Your guide to creating a professional online store in 9 steps

Creating an online store and entering the world of e-commerce is one of the best investment ideas that you can make at the moment. The digital economy is witnessing a huge revolution from which the Arab world is no longer immune. The volume of e-commerce in the Arab world is expected to reach about $13.4 billion during the current year 2020, with more than 30 million Arab shoppers. Certainly no one would want to miss this opportunity.

table of contents:

- Decide which products your store offers
- Choose a brand name for your store
- Choosing a domain and hosting for your online store

- Building an online store
- e-store design
- Determine the shipping and storage system
- Final review and test
- Online store insurance
- Online Store Marketing

How to create a professional online store

There are two main reasons that may push you to create an online store at the present time: the large size of the e-commerce market, which has become very huge, including the Arab world, as the size of the Arab e-commerce market is estimated at tens of millions of dollars, although it is still virgin with very few stores This means that there are a lot of opportunities that can be exploited.

The second is the relatively low cost of creating an online store, especially when compared to expensive traditional stores that require essential elements that electronic stores do not need, such as: renting or buying a store for sale and storage, obtaining licenses and administrative procedures, and operating expenses such as: water, electricity, and Internet bills and others.

Now, the question that comes to your mind is: How much does it cost to build a good online store? Well, there is no definitive answer to this question, it just comes down to the type and size of the store, and the features you want in it. But in practice, you can create an online store for free, for example. Now let's go through the steps of creating

1. Select the products your store will offer

The first step before creating an online store is to determine the type of products that this store will sell, because identifying products is an essential element that directly affects the success of the project from the ground up. The last thing you want is to open an online store that no one buys from, because the market does not need the products you offer. But with millions of goods and products, how do you choose the right products to sell in the store?

In the beginning, you have to take the time to research your target segment, and the products you are going to sell. You probably have an initial idea about these products, but that doesn't mean they will necessarily be popular. So it is important to check that people will buy these products. There are a lot of factors to consider when choosing the type of products such as:

Availability and demand rate of products

Are the products you want to sell available in your area of activity? If they are not available, or are far away, in another city, for example, this is a good opportunity, and you will increase your chances of selling those products. What about the rate of demand for these products? Is it big, medium or a little? Simply, look for products that are most needed in the market.

You can start by doing research to find out which products are in high demand by looking at the lists of the best-selling products in supermarkets, and carefully exploring the reviews of these products to see if there are any problems associated with them, and whether you can solve them or offer an alternative. There are also some tools that may help you with this, such as:

Google Trends: Allows you to see the search volume for keywords during a certain period and in a specific country. This helps you determine the amount of demand for the products you want to sell.

TrendHunter: Offers a lot of high-demand products globally, with the ability to sort results by industry or industry. You can use it to get to know the most popular products and choose from them.

Price and profit margin

Price is one of the essential factors for the success of any online store, if the price is too cheap, it will be difficult for you to achieve a great return on investment. If the price is too expensive, you will find it difficult to convince customers to buy. Therefore, it is necessary to choose products with an appropriate price.

If your store will ship products to their owners, it is important to take product sizes and weights into account. Shipping large and heavy products is expensive, and can affect your profit margin, especially since many customers today expect shipping to be free.

As for the profit margin, it often ranges between 30 and 35%, but this may vary from one industry to another. For example, in the sector of selling electronic devices, the profit margin is lower, while it may be higher in the field of phone accessories and accessories. Make sure the profit margin is appropriate, ask the manufacturer about the wholesale price of the product, calculate the costs of setting up the online store, and estimate the profit margin. If not, look for other products.

2. Choose a brand name for your online store

It is not easy to find a suitable name for your brand. Do not try to find the perfect name, the most important are the services you provide to your customers. If those services like them, they will remember your name even if they have not heard it before. Remember, there are plenty of examples of e-commerce companies that have chosen meaningless names and still succeeded.

There are some criteria that it is preferable to meet in your brand name such as: easy to spell and relevant to your target industry, while avoiding names with complex spelling so that people can easily type it. Also, it is good that the website of the store is the same as your brand name, try to search for a name that is available with the .com domain suffix. Due to its popularity and reliability compared to other domains.

3. Choose a domain and store hosting

Now you need to search for a domain name for your online store. This process may take a lot of time, especially if you are looking for a short distinguished domain name, or contain a specific keyword. Your preferred domain name will often be taken, so when thinking about setting up an online store, you should select a list of potentially used domains.

An excellent way to get a unique domain name is to search domain name sites that allow you to check if a specific domain name is available, with suggestions for similar domain names. Some hosting sites offer a free domain name if you buy hosting from them, but there are a few things to consider when choosing a domain name:

Choose the country code: If you intend to sell your products in a specific country, you can choose the country code. For example (sa) as a symbol for Saudi Arabia.

Avoid Famous Names: You may face lawsuits if you enter a product name or a registered trademark in your online store's domain name.

Add a keyword: If your online store specializes in selling a specific category of products, try adding a keyword related to that category.

After purchasing the domain name, you will have to reserve hosting for your site. There are many reliable hosting companies to host your store. But remember that some online store building platforms offer a store hosting option, so don't be in a hurry. You can learn more about how to host your online store in the following article: What is the most suitable web hosting for your startup?

4. Building an online store
Not all people have the technical knowledge that enables them to create an online store and access the e-commerce market themselves, so you will have two options to build your store, either you hire a professional web developer, or you use one of the tools dedicated to building online stores.

Hiring a web developer
Hiring a web developer is a preferred option for many as it gives them more flexibility. They can request to customize the site as they want, and they will also have complete control

In the details of building the store, and the technology used to build it. Which may not be available in tools dedicated to building online stores, but the price of this flexibility and control is that the cost may be greater.

You can hire a highly qualified and experienced web developer at reasonable rates through a freelance website. Just specify the project details carefully, specifying the expected delivery period and the expected budget, and you will find dozens of offers from the best web developers in the Arab world. Compare them, select the best offer, and start communicating with the developer and agreeing with him on your project.

Choose a ready-made platform to build the store
Online store building platforms are specialized store building applications, you do not need technical skills or knowledge of programming and development. In all cases, online store building platforms offer the advantages of hosting an online store and associating your chosen domain name with the hosting. Providing your site with a security certificate to encrypt financial transactions and protect the personal data of store goers.

In addition to categorizing products by categories, and helping to market your store and products. Plus other advanced features, such as discounts and sales analysis. There are a lot of these platforms, and each has its own advantages and disadvantages. But the free WooCommerce plugin for the popular WordPress platform is one of the best options for building an online store, whether it is small or large. There are many other e-commerce platforms that you can use, but to choose the right one for your needs, you should consider some criteria such as:

Pricing: Each platform usually offers several options. It may be enough to work with the low-cost initial plans, and then move to an advanced plan after your store grows.

SEO: The platform you have chosen should support SEO features such as: link optimization, ease of browsing, site speed and other SEO factors.

Customer Service: If you encounter a technical problem, or a breakdown occurs in your store, it is important that you get support as soon as possible.

Customization: Most platforms offer store-ready templates and designs. But the platform should provide the freedom to customize your store and modify its design.

Security: Check that the platform supports HTTPS, and respects the rules applicable in e-commerce such as: PCI rules and the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Mobile Responsive: A large percentage of purchases are made from phones, so mobile responsiveness is an essential feature for your store.

Help you grow: As your business starts to grow, you'll need new, more advanced features. Verify that the platform allows you to.

Easy to use: The platform should be easy to use. Usually e-commerce platforms provide ready-made templates for adding products, this process should go smoothly and not take much time.

5. Online Store Design

The design of your online store should be attractive and elegant, but without exaggeration. Because overdoing it will slow down the site and distract visitors. The design should be responsive to screens of all sizes, because a large percentage of your store visitors use phones. Also, make sure the store is easy to navigate.

Also, the visitor should be able to visit the home page from anywhere on the site, go to the purchase page, quickly find the products they are looking for, and find categories and product subcategories. Online store building platforms usually provide ready-made templates. Look in the templates provided by your chosen platform. There are components that must be available in every online store, which are:

A- Product Pages

Product pages are the pages where you display your products, and they are very important pages, because they are where visitors make a purchase. So you should pay special attention to it and improve its design. These are some of the basic components that should be available on a product page:

Product name and description

Choose appropriate names for the products. If these products have foreign names, you can hire an independent translator to localize them. Avoid complex names, and find simple, distinct, easy-to-remember names. Also, each product should have a description, the task of the description is to convince the visitor to buy the product. Therefore, the description should be written in a convincing and attractive marketing style, in simple and clear language, while showing the features of the product.

SEO rules should also be taken into consideration while writing product descriptions to get traffic from search engines. The more visits, the higher your chances of selling. The description should also be truthful, otherwise you will lose the trust of your customers. The process of writing product descriptions takes some experience and can be cumbersome and lengthy, especially if you sell a lot of products, so it may be best to hire a freelancer with these skills through a freelancer.

Product Picture
If the product is a physical commodity such as a shoe or a phone, for example, you should put a picture of it on the product page. This has become very easy with the availability of smartphones with professional cameras. Choose an area with a suitable background, use your best camera, and take a picture of the product from multiple angles. If there are several variations of the product, in terms of colors, sizes, and shapes, take several photos that show this variety.

It is also recommended that you take a picture of the product in use. This is suitable for clothing, instead of taking a picture of a coat or shirt, it is better to take a picture of someone wearing that coat or shirt. Do not deceive your visitors, the images should be realistic, and express the truth of the product. Do not have too many images, because too many images slow down page loading, especially on phones.

Reviews
Studies show that 84% of consumers trust online reviews as much as they trust personal recommendations. Also, researching and reading reviews has become an essential part of the product search process. Besides the reviews, the call to action button should be taken care of well. This button is just a marketing name for the buy or “add to cart” button, so it should be prominent and visible

price
There are several factors that control the pricing of products, including: the cost of the product, storage and shipping, and the average prices of competitors. In addition to the general costs of managing the online store, such as: the cost of hosting and development. All these factors should be taken into consideration, and you will set a balanced price that will give you a good profit margin. Taking into account that the price is in the local currency, and clarifying whether it includes shipping and tax or not.

Recently emerged the concept of dynamic pricing, which is a strategy for pricing products according to the amount of demand for the product and the available stock of it, as well as how much the customer needs that product. These factors are identified using certain artificial intelligence technologies that analyze user profiles, visit history, past searches and other digital activities, and then determine product prices.

b- Product category pages
Most online stores divide the e-commerce products they sell into categories to make it easier to browse and find. If you only sell a few products, you don't have to divide them into categories because they will most likely be in the same category anyway. But if you sell hundreds of products, it is necessary to divide them into categories and customize a page for each category, so that it is easy for customers to browse and choose from.

Dividing your products into categories is usually not enough, because the shopper may not know which product category to search. The best way to solve this problem is to provide the search feature in the store. Most e-commerce platforms provide this feature by default. If it's not available, or if you've hired a developer to build your online store, be sure to tell them to add the search feature.

C- Home Pages of the Online Store
Any online store consists of a set of essential pages that cannot be dispensed with or neglected in any way. Notable among these pages are:

Homepage: Most online stores display on their homepage the best-selling products, as well as some customer reviews.

Who we are: The “About Us” page is an introduction to you, your company, and your goals. Avoid copying content from other stores, and write original content.

Communication: You must create a page to contact you, in which you put your contact information, such as: phone number, address, and e-mail, in addition to a form for those who want to contact you to fill out.

Frequently Asked Questions: The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page is where customers' frequently asked questions and inquiries are answered. This saves you a lot of time and effort.

PRIVACY POLICY: Now it is required for online service websites, including stores, to inform users of how their data is used and processed. So you need to dedicate a page to the privacy policy.

Terms of Use: The Terms of Use page includes the terms, conditions and rules that govern the behavior between you and your visitors and users, and it is a necessary condition for anyone who wants to create an online store.

6. Determine the shipping and storage system

One of the biggest challenges you will face when setting up an online store is storing and shipping products. These challenges become more difficult as the project grows. Before you ship the product to a customer, you need to know some key information, such as the customer's address, and the type of shipment. A good time to ask for that information is when you make a purchase. There are several ways to charge customers for shipping, for example:

Free Shipping: This option will give you a huge competitive advantage. But you have to study it well, and it is preferable that you do not activate this feature except when the customer’s purchases exceed a certain value, in this way it ensures that the profits will cover the cost of shipping, and it will also encourage customers to buy to get this advantage.

Flat rate: In this option, the shipping cost is flat regardless of the type of product. This option is suitable for online stores that sell items of similar size and weight.

Variable percentage: In this option, the shipping cost is calculated based on several factors such as: the weight and sizes of the products, and the shipping destination. This option is suitable for stores that sell a variety of products in terms of sizes and weights, or those that have a customer base from widely separated geographical areas.

The question now is how will the products be delivered to their owners? You have two main options: deal with a third party or ship the products yourself to customers. In the first case, a third party will take care of all shipments. All you have to do is tell them the necessary information such as: the name of the customer and his place of residence, and they will be in charge of delivering the products to their owners.

As for self-shipping, you will take care of everything, storing and packing the goods, and delivering them through a specific delivery service. This method may be suitable for those who want to create a small online store project, or who are targeting a small geographic area. But as the business grows, you'll need a better charging system.

7. Final revision and test
After building and designing your online store, it's time to set up the right payment gateways. Most of the e-commerce platforms offer a lot of ready-made payment options such as: Visa, MasterCard, PayPal and others. If you hire a developer to build your online store, ask them to add payment gateways to the store. After setting up the payment gateways don't forget to check that all the payment gateways are working fine, the best way is to make a trial purchase and see if everything goes as expected.

By now, you are supposed to have finished everything related to building and equipping your store. But do not rush, do not launch your store now. There is one final stage that you should go through before the actual launch, which is the final review and testing stage. There are several main aspects that should be reviewed and verified that they are working as expected, chief among them:

Store content: Carefully review the content of the site, because the presence of errors will negatively affect the user experience, and visitors may feel unprofessional.

Responsiveness to small screens: Check that the store works well on screen

© 2021 Digitsmark. All Rights Reserved.