E-commerce sites - mistakes to avoid

By Charles Mburugu

7 Sep 2013

E-commerce has grown to become a very lucrative industry, with billions of dollars being generated annually through online sales. Unfortunately, not every e-commerce venture will end up being profitable. Many have even failed to survive beyond one year of business. To enhance your chances of success, here are some of the critical mistakes you need to avoid in your e-commerce store design.

1. Poor user experience

Customers are more likely to buy from an e-commerce site which offers shoppers a pleasant user experience. When people visit your site, they would want to find what they are looking for quickly. Therefore, make sure your navigation is simple and intuitive.

You could add a search bar where customers can simply type in a query to find something specific. Besides having simple navigation, you also need to ensure that the checkout process is smooth and fast. Reduce the steps which customers need to go through before making a purchase.

2. Ineffective branding

The past few years have seen a great influx of e-commerce stores on the internet. Therefore, to stand out from the crowd, you need to build a strong brand. Here are some of the elements you need to incorporate for effective branding:

- A domain or business name which is unique and memorable.
- A clear mission statement.
- Strong brand values e.g. 'independence', 'simplicity', 'functionality' and 'affordability'. You need to ensure that the brand values outlined are reflected in all your products.
- Elaborate profiles of target customers. What is their range of income? Where do they reside? What challenges do they face and how can you solve them? Having an e-commerce store which is tailored for a specific target market will enhance your chances of success.

3. Poor visibility in search engines

Your e-commerce store cannot be successful if people cannot find it online. This is why it is important to optimize your website for search engines. If you simply copy and paste the product descriptions provided by the manufacturer, you might end up being penalized for posting duplicate content. In addition, posting product images only without words will not improve your search engine visibility. Therefore, you need to take time to write unique and compelling descriptions which will boost your ranking, as well as your conversion rates. Remember to include relevant and popular keywords in your text.

4. Not collecting customer details

People usually don't buy anything from an e-commerce store on their first visit. You might have to coax them first before they make a purchasing decision. Once they buy something, you would want to keep returning for more. Collecting contact details such as name and email address is the best strategy for staying in touch with your customers. However, avoid forcing prospects to submit their details since this might only push them away, thus

resulting in loss of potential sales.

5. Failing to build a community

Building a community is very important for any e-commerce store. One of the best ways of doing this is by starting a blog. This will give you the opportunity to engage your audience on a more personal level.

Encourage customers to play an active role by writing product reviews and submitting comments. A blog that is updated regularly is likely to attract many visitors to your site, thus enhancing your search engine ranking. It would also be advisable to add social media buttons to your site so as to encourage sharing.

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Charles Mburugu is a professional blogger who writes about internet marketing and web development. He also loves sharing saving tips for online shoppers.
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