
E-COMMERCE PROJECT PROFILE

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The following questions will provide a foundation for understanding the requirements for building an e-commerce website.

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OBJECTIVES + STRATEGY

What is the goal for this project?

What outcome will make this project a success?

How competitive is the online marketplace for the products being sold?

How great is the demand for the products online? Has any research been done to see how often the products are being searched for?

What is the strategy for selling the products? If there is a bricks and mortar store, how does this strategy dovetail with that store's strategy?

What are some of the obstacles/challenges that could hinder the success of this project?

Is there a long-term plan for developing the site?

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CORPORATE PROFILE

Briefly describe the story behind your organization.

Is there a mission statement?

What values best describe your organization?

Who are the customers?

Who are the competitors?

How does your organization distinguish itself from competitors?

Why will people shop at your online store? Price? Selection? Service? Speed? Availability? What do you offer customers that makes you competitive?

How is your organization viewed from within the industry?

What are the pros and cons of your organization's image?

PROS

CONS

What other brands are relevant and why?

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SALES

How are sales most often generated – offline or online?

Do you have a database of past clients, existing clients, partners etc.?

What role will the web site play in the overall marketing plan and how does it integrate/complement other marketing programs?

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AUDIENCE

Who is the target audience?

What will each user group want to see and do?

How educated are they about your product? How much assistance do they need to make a purchasing decision? Are they individuals or companies or both?

What are the age ranges of customers? Gender breakdown? Job titles?

Modem Speed [dial-up or high speed]?

What media do they regularly read or watch? [e.g. magazines, newspapers, radio and television, etc.]?

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CONTENT/FUNCTIONALITY

List the main sections and subsections outside of the e-commerce store that will comprise the site and how many pages each section will have.

Describe the functional features besides e-commerce such as a blog, webinar, e-mail marketing integration or other dynamic page content.

How often will the site be revised? What sections?

Does the site need to integrate, either functionally or creatively, with any other sites?

Is any content presently served from a database or will it be in the future? If so describe the database functionality.

Is a search tool being considered?

Are there other dynamic/database driven features being considered?

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E-COMMERCE

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PRODUCTS

How many products?

How many categories and/or subcategories?

How many attributes per product? e.g. color, size, accessories

PRICING

Is all pricing the same, regardless of who is making the purchase?

Do different groups of customers see different pricing on the same items?

Do you ever offer promotional or temporary pricing or price reductions?

What is your pricing strategy for other channels?

ORDERING

Can you build custom orders? Do you want to let customers specify the components of the products they want to purchase?

Do you plan to allow your customers to ask product questions? If you offer complex products that have many variations, how will you guide your customer through the decision-making process toward the right solution for him or her?

How many unique items typically comprise an order?

Do your customers typically purchase the same items again and again to replenish their stock? Do you want to enable registered users or groups to save a permanent shopping list from which they can reorder items they've ordered in the past?

Do you want to offer for sale only items that are in your immediate inventory? Or do you want to offer items for sale even if they are not immediately on hand?

When should customers be notified that the items they selected are either out of stock, not available for immediate delivery, or can be back-ordered?

When do you want to notify the user of a back order? When they are checking out? After they have placed the order? Do you want to recommend a substitution if one is available?

Do you let users know what accessory items are compatible with a purchase about to be made? Do you recommend a substitution if an item is not in stock?

What categories and subcategories do you envision? What are the words your customers use to categorize your products?

ACCOUNTING

What accounting software do you use?

What types of payments do you need to support for your customers? Credit cards? Cybercash? Debit cards? Procurement cards? Purchase orders? Corporate credit accounts? Private label cards?

Will orders outside the U.S. be accepted?

How much authentication do you want to force upon the user? Do you want to authorize cards and transaction amounts with a bank, and then reserve funds,

before issuing order numbers?

How many daily transactions do you forecast?

In what states is tax applicable to your sales? Are all items taxable or only certain items?

FULFILLMENT

What fulfillment and inventory management systems do you presently use?

Where will products come from? Will they be new, re-purposed, or both?

How often will new products be added?

What shipping options do you want to offer? FedEx? UPS? USPS?

When do you stop offering items for sale? When inventory count is at a

minimum or when there are none left in inventory? Is this policy consistent for all products?

How often should orders be sent to order entry?

How will your fulfillment center let the system know that an order has shipped? Do you need to let the system know? Is there a shipping number that needs to get attached to the order? Does shipping status need to be updated more than once, if at all?

Do you want to enable customers to look up the shipping status of their order online? Do you want to provide UPS, FedEx, or USPS tracking numbers?

Would you prefer to be proactive and email changes in the order status to the recipient? Do you want to send messages upon inventory is confirmed or a back order needs to be authorized?

ASSORTED

Technical Support

Do you plan to provide online support materials for the products you sell? Is technical support a product or service in and of itself? Does it need to be processed as an order?

Localization

Do you need to support multiple languages? Multiple currencies?

Regional pricing structures?

Legal

What types of policies and disclaimers do you need to make available to your customers? What are the terms and conditions of a sale? What is your return policy? Do you offer a guarantee or a limited warranty on purchases? What should customers do if they need to return items? Are there any locations where you cannot legally sell your products and services?

Site Metrics

What metrics will you use to manage the site? What reports will you want to see regarding your customers, orders, online merchandise, site traffic analysis, etc.? You can get access to hits and visits, but how will this information answer what you really want to know?: "What did I do that generated the most sales last month? And why?"

Do you want to measure response rates to advertisements and direct marketing tactics? Do you need to evaluate conversion rates on your standard and promotional offers? Do you need to measure and manage your customer acquisition costs?

Customer Profiles

What demographic data do you want to capture as part of the registration or checkout process? What incentives can you offer to encourage anonymous buyers to tell you more about themselves?

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MARKETING

Will the web site be integrated with e-mail marketing or any other type of marketing program whether online or offline?

How will people be driven to the site?

What possible keywords would be entered into a search engine to find the site?

Is an affiliate marketing program being considered?

How important are search engines for generating traffic? Is there a Search Engine Optimization [SEO] program in place?

Do you plan to target future offers to customers based upon their past purchasing histories or browsing habits with your business? Do you plan to automate these marketing features?

Do you plan to offer the same set of products to all your customers? Will you sell to anyone or only to people and groups you know? Do you segment your inventory for certain customers and groups of customers?

How much do your customers know about your products? How many are power users and have model numbers memorized? How many are new customers, who are unfamiliar with your products and need your assistance to make purchasing decisions?

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MAINTENANCE

Who will maintain the site after it is launched?

How much training will be required?

Will marketing programs be automated?

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APPROVAL PROCESS

Who will be managing the project on the client side?

Who is responsible for approving work? Will there be more than one group who will approve work?

Is there a hard deadline for this project? Are there other events/initiatives that will influence the schedule [e.g. marketing campaigns, industry events, etc.]?

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