



THE E-COMMERCE BOOTCAMP

Building an Online Presence

Effective Social Media

How to Sell on Amazon from Jamaica

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What is e-Commerce?

eCommerce —Electronic Commerce — is simply a way for people to purchase products and services over the Internet. An eCommerce store is essentially an online shop.

Why open an e-Commerce store?

- Barriers to entry and cost of of acquiring a traditional brick and mortar;
- Location is not a factor;
- Reduced or no staff costs;
- In some cases you may not even need to buy all your stock upfront — many eCommerce stores only purchase stock *after* they have made a sale, completely minimizing their risk. This is called a drop-shipping business model. For example, if you sell sauces, you could wait until you have “sold” a sauce before purchasing from the distributor.

Of course, there are some products that both an online and offline store will need — for example, you will still require secure payment methods and processing— but these are increasingly quicker, cheaper and easier to access.

Starting an e-Commerce Business

The basic principle of an eCommerce business model is very similar to a traditional one:

- Products or services to sell;
- Place to sell them;
- Marketing strategy to attract customers.
- With eCommerce stores, you will also need a strategy for delivering the products.



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Stacey Hines, President of Jamaica Computer Society
and Founder of Epic Transformation

Types of e-Commerce

There are two main types of eCommerce businesses: Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C). These represent the majority of sales online.

1. Business-to-Business (B2B)

B2B e-commerce refers to all electronic transactions of goods and sales that are conducted between two companies. This type of e-commerce could be between the producers of a product and the retailers who advertise the product for purchase to consumers. Or it could be a business buying office supplies or equipment.

2. Business-to-Consumer (B2C)

B2C e-commerce deals with electronic business relationships between businesses and consumers. Amazon being the most famous B2C business. Many people enjoy this avenue of e-commerce because it allows them to shop around for the best prices, and often find different products that they would not otherwise be exposed to in the retail world. This e-commerce category also enables businesses to develop a more personalized relationships with their customers.



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Creating Value for your Customer

When adding an online presence to your business, take a deep look at your product or service offering. What is your unique selling proposition? How would you describe and position your product? How do you justify its pricing?

- Is there demand for my product or services in this period?
- Are there competitors with the same offer? What are they charging? Which customers are they targeting? What is the quality of their product or service in comparison to mine?
- Does my target customer have the disposable income to buy non-essential offers or add-ons?
- Is it a priority purchase or will I have to find unique ways to entice the consumers?
- How can I position or evolve my product or service to sell more over time?
- How can I use my offline business to create additional value for the online offer?
- What is the best way to describe my product so that it clearly shows value and attracts the right customers? What type of images will support the sale?
- How can I keep my online customers engaged overtime?
- **Do your research on similar businesses and determine the best approach for you. What can you emulate?**



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Payment Gateways

A payment gateway is a merchant service used to authorize and process your customers' electronic transactions or payments e.g. PayPal or Stripe.

The type of payment gateway you select will vary depending on the type of business model you are using but all businesses should consider the following:

- Business Structure
 - Ensure you have your company registered and your relevant documents such as your business Tax Registration Number (TRN) and Certificate of Incorporation, as these are pre-requisites for setting up a payment gateway on most secure platforms.
 - Ensure you are clear on the local tax requirements for your business especially when using North American platforms which typically have tax reporting or payment implications for using their gateways.
- Banking & Credit Options
 - Develop a relationship with a bank that can offer you a business bundle inclusive of a low interest business account, a line of credit and possibly a credit card.
 - Apply for a credit card that can be solely dedicated to business related purchases and payments.
 - Some banks are also offering payment gateways that can be implemented on a business' website; this is another way to expand on your business banking relationship.



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Technology Capacity and Capability

To be successful online, requires comfort with technology. That does not mean you have to be a tech expert. There are many solutions available that require a small amount of effort and others that are more complex. It is important to select the type of e-Commerce technology that works best for you in the short term and then evaluate it as your business grows.

Here are some examples which you can google to get more information:

- Done For You Platforms - these platforms are more or less ready to go with minimal customization required.
 - ✓ Wix website templates w/ e-commerce features
 - ✓ Amazon
- Done With You Platforms - these platforms require you to actually change things within the platform to get it to a usable state.
 - ✓ Shopify - Shopify® offers a full ecommerce and hosting solution for a monthly fee.
 - ✓ Strikingly, Kajabi or Teachable - online courses and coaching
 - ✓ Fygaro
 - ✓ Squarespace
- Do It Yourself Platforms (Or hire out to an expert) – these platforms can be used to build your own custom website from scratch.
 - ✓ Wordpress with plugins
 - ✓ Google Site with plugins



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Things to consider when choosing the right e-Commerce technology for you:

- Is it easy to use?
- Can it be used from your phone?
- If my business grows, will I still be able to use the same technology?
- What are the Payment options?

Distribution (your product supply chain and shipping)

Whether you are selling physical or virtual products, the path to getting the product or service to your customer is key. When selecting e-Commerce technology, investigate whether or not there is distribution support offered. For e.g. if you are selling your products online but need drop shipment support, consider using Amazon or a fulfillment vendor to ship the products.



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To be successful in making money online, consider the following:

1. Define your ideal customer; identify how best to find them;
2. Offer exceptional value (sometimes FREE) to your customer and be clear on how you can extend that value in a scalable way over time, also known as your value ladder ;
3. Choose the right payment gateway approach that best supports your e-commerce model and value ladder;
4. Be clear on the type of e-Commerce model that works for your business;
5. Build a network of customers who are influencers to attract additional leads;
6. Use your offline networks to help drive your online traffic and create demand that will convert to sales;
7. Use a combination of organic (naturally occurring) and paid digital marketing strategies;
8. Create a seamless way for handling payments and other financial transactions.



BREAKING DOWN SOCIAL MEDIA

Craig Powe, CEO Adtelligent

Social media can be a powerful tool for your e-Commerce business. It can be used to engage your customers, introduce a new product or services, and direct them toward your e-Commerce platform.

Popular Social Media Options

- Facebook – has 1.6million users in Jamaica and is great for creating brand awareness and engaging with customers. You can share across platforms and use varied content including images and videos. Facebook also has a good search function which enables customers to find you if they are looking for a related item or industry. Facebook is also more passive to maintain than other platforms such as Instagram and twitter, once it is set up and has advanced features. There are also review options, enabling customers to not just engage with you but with each other. This platform is recommended for all types of businesses.
- Instagram – this a more visual platform and is great for the SME that is selling something that “looks good” e.g., a flower shop, restaurants. Use Instagram to promote your online store by providing a link in your store bio that can take customers to a landing page where they can purchase your products or sign up for special deals. Post visually appealing and engaging content that encourages followers to click on that link. You will have to be more active for people to see your content. Therefore, you will need to post at least 3 times a week to maintain engagement. Notwithstanding, DO NOT trade the quality of posts for frequency.



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- LinkedIn – This platform is great for any professional that is selling a service e.g. a doctor, lawyer, advertising professional or a business consultant. Persons will likely view this page first if a google search for your name is done and they will pay attention to your known connections, profile picture and education.
- Twitter – is good for encouraging interaction and conversation with customers and the hash tag feature makes it easier to share valuable content. With Twitter it can be challenging to stay relevant and ‘keep up the conversation’. This platform works well for larger corporations or essential services that have a wide customer base e.g. JPS, NWC etc. It is not recommended for the average small business as it can require a dedicated analytical person to navigate the platform in order to get results. An alternative, is where, as the entrepreneur you have interesting personal content and connections that can be used in your personal profile to occasionally talk about your business.
- YouTube – this is an excellent choice for businesses that want to use videos to promote their brands or specific products and increase their visibility. YouTube can also be a lot of work to stay relevant. It is best used for advice, “How ‘To’s” and other informative content. E.g. If you have a flower shop, a video on *How to make a Simple Floral Arrangement* could be useful. Think of content that could benefit the customer and record it in an engaging way.



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- Google Plus/Google my Business – This is a lesser thought of social media tool that is best for businesses with a physical location. If you register for this free service, your business is placed on the google map and gives you an option to link your website and put pictures of your location on this platform. When a customer searches for a product or service, google recommends the businesses closest to them. If a small business is not on the google map it will not be one of the first options to come up on the search. It is a simple process.

If you have your own business and do not feel like ready to use a particular social media platform, still consider registering on the platform in order to preserve your business name. Otherwise, a newer business could register using your name in the future.

WhatsApp Graphics

- The best WhatsApp graphics create both the immediate desire to buy and the desire to pass the ad along to friends. This is achieved through beautiful professional looking photos and enticing messaging. Don't make your friend or relative just 'throw something together'. Make sure that all the information about the product is available in the graphic, including the price and how to buy. Don't make potential customers have to search or work hard to find out how to purchase. Try to send your WhatsApp during the time period that it most matters. The average person is not thinking about dinner at 9am so for a WhatsApp graphic promoting a dinner purchase, it is best to send closer to 3pm with a push to "buy tonight". Too many WhatsApp sales messages arrive at the "wrong" time.



DO I NEED A WEBSITE?

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Websites

- Websites that make it easier for the user to see exactly what they want will always get more sales.
- Your website is your hardest working employee – it does not sleep and a good website will sell for you, take your messages etc.
- With websites you often pay for what you get. Higher priced website creators usually provide the added value of thinking through the customer experience and what content they want to see. They will interview you and fully understand your business to ensure the content is accurate and relevant.
- A good website for a small business can cost from J\$400,000.00 - J\$1,300,000.00. Bigger companies with multiple product lines will need more complicated sites and this will require a bigger spend.
- If you cannot yet afford to pay someone to create a good website for you, and you have a physical store front, consider taking the time to do a simple, one page website really well.
- If your business is 100% online you should invest in your website, it is how you will make your money.
- Your website needs to be organized in a way that is convenient for the customer. Think end to end of the Customer Journey: Browsing; Asking Questions; Comparing; Buying; Returning. What is the navigation route through all these paths?
- What are your best sellers? Feature those!
- When purchasing a domain name for your website, consider purchasing both the .COM and .NET options as well as any variations of your name so no competing business can use it in the future.



SELLING ON AMAZON

Barrington McIntosh, Global Amazon Consultant
and CEO of BaLance eCom Training

Amazon (Amazon.com) is the world's largest online retailer and one of the most popular online marketplaces used by both individuals as well as businesses.

In order to sell on Amazon you have to be a citizen or resident of one of their authorized countries (see list in references) but unfortunately Jamaica is not one of them. But why would we let that deter us?

How then can you sell on Amazon as a Jamaican?

There are two ways:

1. Partner with an existing Amazon seller;
2. Partner with a relative who is a citizen of one of the authorized countries.

Partner with an existing Amazon seller

This requires a bit of networking and research to find the right partner for your product. You will also likely be required to provide a sample of your product and build that relationship. Begin by investigating the merchants on Amazon who are in your category. Focus on the ones with high sales in your products, well reviewed and at least 3 years in business. Reputation and past performance matter to you.

Partner with a relative who is a Citizen of an authorized country

With this option, you already have a relationship with your potential partner. With their access they can open the Amazon account for you and you can manage the sales process.



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Is Amazon the best platform?

- Amazon offers excellent exposure to your product because it has the largest global market reach, it is also the most trusted and established for online sales. Trusted is the key because there are many customers who will purchase on Amazon for a higher price rather than buy from your website directly, because of that trust factor.
- Amazon also assists its sellers by recommending inventory numbers based on previous sales and will also invest in you if you are consistently making a profit.
- Through the Amazon Platform, you can know upfront whether or not the item you wish to sell is going to be profitable – if you scan a barcode, Amazon will tell you what it currently sells for online.
- Amazon charges a standard commission of 15% with some smaller added fees e.g. warehouse storage fees. For a professional account there is also a charge of \$39.99 per month similar to a membership fee. The key is to find products at a good price that you can sell for a profit.

Note that there are other growing platforms such as eBay, Shopify, Walmart.com, Etsy and smaller mobile platforms such as Letgo and Poshmark. On eBay you can start selling as a Jamaican directly.



SELLING ON AMAZON

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Are you export ready?

When deciding whether to sell your product overseas, you must consider if you are export ready. To become export ready, among other things, you must:

- Have the required labels with ingredients etc.;
- Have a UPC (Universal Product Code) for each product which is a standard barcode;
- Be registered with the relevant local bureau or regulatory body such as JAMPRO or the Bureau of Standards if you manufacture your own product. If you are simply reselling an existing product this will not apply to you.

Frequently Asked Questions

- How do you work out shipping costs from Jamaica? Are there flat rate options?

There are no flat rate options in Jamaica. The most cost - efficient option is using a service called EMS (Express Mail Service) through the Jamaica Post. They partner with the major shipping companies in North America and Europe. Delivery typically takes approximately 3 - 4 days. For larger shipments, DHL and FedEx are also good options.

- How do you manage returns when fulfilling from Jamaica?

You can use a fulfillment services provider or prep center which are warehouses that prepare your packages for you. If you are selling on Amazon they have their own fulfillment service. It is not recommended that you attempt to have packages returned to Jamaica as the costs can be quite high.



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- Are we charged customs/duty when shipping wholesale products to warehouses in the US?

Charges depend the item. The duty varies by item, you can check with the FDA.gov to see which items attract duty. If you are using DHL or FedEx you can also ask for the costs of all duties ahead of time. Their respective websites should also provide some guidance.

- What is the biggest potential pitfall to avoid when getting started with selling on Amazon? (late shipping, packaging issues, branding problems).

The biggest danger is not knowing your numbers. If you do not know all the costs upfront you can end up in a situation where you send your products overseas and pay more than you earn. Ensure you educate yourself on all the required fees and costs associated with shipping, clearing, packaging BEFORE you sell your product.

Selling online is not a get rich quick scheme or a magic bean. You put in the work upfront but when it takes off you will reap the rewards.



SUMMARY

TOPIC	WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?
E-Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A way for people to purchase products and services over the Internet. • Ensure product or service being offered relevant and valued. • Choose easy to use payment that can grow with your business. • Need business TRN and business account with local bank.
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook is useful for all types of businesses. • Instagram is best for businesses with appealing visual content. Aim to post 3 times per week. Never sacrifice quality for quantity. • LinkedIn is best for those offering professional services. • Twitter is not ideal for small businesses. • YouTube is a great platform for videos that inform – “How-to” videos or offer advice. • If you have a physical store, get registered on Google Maps. • Send WhatsApp graphics that create the desire to buy and to forward WhatsApp graphic to a friend. • Send your WhatsApp messages at appropriate times and ensure all the relevant information about your product or service is included.



SUMMARY

TOPIC	WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?
Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Every company should invest in a website even if it's a simple one pager. Definitely needed if business is 100% online.• Create your website in a way that is logical and easy to navigate for your customer.• Protect your brand – purchase your domain name and similar versions of it to ensure it doesn't get used by a competitor.
Amazon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To sell on Amazon as a Jamaican you can partner with an existing Amazon seller or partner with a relative who is a citizen of one of the authorized countries.• Amazon offers exposure to a wide cross-section of customers who already trust the platform.• Amazon also offers statistical data and other tools you will need to run your online store.• If you make your own product, ensure you are registered with the relevant local bureau or regulatory body and have the appropriate labels and barcodes.• Make sure you know all your costs including shipping and duty before selling your product.



RESOURCES

Stacey Hines is the President of the Jamaica Computer Society and Founder of Epic Transformation.

- **Website:** <http://staceyhines.com/>

Barrington McIntosh is the CEO of BaLance eCom Training and a Global Amazon Consultant.

- **Website:** <https://barringtonmcintosh.com/>

Craig Powe is the CEO of Adtelligent, a Company that offers quality and creative digital services and experiences for their clients.

- **Website:** <https://www.adtelligent.net/>

List of countries authorized to sell on Amazon

- https://sellercentral.amazon.com/gp/help/external/200405020?language=en-US&ref=mpbc_200417280_cont_200405020

The Complete Beginner's Guide to E-Commerce

- <https://prospress.com/beginners-guide-to-ecommerce/>

How To Add Your Business To Google Maps

- <https://thrivehive.com/add-your-business-to-google-maps/>