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**How To Go About
E-commerce Enabling
Your Website**

Plan To Succeed Online

Take The Guess Work Out of Starting & Building a Successful Business Online!

"Obstacles are things a person sees when he takes his eyes off his goal."
E. Joseph Cossman

E-commerce Enabling Your Website

Make no mistake about it, e-commerce is the fastest growing sector in the world's economy. No matter what figures you look at, revenues from e-commerce are growing at an explosive rate of 50% to 100% a year. So should you implement an e-commerce system on your site? You're darn tootin'!

Making It Easy For Customers To Pay Online

It's remarkable really how many otherwise intelligent online business owners will spend countless hours working on their websites and developing their marketing strategy only to neglect one of the most crucial elements of closing the sale... making it EASY for customers to buy.

The Internet is a direct marketer's paradise - no, make that an impulsive shopper's paradise. And when visitors can buy on impulse, and do so in the privacy and convenience of their home or office, the likelihood that more sales will be generated is definitely higher. Provided you implement a sensible e-commerce system.

The most popular online payment method, by far, is paying by credit card, but there are other options as well that you should consider once your business is up and running and you are starting to make some money. Offering one or more of these "extra" choices - personal or business checks, online checks, debit cards, phone charges, digital cash or person to person email payments - could become your "secret weapon," or competitive edge, a service advantage that you offer and your competitors don't.

When people are offered all the benefits of convenience, flexibility and immediacy, the quality of your customer service will perceptually increase. Remember, according to research, options is a key factor in the decision to buy from one company over another. If you are offering essentially the same product or service as others, but you can point to additional payment options you provide, you'll be in a stronger competitive position.

You Must Accept Major Credit Cards

Since 90% of all online purchases are made by credit card, your first priority should be to get set up with this payment option as quickly as possible. Accepting major credit cards has been proven to increase sales from 100-300% or more. Conversely, if you don't accept credit card orders you stand to lose at least 85% of your potential orders.

Let's face it; the entire mentality of the Internet is "instant" access to information, products, and services. If your potential buyers have to stop surfing, free up their phone lines and call in their orders or, worse yet, hunt around for their checkbooks, envelopes, and stamps... and then remember to schedule a trip to the mailbox, your ordering process will discourage all but the most hardy shoppers.

For you, the merchant, accepting credit card payments:

- Builds credibility in the minds of potential buyers since you look like a "real" business,
- Makes it easy for buyers to make impulse purchases
- Provides you with a fully automated payment collection and tracking system, which means no more trips to the bank, no more bounced checks to deal with, and no more hours spent manually processing and recording orders

No "buts" about it, accepting online credit card orders is a must for everyone who does business on the Internet. And, regardless of what you may think or may have heard, getting a merchant account - the pre-requisite for accepting credit card payments - is not that difficult. The hard part is figuring out exactly how to implement an e-commerce system once you have your merchant account. No, let me rephrase this. The hard part is trying to make heads or tails out of the whole e-commerce process to begin with.

Understanding The Basic Elements of E-commerce

The best way to begin to understand e-commerce is probably to piece together all the elements involved one by one, in the order in which they are needed.

Let's start with **a merchant account**. What is it? A Merchant account is a special account that you have with a financial institution that allows you to accept credit cards from your customers. In actuality, it's nothing more than an authorization number you're assigned by a bank, broker or merchant account provider that enables you to do business with **a credit card processor**.

A merchant account is of no use without **a payment gateway**. A gateway acts as a bridge or a secure online path between your e-commerce website and your credit card processor. When your online customer decides to make a purchase, gateway technology relays their credit card information to the processor.

The **credit card processor** then checks the information against lists to make sure the card isn't over-drafted or stolen, processes the sale directly through your merchant account and submits an authorization number back through the gateway to the order form on your e-commerce website - all within seconds.

Typically, your customer receives instant confirmation that their purchase was a success and you, as the merchant, receive email notification of the purchase.

Are you with me so far?

Now, you're probably wondering just how you get your website hooked up to do all this. Good question. But before we get into all that there is one more e-commerce essential...

The Secure Socket Layer Protocol

Before you can sell anything from your website, you'll need to reassure your visitors that it's safe for them to purchase from you online - and you do this by implementing what's known as a "secure" order form or shopping cart at your website.

The industry standard is SSL, which stands for Secure Socket Layer. In English, it's simply a secure web protocol that uses encryption technology to ensure that your customer's personal and/or financial information (credit card numbers, etc.) is safe from prying eyes as it travels through cyberspace from their browser to your server.

Don't worry about the technical details because you don't really need to understand how it works. You just need to make use of it, either by enabling SSL on your web server or by using someone else's secure server (i.e your e-commerce solution provider) to process your orders. Most of the quality web hosting services we recommend will provide you with this service. Don't even waste your time adding an order form or shopping cart to your site if it isn't secure. 95% of your visitors won't use it. And you'll be doing a real disservice to the 5% who do.

Once you have this in place, your next step is to decide just how you're going to e-commerce enable your website. You have to have an order taking system and you have to have the ability to handle credit card orders before your customers can actually purchase what you have to offer. The good news is, there are many easy ways for you to e-commerce enable your website, and I have listed many of the best resources further on in this report. But before you start fast forwarding through the pages, you might want to take a deep breath and learn a bit about just what each option entails.

Storefront Software

If you plan to offer lots of catalog items for sale on the Web, and you envision a full-featured online business that includes customer service options and online ordering and purchasing, you may want to look into software that guides you through the process of creating an online store.

Most storefront software provides you with pre-designed Web pages called *templates*, that you customize for your particular business. Some types of electronic storefront options go a step further by providing you with shopping cart systems that enable customers to select items and tally the cost at checkout along with some sort of credit card payment option. They may also provide space on a Web server that will host your site, and they lead you through the process of transferring your files from your computer to the server.

Storefront software is the most important part of an Internet ordering system. It is what your customers see, and the number of orders you get from the Internet is highly dependent upon seamless storefront software operation. Many Internet customers are apprehensive and easily discouraged. If your storefront confuses them, they may decide to shop somewhere else.

Bear in mind, the Internet is not like the real world. Your customers don't have to drive several miles to go to another store. Your competitors are just a click away, which is why it is so important to choose a software that will work for your customers, not against them.

However, visitors should be able to access and use shopping carts easily - they should be able to add and subtract items effortlessly, and they should understand what is happening each step of the way.

What You Should Look For In Selecting Storefront Software

1. How easy is it to order?

When a customer decides to order something from your store, they click on a button or a link with the magic words 'Click Here To Order', and then they go through the order process. Your goal is to make this process as easy as possible. If ordering becomes difficult, customers may rethink their decision to order.

How many clicks are needed to place an order? Every click loads another page, which means the longer your customer has to wait, especially if your customer has an antiquated modem or is located far from your server, for example, in Australia or in China. If they don't have enough patience they may quit before they complete their order. The fewest number of clicks is two - one click to access the order form and the second click to submit the order. This is what you should look for.

2. Does the software work with all browsers?

The worst thing that can happen is an error that prevents your customer from placing an order or crashes their browser. Your customer may have an older browser that does not support some features that some applications require. So, before you buy storefront software, find out if it works for all browsers and then test the software as much as you can. Don't let your customers do the testing for you!

3. What if a customer mistypes something?

It is easy for a customer to mistype a credit card number, or forget to fill in a field on the order form. And you cannot process the order if some of the information is missing or incorrect. You need to be able to tell your customers that they made a mistake and that it needs to be corrected. How does the software handle this?

Most software applications display a page that tells customers that something is wrong and suggests that they use their browser 'back' button to correct the mistake. Pay close attention to the message text. It must be specific and clear.

Some software applications actually display the form again and put error messages next to the incorrect fields. This gives more specific error information to your customer, but unless a prominent error alert message appears on the top of the form, your customer may click away thinking the form has been accepted - or worse yet, that your ordering system isn't operating properly.

4. Credit card number format.

One reason many customers mistype their card numbers is that many applications do not allow them to use spaces or dashes within the card number. It is easier to enter a hyphenated credit card number like this 4200-1111-2222-3333 than it is to type in 4200111122223333. Any software can definitely understand any format, yet many applications do not allow for dashes or spaces inside a credit card

number. It's not a big thing, but your aim is to make the ordering process as hassle free as possible for your customers.

5. Shipping and sales tax calculations.

Although shipping and sales tax calculations are present in most software, many require customers to complete nearly their entire order before they find out how much they are going to be charged. You should consider buying a software that lets your customers know the total charge as early in the ordering process as possible.

6. Security considerations.

If credit card numbers are stolen, you, the merchant, are responsible. So, you want to protect credit card numbers as much as you can.

All storefront software supports SSL ordering by default, because the software doesn't have to do anything special to support SSL. SSL is supported by your server. (In case you're wondering, SSL stands for 'Secure Socket Layer' and it protects communications between your server and your customer's browser.

So you needn't concern yourself with security issues unless or until credit card information leaves your secure server. If it is e-mailed to you, then the information is insecure, and the credit card numbers can be easily stolen. E-mail order deliveries need some type of encryption. If the software maintains a transaction log, then it should be encrypted as well. If you access your orders with a password, you should find out how your password is protected so that it cannot be stolen and used to access the orders.

The more you think about security and the more you ask questions about it, the better. Not only should you make sure that your system is safe, but you should also know why it is safe.

StoreFront Software Alternatives

Some excellent, multi-featured storefront and full-service e-commerce automation software tools that meet all the above requirements and are within the means of small business entrepreneurs include:

[1Shopping Cart by Marketer's Choice](#)



[Marketer's Choice](#) is a fully integrated, web-based Shopping Cart and marketing management system that plugs directly into almost any web site without costly, time-consuming changes, or complex and expensive programming. No programming! No software! No downloads! [Marketer's Choice](#) was designed to not only process orders from your customers but to help you really sell. It has everything you need to run your online business, including: secure payment processing, digital delivery system, upsell module, electronic coupon module, offer management, client database, unlimited autoresponders, broadcast email, manage newsletters, affiliate tracking and management, ad tracking and more...

In short, [Marketer's Choice](#) delivers world-class capabilities, yet it is so easy to use that you can focus on running your business rather than running your technology. Simply plug it in to your e-business system and be ready to take orders the very same day!

[eComm PRO by Trellian](#)

[eComm PRO](#) is a complete eCommerce solution designed to put your business online. With eComm, you can take orders 24 hours, 7 days a week, complete with secure order management and credit card processing. An intuitive interface combines ease of use with the kind of features you would expect from a professional package. You do not need to be an expert to use [eComm PRO](#). Priced from \$39.95, it is the cheapest and easiest way to take your business online.



Features Include: Secure online transactions and order management. Build a detailed product database - images, freight, descriptions and more. Automatically generated eCommerce website - directly from your product database. Simple, instant updates to the website pages from your product database. Design your own website, or choose from a range of pre-defined styles. Requires no programming skill or CGI access. Works with any website host and Internet Service provider (ISP).

[eComm Store by Trellian](#)

Priced from \$39.95, [eComm Store](#) is an affordable eCommerce solution, designed to put your business online. With eComm, you can take orders 24 hours, 7 days a week, complete with secure order management and credit card processing. An intuitive interface combines ease of use with the kind of features you would expect from a professional package. Ideal for first time store owners.



eComm Store has been specially designed to cater for eCommerce projects no matter how large or small. Inventory facilities include, product naming, coding, description, weights, freight costs and product categorization. Any updates to new products and services can be immediately implemented. eComm Store will work with any Internet service provider where web hosting is available, and can be easily incorporated into an existing website.

[V-ShoppingCart.com](#)

The ultimate solution to your e-commerce needs. A fast, simple and easy to use shopping cart system that works on any web server and all types of web hosting companies, even free ones. This state-of -the-art, award winning browser based system requires no CGI and no java, so it's easy to setup and modify - not to mention very affordable. [vShoppingCart](#) incorporates the very latest research on how customers use shopping carts, offering advanced features like live cart contents and running totals - proven sales boosters. Included is a connection to just about any real-time credit card processing payment gateway. vShoppingCart can even collect your customer's payments through your PayPal account!



[SiteSecure Shopping Cart Software](#)

Cybernow is one of the leading developers of Shopping Cart Software. They've been in the business building business for over 5 years, during which time they have constantly refined and updated their shopping cart programs and other marketing software to meet constantly changing e-commerce needs. This



program is set up with Cybercash to allow for smooth and secure credit card processing.

[Lagarde StoreFront 5.0 SE](#) for Microsoft FrontPage, Dreamweaver & Macromedia MX
Platform: Windows 95 / 98 / NT / 2000



Don't Just Build a Web Store - Launch An E-Business! [LaGarde's](#) powerful new version of its market leading StoreFront product line makes building professional, dynamic, database-driven web stores easier than ever. [StoreFront's](#) FrontPage-integrated store creation and management tools, in addition to its advanced web store functionality, make it a feature-rich, end-to-end e-commerce software solution for Microsoft FrontPage, Dreamweaver & Macromedia developers. The software enables you to:

- Catalog and display a virtually unlimited number of products
- Use StoreFront's affiliate program and promotional mail utility to drive web store sales.
- Offer special sale prices, storewide discounts or free shipping as customer incentives.
- Allow customers to save items for later, e-mail product information to friends, login to retrieve previous orders and use foreign currency conversion services.
- Automate shipping and tax rate calculations, off-line or real-time credit card processing and automated e-mail order confirmation.
- Utilize StoreFront's advanced reporting tools to manage sales and customer records.
- Print e-checks, invoices, sales and product summaries and credit card transaction reports.
- Ensure the security of customer and business data transfer using StoreFront's sophisticated support for SSL, credit card encoding, and customer data management.

"The advantage of the best systems is automation. It's possible to program your online store so that the whole process takes place automatically. The less expensive systems all require more intervention from the site owner. With larger volumes of sales, the set-up and monthly fees become much less significant than with a very small site."

Dr. Ralph Wilson, [E-commerce Research Room](#)

Complete E-commerce Solution Systems

The Many Ways You Can E-commerce Enable Your Website

Depending on the size of the business you operate (or plan to operate) you can e-commerce enable your site in various ways. So many ways, in fact, that you can easily get overwhelmed with all the options available to you. Broadly speaking, however, you have four main choices:

1. You can sign on with a Web host that offers all the e-commerce features you need in your hosting package. More and more hosting companies are doing this. Below are some of the best. (You can use our [hosting service comparison template](#) to compare and contrast what they offer.)

Full-Featured Hosting Services

- [Host Smart](#)
- [WebWizards.net](#)
- [Best Host](#)
- [ThirdSphere Hosting](#)
- [Host4Profit.com](#)
- [HostGo](#)
- [Host Pro](#)
- [Jumpline.com](#)
- [Apollo Hosting](#)
- [Hostx2](#)
- [HostWay](#)
- [Host4Net](#)
- [NewbieClubHosting](#)

"All-in-One" Super Hosts

- [AIS - Advanced Internet Solutions](#)
- [GoEmerchant.com](#)
- [Hosting.com/CheckItOut](#)
- [Perfect Presence](#)
- [ValueWeb](#)
- [Virtualhosting.com](#)
- [TBHost](#)
- [Verio](#)
- [Astro-Space.com](#)
- [Superhost](#)
- [NoMonthlyFees.com](#)
- [Bizland](#)
- [bCentral Business Services](#)

2. You can go with a full-fledged merchant account service, many of which also offer Web Hosting. Or, better yet, a service that will offer you a complete e-commerce solution, with all the bells and whistles.

Merchant Account Services

- [IMC Credit Card Merchant Account Program](#)
- [AIS - Advanced Internet Solutions](#)
- [Quick Commerce - eCommerce Exchange](#)
- [AMS Merchant Account Services](#)
- [National Card Systems](#)
- [Total Merchant Services](#)
- [Virtual Merchant Services](#)
- [CreditCardCommerce.com](#)
- [Charge Card Merchant Services](#)
- [Cash Cards International](#)
- [Merchant Express](#)
- [US Merchant Services](#)

Complete E-commerce Solution Sites

- [Quick Pay Pro Complete E-commerce Automation System](#)
- [MakeBuyingEasy.com](#)
- [Real Affiliate Professional](#)
- [AIS - Advanced Internet Solutions](#)
- [Adgrafix CheckItOut](#)
- [GoEmerchant.com](#)
- [SecureNetShop](#)
- [Auto Site Creator](#)
- [Perfect Presence](#)
- [Verio](#)
- [ValueWeb](#)
- [TBHost](#)

3. You can let others do the work of processing credit cards and fulfilling orders for you, in exchange for a cut of your profits, by opting to go with a third party payment processing solution initially, until you get your feet wet.

Third Party Payment Solutions

- [ClickBank](#)
- [iBill](#)
- [ProPay](#)
- [PayPal](#)
- [Verotel Solutions](#)
- [Instabill](#)
- [eCharge](#)
- [CCSlide](#)
- [DigiBuy](#)
- [CCNow](#)

4. You can also purchase e-commerce/shopping cart/business automation or template-based storefront software and add it to your Website as needed. Some options include:

Full -featured Business Automation Software Options

- [SecureNetShop Shopping Cart](#)
- [1Shopping Cart by Marketer's Choice](#)
- [MonsterCommerce](#)
- [eComm PRO by Trellian](#)
- [eComm Store by Trellian](#)
- [V-ShoppingCart.com](#)
- [Commission Cart™ Pro](#)
- [SiteSecure Shopping Cart Software](#)
- [ProfitCart](#)
- [Lagarde StoreFront 5.0 SE](#) for Microsoft FrontPage, Dreamweaver & Macromedia MX

5. Last, but hardly least, if you want to really simplify your life and your business, you can go with a web-based, full-featured, does everything but walk the dog business automation solution like the ones listed below.

Complete Web-based eBusiness Automation Systems

A growing number of companies are offering packaged services and software to entrepreneurs who want to get their online businesses going quickly, with the help of experts. These sites provide a broad range of services that can include template based web design, point and click site building, site hosting, shopping cart and credit card services, even email and marketing support and anything else you may need. The great thing about these services is that you can get all your Web business needs met through a single source, which greatly simplifies the job of building your online business.

[SecureNetShop](#)



Your one-stop e-commerce solution provider.

Here's what you'll get at [SecureNetShop](#):

Shopping Cart. Quickly and easily add the web's #1 shopping cart system to your web site. Give visitors to your web site the ability to add the items you offer to a "shopping cart". These items can be products, services or files that can be downloaded over the internet. The [SecureNetShop Shopping Cart](#) is the easiest and most cost effective way to add shopping cart and secure ordering capabilities to your web site.

Store Builder. Why pay a Web Designer thousands of dollars for your website, when you can start building your own website or webstore today. [SecureNetShop](#) provides its customers with the tools they need to start building their own WebSite or WebStore. It's simple; all you do is point and click! No Risk Trial.

Merchant Account. [SecureNetShop](#) provides its users with an INSTANT MERCHANT ACCOUNT! Our online application process will allow you to begin accepting credit cards in real-time over the Internet INSTANTLY! Stop waiting days or even weeks for a merchant account and start accepting credit cards today.

[GoMerchant.com](#) - "E-commerce Total Package"



The main advantage of this service is that there is no long term commitment. If you are just thinking of trying out the waters of e-commerce, this is definitely the option for you, because, rather than selling you their shopping cart / storefront software, [GoMerchant](#) licenses their technology as an affordable monthly service.

And they provide more than a mere storefront, their "[Ecommerce Total Package](#)" is a complete turnkey sales and marketing solution - unlike any other offered on the web - for small businesses or individuals to transact secure, real time credit card sales on the Internet. It combines a simple, skill level based, set up (no programming knowledge needed) for anyone to obtain a Merchant Account, Secure Gateway and plug in the benefits of advanced Shopping Cart Technology, without the risk of any long-term commitment or up-front cash outlay. You do not have to sign any contract, lease or binding agreement. You get everything you need to become an e-commerce enabled merchant and transact business on the internet without any of the hassle or risk - for under \$60.00 a month!

[Site Build It!](#)



"The Ultimate eCommerce Operating System for Small Business"

No question about it, the arrival of [Site Build It!](#) has leveled the internet marketing playing field, so that even novice marketers can sell like the pros. For anyone who wants to be virtually assured of success in

their online venture, this innovative tool is an absolute "must have." It leaves very little to chance. What makes [Site Build It!](#) better than the other major small business hosting solutions? They do not grow traffic (warm, willing-to-buy visitors), nor publish and e-mail your newsletter, nor do *anything* to build your business. Have a look at some of the features that come bundled with SBI:

- *Brainstorming and Researching* (profitable topics that attract targeted, motivated traffic!)
- *Point-and-Click Site-Building* (Create a site with your own custom look and feel and navigation, or choose from professional templates).
- And yes, *SBI is now compatible with FrontPage and Dreamweaver and other HTML editors*, so if you use these tools, you can use them on your SBI site!
- Powerful Graphic Tools, including LogoCreator and NavBar Maker (Build your own totally custom, polished, and professional Logos, Navigation Bars and templates)
- *One Click Domain Name Registration*
- *Top quality Web Hosting*
- *Email* (including catchall and redirects, forwarding, even "spam checking")
- *Search Engine Optimization* (SBI! analyzes your pages and tells you how to optimize them to obtain high Search Engine ranking)
- *Automatic Search Engine Submission*, Re-submission, Tracking, Rank checking, Reporting and Re-evaluation of pages to improve ranking
- *Pay-Per-Click Search Engine Research and Mass-Bidding*
- *Traffic Stats and Click Analysis*
- *E-zine Subscription and Delivery* (with the point-and-click HTML builder and automatic text translator for subscribers who can't read HTML)
- *Step-by-Step Action Guide and Guru-in-your-ear Help* (It's literally like having the world's top Internet guru helping you every step of the way, leading you, clearly and cleanly, all the way to where you need to go!)
- *SBI! E-goods* (Sell and fulfill ("e-ship") e-goods securely with your own merchant account! Do it all through the power of your very own 2-tier, customizable affiliate program.)

With SBI, you get it all - all wrapped up in one neat, amazingly easy to use "*e-commerce for the rest of us*" bundle! [Site Build It!](#) goes so far beyond basic Web design and hosting that there is simply no "close second place." This streamlined site-building and Net-marketing system of highly automated tools helps you build a professional-looking, "in-demand" Web site that attracts people on the Net who are interested... and who want to buy. No other web presence solution to date can offer as much for as little... so before you just go and put up any old web site, do yourself a favor and stop by the [Site Build It!](#) site.

[WorldProfit eBusiness Center](#)

[Worldprofit.com](#)
Your Internet Business Specialists

[Worldprofit](#) has been successfully online since 1994. During this time, they have assisted thousands of business people worldwide to create commercial presences. In an industry where only a handful of companies begun in 1994 still exist, [Worldprofit](#) is a standout. The core of their business is helping to put ANY business in the world online by providing the essential services entrepreneurs need to profit from e-commerce. From [Worldprofit](#), entrepreneurs can get either a...

- 100% custom website, where everything is exactly the way they want; Worldprofit has a cadre of experienced web designers second to none.
- an **E-Property**, unique to WorldProfit, where they purchase the website of their choice "as is", 100% ready to open for business.

- an E-Select Property, where they select the domain name they want (from a list created by our top marketers), the design package they want, and the colors they want.

The "ready made" and "select" properties come in both Business Starter Packs and Ultimate Business Packages and all come with convenient payment plans.

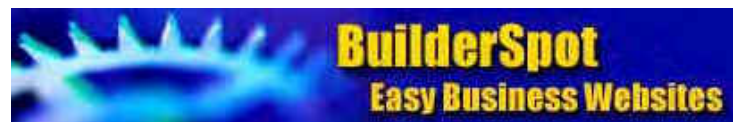
[WorldProfit](#) also offers a separate [Design Package](#): They recognize that your business must have a professional web presence. Your future depends on it! So they've created a unique, inexpensive approach to giving your business the customized web presence you MUST have to succeed in today's demanding business environment. [Click here](#) to learn more about it.

[Auto Site Creator](#)



Build A Professional, Full-Blown E-commerce Site in Minutes! [AutoSiteCreator](#) lets anyone, regardless of their web development skills, design, build, and publish a truly professional "interactive" and "dynamic" web site - within minutes. It's truly a full-blown e-commerce web site launched in a few short hours or even within minutes if you have any existing site design experience. They offer Standard & Premier Accounts. You can select from 30 professionally designed templates and hundreds of color and image combinations. Web site and domain hosting is included. You get 24 hour access to web editing tools, pre- designed and customizable forms and support forums. Premier accounts come with a complete suite of dynamic [AutoSiteCreator](#) Plug-ins that offer complete online store and instant e-commerce capability, compat-ability with either Clickbank or PayPal, page password protection, secure server for forms/ordering and lots more!

[BuilderSpot](#)



[BuilderSpot's](#) newly introduced website building technology makes it easy for anybody to make a website and be online to the entire world in five minutes or less. Just make a few selections and you can be online to the world and to the amazement of your peers, friends and competition. What used to take weeks and cost thousands, now takes minutes, looks better, is more powerful and costs less than \$20 a month. You even get full E-commerce capability! Everything Your business Needs To Be Successful Online – Fully Loaded [BuilderSpot](#) Website includes: email, ecommerce, shopping cart, newsletters, auto-responders, subscription management, catalogs, order tracking, secure server certificates, search engine registration, visitor submission forms, links page, maps, contact us page, online coupons, message boards, guest books, polls, press releases, quotes page, 200+ templates, free support and much more. You get a free trial so you can try it out before making any decision. [Click here](#) to learn more.

[eBay Stores](#)

Sell Your Products to Millions of Ready Made Buyers! [eBay Stores](#) is a platform to help you maximize your business on eBay! Create a store filled with your auction and fixed price listings. Choose your store colors and logo to build your brand on eBay. Create up to 11 custom categories to merchandise your items. You can list items at a fixed price and in quantity in your store for one low listing fee - add more inventory to sell alongside your other items on eBay. Your store will be included in eBay's Store Directory and millions of buyers will be able to find your Store.



Going Beyond The Essentials

Shopping online is all about consumers: their convenience, their shopping experience and their expectations. If you don't provide what they want the way they want it, another merchant that will is just a click away. Any e-commerce system you decide to go with must provide the following essentials:

=> **Shopping Cart Software.** This allows your customers to pick up items throughout your site and put them in virtual "shopping carts." Before they exit your site, they can confirm what's in their carts, make changes and, when satisfied, pay for their merchandise. Even if you don't need to utilize this shopping cart feature because you only have one or two products and have a direct order page, this software still runs in the background, tallying up the order and communicating with the Gateway software (that actually processes the order).

=> **Secure Server.** This allows your customers to buy from you without worrying about giving out their credit card information. Without a secure server you will lose a lot of business because many of your customers will be fearful of fraud. (Don't worry, most of the hosting services I've recommended include secure servers as part of the package.)

=> **Gateway Software.** This processes your customers' credit cards instantly when they complete your order form and click. It gets their cards approved, transfers the money into your bank account and sends e-mail confirmations to both you and your customers.

Some extras you might want to offer to stay one step ahead of your competitors include:

=> Database Integration

To create a one-to-one, personal relationship with each of your customers, you will require specific information about them - information that you store in a database for easy referencing when the customer makes a return visit to your store. Database integration enables merchants to keep track of their best customers and reward them with loyalty programs, volume discounts and other reward features.

For instance, Amazon.com saves each customer's profile. This makes it more efficient to order from them in the future because customers don't have to re-enter all their personal information for each order. They are assigned a username and password that permit them to access to their Amazon.com account at any time.

=> Gift Wrapping

If you are selling hardgoods that might be given as gifts, it is a good idea to offer gift-wrapping. In fact, any well-run e-commerce site should offer this option if they want to hang on to their customers. Think about it. The primary reason people shop online is for convenience. If someone comes to your store and makes a purchase that they want to send to a friend or family member as a gift - and you do not offer the option of gift wrapping - they will have to have the purchase sent to their house first, wrap it themselves and then send it on to the person to whom they are giving the gift. This really defeats the whole purpose of shopping online in the first place.

=> Shipping Options

Having a variety of shipping options is a popular e-commerce feature. For example, people doing their holiday shopping at your site would probably want to be able to identify different "ship to" addresses for different items in their shopping cart. A well run e-commerce site should allow customers to have each purchase gift-wrapped and shipped directly to the address of their choice.

In addition to allowing different addresses for each parcel, a well run e-commerce site should offer a number of different delivery options, allowing customers to choose between next-day delivery, airmail or surface mail. Customers who want their parcels delivered quickly will gladly pay for it.

=> Reminder Service

Another useful technique employed by on the ball e-commerce sites is a reminder service. You simply have your customers fill out a simple form when they make their first purchase, including the important birth and anniversary dates of friends and family members and giving you permission to send them a reminder when these dates roll around. This is a great way to build customer loyalty and generate repeat business. Your customers appreciate your helpfulness and win kudos from friends and family members for never forgetting important occasions.

If your business is a small start-up operation and you're relatively new to the internet - or if you are operating on a very limited budget - my advice is to start off simply and add e-commerce components to your site as your business or your budget grows. If you are offering a product or service that a lot of people want, your e-commerce system will pay for itself soon enough.

Another important way to stand out from the crowd is to increase [the number and type of payment options you offer](#). The more you offer, the greater the likelihood of you getting the sale.

Just remember, if you make it easy for your customers to purchase your products and encourage repeat business, your business will succeed. Word of mouth will always be your most powerful marketing tool and, in the ever growing realm of e-commerce, the customer always rules!

Our Free Gift To You

If you would like you to learn more about this subject, please accept our free gift of our [Doing Business Online? Portfolio](#). It is jam-packed with cutting-edge e-commerce content and resources.



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