Ten Ways To Help You Grow Your E-commerce Business

Whether you are just thinking of starting a business, or are already selling online using eBay, Amazon or a small e-commerce site, the ideas in this guide will help you. It is full of handy hints and tips as well as some helpful marketing suggestions on how you can acquire, retain and cross-sell to your customers.

www.myhermes.co.uk

myHermes
Makes delivery easy.

1. Target, Target, Target

As Abraham Lincoln famously said

"You can please some of the people some of the time… but you can never please all of the people all of the time."

In a perfect world everyone would be drawn to your online store. No matter what the demographic, your products and services would immediately resonate. In the real world unfortunately you need to put effort into understanding who your target audience is, then find out how to cater to their needs and desires. Once you know who you're focusing on your marketing decisions will become much easier.

Identify your buyers and get to know them. Build a buyer persona, or 'type of person' who typically buys from you, be this a middle-aged housewife or a cash-strapped teenager - or both. This information is crucial if you are to get your marketing right. Take some time to be really clear about who your target customers are, remembering that there might be more than one type of person depending on your range of products.

www.myhermes.co.uk

Create a survey to find out who your buyers are

Surveys can be a good way to gather information about your customers so it makes sense to place a survey form on your website. Don't expect too big a response though, since people are busy. To entice them to share information with you, offer an incentive in the form of a discount or free giveaway.

In order to find out more about your customers you could start with these questions:

Is this the first time you've purchased this type of product?

Is this the first time they've bought the product, or do they buy it regularly? Either way you need to address both types of buyers in your marketing efforts. Understand if you have seasoned buyers or novices who might need some help with the products you are selling.

What types of social media do you use?

If you know more about how your buyers like to communicate you can focus your marketing efforts into these channels. If your buyers are into Instagram you can send out information on your products to them here. If they follow certain blogs or subscribe to particular news outlets you can tailor content towards these.

In general (although things change all the time), younger audiences tend to favour certain forms of social media over others, for example Facebook. Older customers probably prefer getting to know your products through your blog or website. Determining how your customers like to be reached will enable you to build a relationship with them.

Why did you buy this product?

For some products it's useful to know why they purchased the product. Find out which pain points your products or services relieve for your customers. For example if you sell iPhone covers you're helping to solve the problem of keeping iPhones safe from damage. If you're selling security systems, it's not just equipment you're selling but the feeling of security. Sell nail polish and you're selling not just a gel in a jar but a sense of fashion and style. If you can pinpoint what you are really selling then you can promote the benefits around that product which will really help to boost sales.

What prompts you to buy?

What's the primary reason for your buyer's purchase, and does the product fulfil any secondary or tertiary needs? For example if you sell iPhone covers you've solved their first problem which is finding a form of protection. If you sell iPhone covers that can be customised with photos, you've also fulfilled a secondary need – to find a cover with an attractive design. What is it about your products that makes them proceed to purchase?

Are you open to new products?

Are your customers willing to take a risk and invest in the latest gadgets, or are they happier staying within their comfort zones and buying products that are tried and tested?

There are lots of other questions you can ask your buyers; these are just some ideas for starters. Find questions which have relevance to your particular product. Once you've gained as much information as you can, then this can help you to create your buyer persona. You can define your buyers in terms of demographics, lifestyle, and their opinions. Remember too, that it's important to identify not just the users of your products, but those who actually purchase the products, perhaps as gifts. If you're selling gifts for teachers you need to target both parents and kids, since the kids, while they may help with decision-making, don't make the ultimate purchase.

Effective targeting will help you create marketing campaigns which resonate with your prospects' lives and make them more likely to buy from you. When posting your survey, always be clear and upfront and tell people why you're asking for information and, naturally, keep their details confidential.

2. There's More Than One Route To Market

Different types of e-commerce channels to consider

Relying on just one place to sell, such as your own website or just eBay or Etsy, can sometimes be a risky strategy. For example if eBay change their pricing or terms and conditions and you have built your entire business around them, it gives you little room for manoeuvre if their new way of working doesn't suit your business model. So it's always wise to have a few places where your potential buyers can source your products.

- **Marketplaces** are a great way of getting started and also growing your business, as they have a ready-made audience for you to sell your products to. eBay is the largest marketplace, then Amazon, but there are also niche sites such as Etsy for craft products, Preloved for selling second-hand items and Gumtree for small classified. And you can even sell through Facebook with adverts. You need to consider what your products are and where you think they will sell most effectively. There are also plenty of books and websites such as Tamebay.com which will help you make the most of selling on sites like these, with useful hints and tips.

- **Your own website** can also be a great way of selling your products. Although there isn't the ready-made audience, you can control how you sell your products and the whole look and feel of the site. There are some great e-commerce platforms and CMS which can make it easy for you to get up and running. Shopify is used by entrepreneurs across the UK and is a popular choice, but there are also some great CMS such as Magento, Volusion or Opencart.

- **Multichannel management software** is also important as your business grows and you are selling on multiple platforms. It can be difficult to keep track of what you are selling and where, as well as managing multiple listings on multiple sites. Therefore products like Linnworks, ChannelAdvisor and eSeller Pro can be a lifesaver, helping you manage stock control, shipping, listings and much more, giving you a toolkit of resources to make online selling simpler for you. Software like this takes away the more repetitive tasks by automating them. So no matter whether your customers come from eBay, Amazon, or your own site you get to interact with just one interface.

As an online retailer you need a variety of channels. You need to build your online portfolio just like you would an investment portfolio to minimise risk and maximise sales. Some of your channels will be higher or lower margin than others, and some will drive acquisition rather than retention. Some products are best sold through certain channels rather than others too. So it's important to take some time out of your business regularly to assess which products sell best on which sites and which give you the most profit. By doing this you can make sure that you are gaining the best from each channel and managing your risk.

3. Are You Mobile and Responsive?

The UK has fallen in love with smartphones and more recently, tablets. All kinds of audiences are becoming accustomed to going online using mobile devices such as smartphones, iPads and tablets. According to the UKOM/ comScore, 36% of people accessing the internet are now doing so via tablets, as ownership grew 63% year-on-year from 11 million to 17.9 million Britons in February 2014.

Make sure your website is responsive

To make sure customers find you it's crucial that your site is mobile-friendly and built to be responsive, enabling it to be read well in different screen sizes. Responsive design means the device automatically adjusts according to the device's screen and orientation, making navigation around your site easy.

A well-designed mobile website leads to stronger conversion rates according to a recent report by ForeSee whereby 54% of those questioned said if they were happy with the retailer's mobile channel they were more likely to buy again. While 61% of mobile users who visit a mobile-unfriendly site are likely to go to a competitor's site (IAB). Responsive website design enables you to code a site so that it works on any device, be it a tablet, mobile, laptop or desktop rather than creating multiple sites. This is especially beneficial to e-commerce businesses.

If you opt to have two versions of your website – a desktop one and a stand-alone, mobile version, you may lose traffic to your main website, plus you'll have the burden of having to manage two sites. Companies who opt to have separate mobile versions of their websites also run into problems with duplicate content which creates SEO problems affecting how Google's algorithms determine your ranking.

With a mobile-responsive website just one URL will represent to both desktop and mobile users making it easier for search engines to index your site, discover content and crawl correctly. That's why responsive sites rank highly in search engine results compared with other websites, since users can find your site quickly and you get more traffic.

Stay ahead of your customers' expectations

These days people expect your website to look good on a mobile device. If it doesn't, you'll let them down and this could harm your brand reputation. They also expect your mobile site to load as quickly or even faster than desktop sites (Google 2011). If you don't have your own web developer you can buy and customise responsive design templates.

www.myhermes.co.uk

4. Logistics - Sending Your Parcels

Your customers view you not just in terms of your website and products, but in terms of the level of customer service you provide. In order to boost repeat business you need to ensure your customers have a good experience when it comes to delivery; in fact the quality of your courier is often just as important as the quality of your products.

Getting late deliveries or damaged goods will not get you good reviews or win you repeat business. If you're sending lots of parcels it makes sense to set up an account where you'll get favourable rates and daily collections.

Here are some important things to consider when you're choosing a courier:

Is the price right?

When selecting a courier, price isn't everything. Granted, you want to get the best deal in order to keep your costs down, but you also need to ensure your parcels are getting delivered safely and swiftly. Choosing the cheapest option could turn out to be more expensive than you think, if it results in losing you customers. Having said that, you can often get some great deals on bulk deliveries or repeat custom, so check out your options.

Check out reviews

These days it's easy to access online reviews, so do your homework and check out what past customers have said. Take a look at business forums or visit sites like Trustpilot, where you can search for a company and find reviews. Find out which areas the courier specialises in – some have services particularly geared towards smaller businesses and e-commerce companies, and will be happy to be on hand to give you valuable advice. They will be keen to get your business early on and grow with you as you expand.

Flexibility

Look for a courier company that is keen to work with you and adapt to fit in with your requirements. A good courier will take the time to get to understand your business and ethos, and match their services accordingly. Your objectives should become their objectives for the duration of your partnership – so make sure they are willing to go that extra mile for you.

Tracking

It's essential you know where your goods are at all times, so select a courier that can track your parcels in real time. If there's a problem and they are going to be late, you should be the first to know. Ideally you should even be able to give your customers the ability to track their orders online, too, for extra peace of mind.

Customer service

You need a direct contact you can speak to if something goes wrong. Nothing's worse than having to speak to countless people and repeat your questions or concerns, or having the feeling you're sending emails into the big unknown.

Are they reliable?

Parcels being delivered when the recipient is not at home are a huge problem and a costly one to boot. You need to ascertain your courier's policy when it comes to delivery – it can help to choose a courier that has the flexibility of being able to deliver to a nominated safe place, or will leave parcels with neighbours. Also find a courier that gives your customers the option of signed delivery, and has a delivery service to even the most out-of-the-way areas

5. Acquisition

There are many ways to drive traffic to your site including SEO (search engine optimisation), social media, and PPC (pay per click). You should, ideally be using all of these strategies as part of a concerted marketing effort, and ideally testing campaigns on a regular basis, so you can improve. It's fair to say that you may need to devote up to 50% of your time on marketing – but if you get it right, you will soon reap the rewards in terms of visitor numbers.

All acquisition strategies have their good and bad points. PPC, while it can be effective, is not cheap, and, while SEO may take a while to kick in, it's worth the wait, as is content marketing.

SEO tips to get your e-commerce site to the top of Google

If you're missing out on clicks you're missing out on sales, so whether you've just started out or are aiming to improve your site, stepping up your SEO is a must. A recent study by Optify found that websites…

- ranked number one on Google received an average click-through rate of 37%
- ranked number two on Google received an average click-through rate of 12.5%
- ranked number three on Google received an average click-through rate of just 9.5%

All of which means that there can be a big difference in the number of click-throughs that you get depending on your position on Google. A study by Marketing Land also backed up these findings, stating that the number of click-throughs coming from the first position on Google was almost double that of being in second position. So taking some time to make sure that those keywords that you know will convert into sales are ranking well and appearing in positions one, two and three is an important part of your SEO strategy.

Get keyword savvy

Targeting the wrong keywords can result in low traffic or a high amount of traffic that bounces straight off the pages and results in low conversions. Keyword research involves finding words to sit on your important web pages that are relevant, have search volume and ranking difficulty.

- Find words that are relevant to your brand and product that have a high exact match search volume locally. Use Google's free AdWords Keyword tool and the low difficulty score in Moz's keyword tool. Don't use keywords that are too broad or competitive, since they'll give you high bounce rate and a low number of conversions. For example, if you sell 'natural coffee filters' don't go for broad keywords like 'coffee', 'natural coffee' or 'organic coffee' since these are not the keywords people will use if they're looking for coffee filters. They're also very competitive keywords.

- Don't stuff – i.e. don't overuse keywords even when they don't fit naturally with the text. Not only will it make for a bad read it gives a bad impression. And Google now penalises sites that do this. And don't put the same keywords on all pages – this is called cannibalisation and it confuses search engines.

- Create a blog. Blogs are a good place to put extra keywords that might not sit well on the main site. You can also use long-tail keywords in the blog – these are unique searches that people use to find things online, consisting of more than one word. According to Moz, 70% of searches are long-tail keywords, so look for high exact-match search volume (local not global) and low difficulty score.

- Keep on top of SEO, since Google change their algorithms all the time. It takes time and patience but getting it right will help you see a great result in sales from your e-commerce site.

- Have user-friendly URLs that feature real words, and make Meta title and descriptions read like an ad – so Google places your site higher.

- Install rich snippets – coded pieces of info that tell search engines what searchers should be able to understand about your site without clicking through.

- Test your strategies using analytics to see which keywords are converting, use PPC campaigns to find high-converting keywords to add to your SEO strategy and test Meta titles and descriptions to assess click-through. A/B test your page content to increase conversions from web traffic.

- Submit your business to all the major directories relevant to your business. Use location-based keywords in your descriptions if appropriate.

5. Acquisition (continued)

Social media

Syncing social media to the products and services offered by your e-commerce store will help to drive added value to your audience and customers. Put plug-ins on product pages so visitors can share their site experience with others, but don't go overboard, just a few including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google + will do.

Offer social sign-in so visitors can create an account on your website. Users who use social media to sign in spend more time on site and purchase more than those who don't log in with social media. To see if that's true for your site, A/B test sign-in with and without social media to find best conversion rates.

Use social-based comment systems for a share of interesting information and spur conversations about your products. Remind users to share, and let them know which of your products are trending socially.

PPC

Pay-per-click (PPC) ads are audience-based ads that are shown as sponsored ads when you type in a search word on sites like Bing and Google. Done properly, PPC ads put your e-commerce business in front of your target audience with products they will hopefully want to buy, or services they need, or information they're looking for.

A well-designed PPC campaign needs time, keyword research, budget planning, and strategic bidding – not to mention compelling ads. Every time your ad is clicked on it costs you money so make sure your keywords are the right ones for your target audience. PPC ads differ from routine ads because they get your company in front of potential customers at the time and place they're actively searching for information. Done correctly you should be able to get excellent returns in terms of traffic and conversions to sales.

Tips for getting your PPC campaigns right

- Make targeted landing pages; don't run ads targeting different audiences that then lead to one landing page. Each target group needs its own landing page to be directed to – if you don't, this will negatively impact on conversion rates. Your viewers' experience must stay consistent from ad to site.

- Create landing pages with the customer in mind. Good landing pages encourage customer interaction and convert into sales. Test landing pages often to find out which work and why – from your home page to your product pages. Try moving text, changing headlines and review your call to actions. (And keep track of changes!)

- Text ads can be highly effective but images work even better. Create a Google Shopping Campaign to keep your products relevant on search pages and showcase product images and promotions.

- Many searches start on mobile devices while conversions tend to take place on computers, so make sure your customers have a great mobile experience. Make sure mobile ads direct to mobile landing pages.

- Monitor and evaluate your ad using analytics to find out how many individuals have seen the ad and responded, by clicking or buying. That way you can work out conversion rates, average sales costs, cost per acquisition and ROI.

If devising a PPC campaign seems overwhelming, remember there's lots of free help out there. To get a good return on investment you need a high click-through rate – so get familiar with keyword tools and join e-commerce discussion forums to connect with other business owners to compare notes and get insider tips. You can also get some great guides from Google on how to set up your PPC campaigns https://support.google.com/adwords

Comparison shopping engines (CSEs)

There are numerous comparison shopping engines including Google Product Search, Shopzilla, Nextag and many more. These can drive traffic to your site and are usually product specific, so make sure the items link through to the relevant product making it easier for you to convert the visit to a sale.

6. Conversion

It's great that you managed to get people to your site – congratulations! Now it's time to get them to part with their money. It's estimated that businesses spend lots of money driving traffic to their website, but just a tiny proportion of their marketing budget on converting. But it's obviously pointless spending money to get your product in front of potential customers without a conversion strategy in place. In fact, making just small changes to your conversion process can improve growth in sales drastically and if you use data wisely you can get good results with minimal effort.

To boost conversion your website must be up to scratch

- Use Screaming Frog to identify website errors and find redirects, duplicate pages, missing header tags etc.

- Focus on website speed – if your website is slow to load, visitors won't hang around for long and they're much more likely to click back to Google and find a faster website, most likely your competitor's. 40% of people abandon a site that takes longer than three seconds to load (Kiss Metrics Report). You can increase speed by buying more server space, using a better CMS or reducing image and file sizes.

- Organise your site structure logically, use internal linking and check your site for ease of usability. Keep it simple so visitors can get around your site easily – live chat widgets come highly recommended to lift conversion rates and increase the average time spent on site.

Other ways to boost conversion rates

Make a purchase an urgent option – alert prospects to the fact that if they don't act NOW they'll be missing out on a great deal. Cite low stock, or use limited-time offers (like the sort Groupon use) since these have been found to be highly effective.

Product reviews can boost sales by as much as 76% according to Internet Retailer. Jupiter Research found 77% of consumers read reviews before buying online. Reviews refresh content too, boosting SEO efforts.

Once visitors have landed on your page, offer a free newsletter or report as a way of gathering information about prospects and building your database.

Make it easy for customers to act, make the call to action stand out. Have your BUY NOW button high up on the page, not at the bottom, and make your cart button highly visible in contrasting colours.

Remove fears by incorporating trust signals to tell customers that shopping with you is safe. Feature lots of ways to pay with credit card logos displayed and accessible phone numbers. Offer Live Chat and make sure all your contact details are readily available.

Add context to your products, for example try featuring models wearing your items if you sell jewellery or clothing. The easier it is for customers to visualise your product and how it will look/feel on them, the more likely they are to buy. Use video to show you've nothing to hide – let them see exactly what they're buying into.

Show you're offering great value for money – that doesn't mean you have to have the cheapest price – but by showing a comparative price you're proving they're not being ripped off.

Publish shipping costs – be upfront and don't hide this information from customers since they will search for it and you'll simply be wasting their valuable time on site.

Make A/B testing a top priority. Use tools like Optimizely to work out how, where, and when to test. Test visitor flows using Google Analytics and other tools to identify areas where visitors lose interest and drop off your radar. You can also use heatmapping tools such as Crazy Egg which will show you where your visitors to your website move their mouse and also click, which can be invaluable information.

7. Retention

Once you've won over a customer don't let it end there. Have strategies in place to maintain a relationship over the long term. Acquiring customers is far more expensive than retaining them, so make sure you keep them coming back for more.

Repeat purchase rates

These will vary according to the industry you're in. If you sell computers, then repeat custom won't be high. If you sell books, jewellery, clothes etc., it will be a lot higher. Work out what your repeat business rate is right now – so you can benchmark and build on this rate for improvement. Use your repeat purchase analysis to identify where shoppers are dropping off – is it after their first order or after several? What characteristics differentiated those who bought again from those that didn't?

Churn rate

This is a vital indicator of your success in e-commerce, since, even if your customer acquisition is high, churn will drag you down. So take some time to analyse churn. Here is a simple method to calculate your churn rate.

If you had 500 customers in June and 450 in July then your churn rate would be as follows…

(500 - 450)/500 × 100 = 10% which means that you had lost 10% of your customers.

However, that might not always be a bad thing as these might have been customers who only spent a small amount. So you should also measure your revenue in the same period to see if that has increased or decreased. Keeping an eye on your churn rate is important as it can give you a good indication of how your business is performing and also if you need to take some action to retain customers and provide offers which will make them repeat purchasers.

Lifetime value

Find out which customers are getting you the best returns over the longer term. Identify your highest-paying customers and make them a priority to retain. One of the easiest ways to do this is to use a simple calculation like the one below. This may vary depending on the type of business that you run, but having a good understanding of the Life Time Value (LTV) of your most valuable customers makes is much easier to forecast for the future and know where your revenue is coming from.

(Average Value of a Sale) × (Number of Repeat Transactions) × (Average Retention Time in Months or Years for a Typical Customer)

(£20) × (8 times per year) × (2 years) = £320

Test your email marketing, an e-commerce staple, and drive up repeat rates by sending emails recommending items frequently purchased together, using relevant subject lines and content.

Reward customers with incentives and entitlements e.g. spend £50 get a £5 discount. Use surveys to identify pain points and satisfaction levels – but don't pester. Personalise to show where customers have bought – this can help returning customers feel more valued.

Offer a Freemium model – whereby users get a certain amount for free, for example the cloud-based storage company, Dropbox will give you a basic storage package but does have paid-for subscription plans for future use. Amazon Prime is another Freemium offering.

Use content to illustrate you're the expert to keep visitors returning, eliminate barriers and make things easy by making registration optional. Simply follow up purchases with emails and offers.

8. Reactivation

If you're a relatively new e-commerce company, reactivation probably won't be your priority: acquisition and conversion will be. When you're a little more established, that's the time to start working out how to win back those 'churned' customers.

Tips to re-ignite your relationship and win back customers

- Look at your 'win-back' rates to find out how many customers came back and stayed. If this is low you know you need to rethink your reactivation strategy. Also, look at customer lifetime values. If you've lost a high number of high-value customers you need to seriously consider how to get them back.

- Discounting is a knee-jerk reaction to many companies who want to win their buyers back. But it's not always necessary, and can have the opposite effect to that which is wanted. Customers may come back to take advantage of the discount but never return again.

- Retargeting can be a reactivation strategy: use your customers' cookies and test them for different offers. You already have lots of information about them so use this to your advantage and to customise marketing communications. Email them with a new product that's similar to one they've bought and tie it in with their personal life. You could send personalised content e.g. birthday and anniversary offers to make them feel special.

- If a customer left you because of negative issues get them back by apologising. It's strange but true that customers are more likely to deal with firms they've had problems with if they've subsequently tried to make amends – and sincerity is what it's all about.

- You could consider calling customers – the personal touch sometimes wins the day. If what you're saying sounds good, they'll appreciate it.

- Create educational content – guides, white papers, eBooks etc. to drive new sign-ups and bring customers back.

And remember to test all your different techniques. Segment customers, try multiple methods and put those that are effective into place.

9. Upsell and Cross-Sell

Amazon are the masters of upselling and cross-selling, but you too should make sure that you make the most out of every sale you make. When you've made a hard-won sale make sure you capitalise on it by upselling and cross-selling. Just like a good sales assistant in a shop tries to help provide customers with what they need, and makes perceptive suggestions for other things they didn't know they needed, you can sell suggestions online. Don't be pushy though – some customers get put off by aggressive sales techniques. Cross-selling and upselling can add a huge amount of value, increase sales income, boost conversion rates and get you higher margins, while enhancing a user's experience. It also gives you the opportunity to make people more aware of the products you offer.

Effective upselling and cross-selling

Suggest the obvious – some opportunities to upsell and cross-sell are just logical progressions, e.g. if you sell tennis racquets, offering tennis apparel and bags etc. is a natural step to take. To make it worth your customer's time, always offer suggestions of products and services that are closely related.

- Justify your recommendations with benefits – how does this product enhance the already selected one? Bundle your offerings by offering linked items at a lower price than when sold separately. If you offer copywriting services, add on graphic design, print etc. and offer a price for all. Bundling reduces hassle for people, plus it increases your value per sale whilst lowering your marketing costs.

- Get expert recommendations from professionals and customers – from recipes to holistic therapies, this method is used a lot by Amazon. Live chat is another way to get to know your customers' needs and softly make recommendations.

- Get the timing right. The best time to upsell is when the customer has purchased an item and is finding out if they like it. If they find that a product doesn't have all the features they wanted they might be open to upgrading to a more expensive model.

- Offer alternative items if you have them, if you don't have the product they want in stock. They might not want the alternative but it will leave a favourable impression in buyers' minds for next time.

If you focus on your customers' needs rather than simply concentrating on increasing sales, you will soon reap the rewards. Meet their wants now and they will hopefully come back for more. Don't confuse them with too many choices or they'll simply hit the back button.

10. E-commerce Checklist

E-commerce is a rapidly changing field, with new entrants joining every day. That's why if you want to grow your e-business and stand out from the competition, it's important to have clearly defined objectives and a robust marketing plan.

When it comes to growing your e-commerce business, always try to see things from the customer's perspective. Experience the buying process through their eyes. Is it easy to shop on your site? Can you quickly find recommendations? Are there plenty of ways to pay?

Get traffic to your site, get them to buy, and get them back if they leave

✓ Use specific landing pages for promotions and certain groups of prospects, since these convert more effectively than using just the homepage. If your PPC ad mentions bike accessories, your landing page should feature these products too.

✓ Use a blog to increase traffic and inform visitors about your products and brand. Provide intelligent content and prospects will start to trust you. Use video, news feeds, or reports and white papers as giveaways.

✓ Multi-channel to increase traffic, and consider using a tool like ChannelAdvisor to manage and automate your orders and product submissions.

✓ Make your site responsive so it can be viewed on a mobile, tablet or desktop. Make sure it's efficient and provides users with a good experience. And it's especially important to check that your site loads quickly.

✓ Give site visitors clear calls to action so they know what to do, and use suggestive or predictive search if you can.

✓ Offer users the option of Facebook sign-in as well as on-site sign-up. Make sure buyers know how to contact you in a number of ways. Encourage users to share good experiences and purchases with friends on social media by placing selected social network buttons on site.

✓ Once you've driven traffic to your e-commerce sites, make the most of it by having a sound retention strategy in place. Even if you lose a prospect before they purchase, you can get them back with a little effort by sending follow-up emails and retargeting. Use emails to get users to return, track customers who didn't complete a purchase and provide them with an option to continue.

✓ Customer feedback is paramount, so you can work out how to improve things and take your business to the next level.

✓ Lastly, take a look at your competition to pick up hints and tips – they've built a good business, but it's taken them time and effort to get there. You can too.