

Electronic commerce, also known as [e-commerce](#), refers broadly to the buying and selling of goods or services using the internet. Far from being just for big business, many small businesses depend on or benefit from e-commerce. This help topic will provide a framework for small businesses interested in selling online, focused on attracting customers, understanding the customer call to action, and considerations for managing customer experience and customer relationships. Be sure to also visit our guide on [website design for small businesses](#) for help with your e-commerce ventures.

Selling Online: Attracting Customers

Social media is the most common e-commerce strategy used by small businesses to gain customers. As consumers are practicing social distancing during the pandemic, they are interacting more on social media platforms. Effective e-commerce must leverage social media as the new storefront while consumers are reluctant to shop in-store. Consumers may be more inclined to make purchases through social media engagement when companies are responsive, offer promotions, and share interesting visuals. As people spend an average of 84 minutes per day watching videos, video marketing is gaining traction as another powerful tool for growing engagement. Some social media platforms may be more effective than others to reach your desired audience. Here are guides to help determine which platforms

may be best suited for your business:

- [Which Social Media Platforms Are Best Suited for Your Business?](#) – Quicksprout
- [Top Social Media Sites to Consider for Your Business](#) – Oberlo

Here are some other resources related to social media and attracting customers for your online offerings:

- [How to Use Social Media for Customer Service](#) – Business News Daily
- [How to Use Social Media for Small Business Success](#) – Forbes
- [10 Great Ways To Attract New Customers To Your Small Business](#) – Forbes
- [Five Clever Ways To Attract More Customers Online](#) – Forbes
- [The Beginner's Guide to Online Marketing for Small Business](#) – Fundera
- [Digital Marketing 101: What Small Businesses Need to Know](#) – Small Business Trends

Selling Online: Customer Call to Action

Once a potential customer has arrived at your website, it is essential that you present a call-to-action (CTA). For your online store, a strong CTA is what will help turn a website visitor into a paying customer. For more information on CTA, check out these resources:

- [What Is a Call to Action?](#) - The Balance Small Business
- [Business Marketing Essentials: Call to Action](#) - Investopedia
- [39 Call-to-Action Examples](#) - HubSpot Blog

Many factors meld together to encourage or discourage a potential customer to buy from you. [Buying decisions](#) involve many rational and irrational processes going on in your

potential customer's mind. The path to purchase when customers shop online is [most successful](#) when they are searching for specific products, thus paid search and organic search have the highest online [retail conversion](#) rate. If it's a [high-involvement](#) decision, you need to provide a good deal of information about the positive consequences of buying. Stress the important attributes of the product, the advantages compared with the competition and maybe even encourage "trial" or "sampling" of the product to help secure the sale. It all boils down to providing [customer value](#).

So how does your product/service compare in the customer's mind? Think about your performance relative to your competition. Do you compete on price? Uniqueness? Speed? Social or emotional

benefits? Service after the sale? Ultimately, why should someone buy from you? Here are some resources to better understand value proposition, with examples for online stores:

- [Business Essentials: Value Proposition](#) – Investopedia
- [Value Propositions: What They Are and How to Create Them \(with Examples\)](#) – Shopify
- [10 Best Value Proposition Examples \(and How to Create a Good One\)](#) – Oberlo
- [5 Great Value Proposition Examples & Why They Work](#) – Search Engine Journal

Selling Online: Customer Experience

Shopping cart abandonment is one of the biggest hurdles for selling online, as customers typically buy less than 60% of items they add to their shopping cart. The primary reasons for online shoppers to abandon their carts are costly shipping rates, slow delivery speed, invalid promo codes, and re-entering shipping/payment info. Creating frictionless ways to shop (e.g. same-day delivery, curbside pickup, click-and-collect) encourages customers to complete their purchase and shop with you again.

Indeed, providing a positive customer experience is key for success selling your service or product online. For a convenient online customer experience, focus on the following:

- *Make it Easy to Buy.* Once the potential customer has found your website and understands your value proposition, make the purchase process as easy as possible.
- *Keep it simple.* Don't require the customer to complete complicated forms or provide superfluous information during the check-out process. You can always ask for additional information after you've closed the sale.
- *Make it Obvious.* Don't force your customers to search and scroll through the whole page for purchase options. Put those options "[above the fold](#)." Don't distract your customers from the primary objective: closing the sale.
- *It Doesn't Stop There.* It [costs five times more](#) to acquire new customers than retain existing clients. Therefore, it is important to provide end-to-end excellent customer service to earn customer loyalty. Maintaining the website and managing reviews can go a long way.

For more insight on providing a positive online shopping experience for your customers, as well as how to manage customer reviews, explore these resources:

- [How To Improve Your Online Customer Experience During The COVID-19 Pandemic](#) – Forbes
- [13 Effective Ways To Improve E-Commerce Customer Service](#) – Forbes
- [3 Areas to Improve Customer Experience on Your Ecommerce Website](#) – SCORE
- [5 Ways to Enhance Customer Experience in E-commerce](#) – Business2Community
- [Managing Online Reviews: How to Handle Customer Feedback](#) – US Chamber of Commerce
- [Small Business Online Reputation Management Tips](#) – University of Pennsylvania Wharton School

With a smooth customer buying experience, thoughtful [web design](#), and a strong [web presence to drive traffic](#) your small business is well on its way to thriving in the world of e-commerce.

Additional Resources

Already in business or thinking about starting your own small business? Check out our various small business resources:

- View our COVID-19 Resources here: [COVID-19 Small Business Resources](#) and [COVID-19 Industry Resources](#)
- View small business help topics here: [Small Business Information Center](#)
- View business reports here: [Small Business Snapshots](#)
- View industry-specific research here: [Market Research Links](#)

Remember, you can also receive free professional business advice and free or low-cost

business training from your [local Small Business Development Center](#)!

If you have a small business resource you think should be included here, please [Contact Us](#).

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