

The 9 biggest mistakes people make when starting to sell online

1. No structure or flow

It's important to plan your site before you jump in and start building. Too many new store owners just put things willy nilly and write what they want without intention or focus.

Ensure there's structure to your site content. By this I mean, get your point across quickly and accurately in the correct position (easy to find and relevant) on your site. Try to use information to funnel your customers to a sale. If your site is confusing, you're simply losing sales.

2. Too much information

It's great to give your customers the information they need, but so easy to give too much.

Many sites fluff on about their company or the product features when they should use bullet points and scrap the useless garble. Get to the point and your customers will actually read what you write!

3. Focus on features rather than value

If you're trying to sell a product or service, you need to focus on value. Feature and functionality is going to target the button-pushers and they are typically not the ones that make the decisions.

Tell a short story about how the product can be used in real life and how easy it is, saving them time and money.

4. Hiring poor quality staff

It's normal that you know your product and business best, so why hire sales or administration staff who do a less than impressive job?

If your customers are receiving the wrong products, poorly packed orders or can't get the correct information when asked, it's hurting your business.

5. Looking at price rather than value

When selecting companies and services to work with your business, price should not be the main focus. A particular company's service might be 15% more than all others, but they might help increase your profits by 20%.

For example, maybe a fulfilment company is more expensive, but gets the order out same day with your own package branding and gets it right every time. This way you get happy customers and less returns.

6. Not holding enough stock

It's extremely frustrating as a customer when you've added 2 of the 3 items to the basket, but the third item is out of stock. Do you still order? Do you wait till it comes in? When will it come in?

What about when a customer orders an item that is out of stock and needs to wait days until their package is sent. Keep your items in stock. If you order too much and can't sell, use them as lost leaders and sell them at cost price when bundled with a second product.

7. Pricing products too low

Price isn't everything. Some of the most successful sites aren't the cheapest.

Focus on service, discounts for loyalty, free shipping and quality. You might lose a sale here and there, but those customers sometimes end up coming back after the other site cut corners and gave poor service.

8. Forgetting the result thank you page

You've already made the sale, so there's nothing more you can do now, right? Wrong!

You now have a new customer and they've loved you enough to purchase, don't leave it there. Your checkout result/thank you page can be used for more than a thank you. Offer discounts off their next purchase, offer a friend referral bonus, show them new products just in stock. These are all reasons to buy from you again soon.

9. Lack of communication

The checkout process is daunting for most customers. They don't want to get it wrong and often worry about security.

Ensure you clearly mark relevant information such as security, payment methods, basket contents and what to do next.

Another form communication problem is pre purchase. When your customer sends an email asking about a product, respond within a couple of hours at most. Give links back to your products and offer your phone number if they get stuck or have more questions.