



- Commerce

How to start selling online

The Canada/NWT Business Service Centre

The Canada/NWT Business Service Centre (CBSC) recognizes the need for introductory guides as tools for small and medium business owners. With the emerging e-commerce opportunities, the CBSC has developed this booklet to help those business owners start selling online. We welcome any feedback and encourage you to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Your Source for Business Information

In June of 2004, the network of Canada Business Service Centres was awarded the United Nations Public Service Award in the category of Improvement of Public Service Results. The Award recognizes the importance of good governance and efficient, competent and professional public service. There were 10 recipients of the award worldwide and only two recipients in the geographic region covering Europe and North America.

The Canada/NWT Business Service Centre provides a wide range of information on federal and territorial government services, programs and regulations.

The goal of the Canada/NWT Business Service Centre is to provide small business and start-up entrepreneurs with access to accurate, timely and relevant information and referrals. The Centre reduces the complexity of dealing with various levels of government, by serving as a central resource for federal and territorial business information. Currently, there are thirteen Canada

Business Service Centres - one in every territory and province. The Canada Business Service Centres also have a growing network of partners providing access to information in communities across Canada.

Products and Services

Whether you contact the Canada/NWT Business Service Centre in person, by telephone, fax or through the Internet, you will have access to a variety of business products and services including:

- Information Officers, who are available to direct you to an extensive collection of printed and Internet information sources.
- Website, that offers extensive information on small business and a database containing information on government programs, services and regulations. The website is located at www.cbsc.org/nwt
- Referrals to government, associations and private sector specialists.
- Toll-free business information line, ready to serve clients outside of Yellowknife: 1-800-661-0599.
- Library reference and research materials, available to assist you with your market research and business planning. Drop by during our business hours - 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (closed from 12:00 to 1:00).
- Public workstations, equipped with computer, printer, Internet connection and popular software programs.

The Canada/NWT Business Service Centre, located in Yellowknife, recognizes that there are business opportunities everywhere in the NWT. That is why the CBSC teamed up with Community Futures Development Corporations and formed regional access sites throughout the NWT to assist you.



Internet Services from the CBSC

1. Business Start-up Assistant

The digital age has enabled the Canada/NWT Business Service Centre to provide new NWT businesses with a unique interactive service, called the Business Start-up Assistant. This unique service offers valuable information that can help you to develop your business, including:

- Market research;
- Business name and structure;
- Preparing a business plan;
- Financing;
- Taxation;
- Hiring employees;
- Doing business on the Internet;
- ... and more.

The Business Start-up Assistant can be accessed on the Internet at www.cbsc.org/bsa.

2. Interactive Business Planner

Another unique source of information is the Interactive Business Planner. It is the first small business planning software designed specifically to operate on the world wide web. This interactive online tool will help you prepare a comprehensive business plan for your new or existing business. This service is effective, easy to use and absolutely free. It can be an invaluable source, saving you time by:

- Providing online help with a simple click of your mouse;

- Saving your plan on the site's server with password protected access; and
- Allowing you to download your plan, print it and use it to obtain financing.

Save yourself the time and effort of trying to do everything yourself. Check out the Interactive Business Planner at www.cbsc.org/ibp.

3. Online Small Business Workshop

The Online Small Business Workshop (OSBW) is a web-based workshop designed to provide you with techniques for developing your business idea. It is organized into five sessions, each focusing on a different area of business.

Session 1 - Starting with a Good Idea

Session 2 - Marketing Basics

Session 3 - Financing Your Business

Session 4 - Planning Fundamentals

Session 5 - Basic Regulations for Getting Started

The OSBW can be found at www.cbsc.org/osbw.

Of course, if you have any questions, remember an Information Officer is there to help during regular business hours. Any way you look at it, we've got you covered.

Table of Contents

1. Welcome to e-commerce from the Canada/NWT Business Service Centre

2. Table of contents

3. Introduction

- a. What is e-commerce?
- b. Why should I read this booklet?
- c. Why should I learn more?
- d. How can I benefit from e-commerce?

4. Before you begin

- a. Do I have the basic knowledge required?
- b. If not, STOP, this book is not for you!
- c. How can I learn more?
- d. I have the knowledge, LET'S GO!
- e. What do I need to start e-commerce?

5. Types of e-commerce

- a. Brochureware
- b. Auction sites
- c. Online stores
- d. Online malls
- e. Subscription sites
- f. PayPal

6. Getting started in e-commerce

- a. Planning and understanding your business
- b. Choosing the right type of e-commerce for your business
- c. Designing your website
 - Design
 - Domain names
 - Site maps
- d. Software
- e. All-in-one website services

- f. Hosting your site – internal vs. external hosting

7. Protecting your investment

- a. The importance of security
- b. The basics

8. Your marketing plan

- a. The marketing plan
- b. Targeting your customers
- c. Search engines - getting your website found first
- d. Links management
- e. Maintaining and managing your site
 - Content management

9. Customer service

- a. Take care of your customers
- b. Automation and call centres
- c. Order fulfillment
 - Logistics
 - Shipping
 - International orders

10. Summary

11. Appendix

12. Glossary

13. Step-by-step instructions

- a. Brochureware
- b. Auction sites
- c. Online stores
- d. Online malls
- e. Subscription sites
- f. PayPal

Welcome to *E-Commerce:*

How to Start Selling Online.

This booklet will help you understand the many different things you need to consider before you begin selling online. After reading this, you will know what to do before you get started, the different ways you can sell online, and important questions to ask.

What is e-commerce?

A general definition of e-commerce is that it is the exchange of goods and services over the Internet, including the transfer of funds. This means anytime you buy a piece of clothing or pay for a service like cable TV online, you are participating in e-commerce. It is much bigger than just shopping online though. It also includes any time you provide money for something over the Internet. If you can think of it and sell it and someone buys it from you using the Internet, then that's e-commerce.

Why should I read this booklet?

E-commerce is becoming more popular as more and more people have high-speed Internet and are becoming comfortable with buying things online. Many experts predict that e-commerce spending will grow faster than traditional retail sales in the years to come.

Not just e-commerce veterans are benefiting from the increased use of the Internet though. Even traditional retailers like your local sporting goods store owe some of their success to e-commerce. Their customers use the Internet to research the item they want to buy and compare prices, but still go into the store to make the actual purchase. Market research and sales reports often miss these online shoppers, but there are more and more of them as e-commerce grows and expands.

Why should I learn more?

The North is a very small market for any product or service. There are not very many customers walking by stores or large populations to buy your service. By opening your business to the billions of people using the Internet, you can increase your sales beyond the limitations of living in the North.

The Internet and computers are driving most of the business in the world today. This means, as well as having more potential customers, competition is getting closer as well. In order to prepare for doing business now and in the future, you need to learn about selling online.



How can I benefit from e-commerce?

There is a lot to be gained, and a lot of money to be made from selling your product or service online. Some of the benefits of selling online include:

- **Global market:** Businesses can sell their products to a huge base of consumers. The more potential customers you have, the more potential you have to make money.
- **No middleman:** The more “hands” a product passes through between it being made and being sold, the more that product will cost. With e-commerce the sale can be done in as little as one transaction.
- **The little guy can look big:** Small businesses can compete with larger ones.
- **The store is always open:** Online shopping can happen at any time of day, making it easier for customers to buy your product.
- **Happier customers:** If your website and order filling procedures work well, your customers are in charge. They can buy, ship, track and return orders easily.
- **Lower marketing costs:** Word of mouth, email, and search engine-recommended lists all contribute to the success of an e-commerce venture.
- **Lower overhead costs:** Maintaining a website is much more affordable than the staffing, rental, and other costs associated with typical retail stores.
- **Better knowledge of your customers:** Having online clients set up accounts with your site not only makes it easier for your customers to shop when they return to the site the next time, it also

gives you information about the buying habits of your customers. This can be used to improve marketing and pricing strategies.

- **Inventory, shipping and purchasing controls:** An automated system is immediately put in place to control inventory, process orders and ship product.

It is actually quite easy to get yourself up and running on e-commerce. Follow these steps and you should be well on your way to promoting your site and product instantly to millions through e-commerce.





Do I have the basic knowledge required?

Some experience and a good understanding of how computers and the Internet works is essential before you begin e-commerce. This book does not recommend that people with no experience begin selling online because mistakes can be costly. Also, being comfortable with computers will help you go through the steps in this book and make the decisions for selling your product or service along the way.

Ask yourself some of the following questions before you go any further:

- Have I used a computer before?
- Do I have access to a computer when I need it?
- Is my product something that can be bought online (plumbing services for example are not, but selling carvings or arts and fine crafts is)?
- Do I know where to find help if I need it?

If not, STOP, this book is not for you!

If you answered “No” to any of the questions above, you should not go through this booklet and try to start selling online right away. The good news is that it is very easy to get the basic knowledge to catch up and be in a position to start selling online.

How can I learn more?

It is important to have some basic understanding and knowledge of how to use computers

and the operating systems that run them (Windows 98, Windows XP, Windows 2000, Linux or Mac OS X). As well, you should have a sound understanding of the Internet and what the Internet can do as an information and marketing tool. If you do not have any knowledge of these things or are very new to computers and the Internet, here are some good resources that will provide you with the basics that you will need to get started.

1. Aurora College

Talk to any of the three campuses or one of the community learning centres to find out about the courses they offer. There are many introductory level courses that will help you with the basics of business and computers.

2. Academy of Learning

Located in Yellowknife, this company allows students to progress at their own pace and has specific courses for many different computer activities and levels of experience.

There are other resources available to you throughout the NWT. Use the Appendix at the back to find some of them or talk to someone in your community that can help you.

I have the knowledge, LET'S GO!

Are you ready to start learning about e-commerce now? If you've thought about this and have the basic knowledge necessary, then you're almost ready to start the process that will get you selling online.



What do I need to start e-commerce?

Once you have completed training yourself on both computer operation and becoming familiar with the Internet and basic concepts of how information is found and shared, you will need access to the following items before you start selling online.

1. Computer (these are minimum requirements)

- a. Intel Pentium or equivalent
- b. Windows 98SE/2000/ME/XP/NT4.0/SP6.0 or higher
- c. 64 Mb RAM (128 Mb RAM recommended)
- d. 25 Mb hard disk space
- e. Word processing software such as MS Word
- f. CD Rom drive

2. Internet access

Local dial-up, high speed cable or Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) connection.

3. Computer software that supports development of e-commerce sites or website design

You will need to be familiar with how to use this program, or the basics of it at the very least.

4. Email account

Hotmail, Yahoo!, Excite, Gmail or one that comes with your Internet access.

5. A company who can host your website

Such as the company you get your Internet and email from or one of many other options available.

6. Scanner or digital pictures of your products (JPG, BMP, TIFF or GIF files)

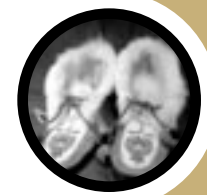
7. Bank account number

8. Credit card (this is not mandatory)

Start a checklist as you read through the information in this booklet. Make note of any areas that are of particular interest to yourself and the type of e-commerce solution that you are interested in as you read about them. Use the Glossary at the back if you come across any words you need explained along the way.

Note: Depending on the type of e-commerce solution you set up, some things may not be necessary or you may need software or hardware not described above.





Types of e-commerce

Although there are several options available, there are five broad categories for e-commerce businesses. This section will help you figure out which one is right for you. The five categories are:

- Brochureware
- Auction sites
- Online stores
- Online malls
- Subscription sites

While not an option for e-commerce business, PayPal is the most popular and easiest way to accept payment over the Internet without expensive bank charges.

- PayPal

Brochureware

Brochureware refers to a site that takes a company's printed brochure and puts it into a web format. Simple, but effective, brochureware sites give new and existing customers valuable information like company mission statements, store hours and locations. Brochureware is often the way many companies with existing sales channels or locations enter the online world. Product information and phone numbers can also be a part of the site, but the final sale isn't completed online.

Outdoor recreation retailers often have brochureware websites. While no selling is conducted online, the website is used to communicate with the stores'

customers and provide information about upcoming events and featured products. The site should be regularly updated and contain relevant features like a "Staff Picks" section of staff-recommended products. Other industries that may use brochureware include tourism outfitters (for guided trip descriptions) or not-for-profit organizations (to share information about upcoming events).

Is brochureware for you? If you are only looking to have an online presence but still rely heavily on customer service to close the sale, this solution may be best. Often, your expertise may require speaking to your customers. In this case, your main goal is to have customers call you so you can demonstrate your knowledge and describe your product.

How to get started with brochureware is described in the step-by-step instructions at the back of this book.



Auction sites

Auction sites have become very close to online malls. For the most part, there are now only three main players in this category: Yahoo!, eBay, and Amazon. However, a number of smaller auction sites exist on the Internet. You should approach these with caution as they may generate very little traffic and be a waste of your time and money.

eBay.ca and other auction sites are just like a traditional auction with paddles and bids; a seller puts something up for sale, interested buyers place bids, and the item is sold to the highest bidder. The only difference with an auction website is that it all occurs online and the auction can last for days.

Auction sites can be used in many ways. They are e-commerce businesses themselves, where the owner sets up the site and charges buyers and/or sellers for access and transactions. Another way to use auction sites is to make one a part of your online store to move discounted and discontinued items.

For most companies, using another company's auction site is easier than setting up your own. Many stores use sites like eBay to market their items because they know that there are millions of people visiting these auction sites every day. Just like online malls, there can be setup costs for auction sites, but they are usually low and sometimes free.

Books have been published on how to effectively sell items on eBay. See the Appendix for recommended books.

An auction site may be best for you if a picture of your product is enough to sell it. Arts and fine crafts fit this category very well because the visual image and the written description are enough to convince

the consumer to purchase the product. Try asking yourself if your product is something that you would look for and buy on eBay yourself, or try looking for similar products. This will indicate the level of interest on auction sites for your product.

How to get started with auction sites (eBay) is described in the step-by-step instructions at the back of this book.



Online stores

The online store is the most typical form of e-commerce. Just like brochureware, you can find company and product information at the online store. But with an online store customers can buy the products and the owner can track those purchases. To be effective, it is very important that an online store provides very detailed product information. This attracts potential customers, and it gives them the confidence in your product and your company, to actually make a purchase.

The NWT Development Corporation operates Arctic Canada Trading Co. Perhaps the broadest online store in the NWT, www.arctic-can.nt.ca is a good example of what the typical online store looks like. The Shopping Cart feature allows customers

to pick items and put them aside while they continue shopping, and then proceed to “Check Out” when finished shopping.

Online stores are a bigger commitment and will be right for you if your product has the most appeal to customers outside of the NWT. Some art galleries in Yellowknife have been very successful selling northern art and carvings using the online store type of e-commerce.

How to get started with your own online store is described in the Step-by-Step instructions at the back of this book.



Online malls

Like a real shopping mall, an online mall provides the infrastructure, address and traffic for retailers. Online malls can provide small businesses with product catalogues, shopping carts and secure transaction processing. The user gets all of this without the cost of custom development or internal hosting. Even though there are often transaction and/or subscription fees for using an online mall, for a smaller company or startup venture with fewer transactions, the online mall is a great way to get started.

Yahoo! Store is one of the biggest online

malls and has a Canadian version at ca.store.yahoo.com. It hosts more than 10% of all online stores. It offers web space, shopping carts, online catalogues, order management systems, discounts on marketing services and technical support.

An online mall gives you a chance to test how much demand there is for your product. If you don't have high sales now, but want to start selling online, this is a good option for you. For example, you may not want to develop a full online store for moose hair tuftings, but want to try e-commerce. Setting up your own store within an online mall may then be the solution for you.

How to get started with online malls (Yahoo!) is described in the step-by-step instructions at the back of this book.



Subscription sites

Subscription sites target customers with very specific or particular interests. They offer expert information, services or products. Newsletters, technical information, financial advice, research reports, videos, music, graphics and computer games related to an interest are sold on a monthly or transaction fee basis.

The most familiar subscription site in the North is likely Northern News Services Ltd. As publishers of News North, Deh Cho Drum, Inuvik Drum and the Yellowknifer, www.nnsl.com offers online access to full news stories only to subscription holders. The technique used by this site is to give all visitors access to recent headlines, however only subscribers can access the full story and the archive.

Subscription sites are great for service-oriented people. If you provide information like summaries of media coverage about the oil and gas industry in the NWT, you may want to offer the latest headlines for free and then charge people subscriptions to view the full analysis. This way, you promote your business online but hold back the real product for those subscribers that pay for your service.

How to get started with subscription sites is described in the step-by-step instructions at the back of this book.

PayPal

Organizing and accepting payment can be very difficult if it's your first time trying to sell online. PayPal is an Internet-based banking service that makes this very easy. By setting up your account, you can accept all the major credit cards from customers wanting to purchase your product online. Without a service of this type, you have to rely on the mail or couriers to exchange the money instead of just mailing your product once the funds are confirmed by PayPal.

PayPal is a service that will work with any of the e-commerce options described before this, from your own online store to getting started on eBay.

How to get started with PayPal is described in the step-by-step instructions at the back of this book.





Planning and understanding your business

While it's easy to get carried away in the excitement of starting your own e-commerce business, slow down and do some planning. The more effort you put into the planning stage, the more likely it is that your business will run smoothly and make money.

Choosing the right type of e-commerce for your business

Make sure your business plan answers the following questions:

- What do you want your website to accomplish?
- How will you make money?
- How will your customers find you?
- What makes your site different?
- How will you deliver your product or service?
- How will you maintain your website?
- How will you help and serve your customers?
- What will demand be?
- Are you able to meet that demand?

While they may not come up in this order for every business, these questions are really the same as those asked in a normal business plan. Make sure you have a solid business plan in place before starting any e-commerce business.

For information on how to write a business

plan, contact the CBSC office or visit www.cbsc.org/nwt and review the document "How to Start a Business in the NWT."

Designing your website

Design

There are many good books on website design that go into far more detail than this guide. How fast your home page loads and each page after that loads is very important. In e-commerce, faster is better. Your home page should be attractive, inviting, and above all, simple. Use it to draw your customer in, and then make sure to give them the navigational tools to discover more.

Another good idea is to be consistent with your choice of font, design and layout styles. While multimedia tools can seem like a fun idea, ask yourself if you would wait 30 seconds for a logo to erupt into flames or to have a school of fish follow the cursor. Unless they tie-in to your marketing strategy, they will take away from the integrity and success of your online store. Only use them if they help keep customers on your site.

For example, if you wanted to attract Japanese customers, there are a number of things you could do. Using lots of images of the Northern Lights would help, as most Northerners are familiar with the Japanese fascination with our northern light show. Having Japanese/English translations will also help those visitors with weaker English skills. Most importantly though, visit some Japanese e-commerce sites to find out what

Northern Notes:

The goal is to give the customer the information they want in as few clicks as possible. Therefore, if you're selling "the North" in your product, put that out front and centre.



works for them in their own country and try to fit your product to a proven design for the Japanese consumer.

Domain names

Choosing your domain name (your website address on the Internet) is an important step. It is what you type into your web browser's menu bar, and is a way to personalize your address on the Internet. This will make it easy for people to find you. You can find out what domain names are available by going to www.domainnames.ca. You should pick a name that:

- makes sense;
- is easy to remember; and
- is as brief as possible.

Once you've chosen your name, you will have to register it. The information you will receive from the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (www.cira.ca) will be needed later when you are setting up your website.

Note: Registering your own domain name only applies if you plan on opening up your own store. Brochureware and auction sites for example, will not require your own domain name. In those cases, part of what you are paying for is the traffic their domain name (like eBay) already generates. See the Step-by-Step instructions for details specific to the type of e-commerce you have chosen.

Site maps

With your plan in place, you'll need to consider how to approach your website's structure; that is, how people go from page to page on your website and where they will find the information they are looking for. The best way to lay out your website is to begin with a site map. The site map is a diagram that maps each page of a website. Also

called a storyboard, it helps you build a site that meets your needs and is also easy for your customers to find their way around.

A good site map is developed after you've completed your business plan. That's where you will figure out what your customer needs and wants and will have answered all of those unexpected questions that come up when you're starting a new business.

If you start to plan your website earlier, you may waste both time and money because you will have to go back and change the way your website works. You only want to have to build your website once.

As well, the site map shows the skeleton of the website, displays links between pages and describes how each page is represented. Some maps also include visual elements, page numbers and descriptions of the images. This way it is clear to everyone involved in the project how to navigate through the site and what happens with each click of the mouse, BEFORE you start building the actual website.

Software

If you like the idea of hosting your own e-commerce website, but don't want or need the high cost of custom development, there is software available that you can use to set up your own online store hosted on your server. They usually include a shopping cart of sorts, a database to load your product(s) into and the ability to process transactions. The overall design may not be as exciting as it is with a custom design, but the program's templates really help to cut down design development and testing time. A potential issue is that the software doesn't usually show you the programming code. This means you can't really change the process

of how your site works and if there are problems with your site, you have to call the software company for help.

Knowing your customers and managing your sales orders can be one of the most difficult issues you will face. A relational database or customer-relationship-management product helps you organize your customers and orders.

The company that makes Maximizer, a popular customer-relationship-management product, also sells ecBuilder (www.maximizer.com/solutions/ecbuilder), an easy-to-use e-commerce store in a box. A beginner can use this software and follow the prompts to get a website and catalogue up and running in minutes.

4th Dimension (4D), a popular relational database company, sells the 4D business kit (www.4d.com/products/4dbk.html). Like ecBuilder, it's a web server, multi-store manager, and database all in one. 4D works on PC and Macintosh computers. It can also be extended with the 4D database system.

These packages need a computer and high-speed Internet access. They make it easy to get started and let people browse your catalogue, but you may still need a technical consultant to make sure the processes run smoothly and that you're connected all the time.

All-in-one website services

In some ways, website services, such as Yahoo! Store, can really take the worry out of e-commerce. The advantages to using these services include:

- No worrying if the server is going to startup properly after a power outage;
- Your high-speed Internet connection is always working; and
- The viruses (infections to your computer), fire, or theft of equipment that could "close" your store for some time are someone else's worry and responsibility.

Instead, these problems are left up to your service provider. Their system is likely to be much better than what you can purchase,



and they have full-time staff who are well-trained in making sure everything is working the way it's supposed to.

Yahoo! Store, eBay, and **freemercants.com** are all examples of all-in-one website service providers. Web hosting providers like **1and1.com** and **halfpricehosting.com** are also in the business of helping people start online shopping carts and managing their stores. With many of these service providers, you can literally have a store up and running in a matter of hours.

Hosting your site - internal vs. external hosting

Hosting refers to the computer where you put the files and programs that make up your website. If this computer is in your office and controlled by you then that is called hosting internally. Hosting externally is when you have another company provide this service for you.

While it can be a challenge, in the long term, hosting your server at your place of business is often the most rewarding way to have an online store. It has the highest start-up costs, but the longer you have the business running the less the investment costs you over time.

If your site has more pages or your business is doing more transactions than the average site, bringing the development in-house might be the right thing to do. Before deciding, make sure you have the right equipment and access to high-speed Internet.

A very popular way to start up an e-commerce business is using the services of a hosting provider. Hosting providers can publish everything from a single page website to a giant, multi-national,

e-commerce store. Use the table on the next page to see which option would work best for you. Make sure you're realistic about the money you have to spend and the technical ability of the people that will help you run your business.

Northern Notes:

Local Internet technology consultants can offer help with setup and trouble-shooting. The additional investment may help to ensure the setup process works as well as it can.



Internal vs. external hosting

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Internal Hosting	Everything is customized for your business	Custom software development is expensive
	No transaction fees (other than merchant accounts like Visa and Mastercard)	Must have high speed internet service, all day every day
	Your e-commerce site can be as big as your imagination. The size of your server(s) determines your capacity	The cost of security certificates and renewal every year
	Accounting functions can be custom built for your business	Administration and maintenance of equipment are required
External Hosting	Very high-speed service available	Your virtual storefront is not located at your business
	Security certificates and merchant account setup often provided by hosting service	You are charged transaction fees and hosting fees
	Equipment and connection managed by provider	You must depend upon a third party to keep your store running all the time



The importance of security

If you are considering hosting your own site, either with a custom-developed server or an off-the-shelf package, the information in this chapter is very important. If you are using an online service for your store, you may wish to read about security first so you can ask your service provider questions regarding their security policy.

Internet security is very complicated; this chapter will only give you basic information. If you can, it would be a very good idea to hire a security specialist to evaluate your plan and help you set up a store that can't be "broken into" by computer thieves or viruses. Spending that money now may save you from losing a lot later.

The costs of not having a sound security policy can be enormous. Theft, fraud, lawsuits and store downtime can all be the unfortunate consequences of poor security.

The basics

Firewalls - provide protection from the general Internet for your servers. These help protect against viruses. McAfee is an example of a firewall protection software

program you may be already familiar with.

Access control - the security of usernames and passwords is a high priority.

Encryption - data coming in and out of your server is encrypted. This means that dishonest people trying to read the information while it's travelling from one computer to another won't be able to understand things like credit card numbers and personal contact information.

Vulnerability testing - make sure your e-commerce software has been tested for attacks and any holes are patched before your site is live on the web.

Virus protection - software packages like Norton AntiVirus and firewalls can help prevent viruses from invading your computer.

Viruses - programming code that invades your computer or system. It is usually transferred by email and can severely damage or ruin your system.





The marketing plan

You've got your website running well. The online store is open and ready for a flood of customers to come clicking in. How are they going to know where to find you? What is going to drive them to your store? Marketing your site is as important as building your site. It is best to ask an expert for help; general marketing solutions don't often provide results as they don't take the people in your target audience into account. See the Appendix for recommended books and websites.

Northern Notes:

Many local marketing agencies and consultants are out there. Speak to one about what they can do to help you. Marketing your site is as important as building your site.

Make your marketing dollars matter. Other businesses and organizations (such as NWT Arctic Tourism) may already be investing in online advertising in which you may partner. This makes your marketing dollars go further.

You will need to decide what you want your marketing to do:

1. **Increase product awareness;**
2. **Increase traffic to your website;**
3. **Promote special events or sales; or**
4. **Rank your site higher with search engines.**

While marketing online may be obvious for your e-commerce site, sometimes traditional marketing may work as well. Make sure you use the methods that give you the best combination of budget, size of audience, targeting of audience and of course, results.

Some common methods include:

- Banner ads on other websites
- Pay-per-click programs
- Links on other websites
- Search engine optimization
- Category links on search engines
- Electronic newsletters or email updates
- Magazines or newspapers
- Direct mail
- Event sponsorship
- Promotional giveaways



Northern Notes:

The easier it is to find your site the more traffic you'll receive. If advertising online, look for opportunities that are already attracting visitors with a northern interest. The "awareness advertising" by others will make your product easier to sell to an established audience.

Most importantly, the mix you choose has to communicate your audience-message clearly, engage the audience and get results.

Targeting your customers

Knowing who your customers are is the cornerstone of a good marketing strategy. If you plan to sell outside of North America, you have to consider some additional issues, such as language translations, money exchange, taxation, and shipping issues.

Beyond the technical issues, proper marketing also depends on what you know about your audience personally. How old are they? How much money do they spend on products like yours? How often do they buy products like yours? What are their other interests? Knowing this type of information helps you develop marketing plans that will sell your product. Even if you don't start out with this type of information, you can gather it along the way by interacting with your customers.

Search engines - getting your website found first

In order for people to find your website on the Internet, you must be listed with a search engine. Examples of search engines are Google and Yahoo!.

There are three ways to get listed:

1. Wait for the search engine to find your site and save it in its database. This can take up to six weeks (or more) and each time the website changes it can take another six weeks to register the change.
2. Register directly with each of the search engines (which can be costly).
3. Use one of the site submission services (for example, www.macromedia.com) that registers your site with multiple search engines at once (more economical).

Here are a few tips to make sure that your site is toward the top of search engine lists:

- Title: The headline for your website is the first thing search engines use to register your site. Be sure it is punchy, descriptive and effective.
- Text: The first 25 words (or 255 characters) of your home page are indexed. It is best to write it so that it contains as many keywords as possible.



You can even hide this with an image placed at the top of your page that is not seen by the audience by making the background and font colour of the text “clear”.

- **Keywords:** These are target words that will direct people to your website. Keyword strategies:
 - i. Avoid plurals, such as “boats” instead of “boat”. Searching “boat” will find “boats”, but searching “boats” will not find “boat”.
 - ii. Never use common terms like “web”, “Internet”, “net” or “services” as they are ignored by the search engine.
 - iii. Include incorrect spellings of words that are commonly misspelled.
- **Meta tags:** These are words search engines go looking for when they receive a search request. List your keywords here and include meta tags on every web page you publish. Talk to your web designer about this.
- **Link popularity:** This refers to not only the number of sites that have your website referenced, but also to the number of links to other websites that you have on your site. This is tricky, as search engines ignore sites that are only links, but will rank your site higher if you have more websites connected to yours.

Another way to get found is by hiring a search engine optimization consultant, but this can be expensive and results are difficult to prove. These professionals help to get your site found for even the most generic search terms.

There is software available to help you get a high ranking with search engines without

being penalized for “keyword stuffing” (using excessive amounts of key words). These points will get you well on your way, but make sure to learn about it. The more knowledgeable you are about developing and managing your site, the more likely your e-commerce business will be a success.

Northern Notes:

Many Aboriginal names are difficult to spell. Anticipate common misspellings when setting up your website.

Links management

Links are connections between your site and another site, or from one page to another within your site.

Broken links are a huge problem on the Internet. Some say as many as 10% of all the links on the Internet are broken. Would you ever trust a company who gave you directions to a dead end? Many links management applications are available that can help you with this problem.

Link Checker Pro:

www.linkcheckerpro.com Does just what it says and is inexpensive.

Change Agent:

www.xlanguage.com/products/cagent.htm Similar to Link Checker Pro and works well with other applications.

Northern Notes:

Link to as many like-minded businesses and organizations as possible. It will help consumers find your site, and odds are, consumers interested in one northern product will be interested in another. It is proper to always ask for permission to link to another site.

Maintaining and managing your site

Making sure your site stays up-to-date with the changes in your company and the changes in technology can take a lot of effort. However, this effort pays off when users visit your site and find it interesting and full of new information that's useful to them.

If you're not sure where you can make improvements, the best people to ask are your customers. They will like being asked for their opinion and you will have suggestions that will keep them buying more product from your business. As they're at least once removed from your business, they will see things differently and offer suggestions that you and your team would never have thought of. A simple survey that pops up when someone visits your home page or an email survey (if you have your customers' email addresses in a database) can produce some great results. If you can afford to hold a draw for a prize for everyone who completed the survey, you may get a better response.

Set up a maintenance system that is easy enough that the person in charge of doing it can be replaced with someone else with little training. How complex your site is will determine how complex the update system

will be. One suggestion is to keep a website maintenance log. Every time the person in charge makes a change, it's noted in the log and they also include why the change was made. While it may seem like it would take up a lot of time, think about how much time it will take the next person to take over maintaining the website without this information.

Content management

Use software to your advantage. There are many applications that can help you maintain your site. They let people with very little technical knowledge edit and contribute new content.

Site management software: NQcontent
www.nqcontent.com

Easy to use content management: Vignette
www.vingette.com

Keeping your site current and fresh will keep consumers coming back. Always keep your database of products as up to date as possible.

Very few businesses get it 100% right the first time their site goes live on the Internet, but the ones that are successful keep moving toward that goal!





Take care of your customers

The first step is to have a strategy. Too often, online marketers focus on marketing, technology and delivery of the product without having a good system for handling simple emails from customers. People think, “we’ll cross that bridge when we get to it”, but sometimes the bridge arrives before anyone realizes and customers end up down river at another site. Have you ever sent an email to a business only to wait 3, 5 or 7 days for a response? How does that make you feel about the company?

Sometimes it is a company’s success that is their downfall. The more orders that come in, the busier the people get who are filling them. Make sure that there is someone who is there to talk to customers or to respond to emails, otherwise you may lose business to other companies who do make a priority of consumer inquiries.

To see if your strategy is going to work effectively, ask yourself these questions:

- How is the customer service department going to handle every part of a transaction, from customer questions, to delivery, to returns and complaints?
- Is there a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) list on your website that is easily accessible?
- Can a customer login and check the status of an order?
 - Do all the emails and calls get responded to within one business day?
- Can customers easily call and talk to a human?



- Does the website provide the ability to automatically email customers with updates if they request it?

Automation and call centers

Your best bet is to provide as much information as possible on the website. If you want to encourage customers to contact your company by email, put a 24-hour return email policy in place. By being responsive and making sure the ordering process is as automated as possible, phone calls can be avoided. If a customer does pick up the phone, having a real person with access to the order status is the ideal situation.

Order fulfillment

Growth is the goal, but as you grow your business will likely become more complicated as you have to deal with a larger number of orders and more shipping. Managing the current level of activity and being prepared for growth is the best way to achieve success.

Logistics

The term logistics refers to the various systems you have in place in order to do business. After you’ve gone to all the effort of planning the setup and marketing of your online venture, consider these questions:

- How will you process orders?
- How will you handle multiple suppliers?
- How will you deal with errors?
- How will you handle returns?

Shipping

Another issue an online business has is shipping. In the NWT, this presents an even greater challenge. Sometimes it costs as much to ship an item as it does to buy the

actual item. This challenge can be addressed in many ways. Encourage customers to buy several items at once, use slower shipping methods that save money (postal service, or 2 day services) or focus on selling specialty items that are of a higher value. Ask yourself these questions:

- What couriers will be used and how will shipments be tracked?
- Can customers track shipments online?
- Can customers choose their couriers?
- How will you charge for shipping?
- Can customers ship to multiple destinations?
- What do you do if an order is lost or damaged during delivery?

International orders

The global nature of the Internet and the potential to market to the global audience is tempting. Before doing so, answer these questions:

- How will you handle currency exchange?
- How will you handle duties, taxes and customs clearance?

- Can you ship your product internationally? Some countries limit the import of food and animal items, such as whalebone carvings. This can be a problem for an export based business that is just starting up.
- Are you prepared for additional international shipping charges?

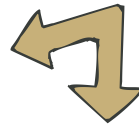
Although this chapter asks more questions than it answers, it should help to get you thinking about the issues that will come up as your business gets off the ground.



YOU



Stop! This book is not for you.



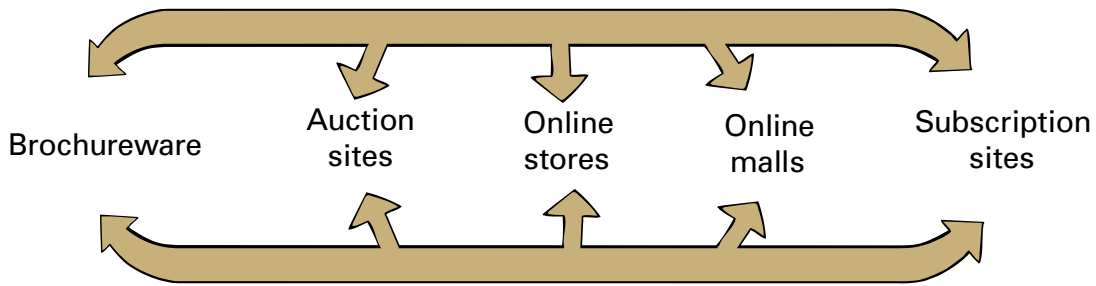
Let's Go!



Check your equipment.



What type of e-commerce is best for you?



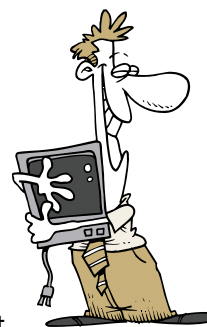
Getting started: planning, design, software and hosting. Use the step-by-step instructions.



Protect your investment.



Customer service and fulfillment.



Marketing your e-commerce site: marketing planning, targeting customers, search engines, links management and maintaining your website.

Appendix

The following are suggestions only and are not comprehensive of all services and products available.

List of books for further reading

Selling Online: Canada's Bestselling Guide to Becoming a Successful E-Commerce Merchant , Revised Updated. Jim Carroll, Rick Broadhead

E-Commerce: Fundamentals and Applications. Henry Chan, Raymond Lee, Tharam Dillon, Elizabeth Chang

eBay For Dummies: 4th Edition. Marsha Collier

List of websites for further reading

Industry Canada Digital Economy:
www.e-com.ic.gc.ca/epic/inernet/inecic-ceac.nsf/en/home
<http://strategis.gc.ca/ebizenable>

E-commerce info:
www.ecommerce-guide.com
www.online-commerce.com

Website creation:
www.creating-a-site.com

Online hosting:
www.shopsite.com

Building your website: There are many companies that will be able to help build your site. Check your local telephone or business directory.



Glossary

Applet - Small programs that can be downloaded and used by any computer.

Application - A software program that performs a task. Internet Explorer and Microsoft FrontPage are applications.

Bandwidth - How much bandwidth is available to you determines how much information can be transferred over a given communications link.

Bookmark - A feature offered in a web browser that stores a website's location in the user's browser.

Brick-and-mortar - Refers to a traditional business with real buildings and facilities.

Browser - The software that comes with your operating system used for surfing the Internet (such as Internet Explorer or Netscape).

Call center - A place where all customer service calls are answered and handled.

CGI script (Common Gateway Interface) - A program that, when running on a server, provides interactivity for the web user.

Client/Server - A client is a computer or application that is served by another networked computer, called a server.

Cookie - Cookies are relatively harmless and allow a website to "know" who you are when you visit, without re-entering information. Technically, they are text strings of information on your computer.

Database - A computerized "filing cabinet" that allows for the storage and retrieval of data.

Domain name - The unique name or address of a website. eg: **cbc.ca** and **yahoo.ca**.

DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) - Using ordinary copper telephone lines, provides high-speed Internet service.

E-commerce - Trading goods (buying and selling) over an electronic communications system, such as the Internet.

Email - A method of exchanging mail messages over an electronic communications system.

Firewall - Hardware or software that protects one computer network from another.

FTP (File Transfer Protocol) - An Internet protocol that allows you to transfer or share large files.

GIF (Graphic Interface Format) - An image encoding format that allows for the display of graphics on screen. Using GIF files on a website is better because they're smaller files which makes your site load faster.

Home page - The main page of a website that normally serves as the starting point for navigating around the entire site.

HTML (HyperText Markup Language) - A programming language used to create documents on the Internet with tags and attributes that define how a document is formatted.

Internet - A public global network of computers that exchange data.

Internet Merchant Account (IMA) - Enables a merchant to accept credit cards over the Internet. IMAs can be obtained through an ordinary bank.

IP Address - A unique identification number that locates computers, servers and devices on the Internet: eg: 192.168.1.1 is an IP address.

JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) - A compression technique used for photographs. Their small size makes them the most common file type for photos on the Internet.

LAN (Local Area Network) - A short distance data network that provides communications between computers at a local site.

Merchant Account - A business account at a financial institution that processes credit card transactions.

Meta Tag - A part of HTML programming that usually describes the type of information or products found on a website. Located near the beginning of the page's source code, search engines use meta tags to index pages by subject.

Multimedia Tools - Software programs or techniques that engage the audience with site features other than static images. For example, moving text, fading images, motion video or sound.

Operating System - The software that controls all of the computers operations, including memory, disk, printing and networking.

Payment Gateway - An online system for real-time charging of credit cards when a customer places an order. Normally requires a merchant account.

PC (Personal Computer) - A computer designed for use by a single person.

PDF (Portable Document Format) - Technology by Adobe that allows for the creation of documents that can be viewed and printed. These files depend on the person receiving the document having the program Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is free.

Plug-ins - Software modules that add on to the host program and enhance functionality.

RAM (Random Access Memory) - Data storage in the form of computer chips.

Search engine - A database system designed to index websites and then retrieve their addresses based on the input of key words, like a company's name or a type of product.

Security certificate - A unique code used by encryption software to hide information sent over the Internet. Security certificates make sure that people, who aren't supposed to, don't see things like credit card numbers or your customers' personal information.

URL (Uniform Resource Locator) - The global address of websites on the Internet.

VPN (Virtual Private Network) - A system that takes two or more local networks and creates an encrypted "tunnel" through the Internet between them so they can securely communicate.

WAN (Wide Area Network) - A network that connects computers at many different places. It's usually much more diverse than a LAN. The Internet is a WAN.

Web Page - A document on the worldwide web that has its own address.

Web Server - A computer with data and software designed to host a website.



Step-by-step Instructions

easy as 1, 2, 3,...

Step-by-Step: brochureware

Macromedia Dreamweaver MX 2004 is a web design tool that allows you to create the layout of your pages using simple visual tools. It's commonly known as a "What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get" (WYSIWYG) editor. This means that what you see when designing your site in Dreamweaver is what the page will look like when a visitor looks at your page in their internet browser. Basic web pages are created in a format called HTML and have file names with an .html extension. Dreamweaver allows you to visually create your pages without learning HTML. When you save your pages in Dreamweaver it does all the work to convert your visual layout to an HTML file which can be viewed in an internet browser.

The following step by step instructions will allow you to create a very simple website containing a home page, and a contact us page. To create a more advanced website, please refer to the more advanced tutorials available in Dreamweaver under the 'Help' menu on the top menu bar.

- 1.** Open Dreamweaver MX 2004.
- 2.** Choose Sites ► Manage Sites from the top menu bar. A wizard window will popup to ask you questions relating to your website.
 - a.** You will first be asked to enter a name for your site – enter your company name and choose Next.
 - b.** Select No for server technology and Next.
 - c.** Choose "Edit local copies on my machine...(recommended)" and browse to a folder on your computer where you want to keep your local copy of your website files.
 - d.** Choose 'None' for How do you connect to your remote server and Next.
 - e.** Choose Done in the popup wizard and Done in the Manage Sites Window.
- 3.** Choose File ► New from the top menu bar. In the General tab, select Basic Page and HTML as the file type and click the Create button. At the top of the new window that is created, there are three buttons labeled: Code, Split and Design. The Code button shows you the HTML code that defines your page. The Design button shows the WYSIWYG editor where you can visually design your page and the Split button shows both the HTML and WYSIWYG editor at the same time. For the purposes of this example, choose the Design view by clicking on the Design button – you should now see a blank window.
- 4.** Choose Insert ► Table from the top menu bar. Enter 2 rows and 2 columns and 100% for the width of the table in the popup wizard, leaving all other options with their default values. You should now see a table with four cells in the window.
- 5.** To insert your logo into the page, you must first convert the logo image file to a format which is usable by internet browsers. There are several formats, and each is suited towards a particular type of image. Some of these are:
 - a.** .GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) – maximum of 256 Colours, excellent for logos or simple images with text.
 - b.** .JPG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) – millions of colours, excellent for photographic images.

easy as 1, 2, 3,...

- c. .PNG (Portable Network Graphics)
 - millions of colours, excellent for complex logos or simple images with text.

To convert your image, you will need to use a graphics editing application such as Microsoft Paint for Windows or Apple Preview for Macintosh. Choose an appropriate file format and set the file size of the image small (typically < 30KB). This can be a trial-and-error process to get a small file size but retain good image quality. Once you have your logo saved in a web-ready format, you are ready to insert this into your web page using Dreamweaver. Click in the top left cell of the table and select Insert ► Image from the top menu bar. Browse to the web-ready logo file and click OK. Select Yes if you are prompted to copy this image file to your root folder. You should now see your logo in the top left hand corner of the table.

- 6.** Enter your company name followed by 'Home' in the Title field of this window. This will be the title which appears in your visitor's browser window.
- 7.** Enter the text content for the home page into one of the bottom table cells by clicking in the cell and typing.
- 8.** To help search engines with your site, you should supply keywords which describe your company. This is easily done by selecting Insert ► HTML ► Head Tags ► Keywords. Enter a number of keywords, most important first, separated by commas. Click OK to finish.
- 9.** Save this page to your root folder by selecting File ► Save, and ensure that the filename is "index.html". This is a special filename which represents the default first

page of your website. Visitors, who enter <http://www.yourcompanyname.com> into a browser, will be presented with this page.

- 10.** Create the Contact Us page by repeating Steps 3 to 5. Click in one of the cells of the table and enter your company's contact information (address and phone numbers). Enter your company name and 'Contact Us' in the title field at the top of the editor window.
- 11.** To add a clickable link to your email address, select Insert ► Email Link from the top menu bar. In the text field, enter the email address in both the Text and E-Mail fields and click OK.
- 12.** Place a clickable hyperlink from the contact us page to the home page, by clicking in top right cell of the table and selecting Insert ► Hyperlink. Enter 'HOME' in the Text field and click on the folder icon to browse. Browse to the index.html file in your root folder that you created in step 9. Leaving all other fields blank, click on OK. You should now see a link labeled HOME in this table cell.
- 13.** Save this page with the filename 'contactus.html' by selecting File ► Save.
- 14.** To add a link to the Contact Us page in the home page (index.html), let's switch views to the index.html window by selecting Window ► index.html (at the bottom) from the top menu bar. Click in the top right cell of the table and select Insert ► Hyperlink. Enter 'Contact Us' in the text field and browse by clicking on the folder icon to the contactus.html file in your root folder that you created in step 13. Leaving all other fields blank, click on OK. You should now see a link labeled Contact Us in this table cell.

- 15.** Save the home page 'index.html' by selecting File ► Save.
- 16.** You now have two pages of your basic website each with your company logo and hyperlinks that a visitor can use to navigate from your home page to the contact us page and back again.
- 17.** You can preview your pages in a browser to see exactly what your pages will look like to a visitor, but without publishing your site to the internet. To do this, select File ► Preview in Browser. Select the browser you normally use from the list. Your browser should open and display the home page as you designed it in Dreamweaver. You can click on the hyperlink for Contact Us to navigate to the contact us page you created and then on the HOME hyperlink to navigate back to your home page. You can use this feature to quickly preview your changes in Dreamweaver without publishing your changes to the internet.
- 18.** You have now created a very simple web site. It is recommended that you use the Dreamweaver tutorials available under the Help menu in the top menu bar to learn more about how to use the advanced features of the application.

Publishing

To publish your site to your hosting provider's server so that your site can be viewed by anyone on the internet can be done using Dreamweaver. When you obtain a hosting package, the hosting provider will have provided several pieces of information including the following:

- FTP (File Transfer Protocol) Server Host Name

- FTP Username
- FTP Password

- 1.** To allow Dreamweaver to upload your web site to the hosting provider's server, select Sites->Manage Sites from the top menu bar.
- 2.** Select the site you created in step 2 above and click 'Edit'. A new window appears.
- 3.** Select the Advanced tab at the top, and Remote Info from the category list. Then select Access: FTP. You will now have a series of fields to define the FTP for your hosting provider.
- 4.** Enter the FTP Server Name in the FTP Host field, leave the Host directory blank. Enter the FTP Username and Password in the Login and Password fields.
- 5.** Ensure that your computer is connected to the internet and click the Test button and Dreamweaver will try to connect to the Hosting Provider's server. Should this fail, contact your hosting provider for more information. If it was successful, continue to the next step.
- 6.** Dreamweaver is now ready to post your web page files to the hosting provider's server. To start this process, open the Files tab in the right hand tool bar. Ensure your site is selected in the drop down box. Click on the blue Arrow button that is pointing upwards. Dreamweaver will now transfer your files 'Up' to the hosting provider's server.
- 7.** Test that your web site has been published by opening your internet browser, and entering the address for your website. For example, <http://www.mycompanyname.com>.
- 8.** You have now published your site to the internet, and visitors use their internet browsers to view your website.

easy as 1, 2, 3,...

Step-by-step: auction sites (eBay)

It's easy to get yourself up and running on online auctions. Follow these steps and you will be on your way to promoting your products instantly to millions of potential buyers daily. eBay is the largest online auction and is used as the example for this type of e-commerce.

1. Start by getting an eBay user account

Log on to www.eBay.ca and click to register as a new user.

Pick a user name and password that only you will know, but that you will remember.

The registration process first asks you for basic contact information. They do this to verify that you are a real person so that both you and others can be confident that the transaction will be with a real person on the other end and is not a scam. Your privacy is guaranteed.

You will have to confirm the registration by replying to an email confirmation message eBay will send you. Simply follow the instructions within the message to confirm your registration.

2. Create a seller's account

In order to sell on eBay, you must be registered. It is free and easy.

3. Gather your information

Put together the information you'll need, including: your item description, digital photographs, the category you want to list under (antiques, crafts etc.) and the currency you prefer to list in (likely Canadian).

4. You're ready to sell

Click on the Sell button found at the top of any eBay.ca page, log in, then choose whether you want to list your item as an auction or at a fixed price and whether you would like to list in Canadian or U.S. dollars.

5. Choose your category

Select one of the main categories by ticking the check box beside the name and then proceed to the next page where you will choose in which sub-category you would like to list.

6. Enter the product information

Enter a concise title and an accurate description. Include as much information as possible about the object – model number, year produced, hours to make it, colour, dimensions and the current condition of the item.

When filling in the title field, make sure to use key words that are descriptive enough so that anyone viewing the title by itself will understand what you are selling.

Enter an accurate description and make sure to be truthful.

7. Photos, duration and other features

On the next page you can add photos to your listing. You are allowed one free graphic per listing. The more photos you

have that accurately show what you're selling the better. After you have added your photos, choose the listing duration, your starting price and any special features you would like to use.

8. Payment methods and shipping

Select what payment methods you will accept and where you're willing to ship. If you select to ship your item worldwide, it will automatically appear on eBay.com and all other eBay sites worldwide.

9. Review and confirm

On the final page you can double check that you have not made any mistakes as well as find out the fees associated with your listing. If you need to, you can go back and edit your listing. If everything is OK, hit submit and your listing is live.

By providing complete and accurate information in the shipping and payment terms section, you will make things much quicker for yourself and your buyer at the close of the auction.

Before setting your starting price, look at what similar items sold for on eBay. You can do this by searching completed items that you will find by using the Search option in the top navigation bar.

Now your item is listed, being viewed, and if someone bids, you are ready to close the deal. Once a listing closes, no more bids are accepted. At this time, the seller is sent an email from eBay.ca containing the winning bid price and contact information for the bidder. The buyer is also sent a notification email containing the seller's email address and the winning bid price.

10. Payment details for buyers

If you did not provide shipping costs in your listing, your buyer may choose to send you an email requesting that you now provide this information. Keep in mind that buyers are only bound to the terms you specified in the listing.

For fixed price items, you can specify the total for a buyer once they have requested the total. It is important to note that once a buyer clicks on the buy-it-now button in a listing, your inventory will be deducted accordingly, even if your buyer has not completed the payment process.

11. Ship the item

After receiving payment, carefully pack the item and promptly ship it to the buyer. However, if the payment is in the form of a personal cheque, for your protection, you may want to wait for it to clear your bank before shipping the item.

Be prepared to ship the item before it sells. This is especially helpful if you are listing many items on eBay at once.

Get going

You have now completed the steps to sell items on eBay. However, it is important to remember that eBay is a community. Your reputation for being a good retailer is important. Take part in the evaluation options that are part of every transaction in order to keep the community spirit going. It will help buyers trust you, and help you trust buyers too!

Step-by-step: online stores

There are many types of online stores. In this sept-by-step example, we will use a popular commercial software package from Maximizer called ecBuilder (www.ecbuilder.com) available for Microsoft Windows. In this program there are 19 official steps to building your website and online catalogue with Ecbuilder's wizard set up program. These steps are very simple to follow and allow you to enter key information about your business, services and products for sale. The wizard takes you step by step through each screen of information required to the final screen where you are able to publish your site and catalogue to the Internet.

1. Site structure

This is where you will choose the main sections that will appear on your site. Each main area can have a separate title to it. This information will explain the basic content of your site. It will include the homepage, content and main sub-pages.

2. Defining your company information

In this section enter essential information about your company's physical and Internet addresses.

3. Site builder profile

Enter the name and contact information for the person who will be the technical and administrative contact for posting information and Internet services on your site.

4: Contact profiles

Enter contact information for the various people in your company or home who will receive orders, inquiries and emails asking questions about products or services from your website.

5. Company identity

This is the basic information that will be displayed on the first page of your website. This is where you will enter your company's slogan or mission statement and a brief description of the company and the products or services you provide.

6. Home page content

This is where you can add customized home page content with HTML. You can also control the number of links included for the content pages and catalogue sections here.

7. Website content

This is where you will define your company's key marketing messages, its products or describe any special programs. You can add images and media files to emphasize these pages.

8. Creating your catalogue

You may create a multi-tiered catalogue structure depending on the Template and Template Classes that are chosen from within the Site Design and Preview Page. The catalogue may have an unlimited number of tiers.

You can group the products and/or services into multiple categories by creating multiple catalogue sections that contain even more sub-sections. You may also copy and paste any catalogue sections or catalogue items by simply right-clicking your mouse on the item or section. You may also drag and drop any section or item by left-clicking on the item or section, and dragging it to the desired location.

9. Online processing

This is where you will configure your Online Processing Payment Information and Capabilities. In order for you to use most real-time transaction processing capabilities, you must first obtain and install an email client digital certificate on your computer. This certificate will be used to encrypt and decrypt the order information generated from your customer's online orders.

Once you have obtained this certificate, you must enter it into the program application. If you do not already have a merchant account, you will have to obtain one.

Once you receive your merchant account settings, you can enter this information into your program to configure your website for real-time transaction processing.

10. Payment methods

Enter the credit card types the website will accept, as well as indicate whether or not the site is willing to accept other forms of payment.

11. Currency

Select the type of currency you wish to use for the orders generated from the website.

You may edit the abbreviated currency symbol which is used to display the currency type for the catalogue items.

12. Order and inquiry fields

In order to assist the website in building relationships with customers, you may want to ask for specific information when a shopper wishes to place an order or make an inquiry.

For instance, you may want to ask questions such as "Please specify your annual household income:", "How have you heard about us?", or "How often are you buying this type of product?"

13. Policies and statements

The Policy and Statements page is normally used to publish your company's Return/Refund Policies, your Shipping Policies, and your Privacy Statement.

Provide the appropriate title for each section by selecting from, or editing, the drop down list, and then enter the policy or statement details in the fields provided.

14. Web links

The Web Links page allows for the creation of a list of multiple groups each containing multiple website addresses to be linked to.

easy as 1, 2, 3,...

15. Advertising and statistics

This is where you would place banners on the website that promote the products or services of other businesses. Banners can create benefits such as increased credibility through affiliation, as well as new branding and income opportunities.

Banners can appear on the top and/or bottom of the website. You can supply your own banner with a link to another website, or select a banner residing on another website. Some banner companies may also require the inclusion of some HTML that they will supply.

Hit Counters help track the number of visits to a website. A counter can be included at the bottom of the home page.

16. Site design and preview

The Site Design and Preview pages allow you to customize the look and feel of the website. You may either select from the example Template Classes, Templates, Skins, and Styles, or you can create your own.

17. Business classification

The Business Classification will help your business to appear in the correct industry category listing located on <http://www.ecplace.com>.

Select keywords that specifically identify the type of business, products or services your site offers. These keywords are used as part of the information that will be submitted to various search engines.

18. Search engines

Search engines will help customers find the website on the Internet.

Enter the URL of your website and select the search engines to submit to. When you first upload the site, the ecBuilder program will submit the website information to the selected search engines.

You will only need to submit the website to the search engines once every few months, or if the content on the website dramatically changes.

Some search engines will accept submissions only once every 60 days or so. Submitting the website more than once within this period may cause these search engines to reject the website because they perceive it as "spamming".

19. Publish your site

In order to publish the website on the Internet, you must first enter the correct User ID, Password, FTP Server address, and a directory name by selecting the appropriate Radio button, and then selecting Publish.

If you do not already have an account, select the first option, click on the Publish button, and then select the Acquire Host Account button to be taken to a web page listing the Multiactive Website Hosting Partners.

The hosting provider will supply you with an optional website address, a User ID and Password combination, and space for your website.

Step-by-step: online malls (Yahoo! Store)

Online malls can help make smaller businesses very successful selling online. They are like renting a traditional retail location in your local shopping centre - you pay a monthly fee for the online "real estate". Online malls like Yahoo! Store will bring in traffic and visitors to your website. The monthly fee is often compensated for by lowering your marketing and advertising costs.

1. Sign up for Yahoo! Merchant Solutions (<http://store.yahoo.com>)

Choose one of the three packages available. A comparison chart is available at <http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com/merchant/compare.php> One of the differences in the packages is receiving orders by fax which may be important if you are not online all the time to check your email. Another difference is handling gift certificates.

2. Manage my services

Once you've signed up for a merchant solution package, (this is your online credit card and payment system such as PayPal) you will have access to configure the following services:

- Web hosting and site design features;
- Store inventory, orders, and reporting;
- Mail accounts and storage preferences; and
- Domain management.

There is plenty of information to help with this and customer support is available 7 days a week using their toll-free number.

3. Prepare to accept online payments

You must have a merchant account open for your business to process credit card transactions. You can sign up for

an account through any number of providers including the Yahoo! partner, Paymentech. Be sure to establish your merchant account early so that they are available when you're ready to open for business.

4. Organize and load your products into the Catalogue Manager

The Catalogue Manager is a powerful built-in tool that allows you to manage your inventory of products, including pricing and detailed information about each item. You can enter your products one by one or upload them from your own database or spreadsheet.

5. Plan and organize your website content

To establish a reputable web presence, you will require clear content that makes your products sound appealing, and sets expectations for your customers. You'll find it's easier to build your store if you carefully outline your website and write out the necessary content prior to building your pages. Don't forget to define the important details such as privacy statements, refund policies, etc.

easy as 1, 2, 3,...

□ 6. Start building your store

Once you have planned out your store, it's time to actually build the web pages of your online store. There are two online tools provided by Yahoo! Store Editor and Yahoo! Site Builder. Both allow you to design the pages of a simple online store. The pages of the store can also be designed using third-party tools such as Microsoft FrontPage or Macromedia Dreamweaver. For complex stores, you may require the services of a qualified web developer to assist you in converting your store design on paper to your Yahoo! online store.

□ 7. Set up back-end systems and operations

You can configure your Yahoo! Store to automatically set up tax and shipping options to handle out of province/territory/country transactions. You will need to consider how your products will be shipped to your customers, and what shipping rates will apply. There are a number of shipping companies that have tools that can be integrated into your Yahoo! store to make this convenient for both you and your customers. UPS for example can be integrated and can provide your customers with a tracking number for their order which allows the order to be tracked online using the UPS website. You can also determine how you would like to receive orders: online, email or fax.

□ 8. Open for business and attract new customers

You will need to consider methods to attract new customers to your online store. Yahoo! offers marketing services

to attract customers to shop in your new online business.

□ 9. Accept and manage your orders

As soon as you open, customers can start placing orders. Depending on the preferences you've established, you can receive these orders via the Store Manager, fax, or email, and process the orders accordingly.



Step-by-step: subscription sites

Subscription - based websites are a great e-commerce solution if your business is providing information. Like a magazine subscription or a library card, these websites allow customers access to information in exchange for ongoing payments. Not every product or service suits this model. Talk to an expert if you are not sure.

1. Choose a subscription e-commerce solutions provider

There are a number of competing subscription type e-commerce solutions providers with a focus on different types of content delivery. If you were selling an electronic book for example, you would want a provider who could allow secure access to download an electronic copy of the book (typically an Adobe Acrobat PDF) only to users who have paid online. If you had a private subscription-based website then a provider who would allow paying users access to read online would be preferable. Another option would be to contract a web developer to develop a custom solution that suits your specific product or service.

2. Decide what payment method(s) you wish to offer and choose a merchant account

Payment methods could be by PayPal, Visa, MasterCard, American Express, cheque, etc. You need to define which methods you want to offer, and then choose a merchant account provider that is compatible with your hosting provider. PayPal and other online payment systems offer tools that can be integrated into your site to allow customers to purchase a subscription and then be given access to your services and/or products for a specified period of time.

3. Design your site, considering how you wish to deliver your services and/or products

Your services and/or products may be delivered in one or more formats. For example, a novel could be delivered as a hardcopy book, an audio CD, a PDF file, or only for viewing in a web browser. A news article could be presented in a browser, or in a PDF file, a video, or an audio file. You will also want to consider providing a sample of the content available through subscription so that potential customers can appreciate the value of the subscription. You may provide excerpts of written content, or audio or video clips of multi-media content. Don't forget to define privacy statements, refund policies, etc.

4. Encourage repeat business through advertising

Since the subscription based e-commerce model is based on repeat business, you will want to establish online advertising which will encourage existing subscribers to re-new their subscription at the end of the term. Some newspapers will encourage subscription renewals with discounts to repeat customers. As the relationship with your customers is on-going, you may wish to solicit their feedback so that you can ensure your customers are satisfied with your service.

Step-by-step: PayPal

To set yourself up to accept all major credit cards instantly, all you need to do is go to www.paypal.com and register by signing up for a new account.

Follow the easy-to-use instructions and then fill in your bank account information. Have this information (account number and branch information) ready and available before you go to sign up. A credit card is not essential for using PayPal but will make it much quicker to send and receive money.

Once you have filled in your account information, you will be required to confirm that this is really your bank account. In the account information page, there is an option to confirm your bank account. After clicking on this option, PayPal will send two tiny deposits into your bank account. Get your account statement online or when it arrives in the mail, note which of the transactions listed were the deposits by PayPal. You will need these to complete the steps of verifying your bank account in the account manager screen.

When you have verified and confirmed your account through this easy process, you can then start depositing money from your PayPal account to your bank account.





KELLETT
communications



Canada 

