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**Building Elegant Ecommerce Storefronts
Without Technical Expertise**

2022

Why Your Site Builder Matters

Small- to medium-sized business owners have a lot on their plates every day without having to worry about being web designers, too. The fact is, they don't have to be. There are many great options when it comes to operating ecommerce websites, from simple templates on hosted sites with robust tools, all the way to agency custom-designed sites that can easily cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Your ecommerce storefront is your business lifeline and should evolve to keep pace with the expectations of today's consumers. But building and maintaining it doesn't have to be complicated. In this paper, we'll explore the seven key elements of a modern website experience and provide insights on how you can easily create customer-pleasing and future-ready design with optimized structural principles that will grow your business.

Tale of the Trends: There's Plenty of Room for More Storefronts

The evolution of consumer technology—and consumer use of technology—continues at a breakneck pace. Smartphone use and high speed internet access are becoming ubiquitous, and ecommerce grows unabated.

$1.33b
projected growth of ecommerce in the U.S. by 2025

In the roughly 30-year time period since online shopping was enabled in the 1990s, ecommerce has grown every single year. In 2022, it's estimated to reach $875 million in the U.S. according to research from Statista, which also projects that it will keep growing at a greater than 10% per year rate to reach $1.33 billion in 2025.[1]

For many people, smartphones are the go-to option for shopping—they search, use maps, and shop without ever needing to visit a store or use a computer. Mobile ecommerce (or m-commerce) includes mobile devices beyond phones, like tablets and laptops. Statista predicts that U.S. mobile commerce will reach $431 billion in 2022.[2] Given the massive use of mobile devices for research and ecommerce, responsive website design is absolutely essential.

Design, Navigation, and Performance Influence Engagement

Ecommerce storefront design can make the difference between a sale and an abandoned cart. In 2021, Top Design Firms found that 50% of consumers believe that website design is crucial to a business's overall brand.[3] In addition, 31% of consumers believe that an engaging user experience should be a priority when designing a website.

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Looking at the design side of the equation, GoodFirms found in its 2019 survey that 38.5% of web designers believe that outdated design is a top reason why visitors leave a website.[4] They note crowded web design as the most common mistake made by SMBs, but also cite slow loading, non-responsive design and bad navigation as the chief reasons why visitors leave websites.

Some of these issues originate with the design and designer, while some of them are the result of technology and style aging out. According to Business2Community, companies should look to redesign their websites every 18-30 months.[5] A web search on this same topic yields an online consensus for redesigning a website every 2-3 years.

7 Key Elements of Modern Website Experience

Content is king on websites. A good website has authority, retains strong search engine rankings, is easy to navigate, offers search functionality, and selectively includes video and interactive elements. However, it also needs to be easy for busy business owners to maintain on the backend. Here are a few key elements to keep in mind when choosing a site builder for your new ecommerce site design:

1. Easy-to-update content

Site management software that incorporates an intuitive website designer or CMS makes updating site content simple for site owners. Today's site design and management systems often come with many templates to choose from that are easy to update and swap out. More importantly, they utilize simple click-to-add block components to help merchants change the look, update content, and include a repository of news, blogs, or other helpful information.

2. Great UX for users and site owners

61% of web designers surveyed listed bad user experience (UX) as a top reason for a website redesign. User experience can make the difference not only between a sale or no sale, but in losing a customer for good. The experience begins with the homepage and continues throughout the website-customer interaction. Here are some key components.[6]

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- A defined color scheme
- Ample white space
- Easy-to-read, welcoming typography
- A hierarchical design that directs the eye
- High quality images (and video, when possible)
- Intuitive navigation, including a search bar
- Content depth on the products they're interested in
- Customer service contacts
- A smooth checkout process with clear shipping options
- Action-oriented headlines
- Clear call-to-action (CTA) buttons that contrast their surroundings
- Invitations to evaluate products

Online shopping is a visual journey that includes the right terms and short, crisp content to keep shoppers energized and moving forward. Your cues are appreciated as visitors explore your site. The power of calls to action is immense. According to Crazy Egg, there are 8 characteristics of high converting CTA buttons.[7] It's worth devoting time to see what simple improvements like optimized CTA buttons can do for your site conversions.

For site owners and managers, the site building software used should deliver a great user experience as well. Merchants should be able to quickly adopt modular, block-based software with integrations available at the click of a button. For today's modern merchant website, there's little need to devote time to scripting custom code.

3. Search-friendly site infrastructure

"Search is the language of demand," says Google.[8] Use search engine optimization (SEO) strategies to help your site rank well for what you offer. Customers will also want to search your site, so it's essential to have a search function that is easy to find and robust, helping them quickly locate the items they want to buy.
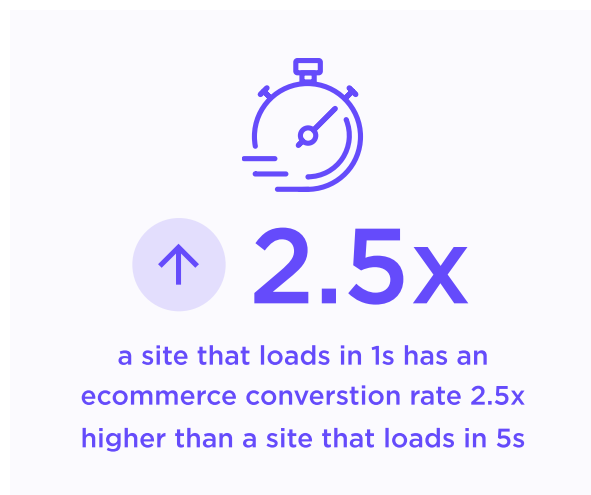
4. Optimized for speed and performance

2.5x

a site that loads in 1s has an ecommerce converstion rate 2.5x higher than a site that loads in 5s

Slow loading sites lose viewers. Marketing agency Portent studied the effect of load rate times on conversions and in 2022 found that a site that loads in 1 second has an ecommerce conversion rate 2.5x higher than a site that loads in 5 seconds.[9] This is even more important at checkout, login, and the homepage. When evaluating site building software, look for best-in-class SEO capabilities and highly-rated load times.

5. Responsive and mobile-friendly

Responsive software is no longer optional, but absolutely necessary. In the first quarter of 2021, mobile devices generated 54.8% of global website traffic.[10] With so much research and shopping happening on mobile, companies must incorporate design for mobile platforms. If you're using templates, begin by only selecting from templates that are responsive. Many designers recommend designing for the phone first, selecting colors and type for the small screen or on multiple mobile devices early in the design to gauge the experience.

6. Simple, streamlined checkout process

It's essential that ecommerce storefronts have fast, easy, and trustworthy checkout processes. Any extra step along the way encourages cart abandonment. A recent Google-sponsored study found that 77% of smartphone users are more likely to purchase from companies whose mobile sites or apps allow them to make

77%
of smartphone users are more likely to purchase from companies whose mobile sites or apps allow for quick purchases

purchases quickly.[11] This includes not having to register for an account, so offer guest checkout options for customers to simply complete their purchases. Customers also expect multiple options for payment. Evaluate website design suites thoroughly to ensure that an SSL certificate is available and that payment options and processing are easy to implement and easy for customers to use.

7. Future-friendly site structure and tools

Style is ever-evolving, and for websites this means that colors, type, and page design will follow discernible trends. Look for a site design software that makes it easy to change templates, designs, colors, and fonts without having to rebuild or spend time porting. Choose a site software that uses block-based architecture so you can avoid coding or having locked pages. The ideal future-friendly site anticipates that you will need to add, subtract, and change not only on the front-end, but on the back-end, too. You'll want to understand how easy it is to select the integrations you will want, so make sure you have a look at these processes, too.

Newer technologies such as React are likely to be around and high-functioning longer than older, legacy software, so understand what lies beneath the site design interface.

Final Thoughts: Fresh Content and Experiences Drive Customer Engagement

There's a natural flow to a good website—it's easy to click through and find what you need. If you walk through your own website as a visitor does, you'll likely find things that you like and things that you can improve. Invite people who are not familiar with your site to give it a tour and provide honest feedback. Your site infrastructure should perform smoothly and support the visual and content story that you are telling. Through colors, direction, compelling content, and calls to action, you are placing a person in your story, helping them envision how they fit in your world, and evoking emotional responses.

When you take the time to improve your site, you keep visitors engaged with your brand. A good website building software enables you to explore new templates, functionality, and design elements to keep your site fresh, exciting, and functional for visitors. Sample and test to make sure you're getting all the elements to work in harmony, both on large screens and small ones.

Explore your Ideal Site Builder Software

Experience your own great customer user experience while building a new site with Volusion's flexible Site Designer feature. Site Designer lets you easily design and build a new site using software at the forefront of ecommerce technology by adding and subtracting pre-coded blocks to each page. It also improves site performance through a variety of backend optimizations, including server-side rendering and automated image compression. Learn more about Volusion's Site Designer here.

Resources

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About Volusion

Volusion is an all-in-one ecommerce solution that helps entrepreneurs build and manage successful online businesses. Since 1999, our dedicated team of developers, marketers, designers, and technical support experts have been passionate about helping merchants operate and grow their stores, whether startup or established. Two decades later, Volusion has earned dozens of accolades and powered over 150,000 successful online businesses.

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