

Guidance Sheets

Starting out in ecommerce

Selling your products online is a great way to generate sales. Because shoppers are clearly enamoured with the speed and convenience of online shopping, we should consider the Internet as a primary selling venue or, at least, as an adjunct to other retail venues.

This guide deals with the online requirement and not the considerations needed for logistics and facilities.

Where to start

There are number of ways to sell your products online and you need to consider which ones would be suitable for your products and where your potential audience might be.

1. Auction Sites

Websites such as ebay let you easily sell your products <http://sellercentre.ebay.co.uk/>

Advantages: It is easy to set up

Disadvantages: You are limited to what you can do and how it is displayed and the platform will take a fee.

2. Marketplace websites

Websites such as Etsy are websites that allow you to post your products alongside your competitor's and the user can place several items from multiple vendors into one basket. <https://www.etsy.com/>

Advantages: It is easy to set up and the user experience is good. People who know the site can find your products.

Disadvantages: It can be very competitive and limited in what you can do. There are also monthly fees.

3. Ecommerce platform

The next option is to create your own site on an ecommerce platform. The platform takes care of all the otherwise complicated infrastructure needed to run an online shop such as product set up, shipping, delivery and user accounts as well as up and cross selling, vouchers and promo codes.

[Magento](#), [Woo Commerce](#) in conjunction with a Word Press themed site are all excellent as is the ever-popular [Shopify](#)

Advantages: You can have very sophisticated and beautiful website for very little investment

Disadvantages: Setting up can be a little difficult and so we would recommend you get a web developer to set it up and guide you through the marketing effort required.

4. Bespoke

Finally you can create an ecommerce shop from scratch. This gives you complete control over it.

Advantages: You can do anything with it.

Disadvantages: It will be incredibly expensive to develop.

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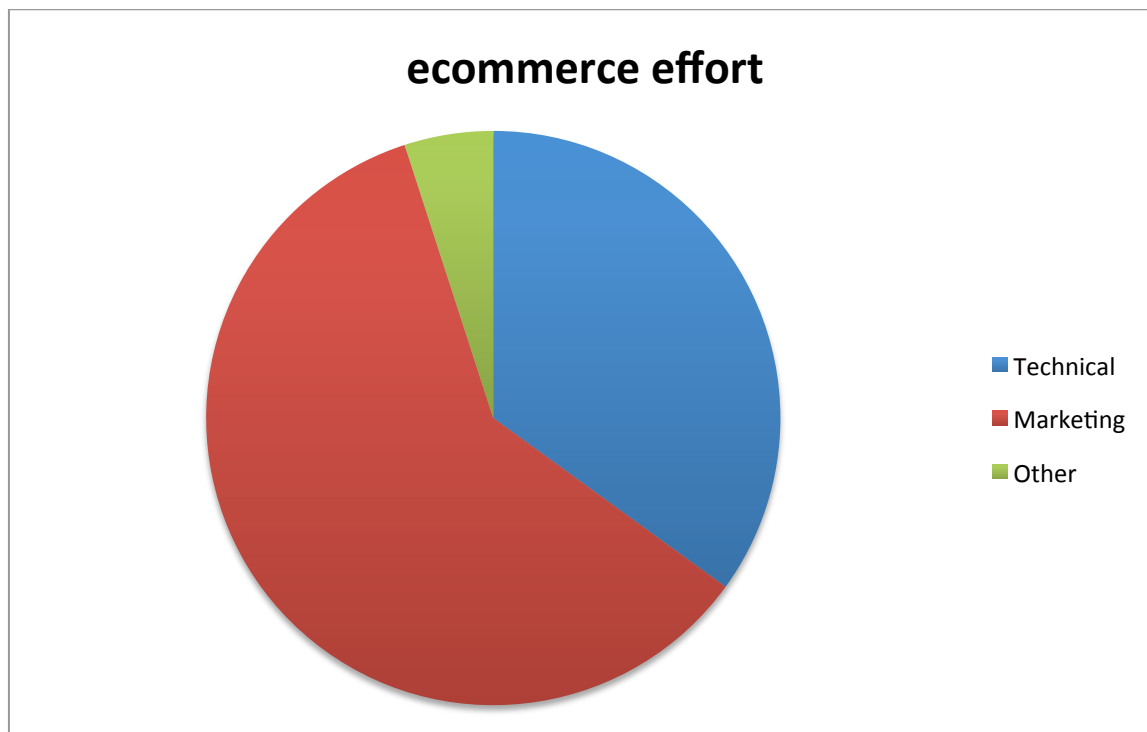
The bespoke solution should only be considered if your product doesn't fit into the classic

Product > add to basket > checkout model. [Building your own BMW](#) is a good example!

What to consider

1. Effort required

For anything other than a bespoke solution you should consider the following:



It takes about 30% of your total effort, mostly at the beginning, to complete the technical requirement.

Where the majority of the initial and on-going effort is required (65%) is understanding who the audience is, where they are and why they want to buy from you i.e. marketing and branding. Just having a perfectly nice looking, fully functional ecommerce solution doesn't mean anyone will buy from you. Getting this marketing right from the outset is always the key to success.

When creating your shop always consider these factors:

- ✓ Who would realistically buy from me?
- ✓ Why would they buy from me and not my competitor?
- ✓ How can people find me?
- ✓ What can I do to make my offering more attractive?

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2. How you are getting paid

WHATEVER happens, use a Payment Provider to handle your payments rather than storing user credit card details on your server. Being compliant when storing payment details is a long and expensive process that is on-going and requires accredited professionals. [SagePay](#), [WorldPay](#) and [PayPal](#) offer great solutions whereby they handle all the transactions securely so you don't have to.

3. Mobile friendly

Make sure the site can be used on a mobile. Test the site using [Google's mobile friendly tool](#).

Once the site is set up what should I be doing?

Here are 5 essential top tips:

- Go and buy something – Make sure it is still easy to navigate around the site and easy to buy things. Your site will need constant tweaking.
- Improve the content – Write articles about your products and keep it focussed on what you are selling. Your site will need periodic updating.
- Social Media – Use social media to drive people to your website. Promotions are always good to do.
- Lifetime value – If your products allow, sell more to your existing customers and get reviews.
- Analyse – Look at all the data and see what is working well and what isn't and do something about it. Whatever you do, don't skip this one!