

SHOPIFY

SECRETS

THEY DON'T WANT YOU
TO KNOW



Shopify Secrets

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Chapter One: What is Shopify?

Anyone who started their ecommerce business from scratch – building the website themselves, doing or outsourcing all of the coding, graphic design and content that is required for even the most basic ecommerce site – will tell you that their method of getting into the business was the hard way. Shopify, on the other hand, is the easy way.

Shopify is a platform that allows you to create a store without any need for major web design skills, programming or any further knowledge that the casual user of the web probably has. It is a framework for you to create your own ecommerce website, with everything provided for you to be able to operate, including options for shipping products, payment gateways, design themes and support for multiple countries and languages. It is the most versatile and most powerful platform that exists for create an online store.

Who Uses Shopify?

There are tens of thousands of stores using Shopify to sell products on the web. In 2010, those stores generated \$124 million in sales with a total of 2.7 million individual customers. Shopify stores are varied in product type and industry, encompassing just about everything you can imagine being sold online and are competing with some of the largest web retailers out there.

How Does Shopify Work?

Shopify is a very powerful platform that is split into two basic sections. The customer-facing side of the program is where people come to browse your products and buy something if they like it. Many of the unique elements that exist on this public part of the site are set up through what is called the backend. This is where you interact with your store. You can add products here, change your theme, add social media widgets and various other customizations. If you are familiar with how Wordpress works you will find Shopify very easy to use, and even if you haven't used Wordpress before, you'll still find that you can learn how to use the interface in just minutes.

With Shopify, you'll be able to list items that you have for sale, including multiple sizes, styles, colors and more. You can set the price however you'd like and then people can buy the products through the included payment gateways that Shopify already has incorporated into the program. You can accept credit cards, Paypal and various other forms of currency that exist on and offline, including bitcoin.

There is a lot to love about this program and it is so easy to set up your store that once you have the idea for the product and have it ready to ship to the customer you can get your store set up in as quickly as a matter of hours and be selling. Plus, Shopify gives you tools to compete with all of the other stores that are out there, like search engine optimization, social media buy button integration and much more. You'll be making sales in no time with Shopify.

Chapter Two: Why is Shopify so Useful?

Shopify is one of the most useful platforms in existence because it makes it so easy to set up a store. In order to see just how useful the program is you have to look at just how difficult it is to set up an ecommerce website. Here are some of the ways that Shopify has changed the way that people start businesses online.

You Need to Design a Website

Perhaps you know a web designer that would be willing to design a website for you on the cheap, or even free. Even if that's the case, you are probably going to have to find a programmer as well because the design elements need to be combined with code in order to make the site functional and allow you to upload products, have a checkout system and for each and every feature that your site requires, you are going to have pay your coder for the hours that he or she spends creating it.

The design and coding come together to build a site and companies often spend tens of thousands of dollars to get the perfect ecommerce website built. Shopify takes all of the design and programming out of the equation and allows you to choose a unique theme and configure your features from an easy-to-use backend.

You Need to Incorporate & Secure Payment Gateways

Receiving someone's credit card information is a huge responsibility and stores are required to set up secure payment gateways that make it nearly impossible for hackers to get the payment information. If you were to set up payment gateways and shopping carts on your site you would need to program all of that security, not to mention automatic shipping calculation and various other checkout features. But Shopify is 100% secure, and you can enable or disable a payment gateway with the click of a button.

You Need to Fulfill Orders

Imagine if you had to fulfill orders without Shopify. You'd have to print out generic shipping labels using third-party software or have your programmer create a shipping label creator. If you were using a dropshipper you would have to incorporate their details into your website so that they could receive the customer's information when an order comes through. Setting up order fulfillment on your own is a huge headache and few people want to deal with it, but Shopify makes it simple and easy to do.

Shopify Takes Care of a Million Details

Shopify takes care of so many things for you that it is almost foolish to try to build an ecommerce site on your own. From the design, security, programming and third-party application integration to optimizing and making websites responsible for mobile, Shopify has it handled for you. Shopify is so useful because it takes all of the work out of starting an ecommerce site and allows you to focus on what is truly important – the products that you’re selling and the customers that you’re selling them to.

Chapter Three: Niche Marketing

With your Shopify store, you’re going to want to concentrate on a certain section of the market, called a niche. Although it is theoretically possible to create a Shopify site that is akin to an online department store, offering a little bit of everything, it is not recommended. When you create your store you are going to be competing with millions of other websites and so you want to give yourself the best chance possible to get found. This means specializing down to a specific niche. Here is what you need to know about niche marketing.

What Niche Marketing is

When you create a store within a specific niche and you market that store to people looking for the specialized product or service that you are providing, it is called niche marketing. The goal here is to appeal to a small number of people. While advertising is generally thought to be more effective if a larger portion of the population sees it, with niche marketing you get seen by far fewer people, but the people that do see your message pay a great deal of attention to it.

Starting a niche store isn’t all that difficult, but you do need a couple of things. First, you obviously need a niche that you can work in. We will cover how to choose a niche here shortly. But you also need a plan for marketing to that group that buys within your niche. Also important, you’ll need to establish some expertise within that niche so that people come to rely upon you as an expert and come to your site willing to buy rather than from a larger site that might save them money but doesn’t offer the same specific expertise.

How to Choose a Niche

One of the first things that you’ll do before starting your niche store is to decide what your niche is going to be. The best way to brainstorm for ideas is to sit down and figure out what your passions are. Consider many comic book store owners. They are passionate about comics. They have read the comics and know the characters and so they not only can help people find the comics that they are looking for, they know when a particular comic is valuable if they encounter it. This is precisely the sort of thing you should be aiming for when deciding upon what niche you are going to be working in.

How to Become an Expert

If you are an expert in your niche you have a head start. In that case, all you need to do is convince other people that you have expertise that would be valuable to them. A great way to do this is by publishing articles online that link back to your site from third-party websites. This puts your expert advice in front of a large readership and also gives you a link to your site which is good for SEO and traffic. You can find tens of thousands of these sites that will allow anyone to publish a good article and link back to their own site.

Chapter Four: Preplanning Your Shopify Store

Before you sign up for your free trial or choose a Shopify plan you are going to want to do some preplanning. As the axiom goes: if you don't have a destination in mind you have very little chance of arriving there, which means that unless you plan out your store beforehand you are probably not going to be able to laser target it to a niche like you want. The way that you start planning is by asking yourself some questions like these:

Questions to Help Plan Your Shopify Niche Store

1. Do you plan on selling real-world products, digital products or services? Is your pricing based upon a purchase model or a subscription model?
2. What is your niche going to be? Do you have enough products within that niche to fill a store? Do you have the budget to buy enough inventory to be assured of appealing to enough people? (Obviously, if you are dropshipping this may not be applicable)
3. What basic store design are you looking for?
4. How are you planning on fulfilling your orders? Are you going to use Shopify's printing labels, your own fulfillment method or are you using a dropshipper?
5. What forms of payment are you going to offer? Are you going to use the Shopify included payment gateways or set up something on your own?

Real-World, Digital or Services and Subscription Models

Nearly every Shopify store out there sells real-world, physical products, but that doesn't mean that you are restricted to physical products. You could choose to sell ebooks or other digital products or you could even offer subscription-based services through your Shopify store, to allow access to a specific program or "member's area" of your site.

Niche Planning

You obviously want to make sure that you can get items that you are going to be selling, and whether or not you can buy those items at a low enough price to be able to mark them up is a part of that. Some store owners even take out a business loan to ensure they have enough inventory to fulfill orders.

Store Design

The store design that you want is also a planning consideration because you will need to choose between existing Shopify themes, free or premium, or having a web designer create a custom theme for you.

Order Fulfillment

Shopify has a great system for order fulfillment. You purchase shipping labels from them with postage included and the higher the Shopify package you choose, the more you save. However, there are other shipping methods that you could set up and integrate into your store if you don't want to use Shopify's labels.

Payment Methods

Shopify has several different payment gateways or methods that you can use. If you want to use their own internal credit card machine, the fees are low and you will receive payment regularly from Shopify. They also allow you to set up your own credit card gateway or to integrate a Paypal payment gateway into your site as well as other forms of currency like Bitcoin and Payza.

Chapter Five: Setting up Shopify

Setting up Shopify isn't that difficult, but it does require an investment of time and a certain learning curve. What you will learn however, is that the Shopify backend interface is actually pretty user-friendly and most savvy internet users will be able to understand how to use the interface even without much help from the tutorials and online manual. Here are some of the basics that are involved with setting up your Shopify store.

Step One: Choosing a Shopify Package

The first thing that you'll need to do is choose a Shopify package. The packages range from \$9 a month to \$179 and the package that you choose will determine things like: how much you'll pay in credit card processing fees, how much of a discount you'll receive on shipping labels and what sort of features are going to be enabled with your Shopify store. With the \$9 a month plan, called "Lite" you don't actually get a store, so unless you are planning to do something else with your Shopify plan, you'll need at least the "Basic" plan, which is \$29 a month.

Step Two: Choosing a Theme

The next thing that you'll need to do is choose a theme for your website. Shopify has over 100 free themes and all of them look great. If you find you need more of a selection, you can opt to go with a premium theme however. The premium themes are priced anywhere between \$80 to \$180 and they are a little higher quality than the free themes. If you cannot seem to find a theme that you like then you might consider hiring a designer to create a custom Shopify theme for you. This is obviously an expensive option, but if you need specific things that the standard themes don't offer then this might be your only option.

Step Three: Adding Your Products

The next thing that you'll do is add your products, something that is covered completely in *Shopify Secrets*. The process of adding products gets a little complicated, but that's only because there are so many features that you get with Shopify. What you need to know is that you'll be able to specify product colors, sizes, styles and any other identifiers that you want your customers to be able to choose from and that adding products is somewhat like adding a post in Wordpress. You'll be able to include product images, headlines, descriptions and options all from the product settings menu in your Shopify admin area.

Step Four: Choosing Payment & Fulfillment Options

The other major step in the setup process is choosing payment options and fulfillment options. Again, this is covered completely in Shopify Secrets but the basics are this: You have several different payment options you can choose to enable, credit cards (processed by Shopify) and Paypal among them, and you have different fulfillment options including connecting to certain dropshippers or having Shopify sell you a postage included label so that you can ship items out yourself.

Chapter Six: Shopify Features, Add-ons & Tools

There are some great features and add-ons that you get or can use with Shopify. While there are literally thousands of third-party tools that you can configure to work alongside Shopify there are also certain programs that Shopify has specifically enabled to work with the platform. A good example of this is one of the shipping options that we have discussed in the previous chapters – where three different dropshippers are included with a simple integration from your admin settings. Here are some of the other areas that you can find add-ons in and connect them to your Shopify site for greater success.

Accounting Programs

Third-party account programs can be used to help manage your business better. It is vital that you keep track of your books as accurately as possible and accounting programs are the way that professional businesses do it. Luckily, you are able to integrate popular programs like Quickbooks, Freshbooks and Xero into Shopify and you'll see where your money is going, keep track of what you owe in taxes and be able to prove your expenses or sales if you ever get audited. You don't need to hire an accountant because you can do your own books with these third-party programs.

Inventory Management

Inventory management is another facet of your business that is best managed through third-party programs. You need to know how you are stocked for upcoming holidays or sales, and you need to be able to replace stock when you get low. Also, inventory management can help you with cash flow problems because you'll be able to see what is selling quickly and needs to be reordered more often, and which items you can allow to become low because the chances of them selling quickly are very small.

Customer Service

How are you planning to handle your customer service? One of the best things that you can do is automate part of the customer service process. An auto-responder that lets customers know you received their email and are working on the problem is essential, plus you'll want to automate the process of sending emails when their items ship, so that they can track their package. You can also set up useful things like live chat and other customer service automation tools that will let customers know you care about them.

Social Media Management

This is definitely one of the most important parts of your business and automation of social media is simply how good business owners do it. That doesn't mean that you remove the human face from your social media accounts but social media management using automated, third-party, software has the following advantages.

- You can schedule your content to be published regularly, which is something that social media experts recommend to build a solid following. Whether it is a blog post, tweet or Facebook post, you can schedule it in advance.
- You will end up spending less time on the little things on social media and instead spending time interacting with your followers.
- Social media management tools are often free and there are some great ones that you can configure to work with your Shopify site.

Chapter Seven: Marketing Your Shopify Website

Once you have your website designed, your products uploaded, your site tested and working, you'll need to do some marketing. You're not going to get very many visitors if you don't get your name out there. There are dozens of ways that you can market your Shopify site and get some sales with your efforts, but we're going to discuss three methods here.

Method 1: Social Media Marketing

Shopify is ready-made for social media marketing. They have worked very hard to incorporate your social media into your store so that you can sell to those who are following you on your networks.

This is important for many business owners, because they have a significant following on social media websites and they are expecting to be able to advertise to those followers. In fact, for many, their business plan depends upon it. Shopify allows you not only to integrate social media into your Shopify site so that people can find you there, they also allow you to use 'Buy' buttons on your social media posts.

Some of the most useful tools that are provided by Shopify when you have a store with them is the integration of the buy button on Pinterest. Pinterest has become one of the most successful ways that store owners can market their products, because all you have to do is post a photo of a great item and watch the referrals roll in. However, Pinterest isn't the only social media site that offers this integration. You also get buy buttons on Twitter and Facebook to make your social media platforms a place to find new customers and fans.

Method 2: Great Customer Service

The second way that you can ensure that your store is going to grow is by always providing great customer service. Take Amazon as your example. They have some of the best customer service on the market today and people go back to them because of how well they are treated with something goes wrong. If you want your customers to remember you and continue to buy from you, then offer them great customer service, because it is a rarity today and you will definitely stand out. It can be difficult to handle each customer's problem quickly and completely when you are a one-person operation, but it will be vital later on, so you might want to think about hiring a customer service rep if you can afford it.

Method 3: Build Expertise

The more of an expert you become in the field, the more people are going to want to buy from you. If you are an expert on sports equipment, people will come to you to ask questions about it, advice on what to buy and more importantly, they will follow your recommendations. That means that when you list an items in your store, they are going to be motivated to buy simply because it is in a store that they see as one of the leading experts on the topic.

Chapter Eight: Growing your Ecommerce Business

So, how do you grow your ecommerce business so that instead of a trickle of sales coming in regularly you get a flood of sales that will allow you to change your life and run your store full-time? There is no one tried-and-true method, obviously; otherwise everyone with a small ecommerce store would succeed. It takes a small amount of luck but a much larger amount of hard work and no matter how much luck you do have, these tips on growing your business to epic proportions will definitely work for you.

1. Continually build on your SEO and keep up with the latest trends. You are looking at the big picture so if you are posting blog entries on your site, make sure they are of the highest quality. If you are getting links for content posted elsewhere, make sure that they are going to stand the test of time. Whatever SEO techniques you are using, make sure that they will still be able to boost your site in the future. This includes being very careful about which SEO companies you choose to work with. Make sure that you know all of the methods that they are using and that they are all white-hat and intended to be long-term.
2. Look for viral opportunities. A good marketer will begin to get a second sense for viral opportunities when they come and if you can figure out what the trends are going to be and jump on them when you do figure it out. Of course, this is often more down to chance than anything else, but all it could take is one time being viral to see your store start to grow quickly, especially if you are doing all of the other things that you should be doing.
3. Always be evolving. This is probably the most important advice that you can take to heart regarding your ecommerce website. Pay attention to what is going on and continue to evolve and be prepared for the future. When the shift to mobile devices happened, the companies that were adopting early were the most successful ones on mobile even after everyone else started optimizing. When the next shift happens you want to make sure that you know it is going to happen and that your store is able to start implementing changes that will give you success long-term. Changes are going to happen, and if you're ready, you can be very successful.