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MARKETING SEO | SEM WORDPRESS

eCommerce Business Startup Checklist

By Judith • July 10, 2024 • Reading Time: 6 minutes



It is common nowadays to consider a side hustle and start an eCommerce website to supplement income. But it's not easy.

You don't just slap up a website. You will spend more time and money than you think. I've written a lot about what is involved but never created a simple checklist that covers every step you need to nail down.

Below is my checklist with links to other articles on this site for more information.

Step-by-step Online Business Startup Checklist

- **Step 1: Research and Planning**
 - Choose a Niche
 - Market Research
 - Business Plan
- **Step 2: Setting Up Your Business**
 - Choose a Business Name
 - Register Your Business
 - Legal Structure
- **Step 3: Create Your Online Store**
 - Domain Name
 - E-commerce Platform
 - Website Design
 - Set Up Payment Methods
- **Step 4: Source or Create Your Products**
 - Product Sourcing
 - Product Listings
- **Step 5: Launch Your Online Store**
 - Test Everything
 - Soft Launch
- **Step 6: Marketing and Promotion**
 - SEO
 - Social Media
 - Email Marketing
 - Paid Advertising
- **Step 7: Manage and Grow Your Business**
 - Customer Service
 - Inventory Management
 - Analytics
 - Continuous Improvement
 - Now what?

Step 1: Research and Planning

Choose a Niche

- Identify Interests and Expertise:** List your interests and areas where you have expertise. This will help you choose a niche you're passionate about. Without passion, it won't happen. [\[More here\]](#)
- Analyze Market Demand:** Use tools like Google Trends, keyword research tools (e.g., Ahrefs, SEMrush), and Amazon Best Sellers to gauge demand for potential products. Don't kid yourself by putting up a "me too" website. [\[More here\]](#)

Market Research

- Identify Competitors:** Search for competitors within your niche. Analyze their websites, product offerings, pricing, and customer reviews. They already own market share. What will you do differently and better? [\[More here\]](#)
- Understand Your Audience:** Create a customer persona detailing your ideal customer's demographics, interests, and purchasing behavior. You need to cater to your specific target market. You cannot be everything to everyone. [\[More here\]](#)

Business Plan

- Executive Summary:** Describe your business idea and objectives. Create as much detail as possible. [\[More here\]](#)
- Market Analysis:** Summarize your market research findings. Describe your target customer's needs and wants. [\[More here\]](#)
- Marketing Strategy:** Outline how you plan to attract and retain customers. Note every venue, website, and activity you need to take to reach your target market. [\[More here\]](#)
- Financial Plan:** Estimate startup costs, pricing strategy, product costs, revenue projections, and break-even analysis. [\[More here\]](#)

Step 2: Setting Up Your business

Choose a Business Name

- Brainstorm Ideas:** Create a list of potential names. Ensure they are easy to spell, pronounce, and remember. Avoid anything that can infringe on established trademarks.
- Check Availability:** Verify that your chosen name is not already in use. You can check domain availability using tools like [GoDaddy](#).

Register Your Business

- Local Regulations:** Check with your local and state government or a legal advisor to understand the necessary steps to register your business.
- Business Licenses and Permits:** Depending on your niche, you might need specific licenses or permits.

Legal Structure

- Sole Proprietorship:** Simple to set up but doesn't separate personal and business liabilities.
- Partnership:** Good for businesses with multiple owners. Shared responsibilities and profits.
- LLC (Limited Liability Company):** Provides personal liability protection and flexible tax options.
- Corporation:** Suitable for larger businesses with complex structures.

Please seek legal advice to know what will work best for you, your setup and situation.

Step 3: Create Your Online Store

Domain Name

- Choose a Memorable Domain:** Select a domain that reflects your business name and is easy to remember. Avoid common mistakes when making this decision. Also, consider domains that describe your products or services. [\[More here\]](#)
- PRO TIP:** Purchase your business and product domains in various extensions to avoid misspellings or competition down the road.

E-commerce Platform

- Shopify:** User-friendly, great for beginners, includes hosting, and has many apps and themes. Review packages to make sure you have all the features you'll need.
- WordPress & WooCommerce:** A highly customizable plugin for WordPress that requires separate hosting. Add-ons also can add up. [\[More here\]](#)
- BigCommerce:** Scalable solution with built-in SEO features and various integrations.
- Wix:** Easy to use with a drag-and-drop interface, suitable for small businesses.

WordPress is the only platform you can easily migrate to new hosting if needed.

Website Design

- Choose a Theme:** Select a template that matches your brand's aesthetic. It must be block enabled. Avoid freebie themes. [\[More here\]](#)
- Customize:** Adjust colors, fonts, and layout to fit your brand. Add a logo and create essential pages (Home, About, Contact, Shop, FAQ, etc.). [\[More here\]](#)
- Mobile Optimization:** Ensure your site is mobile-friendly by running tests.
- Order Process:** Create a flow chart of your order process to ensure all the bases are covered. [\[More here\]](#)

Set Up Payment Methods

- Payment Gateways:** Integrate secure payment options like PayPal, Stripe, or Square.
- SSL Certificate:** Purchase an SSL certificate to secure your website and protect customer data. Most Managed WordPress hosting includes SSL with hosting at no additional charge.

Step 4: Source or Create Your Products

Product Sourcing

- Manufacturing:** List the necessary supplies and create an inventory system so you have materials on hand as needed.
- Wholesalers:** Purchase products in bulk from wholesalers. Do a thorough review of all your options.
- Drop Shipping:** Investigate partnering with drop shipping suppliers to sell products without holding inventory.

Product Listings

- High-Quality Images:** Use professional photos showing different angles and uses of the product. Image quality sells—never cut corners here. [\[More here\]](#)
- Compelling Descriptions:** Write detailed descriptions highlighting features, benefits, and specifications with SEO in mind. The more detail, the better. [\[More here\]](#)
- Pricing:** Set competitive prices while considering production costs, competitor pricing, and perceived value. Never race to the bottom when it comes to pricing. [\[More here\]](#)

Step 5: Launch Your Online Store

Test Everything

- Functionality:** Test all links, forms, and buttons. Then do it again — and again.
- Checkout Process:** Simulate a purchase to ensure the checkout process is smooth. You want this process to be as easy as possible.
- Payment Methods:** Verify that payments are processed correctly.

Soft Launch

- Feedback:** Invite friends, family, or a small group of potential customers to test your site. Collect feedback on usability, design, and functionality.
- Adjustments:** Make necessary changes based on feedback.

Step 6: Marketing and Promotion

SEO

- Keywords:** Conduct keyword research and incorporate relevant terms into your website content. [\[More here\]](#)
- On-Page SEO:** Optimize product titles, descriptions, meta tags, and URLs. [\[More here\]](#)
- Content Marketing:** Include a blog to share helpful content related to your niche, which can drive organic traffic. [\[More here\]](#)

Social Media

- Profiles:** Create profiles on platforms where your target audience is active. Ensure they are all identical in color and style so customers recognize your brand. [\[More here\]](#)
- Content Plan:** Develop a content calendar to post regularly. Share product updates, promotions, behind-the-scenes content, and customer testimonials. Plan on posting once a week, minimally. [\[More here\]](#)

Email Marketing

- Email List:** Use tools like [ConvertKit](#) to collect email addresses and manage your list. Your list is probably your most effective marketing tool.
- Newsletters:** Send regular newsletters with product updates, promotions, and valuable content. Plan on providing an update each month. [\[More here\]](#)

Paid Advertising

- Google Ads:** It gets expensive fast to run ads. Do your homework first before committing.
- Google Ads:** It gets expensive fast to run ads. Do your homework first before committing.
- Facebook/Instagram Ads:** Target specific demographics (do your homework) with visually appealing ads.
- Retargeting:** Use retargeting ads to reach visitors who didn't complete a purchase.

Step 7: Manage and Grow Your business

Customer Service

- Support Channels:** Offer multiple support channels (email, live chat, phone) and respond promptly. [\[More here\]](#)
- FAQs:** Create a comprehensive FAQ page to address common questions. [\[See mine here\]](#)

Inventory Management

- Tracking:** Use inventory management software to keep track of stock levels.
- Reordering:** Set reorder points to avoid running out of stock.

Analytics

- Google Analytics:** Track website traffic, user behavior, and conversions. Your analytics are invaluable in telling you what is or isn't going on.
- E-commerce Metrics:** Monitor critical metrics such as conversion rate, average order value, and customer acquisition cost.

Continuous Improvement

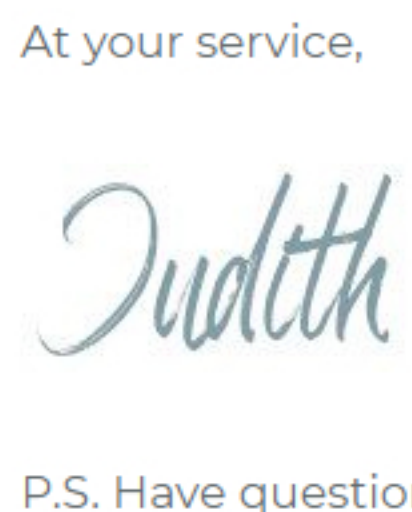
- Customer Feedback:** Regularly collect and analyze customer feedback. Polls are a great way to extract essential nuggets for improvement.
- A/B Testing:** Test different website elements (e.g., product pages, checkout process, calls to action) to improve performance. Then, review your activity statistics to see what worked best.
- Product Updates:** Continuously update and improve your product offerings based on customer feedback and market trends. Online is the opposite of stagnant.

Now what?

- 📄 Download a PDF of this page for future reference.
- 🔖 Bookmark this page for future access to internal links. (Ctrl +D to bookmark.) <https://www.theistudio.com/e-commerce-business-startup-checklist>
- 🔗 Plan on working harder, [spending more](#), and learning more than you could ever have planned if you want to experience success.

Most importantly, have fun!

At your service,



P.S. Have questions on how to start or need someone to bounce your ideas off of? [Schedule a 30-minute brainstorming session.](#)



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POLL: What do you think of WordPress?

- I love it!
- Been using for years - fits my needs.
- Just started; still learning.
- It could be a little more user-friendly.
- I find it too frustrating.
- Have not used it...yet.
- No plans to use WordPress.

Here's My POV

Edit poll

WHAT I'M WRITING ABOUT

eCommerce Business Startup Checklist July 10, 2024

How to Choose the Perfect Domain Name July 2, 2024

How to Update to WordPress 6.5.5 Security Release June 24, 2024

Quick Review: WordPress vs. "Website Builders" June 19, 2024

Why Website Colors Matter June 12, 2024

MOST POPULAR READS:

1. How to Update to WordPress 6.5.5 Security Release (53,795)
2. How to Link to a Specific Area on Any Page in WordPress (25,606)
3. Premium Domain Names for Sale (25,132)
4. Where are WordPress Files "Stored"? (22,375)
5. WordPress Coaching, Business Consulting (15,776)

MY RECOMMENDATIONS:

