

# Beyond The Hype

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Four Fundamentals For  
Sustainable E-Commerce Growth



# Hot-Air Hype, or a Genuine Golden Ticket?

## THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT

**2018 is a great time to be at the helm of an E-Commerce business. With rapid market expansion, constant innovation, and smart new ways to get closer to your customers, tantalising opportunities are everywhere.**

The trick is knowing where to start.

Watch the trends and you'll see the big players pushing ideas straight out of science fiction.

Whether it's Amazon's drones making airborne deliveries, websites built for the tiniest nuances of consumer emotions, or the move to a genuinely global E-Commerce market, keeping up with the latest trends is becoming a serious commitment.

**"E-Commerce is constantly updating with improved discovery, technology, logistics, and bloody cool things to buy."**

*(Brandwatch)*

And that excitement is contagious too. Consumer expectations are blowing through the roof, and right now they don't just *want* stunning new levels of convenience in a seamless multi-channel experience: they *expect* your business to provide it.

In such a hectic world it can be tough to tell which opportunities are worth the investment.

### EYES ON THE PRIZE

The truth is, taking your E-Commerce business to the next level doesn't demand an R&D budget the size of a small country's GDP.

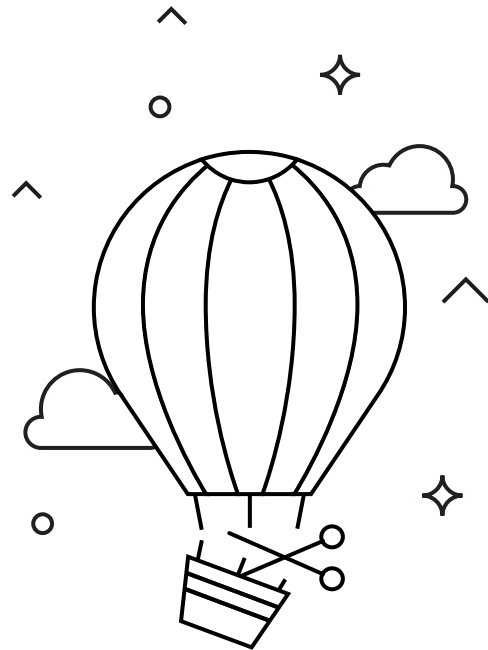
**The priority for ambitious e-tailers has to be keeping a razor sharp focus on delivering your core services.** Do that, and you're already one step ahead of some of the big players in E-Commerce.

Less is more. Smashing your growth targets means resisting the temptation to chase after every new opportunity, emerging technology or novel idea. Instead, keep your eyes firmly fixed on the customer experience and nail the E-Commerce essentials.





We've put together this guide to cut through the hot-air industry hype and focus on a set of four concrete strategies your business can crack on with right away:



## 1 **BUYERS BEYOND BORDERS: INTERNATIONALISING YOUR BUSINESS**

Cross-border E-Commerce is booming, so why are so few e-tailers cashing in? In part one we set out your seven step plan for flexible, sustainable international expansion—*without* a massive up front investment.

## 2 **HEARTS AND MINDS: USING EMOTION TO DRIVE SALES**

Truth is, using emotion in E-Commerce isn't all that revolutionary. Get a handle on how the trusty triad of storytelling, urgency and trust can drive online conversions and boost sales growth.

## 3 **CONVENIENCE AT ANY COST? DELIVERY IN THE AGE OF AMAZON**

Truly competitive delivery is often simpler than retailers expect. Here's how to level the playing field with commitment, an eye for detail, and the right attitude when you're hunting down suppliers.

## 4 **IT'S *STILL* ALL ABOUT THE OMNICHANNEL**

'Omnichannel' has been around for years, but it's still a tough nut to crack, and the holy grail for many retailers. Here's why total visibility and a seamless customer experience need to be at the top of your 2018 growth strategy, and how to make them a reality.

PART ONE

# Buyers Beyond Borders

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Internationalising Your Business



## EXCITING TIMES

International E-Commerce is booming.

With cross-border shopping growing rapidly across the globe, demand in our nearest markets shows no signs of slowing down. **European B2C market growth is running at an impressive 14% every year**, while Southern Europe just hit a phenomenal 25%, according to eCommerce Europe.

This is a cracking growth opportunity for any e-tailer. So why aren't more businesses cashing in on rampant overseas demand?



**"Cross-border shopping will make up 20% of global eCommerce in 2022, with sales of US \$630 billion."**

*(Online Cross-Border Forecast 2017-2022, Forrester)*

As Dan Baker from Smart Insights puts it:

"A big chunk of online traders sit here: If someone from another country reaches the checkout stage, they can probably enter their address successfully, and perhaps tax has been calculated properly, but in the main it is an accident if they make international sales, rather than the result of careful planning and execution."

To their credit, it's not hard to see why smaller businesses rely on accidents like this: effective internationalisation can seem seriously intimidating when you lack experience.



## INTERNATIONAL COMPLICATIONS

Even a casual glance overseas exposes a laundry list of issues.

First there's the operational challenges and paperwork in negotiating European legislation and the ongoing Brexit saga, plus tax and custom rates, all in different currencies. Then there's working with foreign delivery providers, pricing your products, localising your paid and organic search marketing, and creating custom content for new territories.

Even once you're set up, there's adapting your business to a whole new culture...

*"Even European markets are hardly comparable with one another. A good example is design. In Sweden, functionality, simplicity and speed are the most important features of an online shop. This is in contrast with France, where the focus is on design."*

*eConsultancy*

Torn between huge potential growth on one hand and a host of complicated issues on the other, it's no surprise that many retailers default to a mixed solution that doesn't deliver.

But the happy truth is that internationalisation isn't as complex as it seems. You don't need colossal up-front investment and you don't need decades of experience (although they certainly won't hurt either).

The secret is to break things down and take it one step at a time. Most of all: keep learning.

## START WITH DEMAND

Step one of the international game plan is keeping a cool head. Stay calm facing the size and complexity of overseas expansions, and be clinical on the differences between a trickle of international orders and a flood of foreign customers.

Start with a hard look at the real level of international demand...

**"There are two big things you need for successful internationalisation. Yes, you'll need budget—but more importantly, you'll need patience."**

*(Chris Maule, Managing Director, Venditan)*

**First up, pinpoint exactly where the traffic is coming from.** Your resources will go a lot further and your operations will be a lot more effective when you tailor your expansion for one country—so think 'Italy' before you think 'Europe'.

**Next, work out where the sales are coming from.** It sounds simple, sure, but stay clear on the difference between traffic and genuine sales. (There may also be easier fixes if you do spot underwhelming conversion rates in a specific country.)

**With traffic and sales tracked, get a gauge on your foreign social media following.** Customers are great; engaged customers are even better. A social media buzz is a top indication that your brand is making enough noise to hold its own in a foreign market.

**Finally, ask what the competition for your products is like in the countries you're targeting.**

Internationally there's a different competitive landscape. Taking on the locals in Spain is an option, but why bother if it's safer to do so in France?





## **SEVEN SMALL STEPS, ONE GIANT LEAP**

You're all set for international expansion once you've identified a solid base of demand. Moving forward into foreign markets is now a step by step process, learning as you go.

### **We're sharing our diagnostic 7-step checklist: get these things right first!**

Each E-Commerce business will move through these steps at their own speed, but in our experience this is the right sequence to maximise the returns and mitigate the risks on your international investment.

With that in mind...

*"In Spain... 91% prefer paying with Visa or Mastercard. But in Germany, the most preferred online payment method (38%) is ELV (short for Elektronisches Lastschriftverfahren), an electronic direct debit payment method that's supported by banks in Germany."*

*eCommerce News Europe*

## **1 PRICING**

First up, rework your prices for the new market by taking a hard look at the numbers. This is where your earlier research and analysis of demand really come into their own; no matter how sophisticated your domestic pricing plan, you'll need to know the competition inside out.

The truth is that markup pricing, vendor pricing, psychological pricing and keystone pricing are all effective strategies. But what chance do you really have to deliver sales if you're 10% more expensive than a local market competitor on Google Shopping?

## 2 DELIVERY

The best place to start international shipping is still your existing UK base. Invest time with your existing partners first, getting to grips with their international service categories, and making sure your shipping matrix can handle the right size and weight items through the right partners.

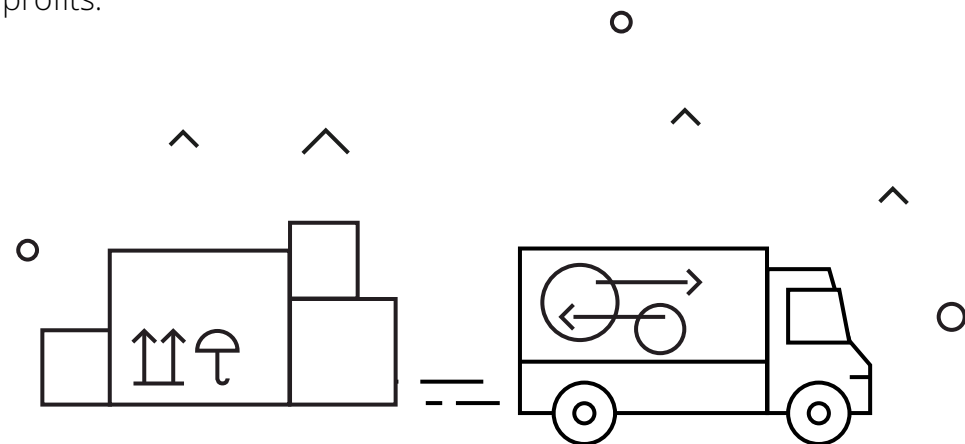
Get up to speed with your existing operations and you'll be best placed to balance delivery costs against the best possible end user experience.

And once all that detail is mapped out, make sure you model it accurately in your E-Commerce platform.

Work hard to keep the subtleties of your service category selection with accurate size and weight data—and don't forget to blacklist countries you won't ship to!

Getting this right will delight your customers with goods that arrive fast and at a fair price, while maximising your own profits.

Maturing your operations means considering the specific idiosyncrasies of each market. For example, do you need to offer free returns to meet the market standards in Germany and Scandinavia?



### 3 PAYMENT TACTICS

Localised payment options are the bold next step for your international expansion.

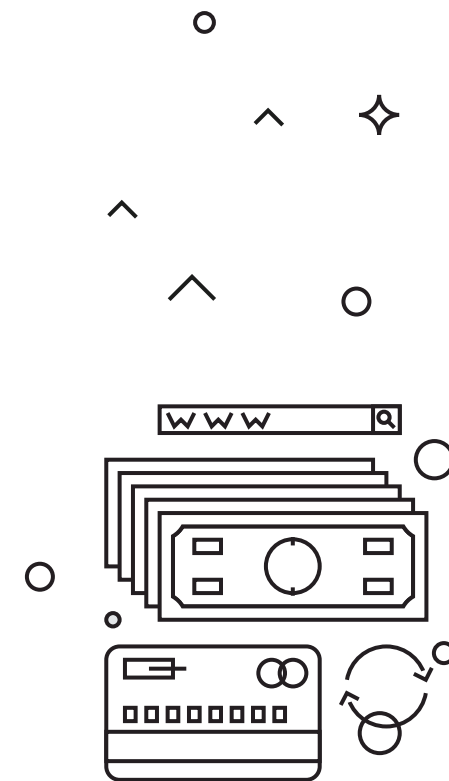
It all depends on the market you're moving into. If you're selling in Spain you can safely rely on standard credit and debit cards for 91% of your consumers (eCommerce Europe). Then again, any effective German expansion means investing in payment systems like GiroPay and ELV.

The full selection of local payment options can feel overwhelming.

The complete picture includes over 250 options from credit and debit cards, to digital wallets and direct debit schemes, all designed to optimise conversions for their global niche.

But you just need to narrow it down for the territory you're trading in. For instance, global traders will cover the biggest tactics by looking to Visa, Mastercard, AMEX and PayPal. Meanwhile trading in Europe means checking out with options like iDeal, GiroPay and SoFort, whereas AliPay and UnionPay are the correct choice for China.

It all comes back to knowing your market.





## 4 LOCAL SEARCH MARKETING

Getting concrete returns from your search marketing strategy is a tough enough task at home in the UK—taking it on abroad requires the same in-depth approach.

Paid Search is the best place to start as the ideal way to test and refine the findings of your pricing research. SEO is another essential part of the mix, though the longer lead time dictates an ongoing strategy.

Social media activity needs to be planned out too. Consider the resources you'll need to set up a specialist account for the market you're expanding into, then build a local following, find evangelists and drive tailored content.

## 5 TRANSLATED CONTENT

It can be tempting to skip out on translation for certain markets. Take the Netherlands: when over 90% of the population speak English (European Commission), why make the investment?

The answer comes back to knowing the local competition. 9 out of 10 Europeans say they always prefer to shop on sites in their own language when given the choice (European Commission), so translated content is a must if local language competitors are serving up products that directly compete with yours.

But tread carefully. The comparatively tiny cost of automated translation makes it a tempting option, but nothing erodes trust and reduces conversion rates like translation errors. In our experience, every business should at least consider having a native speaking professional review (if not write!) the content.



## 6 LOCAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

While native language telephone support is always a hefty investment, translated email support really is a minimum as soon as international revenues start to look sensible.

Make sure you shout about it on your website too—we've seen it make a major impact on conversions. Just remember that international shoppers expect and deserve the same level of support as home grown customers.

## 7 LOCAL DISTRIBUTION

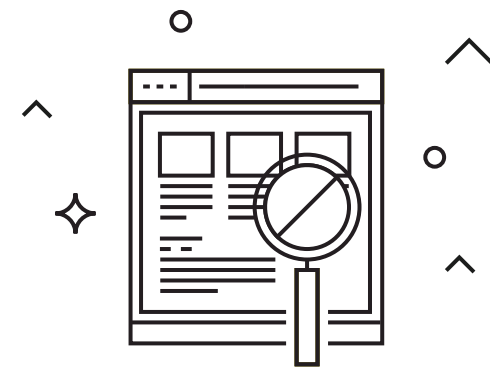
You know you've made international status when you cut the ribbon on the warehouse doors. With local distribution you're set to drive home your proposition with next or same day delivery for your international customers.

Local distribution will always be a major investment. But you'll know the time's right when you make it through all six steps and get to enjoy the benefits of a large, hungry customer base and a steady stream of international revenue.

## KEEP LEARNING

Knowing what's working is simple: is the till ringing? Revenue is the best guide to whether a new foreign market has the fuel your business needs to grow.

The rest is just like success in your domestic operations. Stay smart on creeping costs and margin, pick your partners well, and be sure to keep testing and measuring your tactics.



PART TWO

# Hearts And Minds

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Using Emotion To Drive Sales





## EMOTIONAL COMMERCE

'Emotional commerce' has long been a hot opportunity for your E-Commerce business. We're talking... well... *years*.

All the way back in 2013, Fab's CEO Jason Goldberg predicted that 'Emotional Commerce' would turn the industry upside down as the 'third wave' of E-Commerce.

Listen to enough behavioural economists and you'll probably question whether selling products without emotional approaches *ever* worked...



There's a lot of noise about the power of emotion and what it can do for your E-Commerce strategy. So much so, you'd be forgiven for thinking you need to hire some kind of PhD-wielding research dream team.

But that's not quite the case...

**"It's true that from a behavioral economics perspective we are fallible, easily confused, not that smart, and often irrational. We are more like Homer Simpson than Superman."**

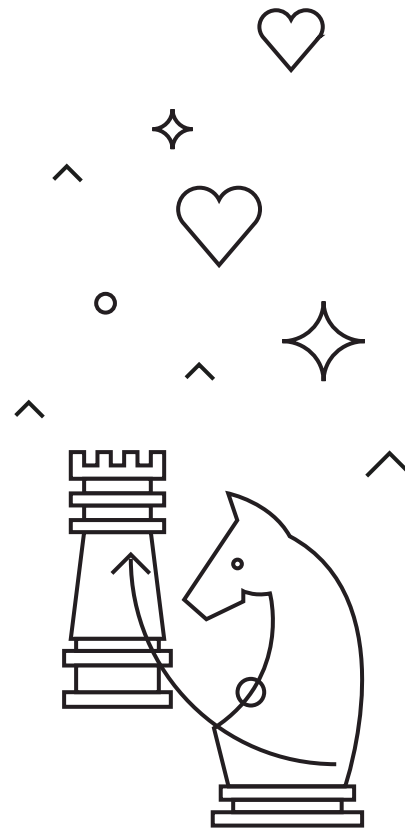
*(Professor Dan Ariely,  
author of Predictably Irrational)*

## **WE'RE ALL WAY AHEAD OF THE GAME**

Truth is, using emotion in E-Commerce isn't all that revolutionary.

You're already tapping into consumer emotions every time you launch a sale, offer loyalty points or share your contact information. Chances are your E-Commerce trading team are already experts in the field of emotional strategies.

Growing your business just means getting a little smarter about how and when you trigger those all important emotions.



*"Long before 'behavioural economics' had a name, marketers were using it. 'Three for the price of two' offers and extended-payment layaway plans became widespread because they worked—not because marketers had run scientific studies."*

Ned Welch

*McKinsey*

**"Consumers were willing to pay 11% more** for a painting, for example, when the artist's story was included on the product page, and 5% more for a hotel room that was promoted with a real guest's story instead of the standard hotel-supplied description."

eConsultancy

*Research from Origin*



## THE 3 FASTEST WAYS TO CONSUMERS' HEARTS

### 1 TELL A STORY

There's a reason why 'storytelling' is such a big buzzword in marketing right now.

If two sites - yours and your competitors' - list the exact same product in the exact same terms, price is pretty much always going to be the big decision point. You'll win or lose based on how little you're willing to charge and how competitive you can be on delivery.

**But a dose of storytelling gives the consumer a whole new reason to buy your product.**

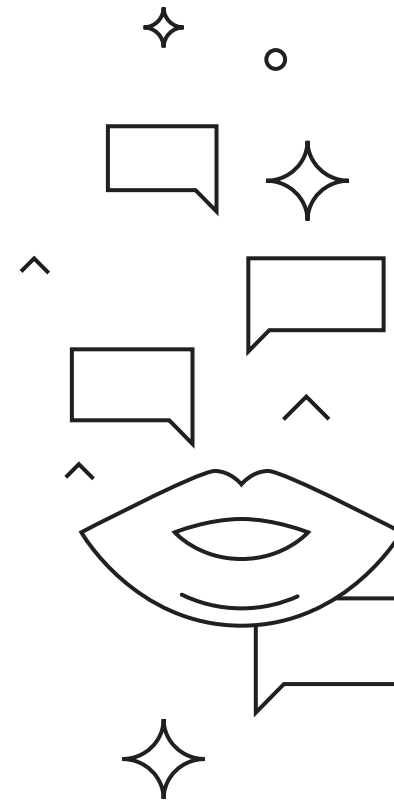
This is especially important to smaller e-tailers. An intimate, compelling story gives consumers a reason to choose you over the global giants of E-Commerce.

### BRAND STORIES

First up, get your brand story straight. Who are you and what do you stand for?

The easy win here is adding creativity to your 'About Us' page. Swap out the list of dates and achievements for a proper mission statement that consumers can connect with. Something that will keep them coming back for more.

Then push that creativity into the page layout. Make it visual and run your brand story through an interactive timeline, for example.



## PRODUCT STORIES

Once your brand story is in order, spin a yarn about the products you stock.

Product stories are a simple way to transform the way consumers engage with your business.

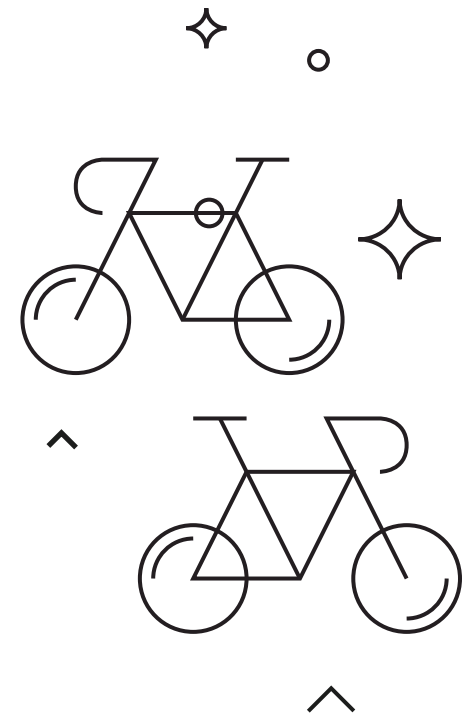
SigmaSports.com are a great example here. The bike and triathlon retailer crafts a strong narrative on product pages for luxury items, looking to create a hook that keeps consumers engaged. Each page provides a visual way of engaging with the brand and following the story—all of it situated within the wider story about Sigma, and why they choose to stock this brand.

**“Creating stories for our products has made a massive impact on sales: our top-end products with featured stories have a much higher conversion rate.”**

*(Nik Hill, Head of E-Commerce, SigmaSports.com)*

The story structure means the consumer has a whole stack of reasons to buy before they reach the pricing information.

Get past the plain sales pitch or settling on just ‘handing over’ information, and you’ll see a transformation in the way consumers engage with your brand.



## 2 KEEP YOUR PROMISES

Online shopping has come a long way. Not so long ago handing over your card details online took serious consumer confidence. Today, it's almost second nature.

**But the best E-Commerce businesses never take trust for granted.** Instead, they keep working to build and maintain it.

A little reassurance goes a long way when all consumers have to go on is your business's presence online...

First up, get the basics right.

For better conversions, **get those security credentials front and centre** during the checkout process. This is critical for retailers competing with the biggest names in E-Commerce—when 65% shoppers are wary of having their personal information hacked (PwC), consumers may well default to a brand they recognise.

Then, enhance the effect with **clearly displayed customer reviews**. Reviews are an effective way to build trust and reassure consumers, by sharing real experiences from real shoppers.

The results speak for themselves too: products with five customer reviews enjoy a staggering 270% higher conversion rate, according to the Spiegel Research Centre.

*"Products with an average star rating in the 4.7 – 5.0 range are less likely to be purchased than those in the 4.2 – 4.7 range.*

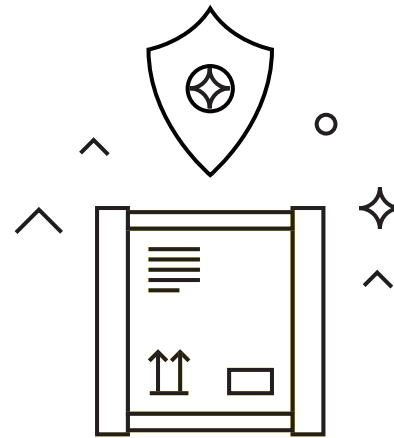
*This suggests that shoppers see ratings at the far end of the spectrum as too good to be true."*

Spiegel Research Centre

Northwestern University



And that works even when customers aren't totally complimentary. The Spiegel team also found that a few negative reviews actually *increase* conversion rates by creating "credibility" and "authenticity". Simply put, consumers won't trust a product that seems too good to be true.



### YOUR BRAND IS YOUR PROMISE

Trust also goes way deeper than flashing your badges.

If a customer orders three pairs of shoes for next day delivery, and your site states that they're in stock and ready to go, your brand just made a promise. If a simple stock error then means those shoes won't be there for two weeks, your brand just broke its promise.

**"Trust isn't just in security and reviews, it's in everything you do. Ultimately, your brand is your promise to consumers. If you break that promise, you break your brand."**

*(Chris Maule, Managing Director, Venditan)*

And that really is as serious as it sounds. Building and maintaining trust makes providing a seamless omnichannel experience critical for the modern consumer (head to *Part Four* for more on how to make that happen).

**Trust should be right at the heart of your whole E-Commerce strategy.** Not big promises and public declarations, but the simple honesty in committing to provide quality service and a seamless shopping experience.

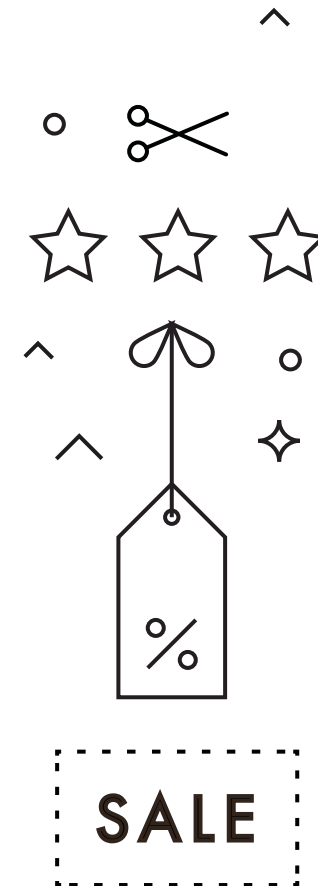
### 3 CREATE URGENCY

Whipping up a sense of urgency might seem counterintuitive since you're also building that all important feeling of security. But don't be shy about applying a little pressure—just be careful not to sink into the hard sell.

Set up your product pages and checkout to spell out a few simple facts...

- ⇒ **'2 left in stock in UK Warehouse'.**
- ⇒ **Order in the next 4 hours 36 minutes for next day delivery.**
- ⇒ **127 people looked at this.**
- ⇒ **6 people are looking at this.**
- ⇒ **Spend £8.20 more to qualify for Free Next Day Delivery.**

...and let consumers' emotions drive the sale.



PART THREE

# Convenience At Any Cost?

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Delivery In The Age Of Amazon





## **THE AMAZON EFFECT**

Think delivery, think convenience - think 'E-Commerce' in fact - and there's one name you can't escape.

Amazon casts a long shadow over smaller businesses. The retail goliath is relentlessly raising consumers' expectations thanks to their newsworthy delivery systems...

**"The Amazon effect has raised everyone's expectations about how fast products should arrive at our doorstep."**

*(PwC, Total Retail Survey 2017)*

Not content with testing delivery by airborne drone through Prime Air and managing an incredible 16 minutes from checkout to delivery - Amazon are expanding their Dash service to deliver over 150 brands direct to consumers' door at the literal press of a button.

There's no sign of progress stalling anytime soon either. Amazon Go officially launched in the US on January 22, 2018, treating the world to the strange spectacle of consumers queuing to **not have to queue** for their shopping.

Amazon's 2018 retail strategy feels designed to turn consumers into big kids, with buttons and toys that turn ordinary delivery times into unbearable delays.

## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR MID-SIZED RETAILERS?**

Well, like it or not, the Amazon effect is making waves with UK consumers.

Better delivery options and returns policies are the second and third biggest factors as to why UK consumers choose one online retailer over another (KPMG), and the biggest cause of basket abandonment (over 50%!) comes down to high delivery costs (MetaPack).

It looks like consumers really are starting to expect outstanding and seemingly expensive delivery systems from every e-tailer out there, no matter their size.

### **THE COST OF CONVENIENCE**

Yup, convenience is a fact of life for modern E-Commerce.

But don't splash out on the drones just yet.

Truth is, a cracking delivery system that caters to your consumers' needs and wants—even if those needs and wants are *crazy* levels of convenience—doesn't have to burn your margins.

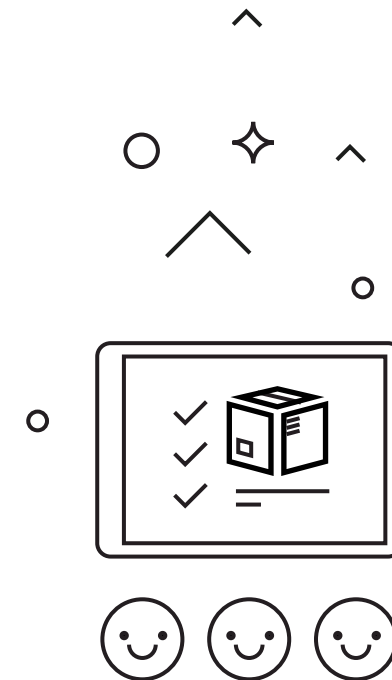
Top notch delivery actually comes down to one thing: **commitment**.

Remember, behind Amazon's fun and games are serious amounts of money, time and pure hard work from their staff. If you want to compete with the best, you have to put in the hours.

Now this isn't the commitment to try and match *whatever* Amazon do next, and certainly not the commitment to spend whatever it takes to power free next day delivery.

The commitment you need is bigger than pure spending. It's about cultivating the right delivery partners, being meticulous with your margin calculations, and being willing to set despatch working hours around your customer experience, not the other way around.

Yup, sometimes it's tough. But trust us, the results speak for themselves...





**"A lot of the most effective strategies are far simpler than you'd expect. What retailers really need for competitive delivery isn't just resources: it's commitment."**

John Coyne

*Commercial Director, Venditan*

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### 3 STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE DELIVERY

#### 1 PICK YOUR PARTNERS

Outstanding delivery starts with the right suppliers. The first way to improve your service is to take a look at all your options, shop around for different service categories, and *negotiate*.

Getting better rates from your chosen courier often comes down to the volume of shipments you're processing. As your online revenue grows, transactions increase, and with them come a greater volume of shipments—hence more negotiating power.

*"You could definitely save money by shifting from one courier to another offering the same service levels, but you could also get burnt if you don't hit their minimum volumes. It's just a matter of researching your options, balancing your needs and finding the provider and categories that work for you. You just have to know where to look."*

John Coyne

Commercial Director, Venditan

So if you haven't re-negotiated with your existing courier for some time, pick up the phone. If there's still no rate improvement to be had, it's time to contact other couriers and find out more about your options.

**Apply the Goldilocks principle to negotiations:** look for a reasonable deal, not extremes.

Like any negotiation, it's about working out the deal that's good for both parties. It's worth paying a little more for a solid supplier who'll stick with you and hold down their end.

This approach doesn't take huge resources—just a commitment to keep looking for the right partners. It also means you don't just throw money at delivery, whatever the costs.

## 2 TAKE CARE OF THE PENNIES

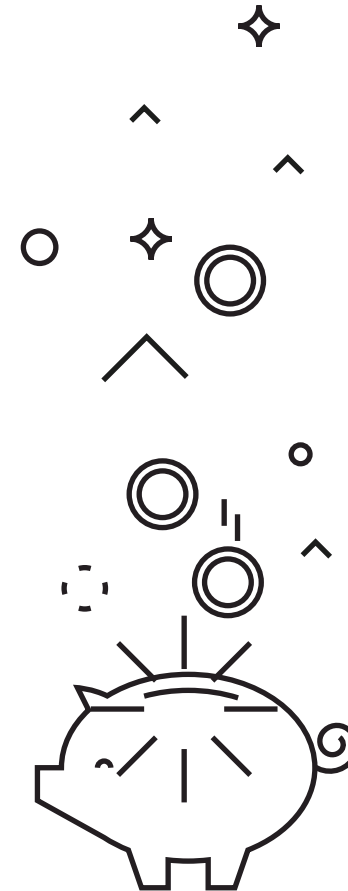
It sounds simple but we're serious on this one—details really do make or break E-Commerce businesses. Even the biggest players get hurt by a momentary lapse in attention.

The key is to watch those margins.

Saltrock for example provide free standard delivery and collect+ for their customers. It's an ambitious, expensive service that's been proven to draw in sales for the business.

But it's also a service with clear cut offs: huge effort went into calculating margins and the right threshold for consumer spending before orders qualify.

Saltrock have had an ongoing commitment to track and monitor their volumes and margins. Software can certainly take a lot of the burden—but getting the calculations right beforehand is what really underpins competitive delivery.



### 3 **ASK YOURSELF: “HOW MUCH DO WE WANT IT?”**

Top notch delivery is often simpler than retailers expect.

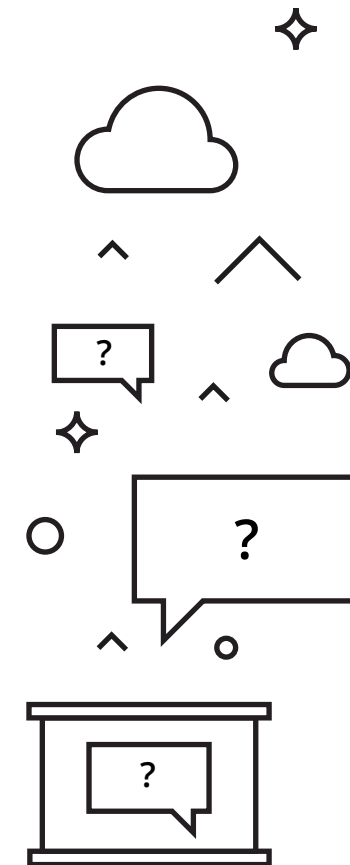
**“Truth is even a sole trader can usually offer next day delivery until 10pm. You often just need to check the details with your local distribution centre, then make the commitment to match their cut off times.”**

*(John Coyne, Commercial Director, Venditan)*

It’s actually a relatively simple process for *all* retailers to offer customers a late next day delivery cut off. Even as a small business, most distribution centres will take your stock right up to 10pm and later. You just need to ask.

Instead of staffing your warehouse 8am till 2pm, staff it 4pm till 10pm. A change to your working hours for despatch could equal a major customer convenience, helping to keep those demanding customers coming back.

Once again, it’s *commitment* that separates the businesses who get delivery right. If you’re willing to put in some tough hours, keep one eye locked on your margins, and spend time building smart relationships with your suppliers - then the results will speak for themselves.





PART FOUR

# It's STILL All About The Omnichannel

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## STILL TALKING OMNICHANNEL

It's easy to feel fatigued by the phrase 'omnichannel' in 2018. But it's never been more relevant.

Consumers have been shifting their shopping habits across more and more channels for a long time now. And e-tailers have done a decent job of serving up multi-channel options: 73% of shoppers now use multiple channels to make a retail purchase (McKinsey).

Trouble is, there's a big difference between being 'multi-channel' and being 'omnichannel'.

Very few retail businesses have cracked the latter. In fact, very few businesses of any stripe have managed it.

*"Multi-channel is an operational view—how you allow the customer to complete transactions in each channel. Omnichannel, however, is viewing the experience through the eyes of your customer, orchestrating the customer experience across all channels so that it is seamless, integrated, and consistent..."*

*Simply put, omnichannel is multi-channel done properly!"*

John Bowden

Senior VP of Customer Care  
Time Warner Cable

Modern shoppers are crying out for a more unified cross-channel experience. And not just from retailers with brick-and-mortar stores: **pure play retailers should remember that the demand for an omnichannel experience applies to them too.**

Even when you're just using multiple marketplaces and/or multiple delivery and return options like collect+—pretty much a prerequisite for modern consumers—there's always the potential for cross-channel friction in your operations.

We're still talking about omnichannel because it's a goal even the biggest players are still chasing.

And that creates a huge opportunity for every other business in E-Commerce.

**"Over 77% of consumers want a more unified multi-channel experience, but only 20% of retail businesses say that reducing friction between channels is a strategic priority for 2018."**

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Manhattan Associates

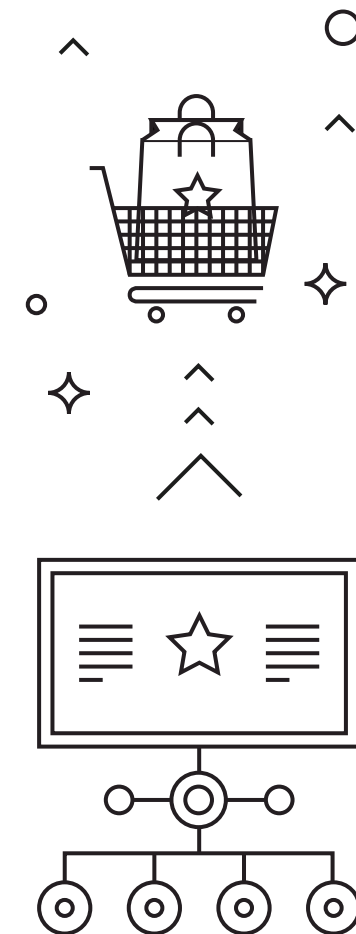
### FRICTION BURNS

Getting omnichannel right is an immense opportunity for mid-sized businesses. Do the hard work—line up a genuinely seamless experience—and you'll be stealing a march on even your biggest competitors.

Working to integrate your systems is a challenge, we know that. But it's more than worth it.

**"The biggest challenges that global retailers face in delivering an omnichannel experience for consumers are: budget constraints (30%), too many legacy systems to change (21%), and the difficulty of integrating existing systems (20%)."**

*(PwC, 2017 Global Retail Survey)*



## THINK VISIBILITY

Start out by stepping into your customer's shoes.

What the consumer doesn't see is the level of on-demand information needed to make their desired experience happen. For this example alone, the retailer needs to bring stock management, delivery time frames, and the ability to make internal shipping requests together in one place.

If the product isn't in stock, the retailer needs the ability to check supplier replenishment timescales with the right level of supply chain integration. And all in real time, too.

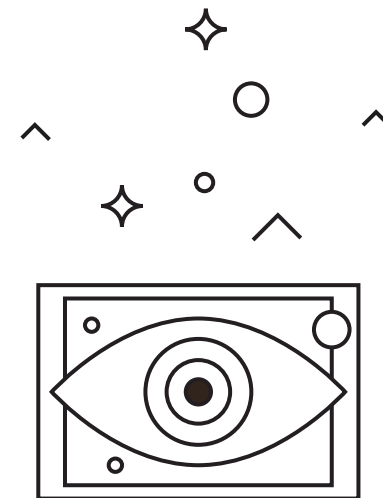
*"Consumers now expect an omnichannel experience. If a consumer walks into a multi-store retailer and they don't have the jacket they want in the right size, the retailer should be able to check their system and see a nearby location's stock levels, or order from the warehouse to collect in store tomorrow, or offer home/office delivery. It all depends on what the consumer wants to do."*

Chris Maule

Managing Director, Venditan

Getting that kind of insight comes down to your data. It may not be the most exciting work, but integrating your systems is the foundation of an outstanding customer experience.

That's when the fun part really starts...



## **MANAGE YOUR INVENTORY**

Manual inventory management may be a viable option when you're starting out in E-Commerce, but scaling up your operation means getting smarter with your staff time.

### **The rewards of getting a single, real time overview of all your stock across channels are huge.**

Those few extra seconds it takes for your warehouse team to manually log and chase stock can quickly add up, especially in peak season. Eliminate wasted time to help prevent bottlenecks and reduce staffing costs.

The effect is multiplied tenfold when you've got different teams juggling channels and suppliers. Having a single view across all stock levels keeps teams across your entire business on track and on time.

## **HOLDING STOCK**

Accurate stock calculations are critical to delivering an omnichannel experience. Getting a single, real time inventory view will hand you the basics: being able to tell customers on your site whether a product really is or isn't available.

While giving convenience-minded modern consumers an 'out of stock' message may feel like waving a red rag in front of a bull, it sure beats the alternative...

Letting them place their next day order and then having to get back in touch to admit there's no stock is as good as handing a sale straight to your competitors.

Of course this is a balancing act. The trick is to avoid overcompensating and exposing your business to inflated warehouse costs and the pains of moving dead stock.

### **The good news is that a fully seamless system sidesteps this conundrum.**

When you can see where your stock is across all of your channels, locations and suppliers, you're primed to take swift action to maintain the precise level of stock needed.

The result is a smoother shopping experience for your customers and precious time saved for your teams.

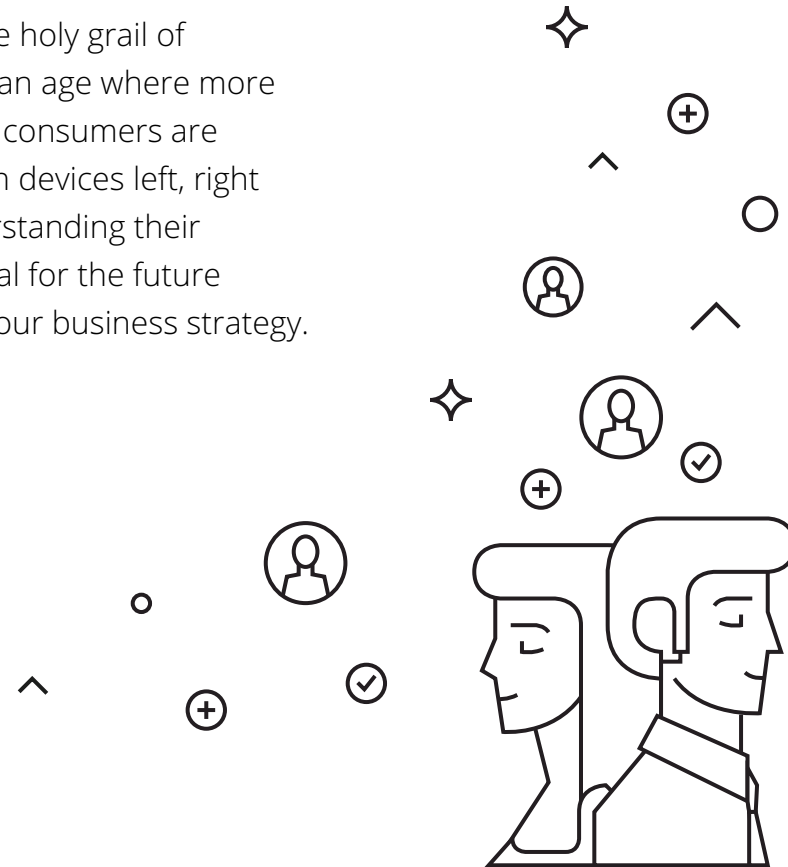


## KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS

The visibility underpinning an omnichannel operation runs both ways. Clearly tracking your own operations across channels is a massive advantage but understanding your customers' behaviour is a game-changer.

A 'single customer view' tracks customers across every channel they interact with—whether that's in-store, online, mail order, events, or another channel altogether.

And here's the reason that omnichannel really might be the holy grail of E-Commerce... In an age where more and more of your consumers are switching between devices left, right and centre, understanding their behaviour is critical for the future development of your business strategy.



# Pick Your Partners

In this Guide we've swept through the industry hype to offer concrete strategies for growing your business. We've delved into international expansion step by step, the hidden emotions that drive higher sales, the true value of delivery service, and—of course—that holy grail of retail: achieving an omnichannel operation.

No business has the complete E-Commerce toolkit ready for every new opportunity that comes their way. We all know that success in this industry comes from building the right relationships with the right partners.

That's why we'll leave you with our three top tips for choosing the best people to work with.



## 1 BE SELECTIVE

Going through a rigorous selection is always worth it. *Always.*

**Make due diligence a priority when you find someone you want to work with, whether they're a fresh new hire for your in-house team, or a whole new agency.** Your process may not be formalised and it certainly won't be the same for everyone you speak to, but having one is vital.

Time spent working out exactly what you want from a relationship pays dividends. Do you need to look at a full platform migration? Or are you looking at some short term fine tuning for your current E-Commerce software? Is your E-Commerce approach still a trial concept in need of hard proof? Or is your priority expanding the thriving aspects of your digital operations?

Answering these questions first means that when you do speak to people, you're in a position to get maximum business value—for all parties.

Which brings us to...

## 2 MAKE CONNECTIONS

Getting out there and speaking to people is critical to securing the right E-Commerce partners. It's those informal, low-pressure chats that give you the real insight into whether people and/or businesses are the right fit for your strategy and mission.

**Above all, speak to the people who work with your potential partners day in and day out.**

Active and even previous customers are best placed to deliver the real picture—often masked by a high-pressure sales process.

### 3 TAKE IT SLOW

Picking your partners *is* a time commitment. But details matter and we don't believe in falling for the hard sell, no matter how hectic the world of E-Commerce may get.

This is something we practice as well as preach. By the time a new customer joins us, we know their business inside out; what they're trying to achieve, where their strengths are, and where they need attention—from end to end.

And the same works both ways. We always encourage potential partners to understand our business, get clear on what they want and need, and speak to a few of our customers. Simply put, getting the partnership fit right benefits everyone.

And that's pretty much all the advice we can cram into this guide! Whether you're using the specific strategies we've laid out, or growing into rich new territories elsewhere, just remember: time spent identifying real opportunities from industry hype is always an investment worth making.





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**We help retailers take their online and in-store business to the next level.**

Our vision is simple: 'To change the face of E-Commerce in the UK'. Its execution is anything but—we deliver expert consultancy and implement elegant software solutions that put the customer first.

Venditan Commerce, our omnichannel retail platform, is designed to ensure retailers deliver a totally unified experience to their customers. Its single aim is to help retailers be loved by more of their customers, more of the time, empowering our partners to become the go-to retailers in their chosen markets.