

eCommerce
for small to medium-sized companies

**A practical guide and
handbook**

e.pages

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eCommerce – Opportunities and Benefits

eCommerce has become a hot topic again. After the internet hype and the exaggerated expectations from eCommerce the opportunities for online sales are being evaluated once again soberly and objectively. At the same time eCommerce has developed surprisingly in the past few years. The transformation cannot be stopped and the opportunities offered by eCommerce can be seen by anyone.

Countless companies are showing how it's done every day and demonstrate impressively how eCommerce can be used in the B2C or B2B sector to sustain increases in turnover and profit, acquire new customers, improve customer relations and services, speed up the sales process and lower distribution costs.

In the meantime, the use of the internet as an additional sales channel has become a completely normal business model for companies of all sizes in nearly every sector. eCommerce revenues are rising steadily and the number of people using the internet to get information or go shopping is continuing to increase. The rapid wide-spread availability of broadband ADSL connections at cheap monthly rates is a significant factor for this, continually stimulating eCommerce revenues.

Today eCommerce is standard practice for companies wanting to enhance their sales efficiency, make more revenue and improve their customer services. This practical guide was written for small to medium-sized companies who want long-term success in online sales. The practical tips are oriented primarily towards the following target groups:

- ❖ **Companies already running an offline business and wanting to use eCommerce as an additional sales channel**, primarily in order to better serve their existing customers.

The primary concern of these companies is the optimisation and automation of sales and ordering processes to improve customer relations and increase revenues for each existing customer and not so much the acquisition of new customers.

- ❖ **The second group are start-ups that see a business opportunity on the internet and want to set up purely online sales.**

The goal of these companies is to open up new markets, attain a certain degree of recognition in the target groups and to acquire new customers and retain them for the long-term using the online store in combination with effective marketing campaigns.

- ❖ **The third group includes companies that are reaching their limits with their traditional business and classic distribution models and see new areas of growth and opportunities in eCommerce.**

These companies mainly want to use eCommerce to reach new target groups that they were previously unable to approach, e.g. internationally, other regions or cities or new age groups. Here too the acquisition of clearly defined new customer groups and the most efficient possible, often international online commerce takes centre stage.

No matter which group you are in this practical guide will give you the right answers to your questions about eCommerce.

- ❖ What does success in eCommerce actually mean or what measurable indicators of success are there?
- ❖ How are successful online stores different from less successful eCommerce sites?
- ❖ What are the most important factors for successful online sales?

In the end, the customer decides whether you are successful or not. What is decisive is that the power of customers has increased considerably in the age of eCommerce. One click of the mouse and your customer is in the online store of your competitor. There he may get better service or find the right product more quickly. In answering the questions above the central focus is consistently placed in this guide on the online customer with his special needs and requirements when shopping online.

If you want to exploit the opportunities and chances of online sales or sustainably improve your existing eCommerce activities in future, this guide is just the thing you will want to read. On the following pages you will find a comprehensive and practical analysis of the factors for success in eCommerce sales.

Online Success is Measurable – Indicators of Success

What are the most important indicators and key numbers that can be used to measure the success or failure of internet-based sales?

These are important questions that you will be faced with if you want lasting success with an online sales model. In the end you will want to know if your company is successful or not in selling online. Unfortunately, many business people are still judging the efficiency of their online store on the basis of subjective estimates. In doing so, the success of eCommerce sites is often overestimated – or incorrectly underestimated. Simply being online is no guarantee of success when there are millions of other stores. And the sheer numbers of visitors to your site says just as little about the success of your store.

For this reason, an internet-based sales system always includes efficient and transparent **measurements** which make it possible to objectively judge success based on reliable information.

The following rule of thumb applies:

The higher the net margin, ratio of regular customers, the turnover per customer and the conversion rate is and the lower the acquisition costs for new customers are, the more efficient your online business is.



We recommend a web analytics system be used to track results. This could be Google Analytics as an example or we use and recommend the "etracker" Web Analytics which allows you to keep an eye on the most important key figures and can measure and judge the performance of your store at any time – all relevant data is generated and clearly displayed at the click of a button.

The following overview shows the key indicators of success that you should regularly retrieve and continually evaluate for your online sales activities:

| | Good performance | Poor performance |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ratio of regular customers | High | Low |
| Turnover per customer | High | Low |
| Conversion rate | High | Low |
| Costs for new customer acquisition | Low | High |
| Net margin | High | Low |
| Uncompleted orders | Few | Many |
| Customer satisfaction | High | Low |

These “hard”, distinctly measurable indicators of success can be used to clearly differentiate successful online stores from less successful ones. You should always keep an eye on these key figures if you want long-term and lasting success.

Many potential customers use the internet to help themselves make a purchasing decision and then don't buy “online”, but “offline” in a bricks and mortar store instead. This “**offline**” **turnover** induced by the eCommerce site is often not assessed by companies with both a virtual and physical presence. The “offline purchases” generated by the eCommerce store should always be taken into account when assessing online operations because in the end it really does not matter where your customer made the purchase.

Another key indicator of success is the increase in **customer satisfaction** through improved service and special offers for regular customers. In the long-term, this increase in customer satisfaction will also be noticeable by improved customer relations and ultimately by rising turnover per customer. The regular assessment of customer satisfaction, e.g. through surveys or customer feedback forms is thus a must for every online merchant.

What Do Your Online Customers Expect?

Online shoppers are demanding – and rightly so! Nowhere are so many sellers pushing themselves onto one spot as on the World Wide Web.

You should, therefore, ask:

What do my online customers actually expect?

Your online customers primarily expect – beside top prices and service – transparency, convenience, security and reliability when shopping online.

Recent studies have shown that a very high proportion of initiated order transactions are broken off before being completed. Very often the reason for **abandoned orders** is a lack of transparency and clarity in the ordering process. If while buying online doubt arises as to the reliability, security and seriousness of the online operator, e.g. because product prices, claims for warranty or delivery times are not correctly communicated or the ordering process is unclear, the big danger exists that the customer loses trust in your online store and aborts his order. In addition, it is highly likely that this customer will never visit your store again and is lost to your company.

However, if you manage to put across a “good feeling” in using your eCommerce site, you have made a significant step towards success in online commerce. Prospective customers who you do not disappoint in the entire handling process, from product selection to ordering, payment, delivery and after-sales services will become loyal patrons who trust you for a long time.

The following overview summarises the most **important demands**, needs and wishes of online customers. Companies should consistently orient their eCommerce offerings to these customer demands, to build on online sales success and to secure it for the long term.

- ✓ Fast and easy product search
- ✓ Clear navigation and fast loading times
- ✓ Comprehensive, detailed product information in text and images
- ✓ Inexpensive product prices
- ✓ Information about current availability
- ✓ Simple, easy and secure ordering and payment
- ✓ Choice of different payment methods
- ✓ Fast order processing with automatic order confirmation
- ✓ Fast and punctual delivery with logistics tracking
- ✓ Return option (money-back guarantee)
- ✓ Security through encrypted data transfer
- ✓ Option for contacting merchant (e-mail, chat)

Which Products Are Suitable To Sell Online?

Not all products are suitable for selling on the internet. In general, specific and special products that are not offered in hundreds of other stores or on the “major” eCommerce sites can be easily described in text and images and have an attractive price-performance ratio can be sold particularly well on the internet. If the product quality is also assured and the product can be delivered problem-free and inexpensively, almost nothing stands in the way of success.

The perennial items in online commerce are books, CDs, clothing and electronics and computer goods. Even in these product areas you can sell successfully online by specialising, informing your target group about your product offerings through efficient marketing and by using a clever online marketing strategy to place your products in exactly those locations where either your customers go shopping or want to go for information (see the section on Marketing).

Another tip for the product portfolio: In the long term, you should offer your **entire range of products** and not just a part of your product portfolio. Your customer expects this as a rule and in doing so you ensure that your store is and remains attractive to shoppers.

Key Factor for Success – The Difference That Counts

What are successful online merchants doing right? Where are the largest potentials for optimisation? What are the key factors for success in eCommerce?

In concrete terms:

What do I have to do to be successful in online commerce?

Basically, this applies: Online merchants who recognise the special needs and requirements of online buyers in virtual shopping and who consistently adapt both their business activities and online stores towards them have excellent chances for long-term and lasting success in online commerce.

The **key factors for success** can be summarised in the following areas:

1. User friendliness, user interaction and design
2. Trust and security
3. Marketing and sales
4. Customer service

User friendliness, user interaction and design

Or: Making it as easy as possible for your customers!

Many online merchants believe that the price in eCommerce is the most important thing for a purchasing decision. Studies show that the price is indeed important, but **user-friendliness** and ease of use of the store is really the **decisive** factor. Due to these two factors, customers primarily decide for or against certain stores – before they have even seen the price of a product.

You should thus make it as simple and pleasant as possible for your customers to get information in your store, to find and order products – one of the basic rules for successful online marketing. You have made the right choice with your decision for an ePages store, because your new store comes with all the vital features and elements for shopping conveniently and easily on the 'net laying the foundations for successful online marketing in the long term.

Attractive and sales-promoting design

Basically, the same rules that apply to a conventional store apply to the design of a virtual store: The goods offered should be attractive and induce shoppers to buy. But this product presentation and the store design should not distract from the actual purpose, selling. Via design and layout it is important to impart a pleasant and secure shopping feeling and induce the visitor to buy. It is essential during implementation to take into account some internet-specific peculiarities:

- ✓ Unlike selling in a brick and mortar store, your customer can't test or try out the product or check the material. For this reason, you should make his buying decision easier with meaningful, but not overly long, **product descriptions** and high-quality and free-form **product images**. Detailed images of the product or individual product attributes facilitate the choice and buying decision of the potential customer.
- ✓ The customer should be guided from the product presentation/information quickly and with **as few detours as possible** to the actual purchase. Don't distract the customer from shopping with meaningless design elements or information not related to buying. Give him the opportunity of placing the selected product directly into his basket and then getting to the basket without having to take a roundabout route.
- ✓ Broadband is indeed on the advance, but ISDN and analogue connections are still widespread, especially for private users. Unnecessary gimmicks and large-size images lead to longer page loading times and test the patience of your customers. The **graphical elements** should not result in an extreme slowdown for images being displayed. Because prolonged waiting increases the readiness of the user to leave the web site.

Your online software should provide a set of powerful design features like ePages that you can use to quickly, easily and flexibly customise your store according to your own personal ideas or your corporate design. In doing so, no knowledge of HTML or assistance from external service providers is needed. Support is provided to you by a powerful design editor and a tool for creating images that automatically creates different sizes and views of product images.

Content is king! Up to date and useful content

Apart from an appealing range of products with competitive prices and an outstanding store design, the **other content** in your store plays a substantial role in the lasting success of your site. Unfortunately, many merchants don't take this into account, although the actual content of a web site is one of the most important reasons why potential buyers visit a web site and is often the decisive factor whether they stay on the site and shop or leave it quickly.

The length of time a visitor spends on your site increases dramatically if you offer him interesting and up to date content that is useful to him. The longer a visitor spends on your site, the more likely it is that he will go shopping here – and not at the competition. This applies to web sites and also of course to online stores.

Some simple, **basic rules** to consider: Being **up to date** is the be-all and end-all, particularly on the internet. Always make sure that the content on your site is up to date and is regularly updated – your customers expect it. Provide **extra information**

about your products that is useful to potential buyers. You're selling fishing supplies and tackle in your online store? You then offer extra, useful, sales-promoting information such as test reports on fishing gear, care and repair tips or equipment tips for certain types of fishing. Almost no limits are placed on your creativity – but always make sure that the extra content gives your customers a **high level of usefulness** and can positively influence their buying decisions.

Note: The integrated WYSIWYG editor makes it child's play to create and place new content in your online store.

Quick product search and clear navigation

Product search is of primary significance for the success of your online store. If the user cannot find the product and related information he is looking for within a short period of time, he'll be gone again quickly. If he finds what he's looking for in the better-organised store of a competitor, he may be lost as a prospective customer.

What do I do now? This is a question that online buyers often ask when landing on pretty, colourful and very creative store pages which lack a clear and concise system of navigation. Build your store and your product catalog as simply and logically as possible, making them appealing and modern at the same time. A good navigation system and customer-friendly store design are characterised by your customers being able to **find themselves around** your store **intuitively** and get to the desired product offers and to the basket quickly and unerringly.

Clear ordering process and basket

Uncompleted orders still represent a serious problem in online marketing. Because of this, companies across the world are missing out on sales in the range of several billion dollars a year. One of the most frequent reasons for abruptly abandoned orders is a complicated, complex and overly long ordering process. Because of this, design the **ordering process** in your online store to be as **short, transparent and clear** as possible.

Büro & Co.
Anything needed at the Office

» Home Page » Contact Information » Contact » Terms and Conditions » Customer Information » Shopping Basket

Categories
Office Chairs
Scheduler
Accessory

Product Search
[Search Bar]
→ Advanced Search

Promotional Items
Leitz Mehrfach-Locher Akto 5114 78.30 €
Wagenmann Taschen-Wochenkalender A6 4.28 €

Shopping Basket
» Address » Confirmation

Please confirm your entries. You can correct these on their respective pages by clicking the order steps listed above. If all entries are correct, click "Finalize Order".

| Quantity | Name | UP | Discount | TP |
|----------------------------------|---|---------|----------|----------------|
| 1 | Piece(s) Wagenmann Buchkalender Gravella A5 | 12.70 € | | 12.70 € |
| Subtotal | | | | 12.70 € |
| Shipping Method: Postal Service | | | | 8.00 € |
| Payment Method: Invoice | | | | 0.00 € |
| Total Amount | | | | 20.70 € |
| Value Added Tax: standard (16 %) | | | | 2.86 € |

Order Comments:
[Text Area]

[Update] [Delete Basket] [Check Out]

Shopping Basket
1 Wagenmann... 12.70 €
Postal Service 8.00 €
Total Amount 20.70 €
→ Show Basket

Customer sign-in
User Name [Input]
Password [Input]
→ Sign in
→ Forgot your password?
→ Register
→ Subscribe to Newsletter

Currency Selection
€ (Euro)
£ (Pound Sterling)

At each stage in the ordering process show your customer where he is in the overall process and how to continue, e.g. by a basket that is always visible and a clear **indication of progress**. Your customer must have the feeling of absolute control in the actual ordering process – until he finally consciously orders the products in the basket, ideally after you have provided him a summary of his order stating all information pertinent to the order and the costs incurred and this is explicitly confirmed by the customer. Afterwards, the customer should automatically receive an order confirmation via e-mail that clearly summarises all data and information about the order.

Make it possible to make changes to the basket

Often customers want to change the amount ordered before placing an order. You should make it possible for your customer to make these changes to the basket. In addition, a direct link from the basket back to the product description makes it possible for your customer to get missing product information or to make sure that he has selected the right product before finalising the order, without a long and cumbersome search.

Provide information about total costs early on

Many orders are abandoned the moment your customer finds about completely unexpected high costs for shipping at too late a point in time. You can avoid this by indicating as early as possible in the ordering process the amounts for shipping and the total for **all additional charges** for the items ordered. Doing so creates an atmosphere of transparency and security for the customer and prevents unpleasant surprises from the outset.

The customer should always be able to choose between different shipping methods. Low prices are unquestioningly important for success online. At the same time remember: high shipping costs tend to scare off more experienced customers. You should therefore stay within the normal range for shipping costs and not attempt to “compensate” for low prices with shipping charges that are too high.

Note: The general rule: **keep shipping charges to a minimum** and at the same time always try to **maximise the value of the basket**. To increase the order value you can, for example, offer free shipping above a certain total order amount or use the various cross-selling tools (see the Marketing section) offered by your ePages store.

Show availability and delivery time

Many customers give up when they find out too late that the item they want to buy is not available. It's best for you to already indicate availability on the product page. This precludes unpleasant surprises related to product availability from the outset. Lengthy delivery times are also a common cause for abandoned orders. You should thus always try to guarantee the shortest delivery times possible. However, you should only give delivery times that you can actually meet in order to avoid disappointments and trouble with your customers.

Milestones
We're equipped to achieve your goals!

» Home Page » Imprint » Contact » T&C » Customer Information » Your shopping basket is empty.

Categories
Jackets
Shoes
Backpacks
Tents
Equipment

Product Search
[Search Box]
→ Advanced Search

Promotional Items
Meindl Air Revolution 2.0
169.95 €
Black Bear Gemini
29.95 €

Categories » Leatherman Tool Survival

Leatherman Tool Survival
The original in stainless steel. The pliers retract into the handle. This is the original Leatherman with needle-nosed pliers, wire cutter, blade, metal and wood file, bottle and can openers, flathead, phillips, and hexagonal screwdrivers and an awl. 180 g incl. leather carrying pouch.

In Stock.

72.95 € / Piece(s)

→ Add to Basket
→ Add to Shopping List
→ Recommend Product

Shopping Basket
Your shopping basket is empty.

Customer sign-in
User Name
[Input Field]
Password
[Input Field]
→ Sign in
→ Forgot your password?
→ Register
→ (ViewNewsletter)

Currency Selection
€ (Euro)
£ (Pound Sterling)

Customer data: require no more than necessary

One last tip concerning the ordering process:

Don't demand too much information from your customer. After all, you want to sell things and not create the most extensive customer database possible. To avoid disturbing your customers more than necessary, restrict the information collected to only the data that is absolutely essential.

If you require **sensitive information** to be entered, always state how the data collected will be used. Make sure that only sales-related data is collected. If you require information to be submitted from an online form, use a simple indication of progress so that your customer is better able to assess how long it will take to finish.

You should make it as easy as possible for your **regular customers** to go shopping in your store after registration. After the second registered visit at the latest nothing should stand in the way of orders after name and password have been entered.

Trust and security

Or: As always, the foundation for good business

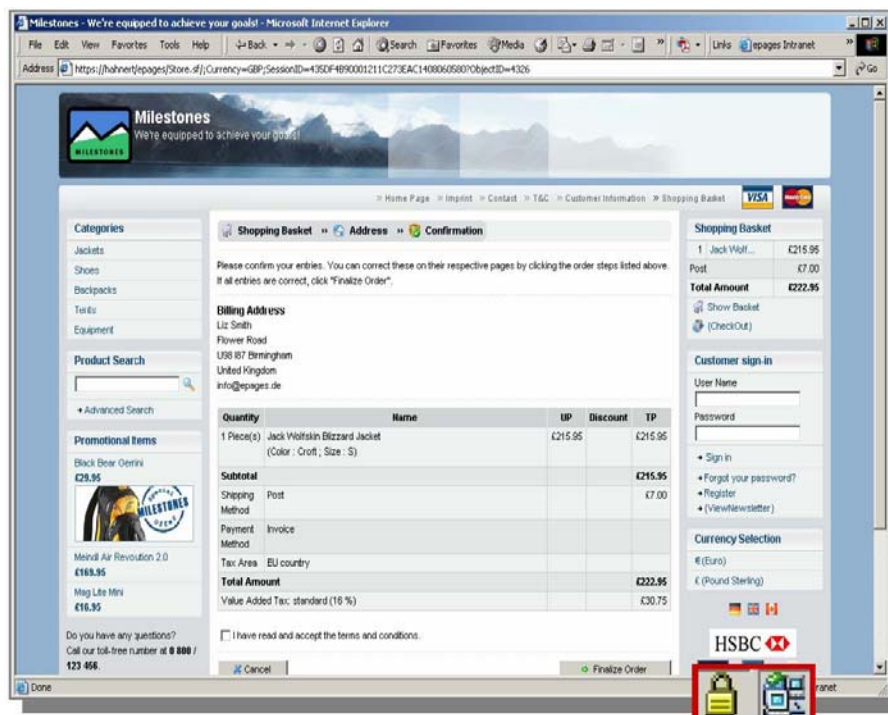
Trust continues to be the most important basis for successful business relationships – this applies to a special degree to doing business on the internet, because personal, human contact is missing.

If you observe a couple of simple, basic rules you can create trust on the part of prospective customers and thus build up long-term and stable customer relations – because in online business it also holds true that it is considerably easier and cheaper to sell to regular customers than it is to acquire new ones.

Transparent information and security are top priorities

For more than half of regular online buyers the security perceived when shopping on the internet is the decisive factor for regular repeat purchases. Many potential customers don't know what awaits them when they go shopping online. The consequences are often **unfounded threshold fears** that in the end keep them from buying.

How can you impart this so important feeling of security and reliability? Explain clearly



to your customers that security is the top priority in your online store, e.g. by handling order processing, the entry of sensitive data and the payment process using **secure 128-bit SSL encryption**, which is practically unbreakable. By the way, your customers can recognise that the connection is encrypted by the closed padlock icon displayed in their browsers.

You should basically dispel any existing threshold fears related to security by providing a large amount of transparent information in your store. Make it clear to your customers when they enter the store how “critical” steps for buying work, from ordering, payment and shipping to any possible warranty claims, returns and exchanges. Explain each individual step as precisely and completely as possible to your customers. The privacy policy for handling customer data strengthens the feeling of security, seriousness and reliability it brings about. The clearer you communicate before making a sale, the lower potential customers will assess the risk of buying online in your store.

“All-round protection” from store certification

You can tell your customers a lot about security and trust when shopping in your store – but it’s still more convincing to have your store tested and certified with respect to security and compliance with established standards and legal aspects by an **independent body**.

Guarantee and warranty in plain text

You have nothing to hide! Describe your fair and comprehensive **guarantee and warranty terms** clearly and plainly and link to your data privacy policy and terms of warranty from every page in the ordering process. A “money-back guarantee” and customer-friendly exchange and return policies increase the feeling of security and trust on the part of your online customers.

Note: You can increase trust even further by offering more than the usual or more than you’re your competition for returns, guarantee and warranty. By assuring your customer before a purchase that returns are acceptable and with money back without having to provide a reason. This can greatly reduce the “perceived risk” on the part of your customers.

Offer a wide range of secure payment methods

Studies have clearly shown that online buyers always expect multiple payment options. You should therefore always offer as wide a range of popular and secure payment methods as possible that are easy for as many customer as possible to use. The most important and frequently used payment methods in eCommerce are invoice, cash on delivery, debit transfer, direct debit and credit card. Each method of payment has advantages and disadvantages from a store operator’s perspective.

- ❖ **Payment by invoice** is one of the most common methods that in the merchant's view is easy to handle and doesn't incur additional costs.
- ❖ **Payment by C.O.D.** involves higher fees and the availability of the customer is not always ensured, which in turn can incur additional costs. But payment by C.O.D. is one of the safest payment methods from a merchant perspective.
- ❖ **Payment by debit transfer** or direct debit is a very customer-oriented and easy method of payment which is why it is preferred by many online customers. Reverse posting of the payment amount by the customer is possible within a certain period of time.
- ❖ Higher costs arise for the merchant for **credit card payments**, but payment processing is easy, transparent and safe for both buyer and seller. Payment losses are insured up to a certain amount and can thus be greatly minimised.

Note: In your store you should offer at least three of the methods of payment described above including payment by credit card in order to give the customer a wide range of options to choose from. The choice of a digital payment option or "**online payment**" is of great significance for your store – especially if you want to sell your products internationally. Payment online by credit card depends primarily on smooth, simple and secure handling of the payment transaction, which is transparent and understandable to the customer.

Your ePages store provides credit card payment and electronic debit collection by a number of different payment service providers. You will find support for **PayPal, eWAY, SecurePay, Dialect Solutions, Netregistry, DPS, WorldPay** and a variety of international providers.

Is it really secure?

The security of customer data should be the highest priority for online merchants – from of their own interest. **Security concerns** still rank at the top of the list in the eyes of internet users and can stand in the way of online shopping. The possible security standard for credit card transactions is undergoing continuous optimisation and today has already attained a very high level. Credit card payment is secure from a purely technical standpoint.

As long as customers believe that payment transactions on the internet are not secure, it doesn't matter if this is not actually the case. The effect is the same: No orders are placed and no customers are gained.

If you want to build an online store you should therefore always offer complete information about the encryption methods used and security mechanisms and explain

that the security of customer data for you as an online merchant is your number one priority. Once customers have gained confidence and have gone shopping in an eCommerce store and paid online, trust – as the results of several studies show – increases in the current security standards and payment methods. Satisfaction arises from the first successful and smooth transactions.

Note: One more thing: Other personal data not related to credit cards is also very sensitive. The assertion that no data will be transferred to third parties must therefore be stated explicitly. Because just like in conventional commerce this applies: You can only successfully build on trust and do good business.

Be sociable and show yourself

Behind every online store there is a team of people operating the store. To your imprint (containing all necessary information about your store and a standard store feature – see the section on Law) add **photos of the people** in charge and who stand “behind” the online store. This will surely increase trust more than mile-long, complexly formulated general terms and conditions, and impersonal e-mail address or a blank form.

Concerning **contact options**:

Make sure that you offer a wide range of contact options in your store. Your customers expect it and should thus have the option of being able to contact you via different channels – even by telephone. Of course, you’ll want to answer **e-mail queries** fully and in a friendly manner within 24 hours and won’t ever let your customers wait for any longer than this for a reply. To answer questions that come up repeatedly you’ll want to create an extensive **list of questions and answers** (FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions) that clearly and fully explains the most important aspects about online shopping – from the ordering process and terms of guarantee to delivery.

Marketing and Sales

The best most secure and clearly laid out store with the most appealing product offerings and prices stands virtually no chance if it cannot be found by customers. This is why the effective marketing of your online store is one of the major factors for success. The following section describes how best to promote your store with a **relatively limited marketing budget** and how you'll be able to integrate it seamlessly into the World Wide Web – so that prospective customers can find your site quickly and then go shopping at your store.

The general question is: How do I acquire new customers and generate long-term customer loyalty to my store? In addition, this section also includes detailed answers to the following questions:

- ❖ How do customers find my store and web site?
- ❖ How can I offer my products to customers?
- ❖ How can I increase customer loyalty?
- ❖ How can I make my store known to my target groups?
- ❖ How can I increase the "conversion rate"?

Do you know your prospective customers?

At the beginning of your activities comes the **target group analysis**. If you are not familiar with your target group there is a big danger that your message in the marketing activities you plan is not communicated to "your" target group or your range of products isn't appropriate for the target group.

An expensive market analysis is not always needed to find out more about new prospective customers. Collect some ideas about your potential target groups together with your team. Which groups of people could be interested in the products we want to sell online? What problems and demands do these people have with respect to the products you sell? What is the age distribution? If you already have a retail store business and would like to establish the store as an extra sales channel, talk to your regular customers. What needs and demands do these people have and what do they expect from buying on the internet?

Note: There are often **free studies** on specific target groups or age groups available on the internet. You should be able to find something with a simple search.

Create a **target group profile** from the information collected and adapt your store, product range and, in particular, marketing activities accordingly. This is how you will be able to avoid the high costs associated with not reaching your target group, make

the best use of your budget and precisely target your message to the intended audience – one of the basic requirements of successful marketing!

Often underestimated: the domain and store name

Are you familiar with this? You found a good store on the internet and forgot to bookmark it? A week later you want to visit the store and can't remember its name – this is terrible for store merchants. This name of your store is somewhat like a **company sign on the internet** and should always be short, catchy, succinct and thus easy to remember. None of your customers is ever going to remember `www.gvw-mpl-and-associates.com`!

In addition, a good, memorable domain name is aimed at the target groups you want to sell to. If you want to address an older target group, you should choose a serious, easily understood name, whereas a term from a foreign language or one that is flashier may be the right one for younger people in a specific target group.

Note: If the name you want with the ending “.com.au” is already taken, the ending “.biz” is very appropriate for stores on the internet.

In principle, you can choose any domain name you wish – as long as you do not infringe upon the rights of others with the name of your store (see the section on Law). Making use of brand research services is a good idea for avoiding this. This is the only way to preclude the legal consequences that can result in your having to change your domain name – with a deadly impact on your marketing.

The fastest and most direct path to your customer: search engine marketing

Most prospective customers find out about web sites and stores by using search engines. Almost three quarters of all transactions in online commerce originate from search engine queries. So, the first thing you'll have to do in marketing your online store is to ensure that all popular search engines are able to find and index your site. Only then will you have a chance of new customers finding your store after entering relevant search terms.

You're selling fishing supplies and tackle? Will users be able to find your fishing store when entering search terms such as “dip net”, “net float” or “pilk rod” into a search engine? Search engine marketing is the most effective way to market your store on the internet, because this brings prospective customers interested in products directly into contact with product suppliers.

The advantages of search engine marketing are obvious: You can **reach your target**

group quickly and generate high-quality contacts with people interested in buying directly.

With his query the person using a search engine indicates a clear interest in or need for a specific product and has decided on your products when he visits your shop. Better leads than this are hard to come by. With continual search engine marketing you will not only **increase your store revenues**, but will also **increase your name recognition**. In addition, unlike classic forms of advertising, successful search engine marketing can be implemented **quickly, easily and at very low cost**. Another major advantage is that you always have **full control and transparency over the costs** and an overview of the effectiveness of your marketing campaign.

Basically, a difference is made between **free search engine optimisation** services and paid **advertising using AdWords** in search engines.

In **search engine optimisation** optimising the source text and design of your store guarantees that your store or web site is found higher in “real” search results, called the **“natural listing”**. There are only a few things you have to do to your store for the search bots of the search engines to be able to index your site correctly – the prerequisite for a high ranking for your site within the first three pages of search results. It's important to continually improve your store and regularly check your ranking, because search engine indexing methods and algorithms are being continuously modified and reworked to prevent misuse.

Registration

You first have to register your store at the major search engines. Registration at Google, currently the largest and most significant search engine, can be done directly from the back office of your ePages store. Registration at other search engines such as Yahoo! is very quick and easy. You only have to fill out an online form and enter a few bits of information about your site. Please note that Google and Yahoo! provide the search results for several other search engines. By registering at Google and Yahoo! you will cover a very large area, so this is a must.

Optimal use of META tags:

META tags are variables written in the head section of an HTML document. These are indexed and analysed by most search engines. The META keywords and description tags are stored by the search engines and made available as results to search queries. For this reason, make sure that these META tags contain the “right” keywords for your store and a meaningful description of it that is as precise as possible. This completes the first and most important step towards

getting the best ranking for your store. You should be aware that search engines have an “allergic reaction” to keywords used repeatedly in META tags and give them a lower ranking. Important note: Put yourself in the position of your target group(s) when editing META tags. Make sure that you use only relevant keywords that are directly related to your site and page content.

Note: One last keywords tip. It always best if your most important keyword is included in the domain name of your store.

Optimising design and content:

Static web pages written in HTML are a basic requirement for your store to be indexed by search bots. These pages must contain enough of the right kinds of words and phrases that can be read by machine. Your ePages store fulfils this requirement as long as the page cache is set correctly.

You should always make sure that you include the relevant keywords in the content, labels and other texts used on your pages, because the search bot will then assign a higher weighting to these words.

Photos and images with text look great and are an important part of appealing to your customers and should always be present. But you should be aware that search machines are unable to index this content. This makes it that much more important for the keywords relevant to your store to appear in sufficient number in the text on the pages.

Active linking:

The more web sites there are on the internet that link to your store, the higher it will be listed in search engine results. Search engines place primary emphasis on the quality and not the quantity of these links. Apart from the number of visits, the relevance of the site plays a very important role. So, it's best if large sites with a lot of traffic directly related to your product offerings link to your shop. One option of achieving this are partner programs in which web sites within the partner network link to your shop.

Paid advertising or AdWords placed at search engines make it possible to show search term-specific, paid ads along with the normal search results. Payment is based on cost per click. The prices for keywords vary and are determined dynamically in a bidding process.

Pay attention to the following things for paid ads at search engines:

Optimal ranking:

From the price-per-click you are willing to pay make certain that your ad appears on the first page of search engine results and is included within the first ten ads. Doing so can greatly increase the click rate. Be aware that you don't always have to be at the top – it's normally enough just being listed on the first page and this is much less expensive.

Plain text in the ad:

Design your ads for the search engines to be clearly laid out with easily understood text that includes the search term the user entered or words that are clearly related to the search term. Ideally, you should place these words in the header of the ad.

Concrete offers:

Be as concrete as possible and use the defined entry point to take the visitor to a part of your store that is directly related to the offer in the ad – normally the product category you are advertising or directly to the product information pages of the advertised products.

Extra incentives:

such as price discounts, bundles or access to interesting information greatly increase the conversion rate and should thus ideally be offered in combination with AdWords. You should always try to get the consent from visitors, who have browsed in your store, but didn't buy anything, for you to send them your newsletter.

Most search engine operators offer extensive information on all aspects of paid advertising and often practical tips as well as extremely powerful campaign and analysis tools, so you can set up your campaign by yourself and analyse it transparently from the start. So get started as soon as possible with search engine marketing and experience it for yourself. Refine your campaign, vary the keywords and the amounts bid for individual keywords, optimise ad copy text and the entry page. Always monitor the effects of these measures on the success of the campaign.

Note: You should always keep an eye on click rates, cost-per-click and conversion rates.

You will very quickly notice which keywords are the most effective and which ad formats and text copy have the greatest impact and generate the most orders in your store. You can also, of course, use the services of a professional who is specialised in implementing and optimising search engine campaigns.

Apart from search engine marketing and AdWords at search engines, there are still other forms of search engine marketing: Yellow Pages or regional and interregional mercantile directories in which prospective customers with a definite interest in buying are looking for products, as well as auction platforms and product search engines.

eBay, Getprice, Shopping.com – sell where the customer goes first

Why not present your products in exactly those places where **customers with an interest in buying** are looking for just such product and price information?

With your ePages store it's child's play to transfer all or part of your products to Getprice and Shopping.com and to thus present them to a wider public looking for exactly what you have to offer. When a prospective customer finds your product at a search engine a deep link takes him directly to the product in your store where he can order it.



Many customers regularly find refuge at the eBay auction site. Almost half of all online customers first compare the price there before buying. You use a standard interface to integrate your ePages store into the eBay marketplace. By doing so, you present your products at eBay with no extra effort and orders are forwarded directly to your store. All other order management tasks are then easily handled in your back office where it is also possible to handle large numbers of orders in an extremely efficient manner.

Cross-Selling and Up-Selling

The fitting carrying case to match that fishing rod you're buying? The right line for your fishing reel? While buying online offers your customers sensible **accessory products** – you will be surprised how easy it is to increase turnover.

Or have your customers determine which products complement each other: with recommendations following the "Customers who bought this product also bought..." scheme you ePages store supports both cross-selling variants. In manual cross-selling you determine in the back office of your store which accessory products to offer. In automatic cross-selling the system takes over continuous analysis of customer buying behaviour for this task.

The screenshot shows a product page for a red Berghaus PacLite Jacket for women. The main product is priced at £199.95. Below the main product, there are three cross-selling recommendations circled in red:

- The appropriate jacket for men:** Berghaus PacLite Jacket - Men, £99.95
- We recommend as cleaner:** Grangers Extreme Cleaner, £9.95
- We recommend for proofing:** Grangers Extreme Waterproof, £14.95

The website header includes the Milestones logo and navigation links. The left sidebar contains a categories menu and a product search box. The right sidebar includes a shopping basket, customer sign-in fields, and currency selection options.

Newsletter, coupons and e-mail marketing

Stay in regular contact and constant communication with your customers. Personalised newsletters offer a variety of options for informing your customers about new **products, special offers or news** about your store and giving new **incentives to buy**. With integrated coupons you give your customers a solid strong reason to stop by your online store again. With the newsletter feature of your ePages store custom-designed newsletters based on your store data can be personalised and sent, e.g. to customer groups you have flexibly defined.

In addition to addressing your regular customers, you can also reach new customer groups that have not yet purchased anything in your store via targeted “permission-based e-mail marketing”. The prerequisite for this is that the addressee has given his express consent to receiving information from you.

The screenshot shows the Milestones website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Home Page, Imprint, Contact, T&C, Customer Information, and Your shopping basket is empty. Below the navigation bar, there are several sections: Categories (Jackets, Shoes, Backpacks, Tents, Equipment), Product Search, and Promotional Items. The main content area is titled "Newsletters" and contains a table with two rows of newsletter options. Below the table, there are input fields for Name and E-mail, and buttons for Subscribe and Unsubscribe. To the right of the newsletter section, there are sections for Shopping Basket (Your shopping basket is empty) and Customer sign-in (User Name, Password, Sign in, Forgot your password?, Register, ViewNewsletter).

| <input type="checkbox"/> | Name | Description | Language | Status |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---|----------|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Neue Ideen bei Milestones | Erfahren Sie jeden Monat, mit welchen Produkten und Leistungen wir unser Sortiment für Sie erweitern. | Deutsch | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New Ideas at the Milestones Shop | Learn more about new products and services in our shop each month. | English | |

You can significantly increase the willingness of interested parties to buy if you regularly provide them with information about special offers, bargains, clearance sales or new products. If you do it right, the loyalty of prospective customers towards your store will be stronger.

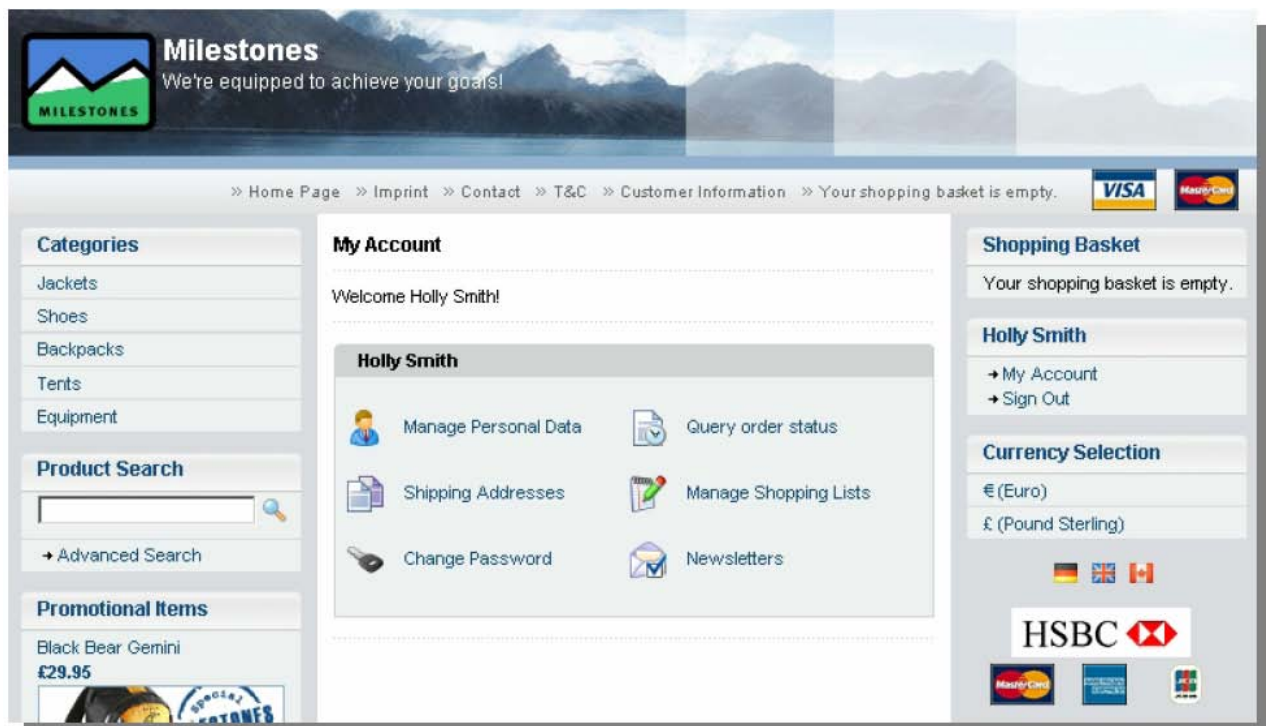
Finally, the customer will perceive your e-mail newsletter as useful and valuable information which he or she is happy to get. You should therefore always offer in your store the option for interested parties to sign up for your newsletter, irrespective if they buy anything or not. One more tip: Incentives significantly increase the willingness to sign up. So, why not also offer a new customer **discount or a coupon**? Ideally, newsletter registration can also be combined with search engine marketing campaigns.

Note: If a customer does not want to buy, always offer the option of registering for your store newsletter.

The most important thing in eCommerce – long-term customer relations

Long-term customer loyalty to your store is one of your main goals. In addition to user-friendliness, a clear design, up to date and useful content, top prices and excellent service before, during and after sales can primarily be achieved by treating your customers as individually as possible and giving specific customer groups the feeling of being special. Here are some tips for you to accomplish this:

- ❖ Personally address registered customers in your store by name.
- ❖ Grant access to non-public information, e.g. to the newsletter archive, manuals, operating instructions or to old orders.
- ❖ Allow registered customers to manage and modify their customer account, log in and address information by themselves.
- ❖ Combine specific customers into customer groups and offer them special prices or discounts.



The screenshot displays the Milestones eCommerce website interface. At the top, the Milestones logo is accompanied by the tagline "We're equipped to achieve your goals!". Below the header, a navigation bar includes links for Home Page, Imprint, Contact, T&C, Customer Information, and a message stating "Your shopping basket is empty." Payment logos for VISA and MasterCard are also visible.

The main content area is divided into three columns:

- Categories:** Lists products such as Jackets, Shoes, Backpacks, Tents, and Equipment.
- Product Search:** Features a search input field and a link to "Advanced Search".
- Promotional Items:** Displays a "Black Bear Gemini" item priced at £29.95.
- My Account:** Welcomes "Holly Smith" and provides a dashboard with options to "Manage Personal Data", "Query order status", "Shipping Addresses", "Manage Shopping Lists", "Change Password", and "Newsletters".
- Shopping Basket:** Confirms "Your shopping basket is empty." and includes a "Holly Smith" profile with links to "My Account" and "Sign Out".
- Currency Selection:** Offers options for "€ (Euro)" and "£ (Pound Sterling)", with flags for Germany, the UK, and Canada.

At the bottom right, there are logos for HSBC, MasterCard, and American Express.

- ❖ Offer your customers shopping lists that they can manage and maintain on their own and can be simply turned into a basket when necessary.

Discounts and Special Offers

Online buyers are also only people and pay attention to the price when shopping especially on the internet! **Special offers and discounts** are standard marketing activities that you should continuously employ. With your ePages store you can boost your turnover by placing alternating special offers with extra images on the home page of your store any thus draw greater attention.

Milestones
We're equipped to achieve your goals!

Home Page » Imprint » Contact » T&C » Customer Information » Shopping Basket

Shopping Basket » Address » Confirmation

Please confirm your entries. You can correct these on their respective pages by clicking the order steps listed above. If all entries are correct, click "Finalize Order".

Billing Address
Liz Smith
Flower Road
U98 167 Birmingham
United Kingdom
info@epages.de

| Quantity | Name | UP | Discount | TP |
|---------------------|---|---------|----------|----------------|
| 1 Piece(s) | Jack Wolfskin Blizzard Jacket (Color : Croft ; Size : S) | £215.95 | | £215.95 |
| Subtotal | | | | £215.95 |
| | Shipping Method Post | | | £7.00 |
| | Payment Method Invoice | | | |
| | Tax Area EU country | | | |
| Total Amount | | | | £222.95 |
| | Value Added Tax: standard (16 %) | | | £30.75 |

I have read and accept the terms and conditions.

Cancel Finalize Order

Shopping Basket

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1 Jack Wolf... | £215.95 |
| Post | £7.00 |
| Total Amount | £222.95 |

Show Basket
(CheckOut)

Customer sign-in

User Name
Password
+ Sign in
+ Forgot your password?
+ Register
+ (ViewNewsletter)

Currency Selection

€ (Euro)
£ (Pound Sterling)

HSBC

You can also provide additional incentive to buy with a large assortment of discounts. **Loyalty discounts** for premium customers? **Volume discounts** for resellers? **3% discount for new customers** paying in advance? **2% discount for delivery by DHL?** With your ePages store virtually no limits are placed on you and in the user-friendly back office you will never lose track of things when managing customer groups, price lists and more complex discount systems.

Acquire new customers: Banner advertising and subject gateways

You can entice new customers to your store with targeted banner advertising on the web pages and portals your customers get information from. However, the costs for

this are higher than for ads at search engines, for example, and the message more frequently does not reach the intended target group.

With a correspondingly larger budget, banner advertising can certainly make sense as a complementing activity in the marketing mix. But the prerequisite for this is that you place banners at portals and sites that are as close as possible to your target groups. In our example of a fishing supply store internet-based forums occupied with the topic of fishing would be prime places for targeted banner advertising placement.

Subject gateways can indeed have several thousand members brought together by a common interest in a specific topic or hobby. The perfect audience if you have the right range of products in your store. In some circumstances you may also be able to reach your target group in the news groups – for free.

Note: You should, however, be aware that commercial posts are not desired or are even forbidden in most news groups. Articles contributed by experts may of course include a URL!

Cross promotion and public relations

Cross promotion – simple, yet effective: The name of your store should appear on all materials and in all communication channels – this includes e-mails, business cards, letterheads, invoices and press releases.

A word about press releases: You can achieve extra attention for your store at low cost with **regular and targeted public relations work**. The regular sending of press information via internet services should therefore definitely show up in your marketing plan.

The chances that journalists will report on your store will increase dramatically if you have an exceptional target group and/or you stand above the crowd with your product range or service.

Don't forget: constant control over your activities

In addition to a target group analysis and the selection of the "right" marketing activities, continuous reporting and a permanent review of success is a part of every sound marketing scheme – after all, you'll want to know if your marketing activities are accomplishing the desired aims.

You can use the web controlling module from etracker to analyse whether your special offers are being accepted, how many visitors made purchases in the month of May or

the areas of your product presentation that can still be improved. Your ePages store comes with a standard interface for etracker, allowing real-time analysis of visitor behaviour and store performance.

Customer service

Or: After-sales means future sales

A customer decides on a product in your store and buys it. This is an important step towards success in eCommerce – the next steps that decide whether a one-time customer becomes a loyal patron are still pending. Unfortunately, many online merchants overlook customer care and the provision of after-sales services - and lose many customers because of this. At the same time, it is very easy to keep customers satisfied after a purchase and keep them coming back to your store.

Prompt order confirmation and transparent tracking

After the actual buying process the customer should automatically receive a **confirmation e-mail** including all order-related information. In your ePages store this confirmation e-mail is generated automatically and sent to the customer. Make it clear to your customers that you are available to lend assistance even after sales, e.g. by offering them several options for getting in touch with you at any time.

Fast and complete delivery

Fast delivery of ordered products is extremely important for the long-term success of your store. You must ensure that customers receive their orders within the promised delivery period. Nothing angers customers more than delivery that is late, incomplete or faulty.

Note: A small give-away included with delivery costs you almost nothing and makes the customer happy. And the customer will always fondly remember your delivery.

Accommodating guarantee and active complaints management

A claim for warranty or an exchange is a situation that can occur time and again. This supposedly critical situation offers the online merchant a substantial opportunity that is often not taken. You can now put your customer-orientation and friendly service to the test. Be **accommodating, proactive** in your communication, **friendly and open** – your customers will be grateful and shop again at your store.

The same holds true for customers who complain to you. Take these customers very seriously and actively manage complaints from customers. Opportunity also lies in the complaint – the chance of solving a previously unknown problem.

Note: For this reason, **regularly** evaluate incoming complaints.

Periodic customer surveys

Carry out customer satisfaction surveys at regular intervals. This is the only way you can continuously improve your store and service and serve your customers even better and satisfy them. You can carry out the survey online or send a written questionnaire to the addresses in your customer database.

You can increase the number of completed and returned survey forms by offering an attractive incentive, e.g. a drawing for a prize among all returned forms or a special discount in combination with a time-limited coupon for a specific product.

Note: By the way, you will get a regular, continuous flow of information from your customers if you include a short feedback form in your deliveries.

Additional after-sales services

The customer buys a product in your store. If you stay on the ball now you have a big chance of making a regular customer out of this one-time customer. How? Surprise him with extra services. You sell technically-demanding products? Give your customer access after the sale to additional, useful information such as **FAQs, documentation, spare parts lists, explosion drawings, downloads, etc.** related to the product that he bought from you. In combination with other customer relationship activities such as periodic newsletters, loyalty discounts, customer accounts and addressing the customer personally, you will be able to sustain increased customer satisfaction, long-term loyalty to your store and thereby the amount of turnover per customer.

Summary

With the choice of your ePages store you have taken the first step towards success in online commerce. You have chosen a shop system that is easy to administer, can be quickly and easily customised to your design wishes, fulfils the toughest demands for convenience and security in online shopping and is furnished with all marketing features that enable the efficient acquisition of customers and a lasting improvement in customer relations. The technology is indeed important, but is only one component for success.

The second, almost more important factor for success is the ability of the online merchant to put himself in his customers' position, recognise his needs when shopping online and to take these into account in marketing and operating the online store. Your store is technically able to do this and includes all the prerequisites for success in eCommerce.

It's now up to you as the shopkeeper and online merchant. There is no patented formula for success. But if you place the customer and his wishes and needs at the centre of your planning, actions and decisions, you are on the right path. We hope that this guide with its practical tips helps you on this path and from the outset sets the course for your successful entry into online commerce.

In this respect we wish you the best of success!

Send feedback to info@ecorner.com.au