



E-Commerce Insider Secrets

Over 50 E-commerce Experts, CEOs, Bloggers, Marketers and Service Providers share their unconventional advice on how to open and run a profitable online store.

A collaboration project by Vinay Patankar



E-Commerce Insider Secrets

Thanks for downloading E-Commerce Insider Secrets, a collaboration project from successful E-Commerce CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Bloggers, Authors and Marketers from around the globe.

The aim of this project is to collect the top piece of advice from people who have done it before and bring it all together to share with those on their journey for ecommerce and online business success.

By downloading and reading this book, you are not only receiving advice from some of the greatest minds in online business but you are joining a community of people who together are striving to innovate and succeed.



About the Collaborator

Vinay is an ecommerce store owner, blogger, nomad, marketer, technology nut and soon to be amateur snowboarder.

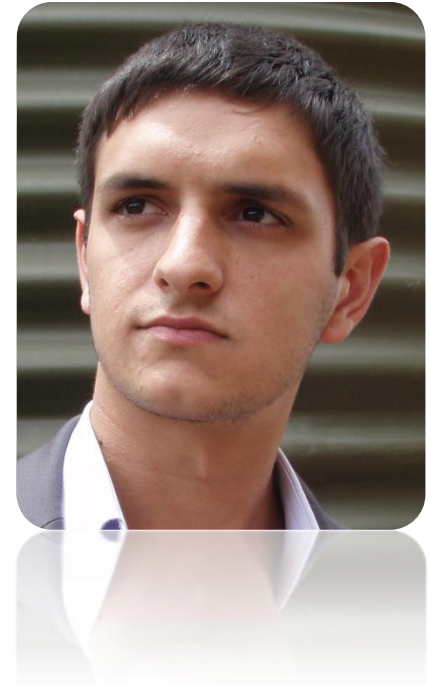
He has spent the last year travelling the world while running an ecommerce store and learning about business and life.

Originally from Sydney, Australia, currently in Vancouver, Canada, he is involved with numerous start ups and consults to on and offline businesses in web strategy, internet marketing and social media.

His favourite activity is learning, his favourite food is salsa and he is addicted to meeting new people.

So please contact him if you enjoy talking, beer or watching people fall over while snowboarding.

You can find him on one of the sites below or email him at vinay@eshopwiz.com



eshopwiz.com





LETS BEGIN



I asked over 50 successful CEOs, Bloggers, Authors, Marketers and of course Ecommerce Store owners one question:

“What is one unconventional piece of advice you would give to someone looking to start their own online store?”

This book is what they came up with



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SELECTING A MARKET

It's always hard to limit yourself to one piece of advice. Being able to talk to someone who is just now embarking on their journey to become an online retailer is one of those situations where you want to quickly share all the many nuances that you have learned over the years. Luckily I firmly believe that there is one piece of advice that is more important than any other and that is: Sell products that you truly care about, then tell people why.

It's hard to out-amazon Amazon. Many have tried, essentially everyone has failed. However, Amazon has a weakness, it's an anonymous big box store on the internet — it cares nothing at all about its products. When I ran a snowboard store back in '04, we only sold gear that we really wanted to have. We would take the new boards to the mountain, pack a digital camera and post photos from our trip on the frontpage of our store (trivia: this is why to this date all Shopify stores come default with a blog on the frontpage). We loved the boards and gear and it was infectious. We were profitable within the first 2 months of launching and I'm sure that we would now have a many million dollar Snowboarding empire if we wouldn't have gotten sidetracked with building Shopify.

Sell products that you care about, tell people why you care, and do it all with great style and taste. Do all this and you will create an online store that the internet has been waiting for.

Tobias Lütke
CEO and co-founder
Shopify

Tobias is of Shopify, the marquee shopping cart system of the e-commerce industry. As a programmer Tobi has served on the core team of the Ruby on Rails framework and has created many popular open source libraries such as the Typo weblog engine, Liquid and Active Merchant. As an internationally invited speaker, Tobi spoke on diverse topics such as startups, crowd-sourcing, and large server cluster performance optimization. He maintains a popular tech weblog at too-biased.

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"Don't think Big, think Small!

Or rather, serve one niche market extraordinarily well, rather than go for a big market immediately and fail to meet the needs of any of its users.

Rachel Willmer
Founder
Luzme.com

Rachel runs the eBook search engine ebookprice.info, founded 2 years ago and about to be rebranded as luzme.com.

She has been in the online IT business as developer and entrepreneur for 25 years.

[Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Twitter](#)



Test ideas as cheaply as possible. Just get it out there and let the market tell you what you should be offering. Also, pick the ideas your friends and family say "that will never work, nobody would ever buy that". It can provide a lot of motivation.

Drew Mast
Founder of Rival Grams

Using FedEx, e-mail, text messages, and a mixture of live and automated phone calls, RivalGrams lets your friends know, your favorite team is better than theirs.

[Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)



Find an itch and scratch it. If you can find a problem in the market that enough people have, and then develop a solution for that problem (that people will pay for), then you have a potential business. Hopefully it will be an itch that is personally compelling to you vs. just being a money-making opportunity, because often the timeline to financial success can be a lot longer than you'd expect.

Dave Schappell
Founder & CEO
TeachStreet.com

[Website](#) | [Blog](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#)



My advice for online store owners is:

- 1) They might discover items that sell well in person, may not sell well online. For example, I sell crystals. When I am at a trade show or convention and I have all my products out on display, the crystals hanging on a stand, sparkling, they sell very well. Online, they do not have the same bling factor and I rarely sell the crystals online.

- 2) If they get the opportunity to do any in person sales, such as trade shows, conventions, etc. they should take it. Sales are sales and money is money. It doesn't matter where they are.

Carolyn Wilman
Promotional Marketing Consultant
Contest Queen

[Website](#) | [Blog](#) | [Radio Show](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) [LinkedIn](#)



Don't underestimate the power of working with the media. Make sure you involve them in your business, and that doesn't mean just sending out press releases. It means building relationships.

Anthony Kirlew
Founder
AKA Marketing

Anthony is a veteran of the Internet Marketing field, having helped companies achieve success online since 1999. During his career, he has founded 3 online marketing firms (NSI Partners, Web Traffic Team, and AKA Internet Marketing), managed Partner Development for a "Top 5" rated Search Engine Marketing Agency, and served as an in house online marketing expert for two notable companies; Innovectra (a leading Independent Yellow Pages platform developer) and The Bump Media (a subsidiary of The Knot). Additionally, Anthony is a respected industry blogger and is the author of The Internet Marketing Guide for Small Business. A native of Maryland, Anthony served as an expert witness before the Maryland House of Delegates regarding the state's anti spam legislation in 2002

[Website](#) | [Blog](#)



We are an advertising agency that helps businesses get their business going. We have done many ecommerce websites with a recent one being mamasretreat.com they are a deal a day e commerce website. The unconventional advice that we have provided to them was to use the strengths of social media to identify with what your potential customers issue is.

In this particular case the problem was new mothers who wanted to have something unique but were not in large cities and have access to some stores. This was an issue for many mothers and wanted to have something that was unique and practical. The deal a day concept enables the store to stay fresh in the minds of their customers as there is a new product everyday.

Most of the mothers that have signed up check this website on a daily basis looking for new items and if they find one they share it via Facebook and Twitter.

Dan Perpeluk,
Account Executive
Webacom Media Corporation

Webacom is a full service advertising agency in Nanaimo BC serving clients all over the world.

[Website](#) | [Portfolio](#)



My best advice would be to pick a niche that people are already searching for but focus on a unique product in that segment. You don't want to have a completely new product that no one knows about because you won't get traffic for it. You want to pick a niche that people are searching for already so you know you will have instant traffic. But by picking a smaller niche in that market, it will be easier to compete against other competition that already occupy the space. For instance, if you wanted to get into the supplements space, pick one supplement directed at a specific segment, say joint care, and go for that. It will be much easier for you to compete on smaller segment then trying to compete on a general segment where there is already so much competition.

Shannen Knight
Optician and CEO
A Sight for Sport Eyes

[Website](#)



Build a client base first. Unless you are expanding a brick and mortar business which already has a client base to build from, the easiest method is to create the client base first. Before you choose which products to sell.

Most people find the product then have to go out and find people to sell it to.

Building a client base first is a very effective strategy when properly executed. Think about how many online stores are already out there. Believe me, there are plenty out there already selling exactly what you plan to sell.

It is so much easier to find a group of people, see what they want, then go and get it for them. It takes away all the selling part, that no one likes anyway. Now you are just providing them with what they wanted. Would you rather be the nasty old salesperson or the person that found them what they wanted.

Because you now have a relationship, you will be able to find more things to provide to your clients while expanding your client base thru referrals. This is not a new concept, it is actually the core of the most successful empires thru early history.

Sherrie Chastain
Skunkworks Marketing Solutions, LLC
Internet Marketing Domination Strategies

Website: [Sunkworks](#) | Webste: [Google Pros U](#) | Website: [Google Spot I](#) | [Testimonial](#)



Mindsets

The best advice I ever received about business or life is rooted in lessons I learned in my childhood, one at summer camp when I was 8 and the other at the beginning of high school when I was 16.

Keewaydin is one of the oldest summer camps in the US, and is nestled in the woods of Vermont. Not much has changed there in over 100 years. Every summer of my childhood I lived in a tent without electricity. We spent a majority of our time messing around in canoes or on camping trips over the lakes and streams of New England. It was a young boy's paradise! What I count as some of the best business advice I ever received was the camp motto...

“Help the Other Fellow”.

This was really a requirement for camping trips to run smoothly. If your small group didn't work well as a team, tents wouldn't get setup and meals wouldn't be cooked. If you wanted food or shelter you had to work together and help one another to get the job done. What I didn't realize at the time is that “Help the Other Fellow” is a fundamental principle of not only a successful life but a successful business as well.

Inherent in any business is a need to help solve a problem for someone. Sometimes we forget that business is simply about solutions. You hear this in a variety of different expressions: “scratch an itch”, “make something people want”, “fulfill a need”, etc. When you start a business, think about how your service or product is helping the other fellow.

Secondly, there is great merit utilizing the principles of “Help the Other Fellow” in how you run your organization. You can't do everything by yourself. You need to build a team that understands the value of team work and helps each other get the job done. Building a business is much like building a campsite in that regard. Everyone better work together or you will all go to bed cold and hungry. Your business will not thrive unless your team works together.

When I was 16 I went away to Kent School, a boarding school in Connecticut. I got to continue messing around in boats by joining the rowing team, also an excellent lesson in team work. I took Latin which is where I learned another inspired business principle contained in the motto of the school which we all had to memorize:

“Temperantia, Fiducia, Constantia”

Continued...

Translated this means...

“Simplicity of Life, Directness of Purpose and Self-Reliance”

I nearly failed Latin but these three simple values have continued to help me in business and life. For me “Simplicity of life” means keeping costs low and living within the means of my business. I am a manufacturer and managing cash flow is a very important part of my business.

“Directness of Purpose” is all about keeping focus. It is easy for a business to stretch itself thin by trying to do too many things. You will do better if you do a few things really well instead of a lot of things just OK.

As a small business owner no one cares as much about your business as you do. This is where “Self Reliance” enters the picture. You have to be tough and optimistic, believe you can do something that other people say can't be done. If you find the right level of competence and confidence you can achieve a lot.

But in the end an idea is just an idea. As any business person knows you need to backup an idea with great execution. With that in mind I want to thank my teachers for their dedication and talent. It is thanks to them that any of these ideas took root in me as a young man.

Patrick Buckley
Co-Founder
DODOcase

DODOcase is the original book bound iPad case. DODOcase launched day one with the iPad in April of 2010. They created a case with unmatched style and quality that won fans the world over. From tech celebrities to the Hollywood set, DODOcase has become the case of choice for the discerning iPad owner. Dodo Case won the Shopify and 4 Hour Work Week Build a Business Competition in 2010, by selling over \$500,000 worth of iPad cases within their first few months of operation.

[Website](#) | [Twitter](#)



In answer to your question I would have to say as much as possible try to do everything yourself. When I first started I initially thought I would outsource the work (i.e. Website design / Advertising / billing / paperwork). But my first concern especially with the website design was getting my vision across and not having to deal with multiple emails and huge cost in order to achieve this. Buying a Mac computer was the best investment I could have made (that and paying the \$99 fee to get Mac assistance).

Not only did there team walk me thru the process, it encouraged me to see what other things I could do on my own. Now in the future I will probably outsource some of the help (frankly it would be a very efficient use of my time) but I know a lot more now to instruct that person on what is needed (as well as understand the cost/time involved).

Tanya Brown
Creative Director
Lauren St. Julian

[Website](#)

Most online businesses fail within the first year. Merchants who hope to succeed in eCommerce for the long haul should first become familiar with the many challenges online retailers face. If done properly, this research will help new sellers learn what to avoid when opening their store and gives them a realistic idea of what to expect when entering the world of eCommerce.

There are many things to consider when starting an eCommerce website or storefront. The most challenging aspect for me personally was knowing what I should and should not be focusing my initial efforts on. The internet is a big place, full of information (some good, some not so good). Trying to learn all these things at once can quickly become overwhelming. I found that there are a lot of aspects to eCommerce including business, management, marketing, service, sales and technology to name a few. In order to do all these things well, one should also possess certain qualities such as multitasking, organization and communication skills. Not to say these skills necessarily require formal training or education.

With that in mind, one of the best things a new merchant can do is formulate a plan of action. This could be as simple as a list of steps, or as formal as a published business plan. Either way, get something down on paper/docs, keep your goals realistic and always tweak or improve your plan as you continue to learn new things.

Beyond learning what to avoid, identifying your personal skill set and making a plan, it is important to learn your platform inside and out, or at the very least have someone on staff who can perform all the inevitable design or programming changes for you.

Knowing your platform strengths and limitations will allow you to take advantage of its full potential. When setting up your store for the first time, and during maintenance, be sure to pay close attention to the fine details (product data, SEO, structure, organization, content, etc.). In the end, the little things will make the greatest differences between you and your competitors (success and failure).

Once your store is setup and you've taken the time to do it right from the beginning, ensuring you've tested everything thoroughly, it will be time to begin promoting all your hard work. In the beginning you will want to focus a lot of time and effort on this step. Use as many channels as possible including new and traditional media (print, search, email, social, word of mouth, local, mobile, etc.). Take advantage of trends or technology and use your toughest competitors, and other successful retailers for inspiration.

Continued...

As your business begins to grow it will become more important for you to continue to grow and expand with the times. Provide top-notch customer service, always try new things, never stop marketing your products / brand, re-focus your marketing using the strongest channels, recruit help if you need it, listen to customers, use analytics and A/B testing to improve experience. It sounds like a lot, but if you've planned ahead from the beginning you should know what to expect, you will already be prepared and may already have the systems in place to make sure you are getting the most out of your efforts.

eCommerce is not hard to do correctly, it just has to be planned and executed correctly. Don't be afraid to try new things (afterall, you've already learned what to avoid). You will make mistakes, you will cuss your computer, you won't be able to make every customer happy, but you will have a strong brand, you will make sales and you will have fun doing it! The best part is, you will most likely succeed your first year in business, especially if you've picked a great product, have a quality brand name, don't do any of the things you determined you should avoid and have followed this simple advice to the best of your ability.

Bottom line: If you want to succeed in eCommerce simply learn what to avoid, know your personal strengths and weaknesses, make a realistic plan, get the most out of your platform, it's all in the little things, never stop promoting, never stop learning new things, tweak your plan, continue to grow, don't be afraid to fail and most of all, have fun doing it!

Matt Franklin
Founder
eCommerceOptimization.com

Matt is just a regular guy who happens to know a little bit about selling online and making the most out of search engine optimization and marketing. He is a self-proclaimed eCommerce and eBusiness expert who specializes in organic search engine optimization for online stores and even web store software. He has successfully built and launched several eCommerce storefronts that are still actively making sales today.

[Website](#) | [Blog](#)



Be prepared to live with legally allowed exaggerated claims of your competitors! Both in respect to their SEO strategies and online advertising! Be also prepared that some of your content will be used freely by some competitors for their own sites. While learning to accept this, you might go through the following stages which may change in sequence: L K J

Heidi Junger Ph.D.

CEO

Onesta Organics

A PhD zoologist with almost 2 decades of research experience and started a certified organic pet food business, Onesta Organics.

[Website](#)



Be prepared to do things over. That is my piece of advice.

My partner and I have over 40 years of jewelry experience in purchasing, selling, manufacturing and marketing fine jewelry. After a year and a half, we have finally launched our site. During the past 18 months, we have gone through two programmers. Our first was in the Philippines. The company was run by a US friend of mine. Long story short, when my friend finally told me he couldn't find the programmers in the Philippines, we were almost a full year into the project without anything close to a useable site. Our second programmer took over and said that to finish the job would take 30-45 days, no problem. Finally about 6 months into the project we got our site. At least he was in the US.

Phil Edelstein
Founder
JewelryClique.com

JewelryClique.com is a new ecommerce business in the Deal a Day business model.

[Website](#)

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Content



If I had to choose just one bit of unconventional advice to give to an aspiring online retailer, it would be to create as much original and thoughtful content as you possibly can around your business. There are myriad places to create content -- YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, your personal blog, topical forums or your own website are just a few ideas. Find out where your potential customers are, and begin engaging with them. People can only find you if you are out there to be found, and once they find you, they will only pay attention to you and (hopefully) care about you if you are genuine, original and thoughtful. Remember that with most small companies, the brand you are building is often as much about you and your story as it is your product line.

Jeremy Hanks
Founder, President & Chairman
Doba

Jeremy Hanks is an entrepreneur. He founded and is the current President & Chairman of Doba, an ecommerce dropshipping software company. He is also the founder of Climb Ventures, an early-stage startup advisory and mentoring group, and LaunchUp.org, an event that focuses on "barn raising" for entrepreneurs in Utah. Previously, he founded and sold GearTrade.com. You can follow Jeremy by subscribing to his Adventures in Entrepreneurship blog at jeremyhanks.com

[Website](#) | [Advisory Group](#) | [Blog](#)



Study the content curation trend, especially around video. Research shows that embedding videos on e-commerce pages increases engagement and sales. There are videos, usually in YouTube, for your free usage that feature product demos and reviews, and other information supporting your business. And many online merchants don't know that you can change the titles, captions and search engine tags of the YouTube videos for better integration within your site using a video curation service.

Kim Garretson
Partner
Ovative/group

Kim is a partner at Ovative/Group and former innovation executive at Best Buy

[Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Twitter Personal](#) | [Twitter Business](#)



Spend the time to write unique product descriptions. Include keywords and make them interesting. Doing this will have a big impact on how successful the site is in the search engine results. Too many ecommerce sites rely on the same manufacturer product descriptions and wonder why the search engines don't bother with them (duplicate content is an SEO no-no) or why users don't convert (the copy is often very boring).

Gareth Morgan
Managing Director
Liberty Marketing Ltd

Online marketing agency offering SEO, Pay Per Click and Social Media management

[Website](#)



If the online store or ecommerce business is unconventional, create content of interest to your customers. For example, if you are in the cutlery biz, create videos about cooking and chopping techniques. If you are selling pet supplies, post videos on dog training. If tableware, post photos of great table settings for various occasions

Michael Samson
co-founder
crowdSPRING

Mike is the co-founder of crowdSPRING and resides firmly at the bottom of the company's ping-pong totem pole. Prior to starting crowdSPRING, Mike was an Emmy Award(R) nominated Producer and Production Manager with more than 20 years of experience as a senior manager in the film and television production industry. He has worked on dozens of feature film and television projects including "Wall Street," "Bull Durham," "Steven King's The Stand" (miniseries), and "Men in Black II." In prime-time dramatic television, he supervised on TV series such as "New York Undercover" and "Third Watch." Mike has received numerous honors individually and as a team member, including an Emmy Award nomination, DGA awards, and a George Foster Peabody Award.

Mike is a frequent speaker on creative crowdsourcing and has given expert advice to audiences at top trade shows including South by Southwest and DEMO. He regularly works with journalists at broadcast, print and online media outlets including MSNBC, Crain's Chicago Business, AdAge, Wired, VentureBeat and the New York Times.

crowdSPRING, is the world's largest online marketplace for buyers and sellers of creative services. crowdSPRING offers logo design, web design, other types of graphic design, industrial design and writing services (such as company names) at an affordable price.

[Website](#)



Get a good haircut and, possibly, pedicure.

Why is that good advice? Well, because one of the best ways to establish your brand, communicate with your market, and drive traffic, is by making videos and putting them all over -- Youtube, Vimeo, Metacafe, Veoh, Dailymotion, etc. The more videos the better. They don't need to look professional (in fact, it can be WAY better if they don't). But you'll want to look your best anyway, because people will criticize everything they possibly can (some people need to find a hobby).

I never imagined my videos about making barefoot running sandals would become so popular... if I had, I would have gotten a pedicure! Instead, I get a lot of comments about my “gnarly feet”.

Steven Sashen
Creator
Invisible Shoes

Steven created Invisible Shoes barefoot sandals. At InvisibleShoe.com you can find free plans for making your own sandals, as well as DIY kits and custom-made huaraches.

[Website](http://InvisibleShoe.com)



Marketing



The best suggestion I can make is to also open up an eBay store. An eBay store will compliment an online store in addition to opening up the front doors to the worlds largest online marketplace! An eBay store will also allow you to build a data base for repeat customers. When you mail the product you can include information about your website and other social sites you belong to as well. You can't compete with eBay so you may as well join them!

Danna Crawford
CEO
PowerSellingMom.com

CEO: PowerSellingMom.com | Founder: VirtualOnlineLearning.com

“
Get other people to work on your behalf.

I'm a huge believer in partnership-based marketing, something I discuss at length in my category bestselling eighth book Guerrilla Marketing Goes Green: Winning Strategies to Improve Your Profits and Your Planet (co-authored with Jay Conrad Levinson) -- and put into practice in launching the book.

Using e-mail and social media, I created partnership ventures that meant *at least five million people were probably reached by the book launch* (conservatively multiplying the more than a million pages returned by an average of five people each) -- and propelled the book to Amazon's Environmental category list, where it has made an appearance every month but one since January publication.

I used appeals to both self-interest (commissions on an upsell product, grow your own list by contributing a bonus) and altruism (build the strength and power of green businesses and help businesses go grown) to get partners.

You can still see all the bonuses I collected [here](#) (scroll down). Our cart, which has lots and lots of descriptive text, is [here](#) .

I've seen this same strategy of getting others to sell for you used very successfully on a number of product launches, especially in the Internet marketing space. The ones who do well are those who get their friends and colleagues to promote the offer. If they rely only on PPC, it doesn't work nearly as well.

Shel Horowitz
Author
Guerrilla Marketing Goes Green

Author, 8 books. In addition to his books, he is a marketing consultant/copywriter and the author of the new Green And Profitable column. Covered in Bottom Line * Cleveland Plain Dealer * Home Office Computing * Christian Science Monitor * NY Times * Boston Globe * Fortune Small Business * L.A. Times * Woman's Day * Wall Street Journal * Entrepreneur * over 250 radio stations...

[Website](#) | [Blog](#) | [Column](#) | [Books](#) | [Profile](#)



Upsell the customer **AFTER** they have checked out and made a purchase. Most sites try to get the visitor to add more items to their cart before they check out. We have much more success presenting offers on the order confirmation page. We get our customers to "keep shopping" after the first purchase.

Mark Dlugozima
Director of Marketing
Three Steps Ahead



My piece of unconventional advice would be to **offer something that gets your customers talking about you**. Whether that's your product, the type of customer service you offer or something else about your business, give your customers something different and extraordinary and they'll talk about you and do your marketing for you. With the growth of tools like social media your customer's have the ability to talk about you more than ever before, you just need to give them a reason to do it. It was starting with that principle that helped lead us down the path of offering custom women's shoes online with Shoes of Prey. Being able to design your own shoes and have them handmade for you is a unique and interesting experience and it makes it so much easier for us to get the media writing about us and people talking about us on their social networks, compared with if we just sold normal women's shoes online.

Michael Fox
COO
Shoes of Prey

ExGoogler turned design your own women's shoe entrepreneur - shoesofprey.com. Michael blogs about the process of founding and running Shoes of Prey at www.22michaels.com

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Focus on profit. Use profit to determine whether or not a specific marketing channel (social media, paid search, organic search, email, affiliate, etc.) is working for your store - not the latest "guru." Most businesses have yet to generate a profit from Twitter, but continue to pour hours of valuable time into the promoting and managing the medium. Twitter, or any marketing channel, may drive sales but you need to determine that on your own based on the profits they generate. Once you figure that out, pour your time and energy into the medium(s) that generate the most profit for your business.

Kurt Illian
Director of Marketing
FastPivot

Kurt is currently employed by one of the leading Yahoo! Store solution providers in the country, FastPivot. With a variety of services tailored to help businesses of all sizes, FastPivot offers mobile storefront solutions, social commerce and can design one of the best looking websites online today. Since 1997, FastPivot has been one of the top Yahoo! Store Designers, developing eCommerce solutions on the Yahoo! Small Business platform. Since 2002 Kurt has been helping businesses build an eCommerce presence. Whether large or small, he has found one common thread among successful businesses, strong marketing.

[Blog](#) | [Website](#)

To kick start your e-commerce business, start by marketing locally. Try a simple offline campaign with leaflets and direct mail, and **HAND WRITE** the address on the envelopes for the campaign. This is completely counter-intuitive to many internet marketers who instantly jump to paid search campaigns and similar ideas. But by operating on a core local base you can establish credibility and affinity with your customers. It creates an understanding that is almost impossible with nameless faceless individuals hundreds and thousands of miles away.

This approach is based on three simple facts:

1. 98% of products are still purchased **OFFLINE** (amazing considering the profitability of the online world).
2. Hand written direct mail and leaflet campaigns still have some of the best response rates especially over email.
3. Seeing offline literature establishes trust and credibility in your prospects mind much more so than credibility indicators on a screen.

It doesn't need to be a fancy campaign, a simple printout of your online sales letter with a handwritten note would only take about three hours to prepare a medium size campaign (granted you may get a bit of cramp in the hand if you are not used to that much scribbling.) However make sure to incorporate simple online marketing techniques like using a unique landing page for different batches of the direct mail. For instance send everyone in a certain neighbourhood to a special landing page which you can then test against other landing pages. Even try some simple split testing. The real success is in the integration of offline and online marketing methods.

Lindsay Macvean
Consultant
Market Myself Online

Lindsay Macvean is an e-preneur who consults in SEO and Internet Marketing.

[Website](#)



Find the one thing that differentiates your service from your competitors and center your entire business around that feature.

Philip Segal

Online Marketing Consultant

[LinkedIn](#)



I run FineAndDandyShop.com, an online shop for dandy-inspired men's accessories. My best piece of advice to someone creating an online store is to create a community. With my shop I've used my blog, twitter, facebook, tumblr, etc. to create a bow tie-wearing, spats-sporting, fedora-obsessed community. So it becomes less about selling and more about a conversation (where folks ultimately buy). It's a great way of cultivating eventual customers and keeping them as customers.

Matt Fox
Shopkeeper
Fine and Dandy Shop

[Website](#) | [Blog](#) | [Email List](#) | [Facebook](#)



My one piece of advice is be sure you plan, budget, and spend time, a lot of time, on marketing. All entrepreneurs, for all businesses, and especially for online businesses, way underestimate the amount of marketing that needs to happen. Especially online entrepreneurs think that if you create an online presence that people will find you. Maybe a handful will but you'll need a lot of marketing in order to get a lot of traffic in order to get a small percentage conversion to sales. Market, market, market.

Ed Mass,
President and Founder:
Yes it's Organic & Green Logo World

Yes it's Organic - Organic Goods for Adult to Baby including Clothing, Bedding and Towels, Sustainable Furniture, Logo Apparel and Promotional Products, and More. Green Logo World - Green Logo Apparel and Promotional Products

Website: [Yes it's Organic](#) | Website: [Green Logo World](#)



As the CEO of Blue Fountain Media, a web design and marketing firm in Manhattan, I counsel e-commerce business owners on a daily basis.

My best advice is to be bold. Be willing to pull out all of the stops and use every marketing tool at your disposal. One of our clients, SpaFinder, combined a multi-platform social media campaign (using blogs, Twitter, and Facebook) with a street marketing campaign that featured models in spa robes to promote SpaFinder's Deal Days. The combination of social media and street marketing resulted in a hugely successful promotion for the company.

Gabriel Shaolian
CEO
Blue Fountain Media

Blue Fountain Media - Springing Ideas To Life
[Website](#)



You pose a tough question. There are so many aspects to successful internet marketing, and I'm sure you've seen many different answers. When I speak with someone who is about to launch an online store, my first advice is to focus on the marketing strategy as #1, an elaborate website as #2. I also make sure they set reasonable expectations for success and growth.

The new paradigm for internet marketing is to focus first on local PPC, and secondarily on national programs. I also advise them that success in SEO is definitely a goal, but should be viewed as a bonus, not a given. Thus, I advise them to develop a professional site, but focus most of their budget on an extended period of local PPC. The other thing that I advise them is to be sure that they build metrics into their site, most notably Google analytics, so that they can measure and improve their success. The only reason people are successful in web marketing is because they pay attention to these metrics, and manage their advertising spending accordingly.

Edward Weisberg
Managing Partner
eCommerce Expertise

Ed is a Managing partner of eCommerce Expertise, he has been assisting firms with web strategy and eCommerce implementation for over 15 years. This includes sites for Harvard Pilgrim Health, Filemaker, Pingo, GE Silicones, and dozens of others.

[Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#)



Mix online with offline sales! For new entrepreneurs, in-person trunk shows, especially at events that target your ideal demographic of shoppers, allows potential customers to feel and test out your product. This allows you to build an offline relationship first that often leads to online conversions later. My nonprofit startup Styleta.org has been able to do this successfully for our target customer group of college students by bringing our designer fashion sales right to campuses.

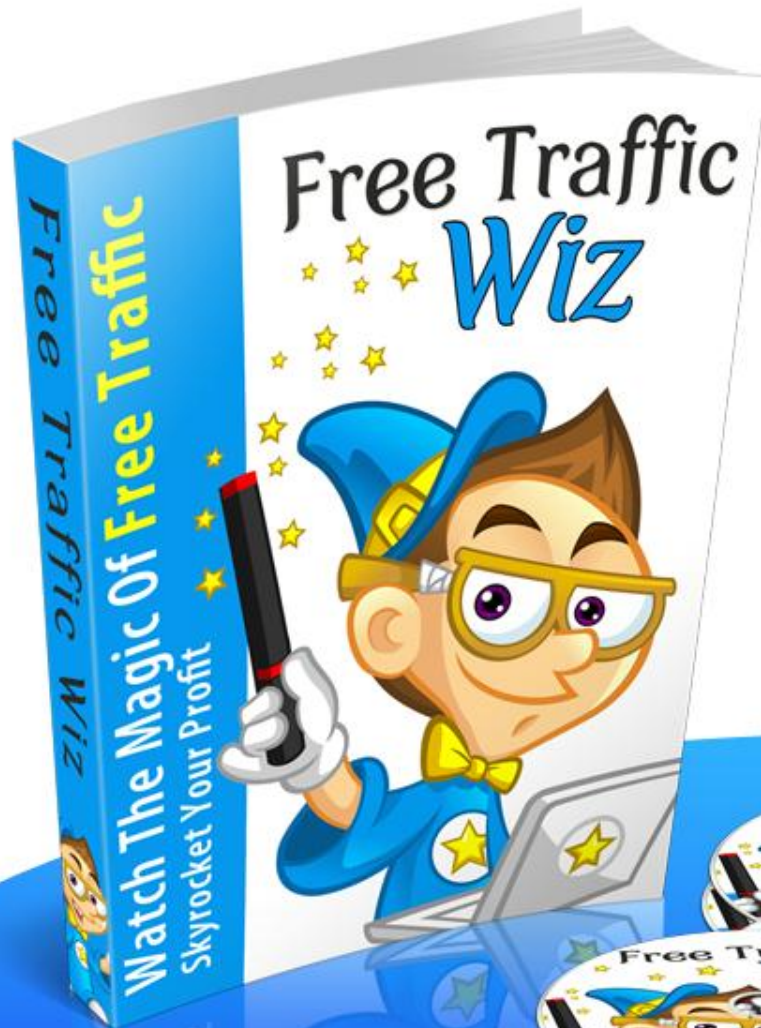
Yifan Zhang
CEO and Founder
Styleta

Yifan Zhang is the CEO and Founder of Styleta. She began the project out of a love for both entrepreneurship and fashion deals, and aims to make a difference in the world at a young age. Yifan has extensive experience in entrepreneurship, having served as the Co-President of the Harvard College Entrepreneurship Forum and interned at a Boston venture capital firm. Yifan graduated magna cum laude in Economics from Harvard University and is currently working full-time on Styleta out of their Cambridge, MA office.

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Ross Kimbarovsky
co-founder
crowdSPRING

Ross is the co-founder of crowdSPRING. Passionate about technology and realizing that he couldn't wear shorts and sandals at work unless he started his own company, Ross decided to pursue his dream.

Today Ross is a leading small business expert who regularly blogs about marketing, start-up challenges, business strategy and digital design. Prior to starting crowdSPRING, Ross spent thirteen years as a successful trial attorney, most recently as a Partner and Chair of the Intellectual Property group at a Chicago law firm. Ross has extensive media experience, including Wired, Mashable, MSNBC, Forbes and ADWEEK.

crowdSPRING, is the world's largest online marketplace for buyers and sellers of creative services. crowdSPRING offers logo design, web design, other types of graphic design, industrial design and writing services (such as company names) at an affordable price.

[Website](#)



My one piece of advice is that no matter how "international" your business is, never forget your local clients. Personally build your local niche, and your international niche will take care of itself.

Tom Wright
The One Penny Millionaire

The One Penny Millionaire! (tm) | Wealth with heart ® Want Love and Light, Tom Wright/The One Penny Millionaire!™
A Course in Shamanism Web-based Seminars and Books for Abundance.
It's Your Abundance, Get Used To It!
Website: [The One Penny Millionaire!](#) | Website: [A Course in Shamanism](#)



Be who you are, be transparent, don't try to look like a huge company if you are not.

Bill Quinn
Founder
Christmas Tree For Me, LLC

[Website](#)



SOCIAL MEDIA



I would suggest making ample use of Twitter's search function to find people who are tweeting about issues related to your industry's keywords. Tweeters are often looking for advice or referrals, and by actively seeking them out and helping them solve their problems, you may be able to initiate a relationship that will result in new customers for your website.

Scott Swanay
President & Chief Sherpa
Sherpa Social Media

Scott is the President & Chief Sherpa of Sherpa Social Media, a social media advisory firm based in New York, NY. He offers basic social media instruction, social media strategy development, and outsourced social media strategy implementation to business owners and other entrepreneurial types.

[Website](#)



My piece of advice is to integrate social media at a fundamental level, not just putting a link to your store's Facebook page, for example.

Facebook has so much great functionality to integrate into websites, there are an infinite number of ways you can integrate it. Your customers can choose to "like" individual products, and you can even generate personalized recommendations based on what people have liked in the past.

People feel more comfortable buying something if they know others are buying it. They feel even more comfortable buying your product if one of their friends have already bought it. Both of these functionalities are available for Facebook-savvy developers.

Social media is here to stay: and your competitors are using it. This is a definite case of "adapt or fall behind."

Nick Rosener

Owner

Tech Nick Consulting

Nick is the owner of Tech Nick Consulting, specializing in cost-effective web marketing techniques. His expertise is in giving small businesses big web presences encompassing Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Blogging, and more.

[Newsletter](#) | [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | [LinkedIn](#)



Customer Service



I would suggest you take the time to learn how to fulfill orders quickly and efficiently. The key to success with ecommerce is NOT the front end with the pretty website, the perfect photos or the exciting descriptions. The real key is when the customer opens that package, they must be happy with purchasing from you. Learn the process of fulfillment. Master that and you will crush the competition.

John Lawson
eCommerce speaker and blogger
ColderICE

eCommerce speaker and blogger, John Lawson is the founder of ColderICE.com and the CEO of the retail ecommerce store 3rd Power Outlet. John is featured by American Express Open for “Building an eBay-based Business” and starred in their national TV commercial. Lawson is an award winning blogger and named “Savviest in Social Media” by MSN Money.

[Blog](#) | [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [YouTube](#)



Like all retail businesses - it is all about the customer - eCommerce needs to reflect the way that you listen to your customers - and respond.

Naomi Simson
CEO
RedBalloon

Naomi launched RedBalloon.com.au in 2001 in the early days of the internet redballoon.com.au has now been listed in the BRW fast lists for the past 5 years and also named as the #1 website by Hitwise for half a decade.

Naomi has recently received accolades such as winning the 2008 national Telstra Business Womens Awards - Innovation, and being one of four finalists the 2009 Veuve Clicquot Business Woman of the Year Awards.

Naomi is particularly proud as being voted by her team as one of the top ten Great Places to Work in Australia and Hewitt ranking RedBalloon with a 97% employee engagement score.

RedBalloon delivered 175,000 experience gifts last year..and is well on its way to changing gifting in Australia forever.

[Website](#) | [Book](#) | [Blog](#)



Give them a great product, price it right and always be immediately fanatical about providing the utmost in customer service throughout the e-commerce process but have patience to see the returns. They WILL come back.

Ira Carlin
CEO
The Earring Doctor

Babson College Alum 1973 BS BA Serial Entrepreneur Consumer Product development / marketing / distribution. Currently and since 1984 Ira has been providing earring and jewelry wearers with problem solving products. She was also involved with launch of Swatch Watch in North America 1984 Involved with the launch of the original license of Calvin Klein Watches 1987 Creator of the Pro Index System partnering with the Upper Deck Company 1991 Exclusive USA distributor of "Therapik"

Website: [Earing Doctor](#) | Website: [Buy a Therapik](#)



Website Advice



Include value propositions like free shipping in your title meta description tags for higher click through in organic search.

Linda Bustos
Director of Ecommerce Research
Elastic Path

Linda is Director of Ecommerce Research at Elastic Path and runs an ecommerce store selling her own line of hand made jewelry. Linda works with some of the world's largest companies to help improve conversion rates and profitability on the Web. Linda's ecommerce blog, Get Elastic, has is ranked on the AdAge Power 150, #1 Ecommerce Blog by PostRank, one of the 15 entrepreneur blogs worth reading by the Wall Street Journal and has won two SEMMY awards (2009 and 2010). In 2010, Linda earned a spot on the DMNews Top 30 Direct Marketers Under 30 list.

[Website](#) | [Blog](#) | [Community](#) | [Careers](#)



Spring for a keyword-relevant domain for your business, not your company name. There are quite a few dead companies with psychobabble names littering the online highway to serve as warnings if you need a reason. If you sell fried chicken, try for "friedchicken.com". Yes, you will have to pay serious cash for it, but it is worth it. Three generations from now, domains will be akin to coca-cola stock that could have been purchased for pennies back in the day. Once purchased, it will only provide income and increase in value. So pay for relevancy. Don't set up shop at "Klkrz.com" or other such hipster sites and think you can create a shoestring buzz-driven marketing campaign. Good luck out there!

John Bottomley
CEO
Genius Goods Inc

[Website](#)

We were close to committing to a lease on store #2 in late summer 2008 but aborted that plan as the economic signals seemed to be worsening.

At that point we opted to invest in the best e-commerce site we could afford. After hundreds of hours of work and countless delays, HighFallsMercantile.com was launched about a month ago.

Lessons learned:

- Work with the best people you can and, ideally, someone in your geographic area. I had no problem getting my developers to understand what the site should look like but it wasn't until they visited my store that they understood how I wanted our site to feel. I had been urged to work with overseas developers to save money. Glad I didn't.
- The process can't be rushed. There will be oodles of decisions to make and many will seem insignificant. They're not. The end product will be that much better with hyper-attention to detail.
- Make sure you know what you want to achieve and communicate it repeatedly. Your developers will never understand your business well enough so don't let them make any assumptions.
- Challenge your developers. Don't settle for "we can't do that."

Jeff Serouya
VP and Co-owner
High Falls Mercantile

Jeff is the VP and co-owner of High Falls Mercantile, a high-end home furnishings store located in New York's Hudson River Valley. They have been in business since 2004 and have a strong following among the many NYC based second-home owners in the area. Additionally they cater to the transient crowd, as their area attracts many vacationers.

[Website](#)

Finding a product to sell, researching supply lines and handling the basic business setup are all necessary before you can open an e-commerce store. Honestly, if done correctly, setting up an online store takes about the same amount of time as it does to set up a physical store. It shouldn't take the same amount of money, but the business owner will realize that there is a lot more to opening a e-commerce store than simply loading products into Google Base (now Google Merchant Center) or eBay.

Perhaps the largest time and expense that a new e-commerce website owner doesn't realize is the photography. Most vendors and manufacturers do not have the correct photography for websites. There are correct and incorrect techniques to showing products online to sell. You will not sell a single item unless the photography is able to accurately substitute for physically holding the item.

No matter who you are, or what type of e-commerce store you are setting up, eventually you will realize everything mentioned above. But this next item might come as a surprise to most: Do not fall in love with your website.

During the design process most new website owners will pour their heart and soul into the design. They want it to be perfect. They proudly show their friends while boasting "Isn't this the best website you've ever seen?" Then the website goes live and they expect to make money overnight, but they never revisit the design of the original site 30 days, 60 days or 90 days after it launches.



Usability and eye tracking software is available now to provide hints on usability and website design before launch. There are even companies that provide live people for initial testing. But all of that doesn't compare to live analytical data collected from a live site.

After the initial 30 days there should be enough visitors to the site to show the ineffective areas of the design layout. Many newcomers are surprised by the results, and emotionally crushed that the very design they poured their soul into will cause business failure if not corrected.

In conclusion, new e-commerce website owners need to view their website as a sales tool. If the tool does not fit the job, change the tool. Change it as minimally or completely as needed until maximum sales are achieved

Matthew Perosi
Founder
Jeweler Website Advisory Group

Matthew enjoys providing new training techniques for online jewelry website marketing. Typical training is provided through a variety of videos and written works. Matthew can be found at various jewelry trade events providing seminars to small and large groups alike. The training Matthew provides has received several accolades for the easy-to-understand methods of training, even with difficult topics like e-commerce PCI compliance.

Matthew Perosi has a team of support personnel helping him manage his programming and consulting company JewelerWebsites.com as well as the educational organization called the Jeweler Website Advisory Group with the website JewelerWebsiteAG.com.

[Jeweler Website AG](#) | [Jeweler Websites](#) | [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Youtube](#)



The way that products are bought, sold, and delivered is changing .. rapidly.

In my opinion, the economic contraction we have been living through for the past few years is a direct result of a market correction ... this correction is based on a fundamental change in the way business gets done.

In the past marketing has driven the purchasing cycle. Branding and advertising have garnered eyeball time, which leads to path to purchase. Those with the spending power no longer follow traditional media. They skip commercials with TIVO, avoid radio ads with sirius, and no longer read printed material. This has led to a more viral approach to purchasing. Buyers are led to products by word of mouth, via Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking applications. The true worth of a product is based on real reviews from real users.

Having said that ..

The most important tenant of an eCommerce site is the ability of the buyers/users to give real feedback on the buying experience, as well as the experience after the sale. This buyer cycle feedback must be married to a real and active location based advertising and branding campaign. The smart phone user that is caught in a whim of purchase will go to the mobile web and find the product to sate their buying need, in real time.

The new economy is all about connecting sellers and buyers in real time, with real products, that provide real satisfaction of need. This holds true from houses to ice cream cones. Impatience from the buyers and patience from the sellers, that is the dichotomy of the new cycle. All of which is driven by real time data, in a very fickle and price competitive marketplace.



I recently worked with an urgent care facility in rural Florida, near Orlando. In an hours worth of work I registered their business on the big three engines, with location based advertising links. Yahoo, Bing, and maps. Google .. the referring engines. Within ten days patient flow, real in the door clients for the business, rose twenty to forty percent per day. The cost to "stake their claim" on the web was zero, only my time. In the beginning of the SEO marketplace I was charging thousands of dollars to get much the same result. I billed the urgent care center three hundred dollars for the service, half of which they waited to pay until they saw results. Selling value in the new economy is difficult on all fronts.

Michael Starnes

Michael has been curing some sort of business cancer with some sort of technology for about twenty five years. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

[Email](#)

The past year developing GreenDoggieBags.com has been quite enlightening in the areas of e-commerce and development.

This is what I've learned in- never, ever buy into the philosophy that a good site has to be built from scratch and totally customized. I bought into this twice which were the first 2 versions of GDB.com. The first iteration was slapped together by lazy local developers who just threw something up, listened to a minimal amount of input from me, and said every tweak was 'out of scope'.

The second iteration was done by Indian developers who were slow, impossible to communicate with, used very amateur developers, took 3 times the development time, and built a completely dysfunctional site that took over a minute to load and had security warnings everywhere. The worst part was that they tried a combination of Joomla and OS Commerce which was so heavy and confusing, I couldn't make the smallest edit without having to go through them. Both development teams brought my business to a screeching halt.

Now our site is built on Big Commerce and I couldn't be happier. There are plenty of out of the box, semi-editable solutions that are already optimized for e-commerce and integrated with many different outlets such as eBay, Shopping.com, MailChimp, Facebook, and affiliate marketing. I now have one part time, in-house developer who put together an amazingly efficient and easy to use site in a few weeks. My lesson is that unless you're creating a completely new technology, which will probably never happen in e-commerce, there is absolutely no reason anyone should be building a heavy customized site. The developers are just trying to make more money and are not invested in your success.

Padma Pandya

Owner Green Doggie Bags and Green Trash Bags

Owner [Green Doggie Bags](#) and [Green Trash Bags](#)



Hire a web designer with a background in **MARKETING**. Better yet, hire a web design company with a professional team of marketers, writers, **SEO** specialists, graphic designers and web developers.

Ford Saeks
President/CEO
Prime Concepts Group

Ford Saeks helps organizations of all sizes leverage their online efforts to produce maximum results. He shares strategies on finding, attracting and keeping more customers through business consultations, corporate keynote presentations, public seminars, training resources and creative marketing and design services.

[Website](#)



Good question. Assuming the entrepreneur has done all of the "obvious" things, (i.e. know your customer; offer real value; etc), my one piece of unconventional advise is this: Invest in a professionally designed website, built on a strong e-commerce platform that will allow you to effectively run and then grow your business..

While the conventional wisdom says a cheap (or free) template website is "good enough" we've found the investment in professional, qualified web design and robust technology to pay real dividends in two ways:

1) Great web design is based on an intimate understanding of the client's brand, positioning, business strategy, customers, competitive advantage, and value proposition. It requires the collaboration of talented professionals in marketing, design, and business strategy, with an understanding of the technology and website usability supporting an effective sales funnel for higher conversion.

Getting this right is difficult, but incredibly valuable. Having your website quickly tell your USP story in a clear, compelling way, that resonates with your target customer, while building trust, in a visually appealing, consistent way, that's easy to navigate will unquestionably do more to drive your business than anything else you can do.

Continued...



11) Putting your site on a robust, scalable e-commerce platform lets you monitor your business with a dashboard (instead of guessing); it give you a content management system that lets you make changes to your product mix, categorization, pricing, promotions quickly and easily; it facilitates important e-commerce features that customers increasingly demand (up sell, cross sell, customer reviews, ratings, wish list, internal blogs, live chat, and much more). The best platforms give you comprehensive control over key SEO variables as well. Thinking longer term, starting out on a scalable platform means you avoid the pain and suffering of a migration later too.

Having launched and grown and consulted with multiple e-commerce businesses (racking up over \$100 million in online sales), I can say with some certainty that the investment made to create a great website on a strong platform is the single most important step a business owner can take to insure the success of their online initiative.

Stephen Antidel
Managing Partner
Precept Partners, LLC

Mr. Antidel is managing partner of Precept Partners, an Internet consultancy offering website design, build and marketing services since 2003. As CEO of a “top 100” online retailer he led the company through a period of explosive growth, a venture capital financing and the successful sale of the company. His e-commerce innovations have been covered by The Wall Street Journal, Investors’ Business Daily, Business Week and NPR. His education includes an MBA from Leicester University, UK and is an adjunct professor at Indiana Tech.

[Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#)



The one piece of advice I'd give is to make sure you choose a shopping cart that fits your needs. Don't just choose the one that comes with your hosting package, because it's free. I initially chose OSCommerce because it came free with my hosting, but it wasn't the latest version and I had to pay someone to install extra features for me. The software was so bug-ridden that it would not accept international credit card orders, updating the cart was an incredibly complex task, and fee-based technical support was of absolutely no help. I eventually ended up paying for a different shopping cart and redoing the entire store.

Gil Sery
Web Designer and Webmaster
Tungsten Heavy Powder, Inc

Gil has been the web designer and webmaster of Tungsten Heavy Powder, Inc. for the past 10 years. The company's e-commerce store sells a variety of tungsten items, including tungsten bucking bars, powder, spheres, balls, cubes and shot of varying weights and sizes.

[Website](#)



I would say make sure that your online store was mobile ready. I can't tell you how many people I see and know of on a regular basis that would be willing to make a purchase from their smartphone browser, yet the online store's product page is impossible to read and/or navigate.

Chris Dritsas
Founder
Barcode Scanner Plus — iPhone App

Barcode Scanner Plus: "Aim your built-in iPhone camera at any barcode and instantly compare prices from thousands of online retailers."

Many shoppers are accustomed to using the Internet to research products and prices BEFORE they hit the mall. My goal is to allow anyone to take that research on the road with my In-Store Shopping Comparison app.

[iTunes Download](#) | [Website](#)



Rather than focusing heavily on SEO, email marketing and shopping cart conversion techniques, consider the benefits of a strong domain name strategy. Descriptive, generic and memorable domain names present an excellent opportunity to expand a company's reach and ultimately bring more customers to its doorstep."

Jeremiah Johnston
Chief Operating Officer
Sedo

Jeremiah is Chief Operating Officer of the online domain name and Website marketplace Sedo.com. He represents Sedo as a founding member of the Internet Commerce Association (ICA) and sits on the Board of Directors in the role of association President, helping to shape the future of domain names in the political space.

[Website](#) | [Twitter](#)



Spend a lot of time in the beginning (and moving forward) creating and maintaining a product database with product attributes (such as color, weight, packaging dimensions, etc.) that are as complete as possible. This makes site search, real-time shipping calculation and product bundling, and pricing flexibility either much better or actually feasible.

Sanjay Arora
President and CEO
Nextopia.com

Nextopia founder Sanjay Arora has more than a decade of experience helping clients and customers manage, retrieve and display data. More than 1,000 retailers, including 25 of the 2010 Internet Retailer Top 500, use Nextopia's site search, personalization and merchandising technology to sell more online

[Website](#)



BUSINESS OPERATIONS

The below is a video transcription. Tyrone Shum was kind enough to give a video response to my question. You can watch the video [here](#).

The unconventional advice that I'd give you is firstly, make sure that you do have the system and ecommerce site set up correctly. Make sure that you have someone that has spent the time putting it all together for you. Don't do it yourself. Because my biggest mistake was that I spent at least 2-3 weeks tweaking, getting it all fixed up and just getting it to look the way I wanted it to look. But then I still needed to upgrade and maintain it over the course of the time that I ran the business.

So I would highly recommend you just outsource and get someone to make the ecommerce store for you. Once that is created you've got something that you can be proud of and start making the sales.

Now instead of me spending that two or three weeks that I spent developing the website I could have spent that time looking for more sales and more traffic to drive to my website. So I think the most important thing that I highly recommend you do is to get traffic as soon as you can, get visitors, and try to build up that database first. Even if you don't have a website set up, an ecommerce store. Have a landing page set up and drive people to that website and say you can download this free little coupon, or you can download and check out my product range categories, or a catalogue you can sign up to, just get them onto the database first before you even have a website. It's sort of what we call pre-launch and that pre-launch is just to really get people excited about your ecommerce store and to launch it out there. So I think that something that is really important is that you focus on having a web domain and driving people through to that web domain first and even if you don't have a store set up just put them onto a list first or database. Then after the 2 or 3 weeks you spend getting someone to build your ecommerce store you can open up the doors and get them to come back and check it out.

continued...



Once you've got them over to your site you've got to make sure you have a good site. A site that is easy to use, user friendly and very clean for the eye and so its attractive and, people will just want to click and buy straight away.

Make it a 3 step process. So they view the product, click buy and pay with a credit card. That is as simple as you want it to be. You don't want them to be clicking here, clicking there and just getting distracted because they will never buy. So you really need to make sure you look at that and implement something [simple] when you're getting started.

Tyrone Shum

Outsourcing Expert

TyroneShum.com and Mass Outsource

Tyrone Shum is the author and owner of TyroneShum.com and Mass Outsource.

TyroneShum.com is a blog decided to providing podcasts, video interviews and written content about outsourcing, entrepreneurship and living a virtual lifestyle to help people set up a profitable Internet business.

Mass Outsource is a website which I show you how I live the four hour work week by outsourcing my work and making money online. Here I give you step by step training videos for you to train your virtual staff and start earning.

Tyrone started his online career by building an ecommerce store selling products in the Dragon Boat Niche. He has since become a prominent blogger in the outsourcing and lifestyle business design niche.

[Blog](#) | [Training Course](#)

Never lose sight of the fundamentals. Don't get distracted by all of the buzz around things like mobile, social and whatever the next great thing to come along is until you know that you've got the fundamentals nailed. We've all felt that pressure if we don't start doing social now, we are going to be left behind and our competitors are going to kick our butts. Have a long-term view. Take customer service as an example, are you consistently meeting your service levels for getting back to your customer? Are they satisfied with the quality of service? Are you continually improving your cost per contact? Do you know? If not, you may not have a great handle on the fundamentals. How about your on-time delivery rate? Is the product the customer ordered arriving on time, every time?

OK, one other related point.

The world of ecommerce is exploding and one of the most dramatic things I've seen in the last several years is the pace at which technology is being created to provide solutions to ecommerce operators. This has resulted in some really positive things, for example the Web analytics package we used to have in the early days at evo.com cost \$40,000 a year and then Google comes out with a free Web analytics product that is even better for free. In addition to a dramatic decrease in cost, the ease of implementation of most tools is measured in hours, maybe days, instead of weeks or months. The challenge this has presented is that now you can get overloaded and before you know it you have dozens of different tools or technologies you are trying manage and doing a mediocre job in a bunch of different areas. Don't fall into that trap. Make sure you have the resources internally to dedicate the time necessary to manage any new tool and get the most value possible out of it. If you don't have someone that can be an end of day owner for a given tool or technology then don't implement it no matter what magic the vendors promise.

Keep your business simple, execute the fundamentals well and build on top of a solid foundation.

Shilo Jones
Founder
SweetMetrics

Shilo Jones is a proven technology entrepreneur and President of SweetMetrics, LLC. SweetMetrics offers an customer analytics engine transforming e-commerce company data into actionable insights for improved profitability at an affordable monthly price. The company's primary product Customer Insight analyzes the value of a company's customer base and transaction to maximize customer value. Prior to founding SweetMetrics, Shilo spent the last eight years building and growing EVO, a leading lifestyle action sports retailer. At EVO, Shilo led a passionate and entrepreneurial team that received many industry awards and accolades as well as appearing on the Inc. 500 list and on Puget Sound Business Journal's list of Fastest Growing Companies for consecutive years. Mr. Jones also founded and operated Internet connectivity, hosting, Web application design and development companies servicing start-ups, small businesses and Fortune 500 companies.

[Website](#) | [Blog](#)



One piece of advice I tell people....**OUTSOURCE**. We work with a great warehouse who handles everything and frees us up to develop products, marketing, and PR. Focus on the your product, not the backend stuff...leave that to the experts! Don't be penny wise and pound foolish and start packing boxes or hiring all this extra staff...use the pros...they are very cost effective and efficient, but you **HAVE** to choose carefully! If you ever wish to speak more, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Craig Wolfe
President
CelebriDucks

Craig was the president of a company that was the largest publisher of animation artwork from television commercials having created the first ever animation art lines for Coca-Cola, Anheuser-Bush, M&M/Mars, Pillsbury, etc., etc. He sold it off to start a new company that does a whole line of celebrity rubber ducks that were voted one of the top 100 gifts by Entertainment Weekly. They do everyone from The Wizard of Oz to Barack Obama to ducks for professional sports teams and Fortune 500 companies.

[Website](#)

Here is a great piece of advice for someone starting a new e-commerce company. Do not order a lot of inventory to start with. It will drain your cash flow. As a test, along with your in-stock items put up several items and mark them "sold out", track how often customers still click on these "sold out" items and you will begin to have an idea of what your customers prefer. For example, if customers click 100 times on an item that is sold out and never click on the item next to it that is also sold out, you just did some free market research that may save your company some money! This is just one method that may help you understand the most important thing: Listen to your customer and they will tell you what they want to buy.

Many e-commerce companies spend a huge part of their budget on Search Engine Optimization and once they move up in the Google rankings they place larger orders of inventory. What most owners fail to look at well enough is how effective they are at understanding what their customers want. In a perfect world you would have almost no inventory left at the end of any cycle. Don't get lazy and believe that an extra 50 of item A or an extra 2000 of item B will just go away. Make sure you buy what you can sell in a reasonable period of time.

Matt Slappey
Business Broker
Murphy Business

Matt helps business owners (including e-commerce owners) understand the value of their business and then put it on the market and get it sold without the employees and customers ever knowing it was for sale. I lead the business owner through the entire process.

[Website](#)



I got way ahead of myself in the beginning when my store went online. I was so excited and passionate about providing pink and purple clothes for boys, that I assumed everyone else would be too! So I had a credit card receiving company that was integrated into my website. They said they were going to have a low monthly charge but in fact, the monthly charges were high and my sales were low! I wound up losing a lot of time and money backpedalling and switching my website to be PayPal compatible. But it was worth the effort because PayPal only skims off the top of each sale you make. Therefore, if its a slow month, no worries! I wish I had started with PayPal. Then when your online store gets really popular and you're making more dependable sales, then it could be time to switch to that bigger credit card receiving company!

Jo Hadley
Founder
Handsome in Pink

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As a serial entrepreneur and owner of a virtual online business, I definitely know the ins and out of how to set up a virtual business with most or all functions outsourced.

Pros:

- Can create the image of a large professional enterprise even without huge financial resources
- Allows the owner to focus on tasks that he/she likes and is good at rather than doing things that are out of one's comfort zone.
- Allows for quick expansion or contraction of business without much risk

Cons

- Sometimes you make mistakes with the selection of a team
- Expensive to move especially things like inventory if you've chosen the wrong fulfillment house/warehouse
- Training is essential and time consuming. Outsourced employees as in the case of customer service may not be as knowledgeable or loyal as in house employees.

What to do:

- Do your research. Every time I need to make a change, I create a spreadsheet to list the pros and cons of each outfit I'm considering. Slowly I narrow the choice down to one or two and then make a decision as to the best fit, most cost effective option for our company
- Ask for references and actually contact each reference to determine how good the company/team really is.
Look online at forums to see if the outfit you are considering has any negative feedback, lawsuits etc. Lots of info available on any company with a Google search.
- Check the Better Business Bureau to see what kind of rating the organization has.
- Ask friends or others in a similar business for recommendations. People are usually glad to help.

Anita Mahaffey
Founder
Cool-jams Inc

Founder of Cool-jams Inc. an online sleepwear company which sells wicking pajamas for people with night sweats, hot flashes and temperature regulation issues.

[Website](#)



RELATIONSHIPS

The very best advice I can give someone who is looking to get into the ecommerce space online is hands down - GET A MENTOR or work with an online business development coach. You will save yourself possibly thousands of dollars and save yourself hundreds of hours of wasted time, energy and effort by knowing how to avoid costly and common start-up mistakes.

Working with a mentor or coach will help you fast track your online success. Because a mentor is someone who has walked this road before you, probably many times, they can quickly guide you in all the right directions and give you the knowledge you need to arm yourself for success. They have already sifted through all the seas of information and education to hand you just the gold nuggets.

If making tons of money on the internet were easy we'd all be gagillionaires. Jumping into the often murky waters of online business development can not only be a technical task to overcome but also an emotional one. A mentor or coach is someone who can help you through the rough spots. They are someone that can see you bigger and better than you can see yourself and a good mentor can help push you and/or pull you beyond who you know yourself to be.

Darcy Volden Hoag
Founder
Secrets Of Her Success

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Find people who are better, faster, stronger and more experienced than you. Find out what they're doing right and copy them.

Surround yourself with the people who inspire you. “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.” — Jim Rohn

And finally, if you need advice or help on anything, just ask for it. The worst thing that can happen is you're told no. But you may just be surprised by the results.

Vinay Patankar
Founder and Author
Eshopwiz & Abstract Living

Vinay is an ecommerce store owner and the founder of eshopwiz a dedicated resource to helping ecommerce and online business owners achieve success. He blogs at Abstract Living and is the collaborator of this book.

At age 16, Vinay was the youngest Australian to become a Cisco Certified Network Associate. He has worked in IT, Finance and Corporate Sales. He now spends his time travelling, learning, consulting and building his empire.

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Thank You

Thank you for reading this book. Thank you for being part of our community and thank you for just being awesome.

A HUGE thank you to all of the amazing contributors, please go and buy their stuff right now or at least send them a nice hand written note.

To your online business success and beyond!

Vinay



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