

## How to add e-commerce cheat sheet

With e-commerce and shipping/delivery/curbside the only option for most small business today, what was once a good business practice to broaden the customer base is now an essential business offering. Yet only 40% of downtown businesses currently offer online sales in any form. Since we don't yet have clarity on how long closures might last, or when customers will resume 'normal' activity even after limitations are lifted, taking this opportunity to explore online options for your business can be essential. Whether you want to go full-scale online shop or just create a pipeline for customers to easily purchase gift cards, custom baskets or other items, the following considerations and resources can provide some guidance.

Basic questions: how you answer these questions will have significant impact on what near-term strategies make sense for your business.

- 1) Do you already have a website?
- 2) Do you have Facebook and/or Instagram?
- 3) Do you utilize Point of Sale (POS) software?

### Full Online Shop

If you answered yes to both 1 and 3, you can likely connect your existing POS software to your website, which allows you to manage inventory and track sales and shipping effectively with one system. You will still need to make decisions regarding the number of items to make available online and the type of delivery system to use, but the actual store setup should be simpler, and the customer service desk for your POS software can likely provide technical assistance.

If you have achieved this level of shop, it is also fairly simple to link your online platform to your social media – creating a Facebook product catalog and creating shoppable posts on Instagram.

If you're looking to revamp or set up a new online store within your existing site, this comparison helps look at the various options most commonly used by small businesses: <https://www.ecommerce-nation.com/best-ecommerce-platform-comparison/>

Downtown Inspiration: Check out these businesses that have a fully functional and effective online sales presence.

<https://bushelandpecks.com/>

<https://www.poppyavenueboutique.com/>

<https://redsmmercantile.com/>

## **Selling via Social Media Stores**

If you answered yes to 2 and 3, then you might consider some of the integrated sales tools available within social media platforms. If it goes well, you might also consider a plugin to assist with invoicing and shipping from these platforms. However, if you are going to take the plunge to offering more products online, it might also be nice to have a storefront landing page, even if it is just simply a product catalog. Most web platforms such as squarespace offer plug and play e-commerce platforms that help display and manage sales, shipping and can also be used to schedule appointments if you also offer virtual services.

Instagram How-to: <https://ampjar.com/blog/sell-on-instagram-without-website/>

Facebook How-to: <https://www.abetterlemonadestand.com/social-media-platforms-to-sell-on/>

There is also always the option to use a storefront on one of the large e-sales platforms like Amazon and Etsy. There are pros and cons of this approach, which are summarized here:

<https://www.ecommerceceo.com/pros-and-cons-of-selling-on-amazon/>

Downtown Inspiration: for inspiration, check out these businesses that have mastered social sales:

<https://www.facebook.com/BloomBakeShop/>

<https://www.facebook.com/tootandkates/>

## **Selling via Facebook Live events**

If you answered no to 1 and 3, but you have a social media presence, then selling via facebook live events are likely the best option for you. In these instances, you will be demonstrating, modeling or displaying new products, and customers can comment on the video to reserve a specific item, or item in a certain size. This type of shopping is first-come, first-served, and orders would be completed via messenger and e-payment system at the end of the live event, or when inventory is depleted.

An alternative to this strategy if your products don't lend themselves to a demonstration is to offer a pre-package purchase option – post information about the available package on social media, and take orders until inventory is sold out. Then pair the order with a future live event or demonstration. An example of this might be a winery that offers a gift basket of wine, glasses and snacks, and purchasers of this basket are then invited to a private live streamed concert, dance lesson or demo at a later date.

If you go this route, your biggest consideration will be fulfillment Check out these posts about various strategies for managing deliveries and invoices: <https://www.shipbob.com/blog/small-business-shipping/> and <https://www.godaddy.com/garage/what-you-need-to-know-about-shipping-for-small-business/>

Downtown Inspiration: check out these businesses that do a great job on facebook sale events:

- <https://www.facebook.com/Theamericanalchemy/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/shopthepurplegoose/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/makersmercantileduluth/>

**Tips for getting started:**

- Keep the inventory simple. Not everything you offer for sale will be included in your live events – focus on new inventory items, sales on inventory you’re clearing, or items that can be bundled together to maximize shipping.
- Consider today’s audience – what are they looking for? Convenience? Novelty? Gifts for family and friends far away? Highlight items that appeal right now, don’t focus on the long-term.
- Consider your delivery/shipping capacity. Offer terms compatible with your capabilities and communicate this to purchasers.

And finally, while it may be tempting to do anything at all to drive sales right now, but it is still important to make sure that you are not actually losing money on each transaction. This guide walks you through the breakeven calculation for online sales models to ensure you’ve considered the hidden costs of e-sales. <https://www.ecommerceceo.com/break-even-point-calculator/>