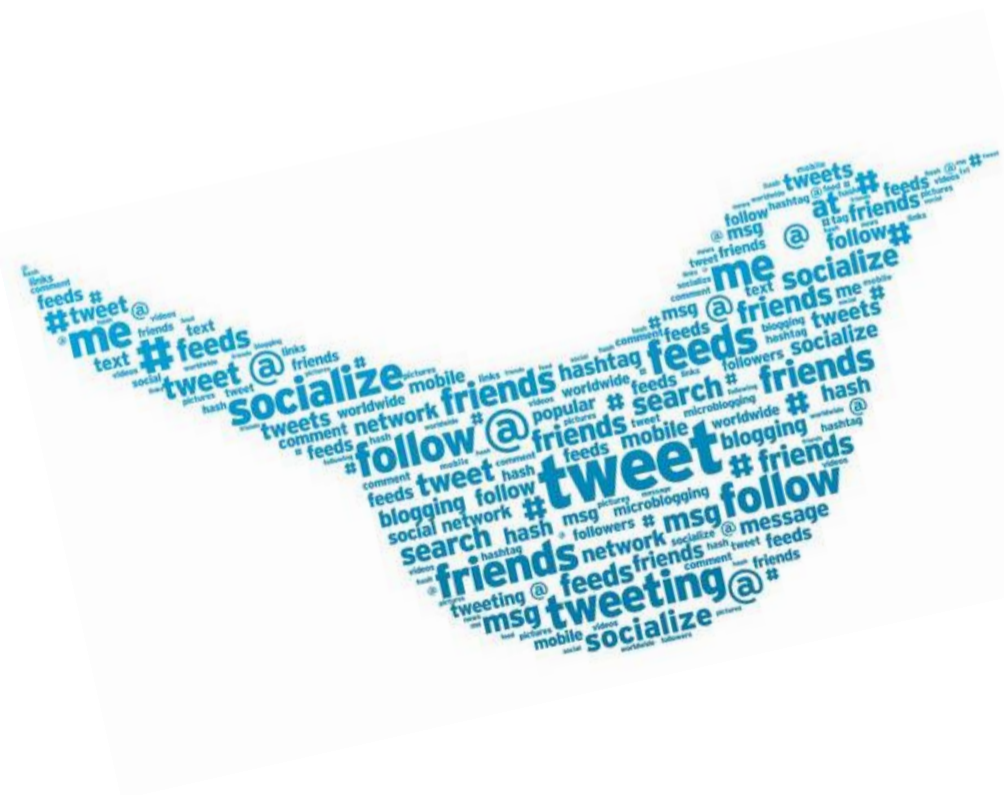
These channels not only give you extremely valuable insight into what your customers are saying about your company, but also provide you with a platform to engage with existing and potential customers, showcase both your brand and products, raise awareness, create engagement and advocacy, and drive website traffic.

13. Engage In Real-Time Conversations With Customers

Social media sites such as Twitter can and should be used to interact with potential and existing customers in real-time. Not only does this show that as a company you're active and engaged with your customer base, but it also shows others that you can handle questions and conflicts. While it's great to use these conversations as a way to show your brand personality, do remember that ultimately you should be seen to be professional.

14. Identify Complementary Websites

Link-building plays a big role in building an effective SEO strategy, and a good way to achieve this is by identifying brands that are complementary to yours and asking them to link to your website (and vice-versa). If you both have blogs, why not also write a guest post, or link to one of their products in your own blog.



15. Start Using Video

Many brands are seeing success on sites like YouTube, by providing users with educational and entertaining videos, in a bid to raise awareness and drive sales. Consider creating relevant 'how-to' videos that address common industry questions, for example if you sell hair products, why not create a series of videos that shows users how they can create the latest hair styles and trends. Other types of popular videos include behind-the-scenes footage, which is particularly good for brands at fashion shows or on-shoot.

16. Increase Sales By Listing On Deal Websites

By offering discounted products through deal sites, you can quickly grow your database, increase sales and get rid of old stock. Do be aware though that this type of eCommerce tactic can lead to low margins and be disruptive to your normal operations, so you will therefore have to do thorough inventory forecasting, and make sure that ultimately the positives outweigh the negatives.

17. Never Stop Evolving

As I'm sure you're already aware, neither the internet as a whole, nor the eCommerce industry is slowing down, and with this will come new technologies and new opportunities. With this in mind, it is crucial that you stay on top of these changes and trends, and ensure that you're continuously meeting customer expectations.

18. Change With The Customer

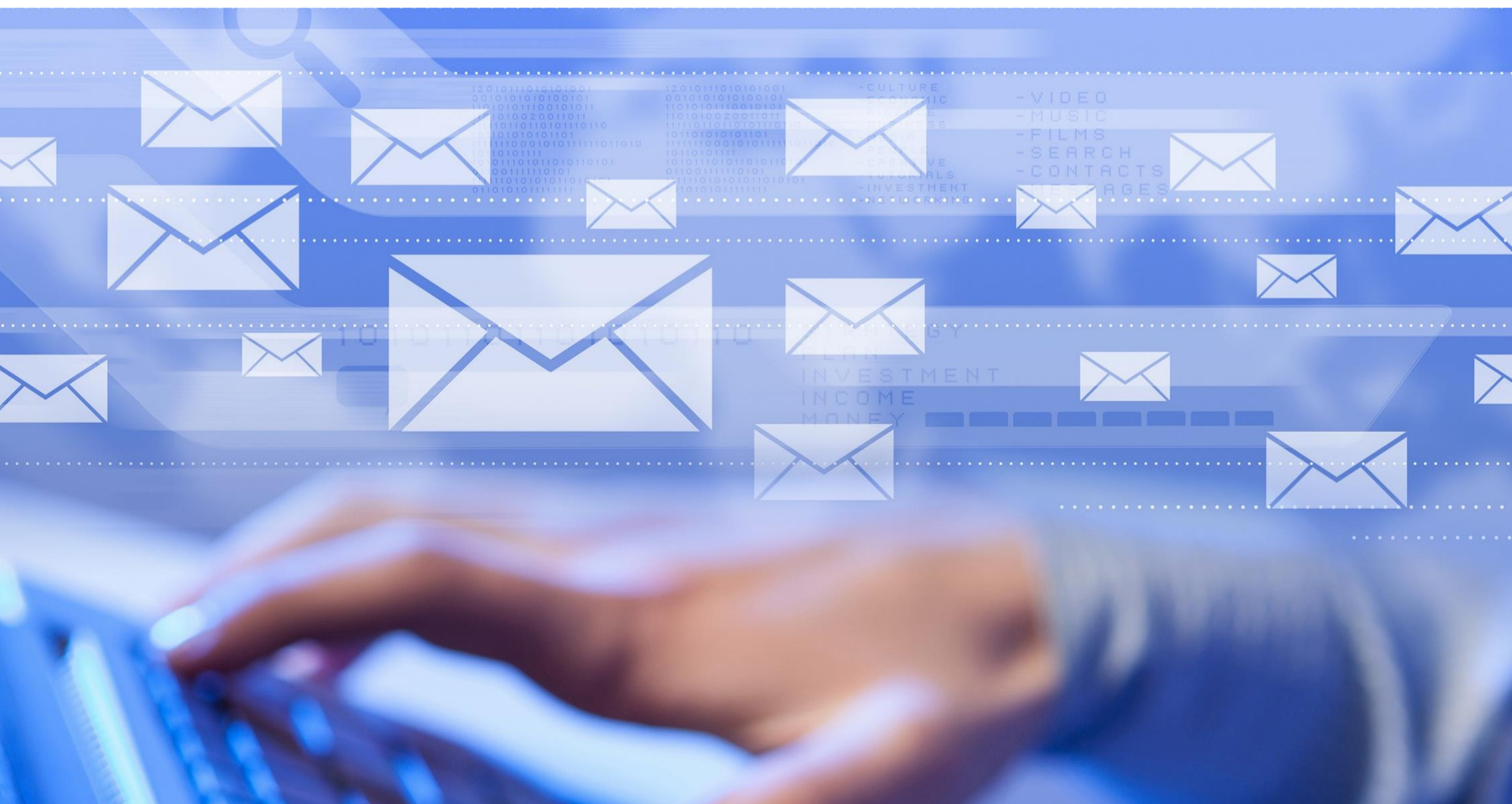
Similar to the point above, it's integral that you're aware of changing consumer habits, including how they research a product, where they're active and ultimately what they expect from you as a business. By neglecting these changes and failing to evolve with the customer, you risk falling behind your competition and losing sales.

19. Open A Pop-Up Shop

By setting up a temporary store, you have the opportunity to connect with your customers, build relationships and showcase your brand personality. They are also great for brand awareness and increased sales, and are becoming increasingly used as part of a larger PR campaign or guerrilla marketing tactic.

20. Increase Email Subscribers

Email marketing is a great way to keep potential and existing customer's both engaged with your brand, and aware of your products, and having a strong email list can make a huge difference to website traffic and ultimately sales. There are a number of ways that brands can grow this list, including having an opt-in option for email marketing permission at checkout, offer a discount code in return for email sign-ups and promote your newsletter in-store.



Shipping & International Selling Tips



21. Monitor Your Customer's Shipping Experience

Your shipping company's performance is reflected onto your business, so it is important that you ensure they are [meeting certain standards](#).

Specifically, you should check that they are handling packages with care and your customers aren't receiving damaged goods, as well as ensuring that these packages arrive in a timely manner, and that your customers are effectively communicated with, should there be an issue.

22. Sell Into New Countries

By selling internationally you are able to significantly expand your reach, allowing you to generate more sales and ultimately grow your business. While many sellers are reluctant to sell overseas for a number of reasons, including [international returns processes](#), lack of knowledge about the market and language barriers, the reality is that each of these concerns can be dealt with relatively easily. While you will still be required to do your research, we would recommend that you start by testing the international waters through the use of a marketplace.

23. Always Do Your Research

When it comes to [cross-border trade](#), the decision to enter a new market isn't one that should be taken lightly, and you should therefore invest time in determining whether it is a good fit for your business. You will need to find out whether your product is appropriate for the market and if so, understand the level of competition you will be faced with. You will also need to find out shipping costs and any other hidden costs inherent to the individual country.

24. Set Expectations For International Buyers

When selling into an overseas market, you should ensure that you are providing clear details and guidance on [payment methods](#), shipping options (including the cost and expected timescale), taxes and insurance. This not only helps set expectations, but also helps to build trust amongst potential international customers and ultimately increase sales.



25. Localise & Translate Your Content

When targeting international customers, you will have far more success by translating and localising your website and marketplace listings, for each dedicated country you wish to sell into.

While [free online translation services](#) such as Google translate and Bing translate can help to provide a reasonable translation, it is often worth investing in a professional service. Do also bear in mind that certain marketplaces will have requirements that you will need to meet, with regards to localising and translating your content, and some will have dedicated support to help you with this.

26. Familiarise Yourself With International Fulfilment Services

While there are a host of fulfilment services available to you, perhaps the two most notable are [Fulfilment by Amazon \(FBA\)](#) and [eBay's Global Shipping Programme \(GSP\)](#). While they both operate differently, both services do eliminate the risk and hassle for businesses looking to sell overseas, and while they do of course come at a cost, the benefits of handing over fulfilment do make them services worth considering.

27. Comply With Cross-Border Regulations

When selling internationally, you will need to be aware of any local taxes, applicable laws and regulations for each market you are looking to sell into. If you're selling cross-border through a marketplace, make sure that you have checked and comply with their policies for international sales, as this is ultimately your responsibility as the merchant.



Webstore & Online Marketplace Tips



28. Ensure Your Site Is Mobile Optimised

eCommerce has gone beyond the need for a website to be mobile responsive (although this is still crucial), and it must now be fully optimised for mobile commerce. This includes the need for simple mobile payment processing, social logins and social media share buttons. Do note that by providing mobile payment options such as PayPal and Google Wallet, you can potentially increase your sales.

29. Monitor Customer Activity

By setting up a free Google Analytics account, you can keep track of your customer's website activity, while also understanding how exactly they arrived at your site, whether that be through social media, a search engine, or direct traffic. By using this insight, you can continuously improve your website, while also building on your marketing tactics to continue driving users to your site.

30. Optimise Your Product Pages

So you've driven traffic to your site and the user has landed on your product page. Great! Unfortunately, the hard work doesn't end there, after all [it is this page that will play a huge role](#) in influencing the potential customer to make the purchase.

With this in mind, look at the page like you are the customer; are the images well-lit and clear, providing shots of the product at different angles? Is the product description descriptive and include details on materials, handling and care? Can I return it easily? Is delivery free or inexpensive? Do they appear to be reliable and trust-worthy? What do other customers have to say about this product? Do they make it clear what exactly the product is in a clear, clean and concise manner?



31. Decide Which Selling Channel Is Best For You

Before making a decision to either set up an eCommerce site or start selling on a marketplace, make sure you weigh up the [pros and cons of each](#), and familiarise yourself with the work involved in getting started, as well as any requirements you may have to comply with. As you grow your business, the chances are you will use both types of selling channels, but for start-ups in particular, you should initially do your research to understand which channel is the best fit for your business.

32. Optimise Your Check-Out Process

The best and [most successful website checkouts](#) (i.e. those with the lowest levels of customer abandonment), are those that avoid an unnecessarily long process. What we mean by this is that users typically prefer checkouts that have as few steps as possible, and aren't seen to be too much of a commitment. For this reason, consider offering a guest checkout option.

33. Make Sure You're SEO Optimised

Whether you're selling on a marketplace or on your own eCommerce site, ensuring that your pages and listings are SEO optimised is integral to increasing visibility amongst potential customers. When it comes to your website, there are a number of factors that should be considered, including keyword optimisation, site structure, internal linking and usability, and on marketplaces you will need to not only optimise keywords to gain a higher listing ranking, but also complete item specifics sections and where possible create an "about me" page.

34. Regularly Audit Your Website

User experience is becoming more and more important to online sellers, largely because it plays an integral role in their decision to stay on your website and buy from you. As a retailer, you should therefore [ensure that your site's navigation is straight-forward](#), your product descriptions clearly convey key information and your site's design is clean, among other key considerations.

35. Be Clear About Your Stock Levels

Why not manage customer expectations by being up-front about stock levels for an individual item, in order to build trust and reduce frustration (and potentially loss of custom) amongst customers.

In addition to reducing the number of irate customers who go to buy an item, only to be informed later on that the product isn't actually in stock, this tactic can also trigger a 'buy now or lose' mentality in many shoppers, especially if the item is low in stock. Alternatively, for out of stock items, why not provide an option where the customer can be notified once the item is back in stock.

36. Make The Sale Section Clear

As many as 47% of online shoppers visit a website solely to purchase discounted products, so why not make it easy for your customers (and more profitable for your business) by having an easily identifiable sale section on your website's homepage.

37. Let Potential Customers Know What Your Existing Customers Are Saying

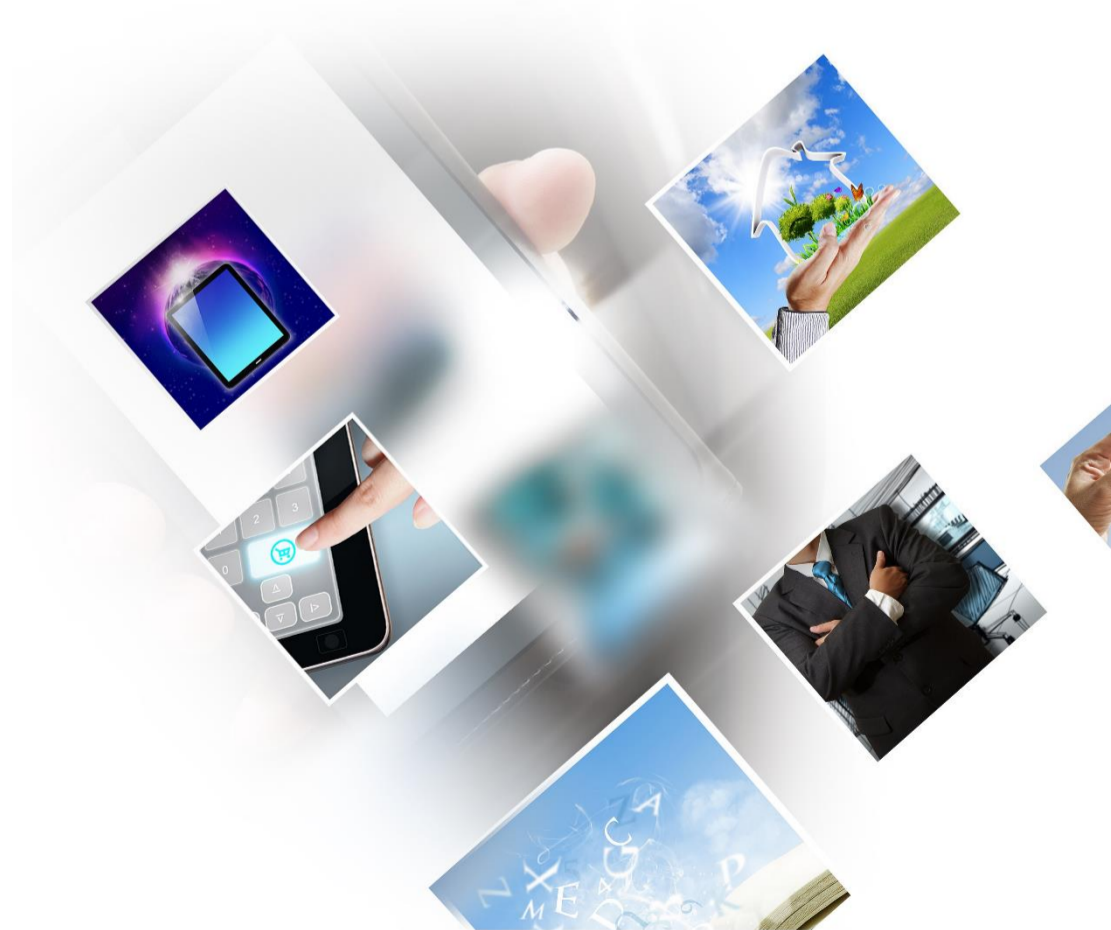
Reviews are extremely powerful when selling online and often play a huge role in building trust and influencing buying decision. Now while this doesn't necessarily work in your favour if you have negative feedback, assuming this isn't the case and you have worked hard to build a loyal, happy customer base, these reviews can make a huge difference to sales and brand reputation.

38. Only Use High-Quality Images

Never underestimate the importance of using high-quality, well-lit images when showcasing your products. These images will play a huge role in convincing the customer to purchase and should therefore be professional and accurate. If you're selling on marketplaces you will even be required to meet certain image requirements, so always be clear on these before you invest time in take the photos.

39. Ensure Your Returns Policy Is Clear

Ensuring that your returns policy is simple and clear to understand not only makes it easier for customers looking to return a product, and ultimately increase the chances of them purchasing from you again, but also reassures potential customers looking to make a purchase. With this in mind, your returns policy should be easily accessible on the product page, and we would also recommend that you also include returns information within the packaging.



40. Effectively Deal With Customer Complaints

Regardless of whether a complaint is your fault or not, as a business it is your responsibility to deal with it appropriately. While you should always use empathy and try to offer a reasonable solution, if it just isn't possible to offer a solution, you should still be compassionate and provide a thorough response to the customer's complaint. In addition, where possible, you should consider being proactive by reaching out to a customer to inform them that you've resolved an issue, prior to them making a complaint. This can go a long way in building trust amongst your customers.

41. Monitor Search Bar Activity

Aside from being helpful to website visitors looking to locate something on your website, your site's search bar can be a brilliant tool for you to uncover customer behaviour. By looking at the data, you can see exactly what customers are searching for, and use this insight to improve your website by making the most popular searches easy to find.



42. Combine Related Items To Increase Marketplace Listings

If you're selling on a marketplace, one of the key factors that will be taken into account when your product is ranked, is your item-level sales history. What this means is, if you sell high quantities of a product, it will be seen to be of a higher relevance to potential customers and therefore rank higher.

By combining related items, for example a product that comes in a range of different sizes and/or colours, into a single variation listing, you will have a combined score, and not one that is diluted over multiple product listings.

43. Tell Your Story With An About Us Page

About us pages are great for conveying what your company is all about, and ultimately what makes you unique. Some customers will want to know about your story – how and why the company started, company milestones etc. – as well as see visual representations of your brand.

This might include an image of your team, offices, or anything else that represents your brand ethos. Do, however, keep it short and sweet, as you don't want them to lose interest.



Business Practices For eCommerce



44. Have A Routine

If you're a relatively new business with little resource, having a routine that you stick to is important to ensuring everything runs like clockwork. We would recommend that you dedicate several periods of the day to fulfilling orders, and make use of a checklist to ensure that you're covering everything. It's also important to make sure you don't fall behind, so we would strongly recommend that you fulfil your orders before anything else.

45. Make Sure You're Prepared

As obvious as it may seem, you should ensure that you have the tools and supplies you need to hand, to ensure you can fulfil your orders quickly and efficiently. Ensure that your pack and ship area is well organised and that you are printing labels in advance. It's also important to stay on top of your stock levels, so that you can order more when you're running low.

46. Ensure Stock Information Is Consistent Across Channels

Stock information should be consolidated in order to avoid overselling. Unfortunately, when selling across multiple channels, this can often lead to human-error, which unsurprisingly leads to customer disappointment as well as increased time and costs. For this reason you should consider investing in an inventory management solution that is able to scale with the growth of your business.

47. Stay On Top Of Your Stock

If you're selling food or drink, it's important to stay on top of best-before dates, as sending these products can result in significant consequences, including hefty fines and a damaged brand reputation. It's also worth considering that if you use a fulfilment service such as Amazon's FBA, you will have to be aware of what stock you have there, as items that they store for longer than six months can come at an additional cost to your business. For these reasons, invest in an effective stock control system to eliminate these risks.

48. Provide Outstanding Customer Service

Even the smallest of companies can provide their customers with a high-quality experience, and the more helpful you appear to be, the more likely your customers will return and spread the word about your brand. While it might not be possible for you to have a dedicated customer support team, or offer 24/7 service, there are still ways you can keep your customer's happy, even on a low budget. Think about using social media to engage with customer's in real-time, and consider using a system such as XSellCo to help you manage customer communications.



49. Plan Your Stock With The Use Of Demand Forecasts

Effective inventory management can help you make informed business decisions, by providing insights into trends and sales information, in-turn allowing you to determine reorder points and order quantities.

50. Invest In Ecommerce Software

eCommerce solutions such as inventory & order management software are designed to help companies maximise business growth, simply by automating key business processes, in-turn saving time and reducing costs. At the end of the day, regardless of what role you play within your company, it is likely in your interest to help expand the business, and by having a system in place that scales with the growth of the company.





Linnworks is an eCommerce platform that helps online retailers automate key processes, reduce costs and grow their business. Get in touch with us to find out how Linnworks can help you manage your business, the smarter way!

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

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