

# eCommerce Check List

If you are thinking about selling stuff online, understand that a lot of information will be required from you. Do you know your products? Do you know your target clients? If you are the least bit unsure, do some more homework.

Your online commerce scheme may be part of an existing business, if not, you may be starting up a new business which will require you to generate new information.



## 1. Business Data

Basic business information like address and phone number are just the beginning. You may want to generate a separate entity for your business to shield your personal information. You start simply by registering a trade name with the state. Your bank will require a certificate from the state or a corporate filing before creating a checking account for a business entity. Depending on how you want your business structured you may want to create a corporation. Ask your accountant or lawyer about creating a business entity and how best to structure that entity.

- If you don't have an accountant and you are in the Phoenix metro area I recommend [Rick Podraza P.C.](#) 480.998.3945
- If you don't have a lawyer and you are in either Arizona or Massachusetts, give [Marc Paquette](#) a call at 480.993.6650
- If you are looking for a great bank to do business with in Scottsdale Arizona I highly recommend that you contact Susie Timm of [UMB](#) 480.459.2135
- Also if you are in the Scottsdale area and need a postal box, you need to call [Michael Castillo of Postamax](#) 480.860.8446

If you don't have an office and you want to shield your home address, get a P.O. Box or get a box at a local postal store. It is secure way for your business mail to be delivered to you and postal stores can also accept packages for you on your behalf.

The same goes for telephone. You will probably need a separate phone line for your business and especially for your online store for customer support. Cell phones are handy as well and usually come with a built-in answering machine. Find out what your local sales tax rate is going to be. If you are going to be reporting retail sales tax for your business, consult with your tax accountant about proper filing.

## 2. Product Data

Whether you are selling ebooks, memberships or tangibles make sure you have in writing, preferably a Word document, a description of each individual item that you are selling. It makes sense to describe your products for your website, your ads, product packaging and of course for your customers so that they can understand your product. Try to avoid superlatives, words like “Super Duper”. We want to know what it is, what it does, how much it costs, and if you have to ship it to your customer, what does it weigh?



- Product Name
- Product Description
- Product Price
- Product Options
- Product Weight
- Product Photo
- 

Photography and artwork should be worked out ahead of time to keep the eCommerce project running smoothly. Get a designer involved early for your product brand if needed. Creating an ad slick for each product brings it all together even before you head for the web.

For photography of products call [Ken Epstein](tel:602.788.3686) 602.788.3686. For design I recommend [Visual Eye Creative](#).

## 3. Payment Gateway

A payment gateway is a necessary online service that is usually procured at the same time as your merchant account. For example if you go to your bank and tell them that you would like to accept online payments through your website they will most likely introduce you to a business banker who will get you set up with a merchant account.

**Merchant Account:** This is a bank account established with a Merchant Account Provider to enable you to process credit card transactions online. Your bank or Merchant Account Provider will process the credit cards through their credit card processor and deposit the money into your merchant account. All merchants need a Merchant Account to be able to accept and process credit card transactions.

**Payment Gateways:** This is an e-commerce application service provider that encrypts sensitive information, such as credit card numbers, to ensure that information passes securely between the customer and the merchant.



Merchant accounts have statement fees ranging anywhere from \$10 to \$20. When you are inquiring about getting a merchant account also ask to have the gateway setup as well. There are monthly fees and an initiation fee. Specify [Authorize Net](#) unless you know for certain that your cart system can connect to a different gateway of your choosing. Authorize Net is the de facto standard for all cart systems. Gateway fees typically run between \$10 to \$20 per month as well.

Paypal has recently entered into the gateway market with a product called [Website Payments Pro](#). This product has no initiation fee and only costs \$30 per month. There are no extra fees to carry AMEX or Discover. For startups this is an inexpensive way to start.

If you are selling in large volumes or high priced items, the transaction rates may be lower with your merchant/gateway solution over Paypal.

#### 4. Shopping Cart System



There are many choices for cart systems. I recommend using 3rd party cart systems over installed scripts. With 3rd party hosted cart systems you are getting a company dedicated to keeping your cart system working. Since you are renting their system, they need to keep their end of the bargain otherwise they would lose business.

Not all cart systems are the same. You will need to review carefully all of the features to make sure the cart system fits your needs. Web designers typically are poor choices for shopping cart advice as they can only relate to you their limited experience. You need a web consultant that specializes in eCommerce to help you, someone who has many years of experience and who is willing to help you research many systems. The list of features are daunting and it is wise to have experienced eyes to help you.

## 5. Marketing

You should plan and budget how you are going to let the world know about your new online store. Consider both traditional and internet marketing. The best way to advertise is with tracking in mind. It can be as simple as adding: "Let us know you saw this ad for a 10% discount". It is valuable information to know where your customers are coming from.

- Automobile Graphics ([Techniprint](#))
- T-shirts and Promotional Products ([Showline Promotional Products](#))
- Newspapers, Magazines and Newsletters ([Cactus Coffee Talk](#))
- Radio and TV

The most direct form of advertising online is with [Google Adwords](#). This is a Pay-per-Click service and can get expensive if you don't know what you are doing. There are specialists available to help you but I personally feel that the small business owner needs to learn how to position their business online. The best way is to see how keywords effect the traffic coming to your website.

You also need links back to your website. Look at getting into online directories. Some directories are free and some have fees. If you are going to do banner ads make sure your banner is compelling and the site that you pay to post it has a lot of traffic.

Don't forget that with the web you can post special landing pages for your web ads and links. This is an easy way for you to gauge the response to your online ads. Your friendly neighborhood web master can help you with that.

Obviously there is much more to talk about for marketing. This is just to get your wheels turning.

Posted on August 23rd, 2008 by Karl Knelson