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## SMART START



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# BEGINNER'S GUIDE

The Smart Way To Ecommerce Success

Ken Ninomiya

# ECommerce Smart Start Beginners Guide

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# ECommerce Smart Start Beginners Guide

## Introduction

If you're looking to start and run a successful ecommerce store, then you need to pick a good niche, develop an advertising strategy, and plan for growth.

This workbook in conjunction with the main manual will help you accomplish all these goals and more.

Take a look...

Determine If Ecommerce is Right For You

Before you start planning your ecommerce store, you need to ask yourself why you want to run this store.

For example:

- Do you want a store as a supplement to what you're already doing? For example, maybe you already have a dog training site, and now you'd like to create another revenue stream on the site by selling physical products.
- Do you already make goods, and you're looking for an outlet to sell them?
- List item #3
- Do you want a store because you're looking for a way to turn your passions and hobbies into money in the bank?
- Do you want a store because you're looking for a way to turn your passions and hobbies into money in the bank?

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- Did you read about someone else having big success with an online store, and that made you daydream about having your own uber-successful store?
- Does it look like an easy way to make money to you?
- Do you want a store because it seems like a good way to help your niche market?
- Do you want a store because you like the idea of owning something? In other words, do you imagine putting “CEO and store owner” on a business card and impressing friends and strangers alike?
- Do you want a store because your brother / sister / friend /colleague said they were starting a store, and your ultra-competitive nature kicked in so you wanted a store too?
- Do you want a store because your current online marketing gig isn't working out, and you're pretty sure a store would be a much better business for you?
- Do you want a store because you tend to chase bright and shiny things, and this seems awfully bright and shiny today?

Those are just a few questions to get you brainstorming.

But basically, you need to be honest about WHY you want to start up an ecommerce store.

The reason you need to be honest about the “why” is because your answer can make or break your success. If you're ONLY reason for wanting a store is because of the money, then you likely won't have the passion needed to keep going weeks, months or years down the line. So be sure you have a solid reason for wanting to become a store owner.

# Brainstorm and Research Niches

The first step in setting up a store is to pick a profitable niche. You'll start by brainstorming a list of possibilities by asking yourself these questions:

- What are you really good at?
- What are your hobbies?
- What are your problems?
- Where do you like to go on vacation?
- What do you like to do on vacation?
- What types of things do you like to read?
- What sort of sites do you have bookmarked on your computer?
- What sort of apps do you have on your phone?
- What do you like to watch on TV?
- What are your favorite topics of conversation?
- What sort of educational or hobby classes would you be interested in taking?
- On what topics do people marvel at your knowledge?
- What topics have you loved for years (and that you're likely to be interested in for years to come)?

## Now list all the other topics you can think of that interest you.

Okay, so now that you've done some initial brainstorming, I want you to go through the following list and pick out any of these topics that also interest you:

- Hiking and camping.
- Medical problems, including physical and mental health issues, as well as chronic illness.
- Caring for elderly parents.
- Antiques, collectibles, jewelry.
- Babies, children, family.
- Relationships and marriage.
- Sports hobbies, including golf, archery, fishing, bowling
- Other hobbies, such as car restoration, cooking, dining out
- Fashion and beauty.
- Anti-aging.
- Making money, including online marketing, entrepreneurialism, etc.
- General finances, including investing / debt management.
- Retirement, including financial security and becoming an ex-pat.
- Traveling, from backpacking across Europe to living an RV lifestyle.

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- Home remodeling and home improvement.
- Diets, including vegetarianism, raw food diets, etc.
- Weight loss.
- Bodybuilding.
- Motivation.
- Productivity and time management.
- Other self-help (e.g., public speaking, feeling more confident, finding happiness, etc.).
- Grief and mourning.
- Bad habits, such as stopping smoking.
- Pets and animals.
- Career and job.
- Music, including learning an instrument or learning how to sing.
- Languages (e.g., learn French).
- Self-defense.
- Home security.
- Computer security.
- Stress relief, such as meditation and yoga.
- Weddings.

You'll note that many of these are very broad. What you want to do is figure out what sub-topics/niches within these broad markets most interest you.

Once you've created a list of possibilities, then you need to do your market research to ensure these possible niches are profitable.

### **Take these steps:**

#### **Step 1: Find out what your market is already buying. Here's how:**

Search marketplaces. Simply enter your niche keywords into top marketplaces, and see which products are selling well.

You can search marketplaces such as:

- Amazon.com
- Etsy.com.
- CafePress.com
- Zazzle.com
- Bonanza.com
- eBay.com

#### **Search Google. Now go search for your niche keywords in Google or Bing. Take note of the following:**

1. What are the top sites in your niche selling? If several sites in your niche are selling similar products, that's a good sign that the product is popular.

2. What are the top sites in your niche advertising? In some cases, a top site might not directly sell their own products. Instead, they may accept advertisers. Take note of what these advertisers are promoting – if you see similar ads across sites, that's a sign that a product is in demand.

3. What do you see being advertised in the sponsored results? You'll find these sponsored (paid) ads next to the organic ads in Google or Bing. If you see similar products being advertised across ads, that's a sign that it's something popular in your niche.

### **Check out print publications. Here's what you're looking for:**

1. See what niche catalogs are selling. In particular, pay attention to what is promoted on the front and back covers. These are the big items that tend to be popular, and those who print catalogs do a lot of research and testing to determine which items to put on the front and back covers.

For example, if you're looking to sell gardening supplies, then check out what the top gardening supply catalogs are positioning as their big sellers.

2. See what's being advertised in niche magazines. Popular magazines (with large circulation numbers) charge a lot to advertise, so advertisers pick their products and offers carefully. Check out the ads scattered through these magazines, as well as the classified ads in the back (where applicable).

## **Step 2: Find Out What Your Market Wants**

### **Walk through these three steps:**

Eavesdrop on your market. In other words, simply spend some time listening to your market talk amongst themselves, which can be very revealing. You can find these discussions in the following places:

- On niche blogs (check the comments).
- In niche communities, such as Facebook groups or niche forums.

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- In product reviews on sites like Amazon.

Use keyword tools. The next step is to enter your niche keywords into a tool such as WordRecon. Then pay particular attention to the keywords that revolve around specific products and product reviews.

Survey your market. Finally, you can ask your market what they want. One way to do this is by using a tool like SurveyMonkey.com. Another way is to simply open the discussion on a big platform, like in a social media group, in a sort of focus group. Or, preferably, you can do both.

### **Step 3: Pick a niche.**

Ask yourself these questions (and answer them based on your research):

- Which niches appear to be the most profitable?
- Where can you carve out a niche?
- Which niches appeal to you the most?

## **Choose a Platform**

The main guidebook gives you a variety of both hosted and self-hosted selling platforms that you can use to set up your store.

But the question is, which one is right for you?

In order to determine the answer, ask yourself these additional questions to uncover your needs?

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- What sort of products are you selling? Different platforms have different fees, depending on what you're selling, so you'll need to take that into consideration when determining cost. You'll also need to check the terms of service on each site to be sure that the platform accepts your type of product. If you're selling something prohibited by other sites (such as firearms), then you'll need to consider selling on your own site (such as by using WordPress + WooCommerce).
- What is your level of technical expertise? If you have low levels of technical expertise and/or you don't intend to outsource the development of your site, then you'll need to stick with third-party, hosted platforms (rather than self-hosted options like WordPress). All you do is pay a monthly fee, and it's headache free.
- Do you intend to stock and fulfill merchandise? If you don't carry inventory, then a dropshipping model is a good option (think Shopify plus the Dropified App and AliExpress), or you can use a service such as eBay's valet service or Fulfillment by Amazon.
- What is your marketing plan? It's a good idea to market your store aggressively in order to grow it as quickly as possible. However, some platforms – such as eBay, Etsy and Amazon – help you with marketing, and you get the benefit of their branding to boost conversions.
- How fast do you expect to grow? You need to be sure you pick a platform that can grow with you. Consider not only how many products you intend to list, but also what sort of volume you plan on doing. Some options, such as Shopify, let you start with a smaller plan and then upgrade as your business grows.
- What is your budget? Obviously, this is going to have an impact on your decision. But keep in mind, you don't want to go for an unsuitable option just because it's cheaper, otherwise you may need to start over later at a great cost of time and money.

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So go ahead and consider these questions carefully, and then visit each of the recommended platforms inside the resource guide to see which one best meets your needs.

Need a quick overview of these platforms? Check this out...

### Use The Platform Checklist/Worksheet

Use this checklist to help you decide which platform is right for you. As you complete your research on each platform, you may want to make additional notes about the pros and cons that are specific to your business model.

WordPress + WooCommerce

Here are the advantages of using WordPress + WooCommerce:

- It's a stable, secure platform.
- You're in control. It's your store, it's your domain, it's your web hosting.
- You don't pay per-transaction fees to the platform. (Only to your credit card processor.)
- WordPress and WooCommerce are user-friendly.
- WooCommerce is flexible, extendable and adaptable.

List other advantages here that are specific to your business model:

Here are the disadvantages:

- WooCommerce paid extensions can add up.
- The tech stuff is up to you.
- Potentially slow loading times.

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- There is no telephone support.

List other potential disadvantages here that are specific to your business model:

To learn more about the WordPress platform, go to [www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org). To learn more about WooCommerce, go to [www.woocommerce.com](http://www.woocommerce.com).

Now let's look at another popular option...

### Shopify

Here are the advantages of using Shopify:

- It's secure.
- It's flexible and scalable.
- It's customizable.
- Good customer support.
- You're in control.

List other advantages here that are specific to your business model:

And here are the disadvantages of using Shopify:

- Pricing uncertainty.
- Learning curve.
- Checkout cannot be customized.

List other disadvantages here that are specific to your business model:

## Amazon

Here are the advantages of using Amazon's platform:

- Credibility and trust.
- Built-in traffic.
- Security.
- You can use FBA (fulfillment by Amazon).
- Amazon takes care of the details, such as collecting taxes.

List other advantages here that are specific to your business model:

Here are the disadvantages of using Amazon's platform:

- It's not on your site.
- Fees can be high.
- Direct competition.

List other disadvantages here that are specific to your business model:

To learn more about Amazon's selling platform, go to:

<https://services.amazon.com/selling/benefits.htm/>

And now let's look at the next platform option...

## Etsy

Here are the advantages of selling on Etsy:

- Setting up your store is easy.

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- Etsy sends you some traffic.
- Etsy is a trusted brand.
- It's a good choice if you're creating handmade items.

List other advantages here that are specific to your business model:

Here are the disadvantages of selling on Etsy:

- You have direct competition on the platform.
- Fees on low-cost products can be high.
- You can lose your own sense of branding.

List other disadvantages here that are specific to your business model:

You can learn more about this platform by going to: <https://www.etsy.com/sell>

### **eBay**

Here are the advantages of selling on eBay:

- You can sell both used and new merchandise.
- Built-in traffic.
- eBay is a trusted brand.
- Setting up a store and listings are easy.
- You can use the valet service.

List other advantages here that are specific to your business model:

Here are the disadvantages of selling on eBay:

- You have plenty of direct competition on the site.
- Fees can be high, depending on what you're selling.
- Your payment options are limited.

List other disadvantages here that are specific to your business model:

To learn more about selling on eBay, go to <http://www.ebay.com/si/sell>.

## Create Your Product Listings

Another very important factor in your success is to create a compelling sales description for every product you list.

Now before you write your description, you'll want to profile the product to uncover its main features and benefits. You can create this profile by answering these questions:

NOTE: If you outsource your listings to a copywriter, then provide this information to your freelancer.

- What is the product?
- What does the product do?
- What color is it?
- What is it made out of?
- Who made it? (E.G., brand name?)
- What are the features of the product? These are the actual parts of a product.

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- What are the benefits of the product? This is what the features of a product do for the customer. List as many of these benefits as you can think of.
- Who is the product most suited for? When applicable, list who would benefit the most from this product.
- What are the potential flaws of the product? And how can you rationalize and overcome these flaws? In other words, raise and handle potential objections to help people make the buying decision.
- Does the product require any special care? For example, if you're selling clothing, you would note if it's dry clean only.
- What are the product's measurements and size? This includes length, height and even weight.

NOTE: Be sure to list product measurements on clothing even if you've listed the size.

- How is this product different from other products on the market? In other words, why should people buy this particular product? What makes it better than the competition?
- Are there any discounts or freebies available? This includes things like free shipping, as well as any discounts that may be available.
- Are there any bonuses included?
- Does the product come with any sort of guarantee? If so, what are the terms of this guarantee? Do customers need to pay return shipping? What is the length of the guarantee? Is it a money-back guarantee, or do you only offer product replacement?
- Is there anything else the prospect should know that will help them make the buying decision? Go ahead and list everything that comes to mind, even if it seems trivial.

Now that you've answered all these questions, you can write your product description and incorporate as many relevant details as possible. Be sure to focus on the benefits of the product, and include a call to action at the end that specifically tells people to purchase the product.

## Determine If You Should Outsource

From creating product listings to taking care of your customer service inquiries, there are plenty of tasks that could keep you chained to your desk all day long. That's why you'll want to consider outsourcing some of these tasks.

Answer the following questions to determine if and what you should outsource:

What would it cost for you to do it yourself rather than outsource the task?

A lot of people think it's "free" to do a task themselves, but that's not quite true. That's because time is your most valuable resource since it's limited, so you need to figure out the best use of your time.

What you need to do is determine what your time is worth per hour, and how long it will take you to complete a task. Then check to see if a professional can do it at a lower cost.

But even if it's more expensive to hire someone else, you might still outsource this task.

Check out these next questions to ask yourself....

## What sort of end result can you produce?

In other words, are you skilled at this task? Or would it be better to hire a professional to get a better result?

Next question...

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Do you like the task?

Maybe you're good at it. Maybe you'll produce great results. Maybe it's even a high-value task, so you feel like it's worth doing.

But the question is, do you actually LIKE doing it?

If not, outsource it. Because if you really don't like a task, you're likely to drag your heels and slow down your business growth. It's a much better idea to hand it off to a professional who'll get it done fast and get it done well.

If you outsourced your listings, what would you work on instead?

You only have a limited amount of time in a day. That's why you'll want to focus your time on high-value tasks, such as marketing. So when you consider what to outsource, leave the lower-value tasks to freelancers, while you focus on the higher-value tasks.

What is your outsourcing budget?

Chances are, you don't have an unlimited budget, right? So in that case, you need to use the questions above to figure out which tasks you should be outsourcing. Next, rank these tasks in order of which ones you definitely want to outsource, and which ones you'd like to outsource if your budget permits. Then allocate your outsourcing budget accordingly.

## Develop An Advertising Strategy

Before you start promoting your store, you need to develop an overall strategy. Use the answers to these questions to help you develop this strategy...

Who is your target market?

Here are questions you'll want to answer about your target market:

- How old is your target market?

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- What gender?
  - Where do they live?
  - What is their yearly income?
  - What language do they speak?
  - What is their education level?
  - What sort of jobs or careers do they have?
  - What is their marital status?
  - Do they have children?
  - How much money do they spend every year on products in your niche?
  - What are their problems?
  - What issues do they have with similar products in your niche?
  - What motivates your target market?
  - Does your market use any sort of niche-related jargon?
  - Does your market buy products like yours online?
- ... And anything else you can think of to help you better understand your target market.

## How do you intend to reach your target market?

In order to answer this, you need to know where your target market congregates, or what sort of activities they participate in that allows you to get an ad in front of them. Here are some possibilities:

- Paid advertising
- Social media
- Search engine optimization
- Email marketing
- Affiliate program/JVs (joint ventures)

What is your advertising budget?

Naturally, this is going to have a big impact on the type of paid advertising you do. You can create a strategy to reinvest your profits, so that your paid advertising efforts grow naturally over time.

What are your target goals?

Define your goals in terms of income, sales and traffic. Then estimate your conversion rate, and determine how much traffic you'll need to meet your sales goals.

Who are your biggest competitors?

These are the people who are selling the exact same products as you (such as other dropshippers in your niche), or those who are selling very similar products to you. You'll want to do research to gather as much information as you can about your competitors. This includes answers to the following questions...

### **What makes you different and better than these competitors?**

As you start advertising in your niche, your prospects are going to wonder why they should buy from you instead of your competitors. You need to develop a brand and an USP (unique selling proposition) that answers this question.

### **In order to determine a good USP, you'll need to do two things:**

1. Figure out what USPs your competitors are using, because of course you want to position your business in a unique way in the marketplace.
2. Figure out what is important to your prospects. It does you no good to develop a USP (or overall brand) if your prospects and customers don't give a flying fig about it. Your market research will help you determine what is important to your customers.

Once you develop your USP and overall brand, then you can start incorporating it into your advertising campaigns.

### **What are your strengths and weaknesses?**

Simply put, what weaknesses may hamper your marketing and overall business efforts? And what strengths do you possess that are a boon to growing your business?

You'll want to spend some time thinking about this, as knowing your weaknesses in particular will be helpful, as you can make a Plan B to overcome these weaknesses.

### **How are your competitors reaching the target market?**

Simply put, study what your competitors are doing. Sign up for their mailing lists, follow them on social media, search for them online to find out how and where they're advertising. Figure out what's working for them, and then see if you can adapt some of these idea into your overall marketing strategy.

### **What is your main advertising goal?**

If you want effective advertising, then you need to determine your primary goal before you purchase your first ad. Here are follow up questions to help you determine your goal:

- Do you intend to generate revenue on the frontend (e.g., advertising for growth and monetization)?
- Is your goal to build your customer list and then generate profits on the backend?
- Are you using it primarily to build your prospect list?
- Are you using your advertising to build brand recognition?

Once you've answered all these questions, then you'll have a good handle on who your customers are, how to reach them, and how to stand out from your competition.

## Optimize Your Store (SEO)

**Here's a checklist you can use to optimize your product pages for the search engines. Include your keywords (such as the brand name and type of product) in:**

- The page title.

HINT: Use 70 characters or less here so that the search engines don't truncate your title.

- The page URL.
- The H1 tag (the header on the page).
- The image alt text.
- Image captions.
- Image filenames.
- Navigation links or other internal links.
- Within your product description itself.
- Meta description tags, which is the content appearing under your page title in organic search results.

NOTE: Not all search engines use these tags, but it doesn't hurt to include them. Keep the meta description length to 150 characters or less so that search engines don't truncate it.

Then walk through these other points on the checklist to ensure your product pages (and blog pages) are optimized for the search engines:

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- Keep your focus on your human visitors, not the search engine bots. Write for humans first, and bots second (as long as writing for the bots doesn't diminish the experience for the human visitors).
- Make sure you're using a mobile-friendly theme/design.
- Be sure your site loads fast.
- Create content-rich pages (especially with blog posts, where you have more leeway to expand).
- Include synonyms and words related to your keywords. For example, if your keyword includes the word "housebreaking," you might also use words such as "house training," "potty training," and "
- Set up related social media pages and link back to your store.
- Install social media
- Set up review pages on sites like Yelp and Epinions, and link back to your store.
- Create an XML sitemap.
- Use canonical tags if you have duplicate content (such as similar product descriptions), or avoid the issue altogether by changing the descriptions.
- Create original content. Don't use product descriptions from dropshippers. (Not only does original content help you with SEO, it also helps with conversions and sales.)
- Use redirects for pages that no longer exist.
- Check your site regularly for errors, such as broken links or scripts that don't work.

- Offer videos, interactive features and other “rich snippets.” These snippets may appear in the search engines, which will have your page standing out from among the text-only pages.

## Develop a Social Media Strategy

Before you develop a social media strategy, you need to figure out what your end goal is. That is, how do you intend to use social media to grow your store?

### Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Generate new leads/build your mailing list.
- Create more sales.
- Drive traffic.
- Build your brand.
- Build authority status.
- Boost your viral marketing strategy.
- Distribute content.
- Engage your audience for research purposes.
- Create higher conversion rates.
- Develop another communication channel (including for customer service purposes).
- Lower your marketing costs.
- Bolster your other marketing efforts.

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While you may enjoy all these benefits of engaging on social media, you need to primarily pick just one goal, and then develop your social media strategy around that one goal.

Now that you've picked a goal that will drive your overall social media strategy, ask yourself these questions to further develop this strategy:

- What sort of content does your audience seem to respond to the best? (Hint: look at your competitors' social media pages to get ideas.)
- What type of content do you need to create for your chosen platforms? (For example, if you're on Instagram, then you need to share pics. If you're on Facebook, you can create and share a wider variety of content.)
- How will you integrate your branding into your social media strategy?
- How often will you post on your social media accounts? (Hint: Posting at least two or three times weekly is the minimum – you'll likely want to post more often.)
- What sort of tools will you use to schedule content and track responses? (See the resource document included with this guide to learn about your options.)
- Will you outsource content creation or do it yourself?
- How will you engage your audience to produce more likes, comments and shares? (E.G., Asking, "What do you think?" at the end of a post.)
- What sort of viral content will you distribute?
- How will you integrate your social media campaigns within your store? (For example, you can place social media "like" and "share" buttons next to products as well as below blog posts.)
- How much time will you set aside each day to interact with your audience, respond to their questions, etc.?

What you'll want to do is develop a strategy using the answers to the questions above as a guideline, and then test your strategy. Test content length. Test text versus multimedia. Test out the time of day you post, the day, and how many times you post per week to see which strategy gives you the best reach.

## Develop An Email Marketing Strategy

Your mailing list is going to become one of your most profitable assets. However, in order to ensure this, you need to develop a solid email marketing strategy.

Use these questions to guide you:

- What are your overall goals for your mailing list?
- What sorts of promos do you plan on running, and when?
- What kind of content can you send to build relationships? In other words, what sorts of “how to” articles, tips and other informational articles are can you create to inform subscribers (build relationships) and close sales?
- What sort of holidays would you like to observe with your mailing list? (E.G., If you sell candy, then you're sure to want to send special promos out during Halloween, Christmas and Valentine's Day.)
- What sorts of events are relevant to your niche? For example, if you sell clothing, then you'll send out seasonal newsletters. E.G., selling beachwear during the summer months.
- Are you doing any content swaps with partners? If so, you'll need to plan their mailings into your publishing calendar.

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- Which products do you want to focus on moving? “All” is not the correct answer here, because you can’t promote all your products in your newsletter. (Assuming you have dozens, hundreds or even thousands of products.) That’s why you’ll want to pick your top products and promote them in your newsletter.
- How can you use your newsletter to promote these products? NOTE: Generally, a series of emails about a product creates more sales than sending out a single email about a product.

Once you answer all these questions, then you’ll be able to create a publishing calendar so that you know what sort of emails you’ll send and when over the next six to twelve months.

### Use This Email Marketing Checklist

There are plenty of pieces and parts to remember when you’re sending out campaigns and emails.

Use this checklist to be sure you cover all your bases...

#### Goals

Do you have a well-defined goal for this email?

Did you plan your content and pitch around this goal?

Is this email part of a series? If not, would your goal be better served by creating a series?

#### From Field

Have you selected a recognizable “From” field?

Is your “From” field brandable?

NOTE: Pick your “From” field carefully, as you do not want to change it once you’ve decided on it.

## Subject Line

Does your subject line give your prospect a good reason to open the email?  
(Does it grab their attention?)

Does the subject line include a benefit?

Does the subject line arouse curiosity, where possible?

Is your subject line short so that the email client doesn't truncate it?

## Email Content

Does your email immediately engage readers with a direct benefit, a story, an intriguing question, a startling statistic or similar item?

Is your email reader-oriented? (Hint: You should use words like "you" and "yours" much more often than self-centered words like "I" or "me.")

Is your email structured in a way to naturally lead people to your offer at the end?

Do you answer the question, "What's in it for me?" by offering a list of benefits?

Do you include high-quality product photos in the email?

Do you provide a strong call to action alongside a link?

Do you give your readers a good reason to click on the link now? (E.G., a time-limited discount offer is a good way to create a sense of urgency.)

## Email Formatting

Are you using a responsive email design?

Did you test your email across devices to be sure it looks good?

Did you proofread your email?

Did you test the email's spam score?

### Testing

Did you switch your email's testing tools on so that you can test and track this email?

Are you only testing one factor at a time, while holding all other variables constant?

### Segmenting And Follow Up

Are you sending highly targeted emails to different segments of your list?

Do you have another email with a different subject line ready to send to people who didn't open the current email?

Do you have another email ready to send to people who open the current email, but don't click on the link?

Do you have another email ready to send to people who open and click on the link, but don't purchase the offer?

## Create Customer Service Templates

You're likely to get some of the same questions coming in through your help desk over and over again from customers and prospects. You can save you and your staff time (and create a uniform customer service experience) by creating "copy and paste" template answers for these common questions.

Here are the inquiries and questions you're likely to receive:

- What payment methods do you accept? (Or specific questions such as "Do you accept PayPal?")

## ECommerce Smart Start Beginners Guide

- How quickly do you process orders?
- When can I expect my order to arrive?
- I didn't get a receipt/tracking number – can you resend this information?
- What is your return policy?
- What is your guarantee policy/warranty?
- How do use a coupon?
- How do I use a gift card?
- Do you have any coupons/Groupons available?
- Do you have any upcoming sales?
- How do I use the product/is there an owner's manual available?
- Can I order a replacement part?
- This item didn't work – what are my options?
- How do I start a return?
- Do I need to pay for postage on a return?
- Is there a restocking fee?
- Do you have telephone number where I can speak directly to a real person?
- I'm furious about \_\_\_\_\_. How do I contact the manager or owner?
- Did my order go through?

## ECommerce Smart Start Beginners Guide

- Where is my order?
- Do this, or I'm going to leave a bad review...

NOTE: Some people have such bad customer service experiences that they start out every inquiry with a threat. Stay level-headed and answer these inquiries cheerfully and promptly.

- I just hit the order button and realized I ordered the wrong item/size/color/etc. – how can I correct this before it ships?
- I keep getting an error when I try to \_\_\_\_\_. What now?
- I asked for a refund 7 days ago and haven't heard anything back. Are you trying to rip me off?
- Can you flush a dead fish down the toilet? (That probably has nothing to do with your business, but you can bet you're going to get some off the wall questions sometimes – so be sure to handle them in a polite, professional way!)

Yes, it takes a little time upfront to create template answers for these questions, but it will save you and your staff a LOT of time down the road.

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