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Small Business Ecommerce Web Design

By Joel Walsh

If your small business is venturing into ecommerce, you may be daunted by the technical wizardry

you think is involved. But fear not: complete web store software packages will keep all the technical wizardry safely behind the screen, so you don't have to worry about it. All you have to do is choose a design, stock your store, and promote it. Here's how to do that.

Designing Your Online Store: Choosing a Template

When starting a brand-new online store for a small business, you're better off choosing a pre-existing design template rather than having a design done from scratch.

- Templates. If you're not quite sure what kind of design you'd like, you can browse through the design templates included with most hosted online store programs.
- Themes. Some online store builders take the design template concept one step further, with "themes." Themes are essentially templates that include not only basic design elements but also text styles such as font faces and sizes. Themes also allow for slightly different pages across a website with a single unified design, without having to configure each page individually. For instance, a web store theme might include a product description page, a product category page, an "add to cart" page, and a checkout page. Just by choosing a single theme, you have all the pages in the shopping cart designed with a single, unified professional design, just like big, successful web stores.
- Theme builder. If you want to make changes to a theme-say a different font or a different color-some web store software packages make it easy with a "theme builder." With the theme builder, you can select values for features such as color and font. You can even choose to build a theme from scratch, though for most web stores this will be a case of re-inventing the wheel unnecessarily. You don't need to know anything about HTML; the interface is much like a word processing program.
- Professional design. Once you've created your store using templates or a theme builder, you can turn to a professional designer to make your site really special. Still, you may want to stick with the basic template or theme-builder site until you have a firm idea of how users are interacting with it and

what elements are working. That way you'll have concrete requests to make of the designer.

Building Your Online Store: Inventory

The foundation of any online store is the products or services being sold. With most web store and shopping cart software packages, the functions for adding, removing, and pricing items are collectively called "inventory."

Even if you're selling intangibles such as downloadable software, you will use the inventory functions to specify how the items will be sold. There are options for setting the available quantity in stock to unlimited, or handling just about any kind of permutation of selling products or services online. Web store software makers have seen it all.

One of the great things about using a hosted web store software package is that if you do have trouble setting something up, you can get help quickly from customer service.

Adding New Web Pages to an Online Store

If you want to add new pages to your online store, the store creator software can help. If all you want is to add a new product, you only have to use the "add a product" feature, which is often listed under "inventory." However, if you want to add pages for sales copy, manuals, privacy policies, terms and conditions, the store creator interface is the way to do it. Most online store creators have a way of adding pages to a web store without having to use HTML; you simply type in your text in the form and upload any images.

Getting Your Store Found in Search Engines

In order for your online store to generate the most business possible, you'll want to make sure that your store is easily searchable for Internet shoppers. Unfortunately, some web stores create pages using a dynamic script that search engines cannot index.

Often you can tell if a web store cannot be indexed by search engines by looking at the URL of an inside web page (the homepage, also called the index page or "front page," will usually be search-engine-index-able no matter what). If the URL is a long string of characters that is slightly different from one user to the next (say, when you open the page on your computer and someone else opens the page on another machine), that likely means the site is using "session IDs" which search engines have a notoriously difficult time interpreting. If the URL is something simpler, such as "domain.com/category-5/product-6.php", the page is much more likely to be search-engine friendly.

The best way to check whether a web store or shopping cart software produces "search-engine-friendly" pages is to check the documentation; software that's search-engine-friendly will usually say so.

Of course, as with any website, doing well in search engines still requires your site to have links

pointing to it and some text on the pages. Just because search engines can index a page doesn't mean they'll return it for any searches.

Joel Walsh is a web business owner and writer. For a hosted web store software package, check out this:

<http://www.easystorecreator.com>

[Publish this article on your website! Requirements: 1. Live link

for above URL/web address. 2. Link anchor text: "online store builder" OR leave this bracketed message intact.]

Ecommerce Stores

By Mark Lawson

The Internet opens up so many opportunities for a company to exist and to expand their operations worldwide. It opens up a global marketplace in which people from all over the world can buy and sell goods and services from the comforts of their own homes. The Internet opens up so much opportunity that more and more conventional stores are becoming e-tailors. Everyday more and more ecommerce stores are appearing on the Internet in all countries. If everyone is doing it, then why aren't you?

Discount Domains is well known in the field of domains and web hosting and we now offer discount web design services. We offer services for static ecommerce stores as well as the dynamic ones. Ecommerce is the process of shopping for what you want to buy and paying for it on the Internet and an ecommerce store allows customers to do just that. An ecommerce store costs less than the average person might think it would, it can run as little as \$1k to get up and running depending upon the features that are needed. It reduces the cost of operations in many ways.

First off, it reduces some paperwork because the customer enters everything themselves. Instead of an employee writing down or typing the customer's basic information, the customer enters all of the details themselves. Secondly, it saves on time. An ecommerce store provides convenience for the company and the customer. It can provide a customer with everything they need in front of them to shop around and to make the purchase including whether or not the item they want is in stock. A customer can do this anytime of the day without needing an employee to show them around the store. Thirdly, an ecommerce store could save on overhead. If a company has an ecommerce store instead of an actual physical location then the company can save on things such as rent, inventory costs, some telephone services, electric, and heating services. The company can manage their store from anywhere in the world.

Most people today are using the Internet and having an ecommerce store will take your products and services right into their homes and businesses. An ecommerce store will save many expenses. This savings can be put towards other things that your company needs. Your store will also act as advertisement for new products and services that you want to offer in the future. Based upon the

Small Business Ecommerce Web Design

orders that you receive on your ecommerce store, you can decide which products and services to discontinue based upon sales or lack of sales. Your store will help you process orders using credit cards, pay pal, and other payment methods. Your ecommerce store will also bring you new customers you may not have reached with your traditional physical store. The possibilities with an ecommerce store are endless.

We want everyone to find your store so we will design it with this in mind. Discount Domains understands search engines and we build sites that are search engine friendly. We have many designs to choose from and your store will be an original design. We build sites and ecommerce stores that are user friendly as well. Your store will be easy to navigate so that your customers will keep coming back to buy more products and services. We want your customers to go through your store with little or no problems. We will design you a professional ecommerce store according to your wants and needs. Your customers will be able to find you when they need to find you at anytime of the day or night because you will be open 24 hours a day. Your store will never sleep.

Mark is a webmaster with Discount Domains a leading UK web design house. Please feel free to

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