



THE  
ULTIMATE

# Field Guide

TO

ECOMMERCE  
CONVERSIONS



**v**olution

MARKETING SERVICES TEAM

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# Introduction

# Introduction

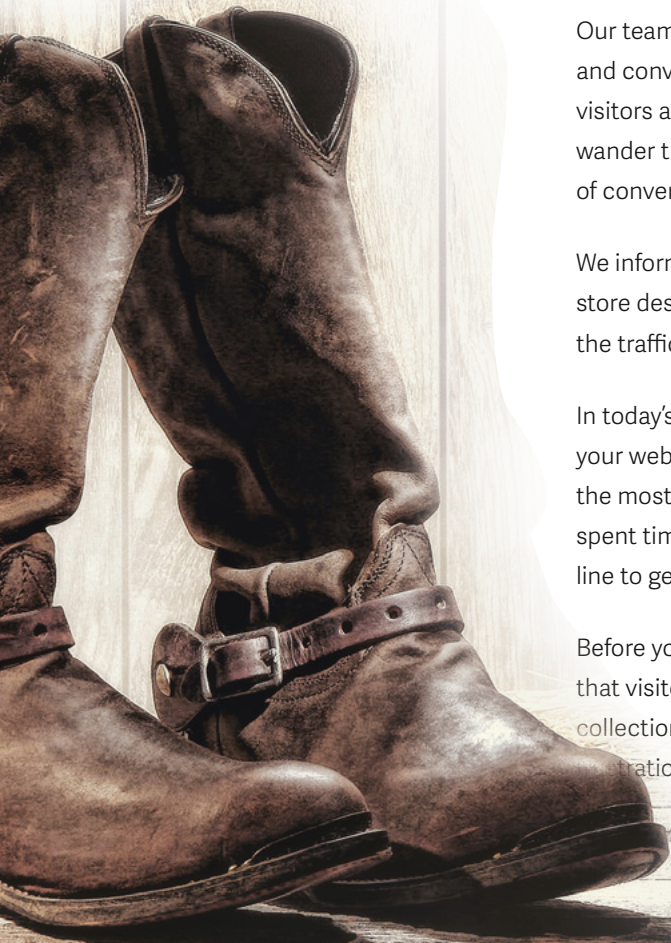
*When we first met Wayne, he was struggling. His online boot store was bleeding money. Sales were excruciatingly rare. As we looked through his transactions, he quietly confided that if he didn't see a change in the next three months, he would need to close the store for good. We were literally his last hope. "I just need more traffic. Paid, organic, whatever. I just need it fast!" Wayne asserted.*

Our team immediately dug into his website's analytics. We explored traffic, visitor behavior and conversion rates. The website's current traffic was surprisingly strong but once visitors arrived, they behaved erratically. Those who did not immediately leave seemed to wander the website without purpose. The result was a lot of transient visits, and not a lot of conversions.

We informed Wayne that he didn't have a traffic problem... he had a conversion one. His store desperately needed conversion optimization. Sure, more traffic would be nice, but all the traffic in the world is meaningless if you cannot get that traffic to convert.

In today's crowded, fast-paced online marketplace, it is not sufficient to drive traffic to your website; you must convert traffic to sales. Optimizing for sales conversion is one of the most valuable exercises you can perform for your online business. After all, if you've spent time, effort and money to bring visitors to your site, don't you owe it to your bottom line to get that traffic to convert?

Before you can successfully optimize your website for conversions, first understand that visitors are more than prospective sales; they are human beings. They experience a collection of emotions that influence their purchasing behavior, including everything from frustration, annoyance and distrust to satisfaction, familiarity and excitement.



An online store should be structured to create the best possible shopping experience and clear path for your visitors to easily purchase your products or services.

The following guide outlines how an ecommerce website can best optimize for visitor conversion. While you may not be able to incorporate every recommendation, it will empower you to identify barriers to purchase and opportunities for improving your store.

To this end, this field guide analyzes several core areas for conversion optimization. Regardless of your industry or specialty, each of these fundamental elements contribute to creating a user experience that encourages sales.

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There is marketing your site and then there is marketing your site to people who want to buy. Capture the traffic with the highest potential to convert.

At the end of each section, use the checklist as you review your own store. These are useful for identifying missed opportunities quickly.

# How to Use This Guide

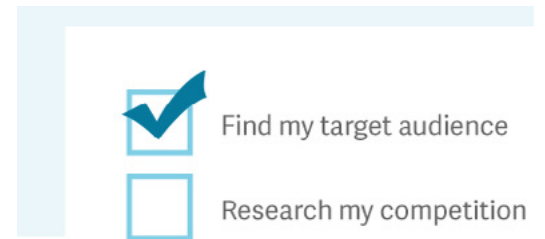
## Sections

This guide is broken down into seven sections. Each section discusses an important component affecting conversion. For quick reference, the color of the page number is particular to each section of the guide. Throughout the guide, we illustrate the importance of the different conversion components using real world examples; only the names have been changed.



## Checklists

At the conclusion of every section, you'll be presented with a checklist to help you determine if you've completed the conversion recommendations.



## Helpful Tips

You'll notice helpful tips throughout the Field Guide. The tips are sorted by theme.



### Conversion Killer

Common mistakes that hinder conversion



### Quick Tip

Fast and easy conversion boosters



### *The* Volusion Advantage

Tips specific to the Volusion platform

## Glossary

Terms that appear in bolded, green text throughout the Field Guide link to the full definition in the glossary at the end of the document.

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on, the **target market(s)** and your  
cover. Ultimately, whatever you c

The background of the slide is a solid green color with a repeating pattern of stylized birds in flight. The birds are depicted in various orientations, some facing left and some facing right, and are rendered in a light green or yellowish-green color. The word "Positioning" is centered on the slide in a white, serif font.

# Positioning

# Positioning

*Sweet Bead was an online boutique specializing in unique, affordable beads. They built a profitable business selling to individual crafters as well as small bead shops across North America and were well-known for their bead variety and bulk purchasing options.*

After three years of solid growth, Sweet Bead knew it was time for a website design refresh and thought they would take this opportunity to “upgrade” their brand as well. They decided to position their store as a premium shopping experience for luxury beads. They selected an elegant website design that communicated premium quality and exclusivity. Their onsite messaging and external marketing promised the highest quality beads and a luxurious shopping experience. The result was... disastrous. The new branding alienated their arts-and-crafts customer base and repelled their most profitable market segment, bead store owners, who wanted value rather than elegance. Conversions dropped significantly and return rates increased. Their beads simply did not meet the new premium shopper segment’s expectations. In short, Sweet Bead damaged their brand and profitability by positioning their store incorrectly.

In marketing, positioning is the act of establishing your brand identity to potential customers in relation to the competition. It involves an in-depth understanding of your industry’s online space, the customer segments served, and the competitive landscape. How your company is positioned will ultimately affect how your brand is perceived, how prospective clients interact with your website and whether or not a purchase is made.

If you haven’t formally positioned your brand, you still may have an intuitive understanding of your general place in





## Conversion Killer

Excellent customer service has become an expectation to online shoppers, making it an ineffective differentiator. Unless customer service is a unique quality in your industry (for example, you sell something that requires consulting prior to purchase), be careful of hanging your brand on “customer service” alone.

the market. This is a good place to start. To maximize conversions, however, it is best to formally map out your position. After all, had Sweet Bead understood their position in the marketplace and chosen to embrace their bohemian, value-driven identity rather than contradict it, they would have likely delighted their clientele and grown their market share. Instead, they repositioned their company incorrectly, resulting in damage to their brand and bottom line.

## Understanding your company’s position in the marketplace will allow you to:

- Determine where your store “fits” in the online ecosystem
- Effectively communicate with your shoppers and target audience(s)
- Create fully informed strategies for reinforcing your position in the marketplace
- Identify areas of opportunity for strengthening your positioning, re-positioning (changing your identity) or even de-positioning (attempting to change the identity of competitor)

How do you define your position? It takes research. You will need to consider your relationship to the competition, the **target market(s)** and your company branding. You may not like what you discover. Ultimately, whatever you discover is in itself an opportunity.

## Identifying the Competition

Your company’s positioning is first and foremost relative to the competition. It is critical that you have an in-depth understanding of how others are positioned in the marketplace. This will allow you to determine where your brand fits and create fully informed strategies for establishing and/or reinforcing your position in the marketplace.

Start by identifying three to five of your top competitors. These should be online stores with similar target markets. One or two competitors can be aspirational (i.e. successful stores you use to benchmark your company’s progress), but they should be within the realm of comparative reason. For example, if you are a high-end dog boutique, you should identify similar businesses, and not massive corporations like PetSmart or Petco. It is important to understand how these mega-corporations fit into the marketplace, but ultimately these are not high-end dog boutiques and therefore not direct competitors.



## Conversion Killer

Many ecommerce stores fall into the trap of believing that their target market is “anyone with money.” This is a grave error because it is too broad a market — preventing you from crafting compelling promotions or optimizing your store for conversions.

There are a number of useful tools available that will allow you examine your competitors quickly, including [www.compete.com](http://www.compete.com) and Alexa. You will undoubtedly do a lot of online research during this exercise. Pay particular attention to competitors’ website copy, design, advertising, press releases, media coverage and social media.

### For each competitor, determine the following:

#### What is the competition’s value proposition?

For example, do they emphasize monetary value, industry expertise, customer service, breadth of selection or a fun personality?

#### What sort of branding does the company rely on to communicate their position in the marketplace?

How do they use content, design, social media, etc. to communicate their brand message?

#### How does your brand differentiate itself from these companies?

What is your hook? What makes your store unique? Do you have the lowest prices? The best selection? A fun personality and shopping experience? Does your company offer expertise and know-how?

The answer to these questions will help to define your positioning.

## Target Market

Remember how Sweet Bead abandoned their target markets in hopes of attracting the premium shopping segment? You certainly don’t want to make the same conversion-killing mistake. It is important to clearly identify your target market(s) so that you can cater your positioning and shopping experience to that market’s tastes and needs, which will maximize conversions. You can do this by utilizing market research, purchasing visitor data and, to some degree, intuition. In some cases, you have a primary market, secondary market(s) and/or a cluster of niche markets that have different motivations. In these instances, segmenting the markets is extremely beneficial.

### Start with your intuition and ask yourself the following:

- What exactly are you selling and what makes it unique and appealing to your clientele?
- Why do your visitors choose to buy from your store and not elsewhere?
- What characteristics define these buyers? Are they teenagers, parents, retirees, etc.? What are their income brackets? Do they have distinctive behaviors or similar interests?



## Conversion Killer

Avoid vague or generic selling points in your copy. Tell them exactly why they should purchase from you.

### Solid selling points include:

- Free Shipping on All Orders
- Free Shipping on Orders over \$50
- 90-Day No Hassle Return Policy
- Low Price Matching Guarantee
- Same Day Shipping

### Generic, vague and unconvincing selling points include:

- Satisfaction Guaranteed
- Best Deals
- Low Prices
- Fast Shipping

Use this information to map out your target market's identities. Identify your primary market, as this will be your core focus. Then, clearly divide out the different secondary markets of your client base. Ask yourself what motivates each market segment? Are they looking for value, style, convenience, etc.? Are they solving a problem or realizing a need?

Once you have properly mapped out your market segments, market research will allow you to examine purchasers' demographics, behaviors and other unifying characteristics. This data lets you to delve into their specific needs and identify areas where perhaps your intuition does not match reality. You can procure market research through **website analytics** (free), client surveys (free except for your time), whitepapers (moderately priced) and formal market research companies (more expensive). By fleshing out your primary target market, you can hone your company's position and maximize the effectiveness of your messaging to the outside world.

## Messaging

While a high-end clothing retailer might use adjectives like "chic" and "sophisticated," a teen boutique might use phrases like "cute," "trendy" or "urban." **On-page messaging** (i.e. the message that literally displays on each page of the website) should use a voice that resonates with the target market. Think about their age, education level, communication style and which adjectives and terminology will appeal to their sensibilities. Consider your audience's frame of mind when they are shopping for your products. Do they want a professional, serious tone or a more casual, familiar one?

Your website's voice should not only be in line with your target market's desires and expectations, but it should also actively communicate the company's value proposition. Spend some time crafting a compelling **tagline** (the promotional statement about your company) that truly emphasizes your brand voice and positioning. Your tagline should summarize the shopping experience and be memorable, compelling and pleasant to say. A great tagline forms an immediate connection with the visitors and positions your business effectively in their minds.

Lastly, copywriting must be professionally written and edited. Nothing undermines credibility quite like grammatical and spelling errors. Even the best writers rely on editors and so should you. If you are uncomfortable crafting content, it is reasonable (and often affordable) to outsource this activity to a professional.



## Conversion Killer

Remember, this page is about your business, and not necessarily about you personally. While it is perfectly acceptable to infuse the About Us page with personality if that is consistent with your brand, it is safest to keep the About Us page professional to help establish trust with your customer.



## Quick Tip

While placing contact information on the About Us page is critical, including contact details in the store is also highly advisable.

## The “Company Info” Page

Many ecommerce stores treat their Company Info or About Us page as an afterthought. This is a mistake. Your About Us page can be a surprisingly popular page for visitors and is an essential tool for conveying branding and establishing trust.

It is important to have these pages filled out so that your customers can find information about your company and how to contact you.

A correctly optimized About Us page is a significant trust builder that bolsters conversions. Don't rush its creation. Infuse it with personality, ensure that your company's contact information is easy to find, and be certain to provide multiple contact channels, including non-electronic methods.

## The About Us page should:

- Provide complete contact information, including phone number, email and a physical address (if applicable)
- Show pictures of physical location(s)
- Tell the story behind your business
- Use the authentic voice of the brand
- Highlight the quality of your staff
- Be written in a professional manner
- Avoid meaningless buzzwords and vague industry speak

## Market Differentiation

Your promotional banners, social media messaging and PPC advertising should all carry a consistent message that strengthens your position in the marketplace.

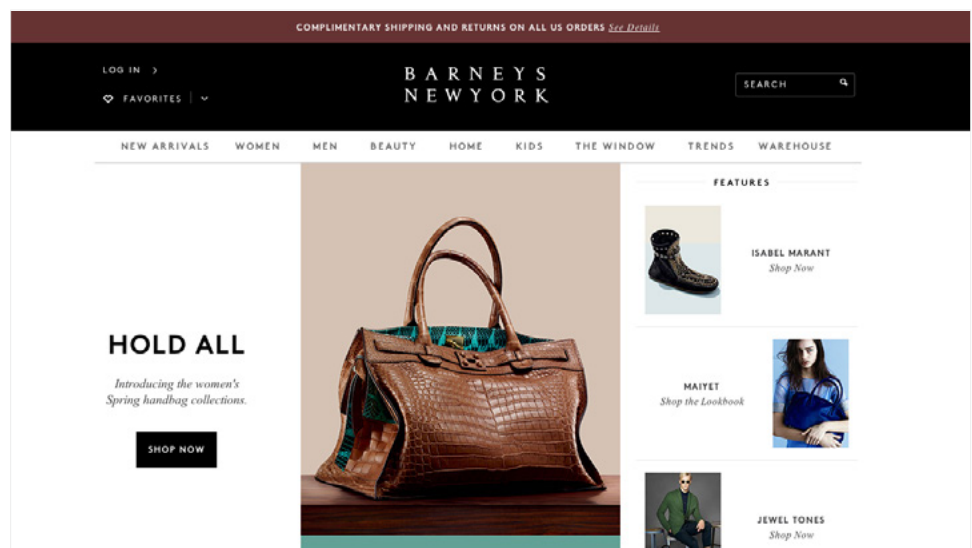


## Quick Tip

Need branding inspiration? Follow branding gurus like [Gary Vaynerchuk](#) and [Seth Godin](#) for on-going branding education. The information is free, but also invaluable.



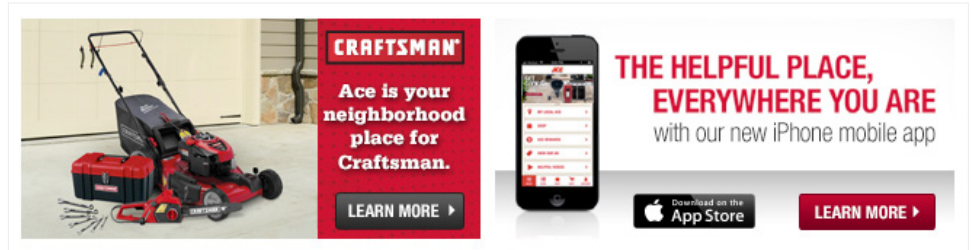
For example, a low-cost retailer can reinforce their positioning through promotions like lowest price guarantees, coupons, free shipping and percent-off sales. Payless Shoe Source does an excellent job with this. From their featured sale to their Rewards program, each homepage promotion reiterates their positioning.



If your store touts exceptional taste as a differentiator, promotions might revolve around the distinguished brands featured or concepts of exclusivity. Barney's New York aligns their promotions with their high-end position in the marketplace. Shipping is not free, it's complimentary. The promotional space is used to highlight expensive designer brands rather than discounts.

You can have Sale items similar to Barneys' sale category, but excessive sales and constant discounting could undermine your brand position as a luxury retailer.

If your positioning is one of industry expertise, your promotions should highlight that fact.











Ace Hardware positions itself as the helpful neighborhood expert on hardware, tools and home repair. Their promotions clearly strengthen this position.

### Pricing Strategy

Price is one conversion variable that cannot be ignored. Your pricing strategy has a direct impact on your store's position in the market. It is critical that you examine the pricing of your direct competitors and determine how your store fits in.

#### Low Price

Shop for medical syringes on sale on Google Sponsored ⓘ

 <b>Disposable Syringes</b> <b>\$19.95</b> Valley Vet Su...	 <b>Medi-Pak Performance...</b> <b>\$0.95</b> HealthyKin.c...	 <b>3 mL Luer-Lok Syringe with...</b> <b>\$21.51</b> AllegroMedic...	 <b>BD Luer-Lok Syringe with...</b> <b>\$6.95</b> HealthyKin.c...
 <b>Exel Medical Products: Lue...</b> <b>\$7.49</b> theEMSstore	 <b>MONOJECT Rigid Pack S...</b> <b>\$1.00</b> AllegroMedic...	 <b>Kendall Healthcare Pr...</b> <b>\$3.33</b> Wayfair	 <b>BD Hypodermic...</b> <b>\$16.95</b> FirstOptionM...



## Quick Tip

Offering a few pricing options may increase conversions, but be careful not to offer too many. Too many options can over complicate the transaction, leading to confusion and abandonment.

The Web makes comparing prices easy and fast, so having a low price advantage can separate your store from the pack, especially if you are selling the exact same product as a number of other online stores.

### Quality Leader

While low price is compelling for some, there is a subset of customers that will pay for quality and prestige. Premium pricing can be used to reinforce your position as the quality leader; some consumers understand you get what you pay for, and in some markets, quality is critical.

### Other Pricing Strategies

Aside from low cost advantage and quality leader, there are a number of effective pricing strategies you can use to increase conversions. A few effective strategies include:

- *Anchoring* a price with a higher comparison (for example: “was \$50, but now only \$39!”) creates a higher perceived value of the item.
- *Bracketing* steers shoppers to a middle product that is perceived as a good value in relationship to its less and more expensive counterparts. Bracketing provides an option for price-sensitive shoppers, value-driven shoppers (the majority) and premium-oriented shoppers, who will inevitably select the highest priced items.

For more information on pricing, be sure to check out the [product pricing section](#).

## Positioning Summary

*Your positioning should be communicated in your copywriting, pricing strategy, promotion and design. Actively position your company in the marketplace. Define your company, brand or product identity in the marketplace in a way that is compelling to your target audience. You will learn more about reinforcing your positioning in this guide's Design and Promotions sections.*

### Your Positioning Checklist

- Research direct competitions' value proposition
- Analyze how my competitors use branding to communicate their position in the marketplace
- Determine how my brand is different from my competitors
- Define my target market(s)
- Understand what my target market wants (convenience, value, style, etc.)
- Align my messaging (brand voice) to my primary target market
- Clearly state what sets my company apart from the competition
- Include appropriate information about my business on the Company Info page
- Ensure all promotions on my site reinforce my branding
- Determine a pricing strategy that fits with my brand positioning





Design

# Design

*Think about all of the capital you would put into a physical storefront. You would invest in shelving, flooring and signage that reflect your store's brand and provide a pleasant shopping experience. Think of your website design in the same way. Put as much thought and investment into your online store's aesthetic, as this has a dramatic effect on conversion rate.*

Like a physical storefront, your online store design can establish an instant positive or negative response from visitors. It can immediately endear your visitors to your brand or sow seeds of doubt regarding your company's trustworthiness.

## When assessing your current design, ask these questions:

- What is a visitor's immediate impression of the website and company upon viewing the homepage?
- Is there something that grabs your attention or entices you to click deeper into the site?
- Is the site easy to navigate? Can you easily find what you're looking for?
- What is the style? Is it professional or casual? Authoritative or quirky?
- Is there a certain color palette or aesthetic that is most appropriate for your industry? For example, a site selling baby clothes may use pastels, whereas an extreme sports site might be bright and bold.
- Is your website in line with current industry design trends? Or does it have a dated quality and need updating? How does it compare with your direct competitors and industry leaders?
- Does your Web aesthetic match your brand promise and positioning?

When reviewing your design, it is wise to include an impartial third party to evaluate and compare your site with competitors. You may simply be too passionate about your business to be objective. Likewise, people close to you understand your site is your pride and joy and don't want to tell you the design could be improved. Survey clients, and/or seek the opinion of a respected design professional.

### A few design tips for improving conversions:

When in doubt, simple is better, especially on the homepage. Make it easy for shoppers to find what they are looking for and purchase with as few barriers as possible. Avoid unnecessary clutter, splash pages and unnecessary animation, all of which can distract from the purchasing process.

- Be aware of your industry's aesthetic norms, such as color palettes and design conventions, but never simply recreate a competitor's website. You want to stand out from the crowd, not be a knockoff site.
- Regularly update the store with new content to keep customers coming back.
- Use categorization strategically to improve the experience. It should be easy for the customer to find what they are looking for. Include a search bar just in case they get stuck.
- Be cognizant of color contrasts.
- Add elements that point to your **call to action** (CTA). White space, color and contrast can effectively direct the eye to a CTA. Or you can use an image of a human or animal's gaze to direct the visitor's eye; it's in our nature to look where they are looking.
- Incorporate psychological influencers such as social proof, reviews or well-received images in your design.
- Think beyond the homepage; you should have a strategy for every significant landing page on your website.

## Branding

Your brand is essentially the manifestation of your company positioning. It is your store's persona and encompasses who you are and what you stand for. Many companies avoid branding at the inception of the business, thinking they can manage without it or hope to stumble into their brand along the way. This is a lost opportunity as branding can have a huge influence over how your company is perceived and your store's success.



## Conversion Killer

A user-friendly **content management system** (CMS) can be very empowering, making it easy to edit and “play” with font color. This is not always a good thing! Be careful not to randomly apply colors as this can lead to an outdated look that erodes the perceived professionalism of the site and detracts from your branding.

## Logo

Your company logo should accurately reflect your business and have a prominent location on your homepage (usually in the top left-hand corner). If you are a reseller, it can also be useful to show logos of brands you offer that have strong brand recognition.

### A logo should be:

- Attractive and professional in appearance
- Easy to read and understand
- Have a tone and aesthetic in line with the company and industry
- Use colors in line with the rest of the site
- Sized appropriately on the website



*The elegant font and expressive use of color give this logo a level of sophistication. The playful coral accents also make it memorable.*

## Color Scheme

The colors used in website design should first and foremost fit in with your brand. If you have an offline presence, the colors and overall look and feel of your website should be cohesive with your store. Use this color scheme throughout your website’s pages, social media and anywhere else you have a brand presence. For example, if you use a cobalt blue color prominently in graphics on your homepage, make sure you also use that color throughout the site and in marketing materials to create a consistent brand experience.

The colors of your site also need to be appropriate for the industry you are in. For example, many health-related sites use clean, sterile colors, while sites selling children’s products often use primary or pastel colors. Industrial sites typically use grey and black tones as a base.



*Many medical websites use white space to create a “clean” or “sterile” environment. Blue is also a commonly featured color for the medical space.*

Once you have decided on your main colors, use one color that stands out against the rest. This color can be used to draw attention to promotional text, the shopping cart and also the purchase buttons. The colors should all work well together to present the information in a way that makes it easy to comprehend and direct people where you want them to look so that they have the highest likelihood of converting to a sale.

## Typography and Fonts

When deciding on the typography for your site, there are many items to consider including legibility, consistency, size, style and color. All these factors work together with your other design elements to present your information in the best way possible.

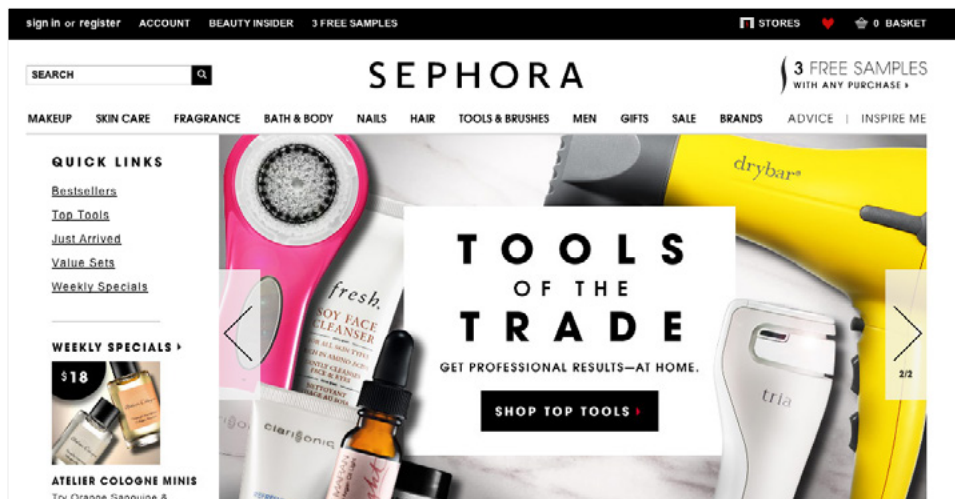
### Keep these typography tips in mind when planning your site’s typography:

- Ensure that any fonts used are legible and do not appear pixelated
- If using stylized fonts, make sure they are easy to read
- Make sure you use complementary fonts to keep consistency. Two or three fonts can do all the talking on your site



## Quick Tip

Some fonts have a personality of their own that influences the way visitors may perceive your site and brand. For example, a typeface like Georgia commands authority, making it an appropriate choice for an industry where expertise is highly valued, whereas a more playful font like Grand Hotel conveys a different mood entirely.



*Sephora uses the same font throughout its site, but changes the color and size to keep everything dynamic. This tactic can be used to show which information is the most important on the page.*

## Layout

The layout of your store can have a significant impact on how individuals interact with your site and can ultimately determine if they wind up heading down the conversion pathway.

Many ecommerce sites have developed a standard for layout and navigation so that it makes it easy for visitors to shop. This is called the “**F-pattern**.”

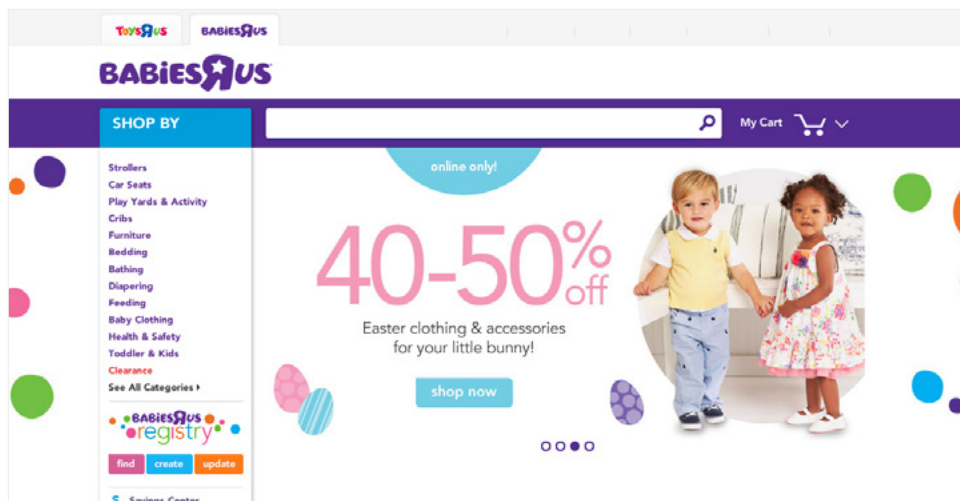
### The F-pattern typically includes:

- Logo in top left
- Login in the top right
- Search box in the top right
- Navigation along the top and left-hand side
- Footer links including company information and contact info



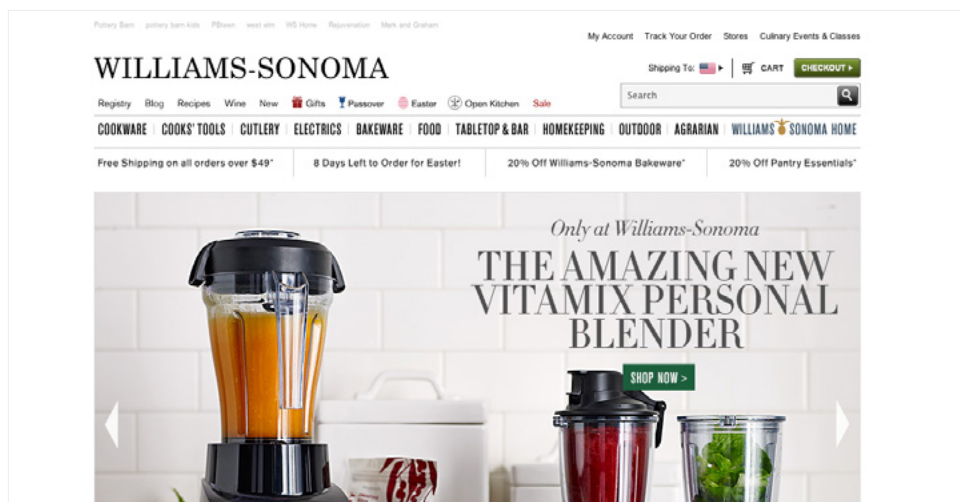
## Quick Tip

As more shoppers are using their smartphones and tablets, it is important to optimize your site for mobile display, which might include responsive design.



*Babies R Us uses the familiar F-pattern.*

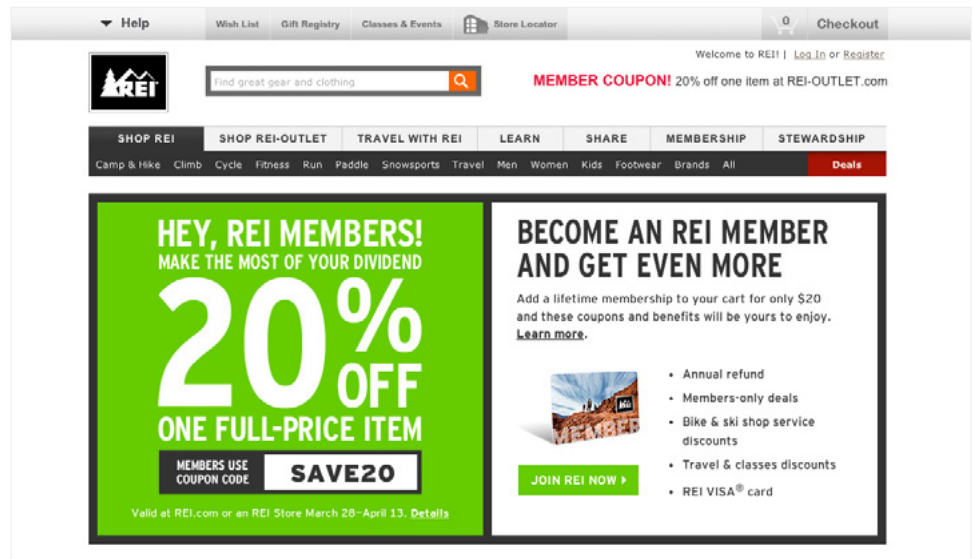
Recently, many stores have moved away from an F-pattern on the homepage, opting instead to leave the middle section completely free for product promotion and branding. This allows for a clean-looking site that works great for highly visual products and brands.



*The Williams-Sonoma site foregoes the F-pattern on the homepage in order to allow more space for product showcase. The F-pattern appears once you click deeper into the site.*

The site header usually contains the logo, navigation items and links to the About Us or social media pages. Some retailers also include a search box as part of the header.

To determine what to put in your header, decide which links and messaging are most important for customers. For example, if you always offer free shipping on orders over \$50, include that messaging in your header because it will most likely have a positive impact on conversion.



*REI is one company that includes their shipping info or current promotion in the header.*

It is also essential as a retailer to include the shopping cart in the header of your site so that visitors can always access it after adding items to the cart to make it easier for them to checkout.

On the other hand, the footer of the site can contain a lot of links to information about your company, shipping and return policies, etc.



*In Anthropologie's footer they include additional links that, while helpful, are not necessary to be featured in the header.*

When planning site layout, think about what information will appear **above the fold** of the page. If a visitor has to scroll down to view content, that specific content is referred to as being below the fold. Ensure that vital information like promotions, your logo and the majority of your navigation appears above the fold so that customers can easily access that information without scrolling down.





## Conversion Killer

Some sites sort their navigation exclusively in alphabetical order, but doing that case may cause them to give high placement to categories that don't have top-selling products, which can hurt conversion.

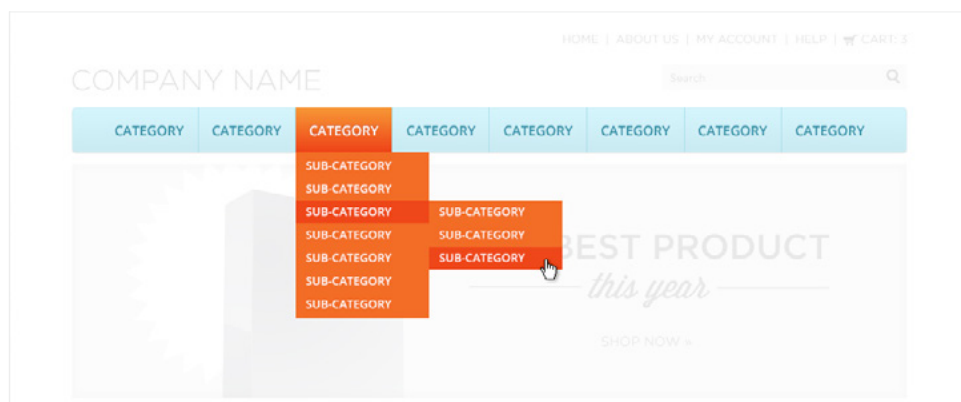
## Navigation

When deciding how you want your navigation to look, plan it out before you start; otherwise, you may wind up with a long list of categories on your site.

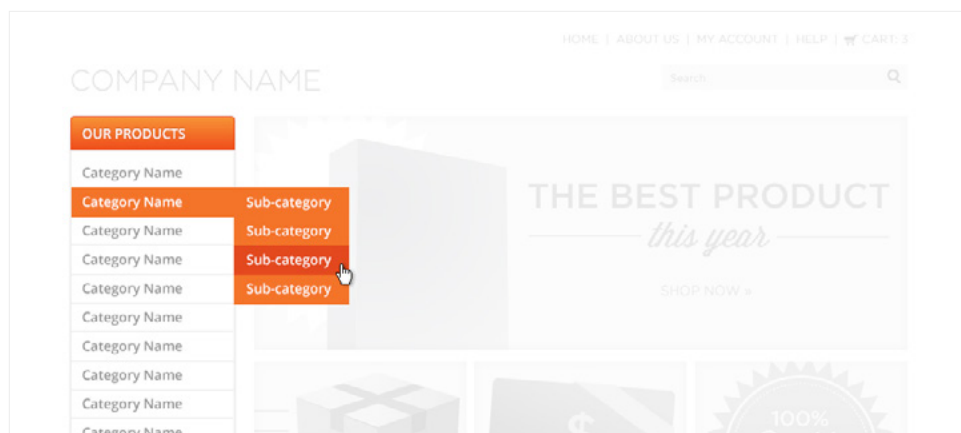
When ordering your categories, consider how your target market shops and ensure your most popular categories get highest placement. Many retailers list products by product type and category. However, if most of your customers are looking for brand-related items, it may be best to primarily list your navigation by brand.

If you have a lot of categories, here are some effective ways to organize your navigation so that it doesn't become too lengthy.

## Horizontal Popout Menu



## Vertical Popout Menu

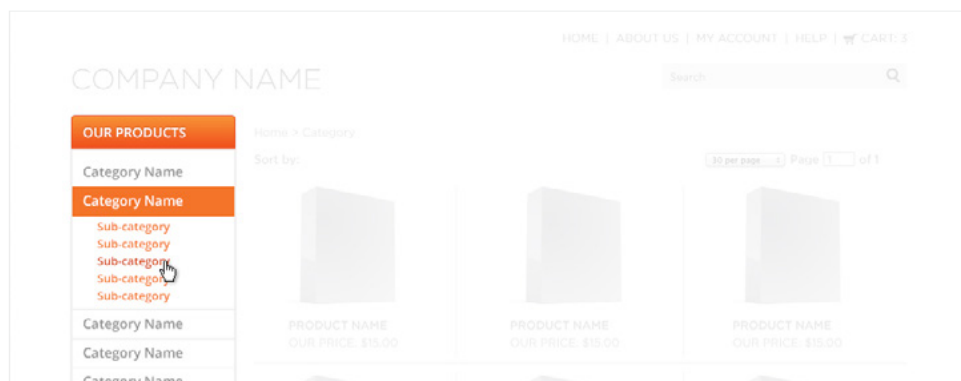




## The Volusion Advantage

If you utilize a search bar, visit your store's Reports area to view the search terms that people are using to find products. If a large number of people are struggling to find a product or type of product, you should consider making that product more accessible in your navigation.

## Smart Tree Expand



Revisit your navigation periodically by looking at internal site searches to see if people are searching for certain types of products on your site that they aren't able to locate. Add those as prominent categories or make it easy for people to get to those products if there is a large search volume for them.

## Balance

Having a visually balanced navigation helps create a fluid website experience. For example, if one category contains two products and another category contains 40 products, you should consider consolidating that one category of two products into another relevant category.

## Product Offering

Having an appropriate number of products in each category aids conversion. If you only have one or two products in a category, your store may seem limited or incomplete, leading customers to look elsewhere for a more complete shopping experience. Conversely, if you have too many products, customers may not want to click through page after page of results to view them all. In this instance, breaking out an overly populated category into subcategories can help conversions.

## On-Site Search Box

When visitors know exactly what they want, having a search box on the website allows them to quickly find what they're looking for. Have your search box stand out from the other elements of your site and make the submit button easy to locate. Test out common searches to make sure your products are showing up appropriately for searches for products or brands.

## Sort By

Sort By functionality allows visitors to your store to change the way products on a particular category page are arranged, or sorted. This gives visitors the ability to browse products and categories on your website based on various criteria that are important to them, such as by Price (Low to High), Most Popular, Newest, by Size, etc.

Depending on your Sort By options, choose the one most compelling to your customers. For example, choose:

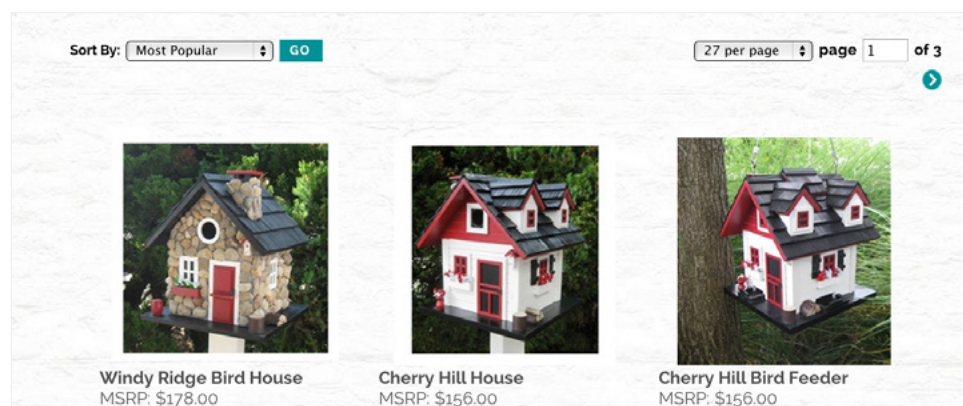
### Price: Low to High

When shoppers are price-sensitive

### Price: High to Low

When there are price outliers in a category (example: a \$0.10 item in a category of higher-priced items)

### Newest



When there are seasonal, frequently updated product lines

## Visitor Flow/Dead Ends

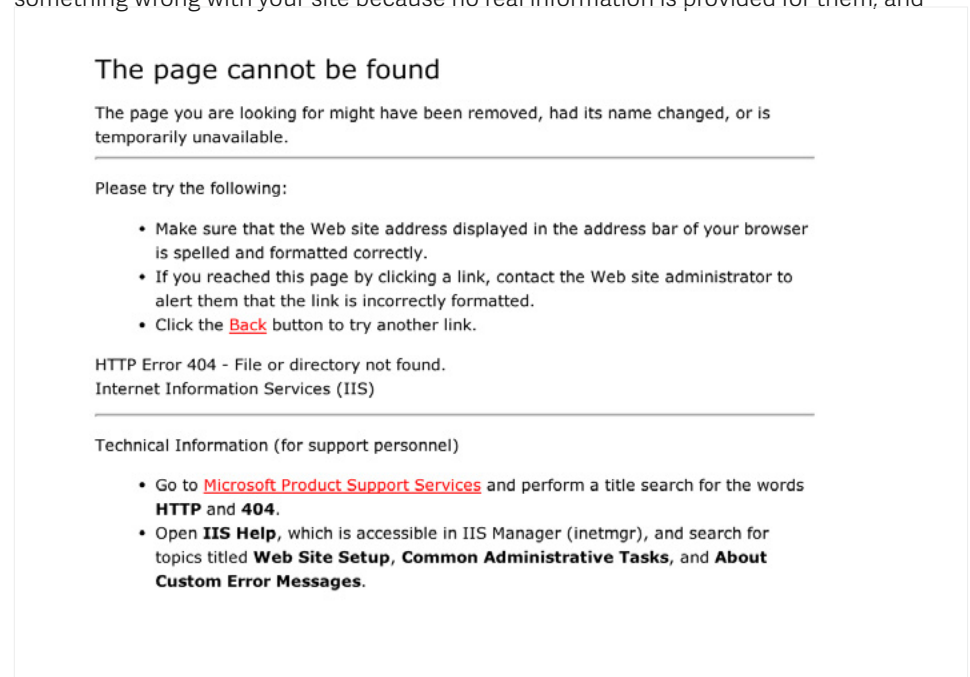
Boost conversions by moving customers effortlessly through your website. Direct them to pages and products that are most popular or most likely to convert.

To create this natural visitor flow, never allow visitors to reach a dead end where their only option is to hit the back button or leave the website entirely. Provide your visitors with options to move along to another product or category easily.

One area where customers may hit a dead end is the About Us page. Many times retailers include informative paragraphs about their business and how they got started, but after a visitor is done reading about the business, the only option is to use the navigation or click the back button. Instead of leaving it up to them, include links or clickable images to a product or category page.

## 404 Page

A **custom 404 page** can help if visitors attempt to go to a page that does not exist. The general Web default 404 page provides nothing for the visitor to do, other than push the back button on their browser or type in a different URL, thus navigating away from your site. Less Internet-savvy shoppers may see a general 404 page and assume that there is something wrong with your site because no real information is provided for them, and



leave right away.

*The Default 404 Error page, pictured above, does not make it easy to navigate back to the website and continue shopping. In fact, it often confuses and frustrates visitors, motivating them to leave the site entirely.*



## Conversion Killer

Relying on a default 404 page will create confusion and increase your exit rate.



*Above is an example of the custom 404 page ModCloth has implemented on their site.*

### A custom 404 page:

- Reinforces branding
- Keeps customers on website
- Minimizes confusion
- Gives customers a clear path back to shop

## Design Summary

*The design of your site is much more than an aesthetic choice. It can greatly influence trust in your site, which influences purchasing decisions. Be mindful of how customers navigate the site, and ensure they can reach the products and checkout easily.*

### Your Design Checklist

Take a thorough assessment of my industry's design standards

Conceptualize my website aesthetic including the color theme, typography and layout

Create a memorable and relevant logo

Employ a layout that uses helpful features such as a header navigation, footer links and the F-pattern

Verify that critical information displays above the fold

Map out my navigation strategy

Ensure the links featured in the navigation are conversion-oriented

Populate categories and subcategories with an appropriate number of products

Include an on-site search box

Feature a custom 404 page



Technical



# Technical

*Imagine walking into one of those giant hardware stores, looking for something specific, like a dryer vent hose. You look up for some direction and realize there are few, if any helpful signs and no sales associates around to help you. The next thing you know, you've wandered around the store three times and still haven't found the vent hose. At this point, you're frustrated and ready to leave, even if it means driving across town to another hardware store.*

Just because you have an online store and a person never leaves their chair to visit your store, it doesn't mean a shopper won't have the same emotional experience. The same thing could be happening to your customers because of technical issues. Online competitors are just a click away instead of a drive across town.

Having a strong technical foundation prevents frustration by allowing your site to load quicker and helping users navigate more easily while shopping.

## Architecture

A proper **site architecture** allows for easier **search engine crawling, indexing** and even helps a returning visitor find your website or a specific page more easily through bookmarking or their browser history.

## Use SEO-friendly URLs

Just like aisle signs in a store, the URL can reassure the customer they are in the right place. Using relevant keywords clarifies what the page's theme is if a visitor is browsing their history.





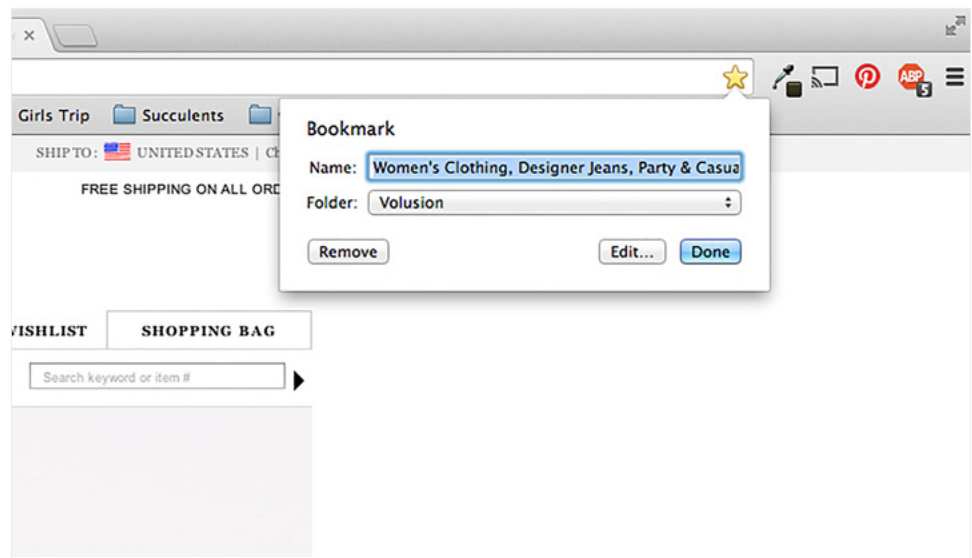
## The Volusion Advantage

Use the Product URL Text field to have an SEO-friendly URL on the product level. Use the Category URL Text field to do this on the category level.

For example, [www.clothingonline.com/womensdress](http://www.clothingonline.com/womensdress) is more descriptive and helpful than [www.clothingonline.com/category=545](http://www.clothingonline.com/category=545). If you were to see these URLs appear within search results, which would you pick?

## Page Title Tag for bookmarking

Make returning easy for visitors by having clear page titles that communicate each page's products or purpose. If someone bookmarks the page, a descriptive page title will populate in the bookmark name field (perhaps something like "Women's Dresses from ClothingOnline.com").



## Breadcrumb Trail

A breadcrumb trail shows the category path when a visitor is on a deeper page. By enabling breadcrumb trails, you can visually show a visitor where they are and how they can broaden their search. Breadcrumbs also provide context; a shopper could arrive directly on a hose-related page, but are these dryer vent hoses or stove vent hoses? The breadcrumb trail will let us know.





## Quick Tip

To find out your own store's load time, [check here](#).



## The Volusion Advantage

The CDN is enabled by default when store is set up with Volusion. The Akamai Content Distribution Network (CDN) used by Volusion is made up of more than 90,000 high-speed servers spread over 72 countries.

## Load Time

A first impression is made within the first few seconds of visiting a site, so you want customers spending that time experiencing the site and not waiting for it to load. It's no surprise then, that studies show the longer a page takes to load, the higher the page abandonment (<http://blog.kissmetrics.com/loading-time/>).

## If you find that your site has a long load time, these are possible solutions:

### Use a CDN

A Content Distribution Network (CDN) distributes your website content from the original data center or server to the closest geographical server to the customer. This means faster connections, faster page loads and less congestion at busy times. Additionally, since content is stored on so many servers, it will not be afflicted by heavy traffic or even hardware failures; the system will automatically reroute to the next closest server with the highest availability and performance.

### Limit redirects

**301 redirects** are critical to the proper maintenance of an ecommerce website, but it is best to eliminate **unnecessary redirects**. This is especially true if you use multiple redirects in a "daisy chain" effect that redirects page A to page B to page C to page D and so on. A single redirect from page A to the final destination is preferable as it improves page load speed.

### Limit script use on site

As with 301 redirects, an over-abundance of scripts can slow page load speed. Limit script use to the critical functionalities that truly improve the shopping experience.

### Optimize images

Save images only as the size they will appear on the storefront rather than having the browser resize them. Reuse the same image when possible; it keeps the browser from having to download the same image multiple times. JPG and PNG are typically regarded as the best formats for Web images. JPG uses less bandwidth than PNG, cutting load times, especially for mobile devices.



## Quick Tip

If you have Google Analytics installed, you can see which browsers your customers are using to view your site. If you notice one browser has drastically lower conversion, this may signal a display issue.

## Browser Rendering

Websites can display differently depending on what Internet **browser** is being used due to rendering differences. It is important that your store is viewed the same way on every browser, or at least as close as possible. Here are a few features you should compare on multiple browsers to ensure consistency:

### Sizing

Are there discernable sizing differences for the images, buttons and items on the page?

### Coloring

Do the colors appear the same on all browsers for the background, images, photos, buttons, tabs and other important elements?

### Layout

Does it fit in the window correctly? Are elements on the page arranged correctly?

### Mobile

Does your website display correctly on mobile devices and tablets?

## Technical Summary

*Having a strong technical foundation increases conversion by reducing shopper frustration, increasing site load speed and helping users progress to checkout. Regardless of your ecommerce platform, there are many technical aspects within your control.*

### *Your Technical Checklist*

Check my landing page URLs to ensure they are descriptive and SEO-friendly

Include clear page titles that communicate each landing page's theme

Activate breadcrumb trails

Review load times and optimize site as needed

Compare how the site displays on multiple browsers



# Products

A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a purple floral dress and black heels, is reaching up with her right arm towards a large, dense bush of purple flowers. The background is a light-colored, textured wall. The overall scene is bright and vibrant.

# Products

*Eastside Boutique had a successful brick-and-mortar store, but their online sales were struggling. After comparing differences in their storefront and online location, they realized that the online customers were confused and uncertain about what they were purchasing due to a lack of product information. To mimic the retail shopping experience, they added product videos, multiple image views, enhanced product descriptions and launched an effort to incentivize product reviews.*

After a few weeks, their conversion rate quickly climbed and Eastside Boutique received a lot of positive feedback from customers who enjoyed the shopping experience and recommended it to others. As an added benefit, they saw a decrease in product returns as customers were now better informed on exactly what they were purchasing.

## Product Information

### Product Naming

Product names should accurately reflect the product so customers are not confused about what they are purchasing. They should be clear, specific and concise - but not so short that they lack important terms for usability. For example, a product name of "Turquoise Felicia Necklace - 16"" is preferred to "16" Felicia" because "Necklace" and/or "Turquoise" is likely how a person will search for this product on your site.

For more technical products, include the model number, and for common brands, include the brand name.



## Quick Tip

Most internal site search bars scan the product name to deliver results; keep this in mind when crafting product names.



## Conversion Killer

Avoid using ALL CAPS in product names and descriptions. This can cut down readability and overwhelm visitors.



*Above is a good example of a well-crafted product name; it includes the brand name, model number, quantity and search-friendly keywords like “Spray.”*

## Product Description

The product description should expand on details and specifications about the product. It should accurately reflect what is offered, provide all the information needed to make a purchasing decision and entice the customer to purchase. Each product description should include relevant keywords and avoid **duplicate content** when possible. If you must use a manufacturer’s description, augment it with unique text that speaks to the product from your company’s point of view.

To help speed along the buying process, have two product descriptions: one short and to the point, and one longer and more robust. This will allow those ready to make an instant purchase to quickly scan the brief description, confirm it’s the product they want and buy, while also allowing cautious users needing detailed descriptions the opportunity to read all the details.

Shoppers want information, but they want it to be quick and easy. Make descriptions as reader-friendly as possible. Put the most important information toward the beginning of the description and bullet out the details so users can skim easily (and so the text doesn’t appear as daunting!).

## Technical Specifications

If you have a product that requires a lot of detailed information, you can add this information to an additional area or tab on the product page.

### Specifications may include:

- Sizing/dimensions
- Materials or ingredients
- Product guarantees
- Warranty promises
- Care instructions
- Compatibility information
- Other critical characteristics (ex. waterproof/water-resistant, refurbished, edition number)

At minimum, every product should include the technical specifications listed on the manufacturers' site; without anything listed at all, it may diminish credibility, leave shoppers in doubt and hinder conversion.

**VIP: \$67.46** [Get This Price](#)

**Step 1** Select Color: **Charcoal/Blue**

**SALE**

**Step 2** Select Size:

5 6 6.5 7 [Size chart](#)

▲ Fit Size: Buy this shoe 1/2 size up  
Need Help? Your Fit Expert is standing by at 800-743-3206!

**Step 3** Select Width:

2A B D

Select Quantity: 1

**ADD TO CART**

100% AWESOMENESS FREE SHIPPING WARP SPEED PROMISE Norton SECURED powered by VeriSign

**Description** | **Reviews (25)** | **Video** | **Need Help?**

**Product Description:**  
Women's ASICS® GEL-CUMULUS® 14 :: Slip your feet into the women's ASICS® GEL-Cumulus® 14 and experience the perfect combination of light weight and cloud-like comfort. Your feet will think they've died and gone to Cloud 9! You'll love the Cumulus® 14's plush cushioning and powerful shock absorption. Float through your run on a stable platform designed to offer under - to mild over-pronators just the support they need. And you know that comfy memory foam mattress topper on your bed that you absolutely can't live without? Get that same cloudlike feel with the dual layer of cushioning built right in to the GEL-Cumulus® 14! Your next run will be better than ever thanks to the lighter weight and cutting-edge updates! 9.6 ounces

**Category Type:**  
**NEUTRAL** ⓘ  
If you have high arches and need minimal support, Neutral shoes are right for you. Your feet will guide themselves more naturally through each step for your perfect running gait. When choosing running shoes, find your perfect fit [using this chart](#). Category types are based on factors like arch height, running habits and body frame.

**You May Also Like**

ASICS GEL-Nimbus 14  
Reg: \$139.95  
Sale: \$89.95  
VIP: \$80.96

ASICS GEL-Foundation 8  
Reg: \$109.95  
VIP: \$98.96

*Road Runner Sports is a good example of including critical product information and splitting information into multiple tabs to make it easy to read.*





## The Volusion Advantage

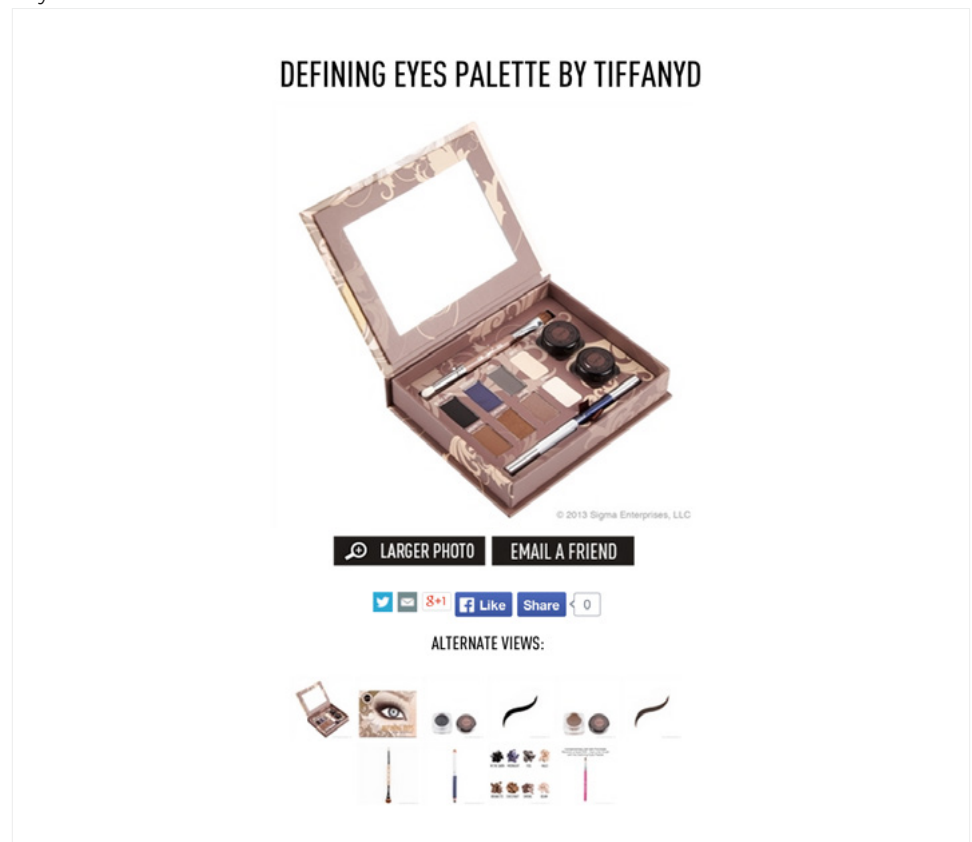
Enabling vZoom is an easy way to give customers the detail that they are looking for to reassure them they are getting exactly what they want. When the cursor hovers over any part of the product, vZoom zooms into that area, showing more detail.

Consider showing the stock status of an item (in stock, preorder or out of stock) so a customer knows they are not wasting their time clicking through to purchase. Stock status can also create a sense of urgency that a customer needs to purchase now.

## Images and Video

Remember, some people are still apprehensive when it comes to purchasing products online. A great way of alleviating that anxiety is to use high-quality images and videos so your customers can better visualize the product (size, feel, etc.), just like they would in a physical store.

Some types of products benefit from multiple images which can show the product in use, from different angles or close-ups of product details. For example, if you offer one product in a variety of colors, show color options with swatches of each color. This way, a potential buyer can better see what shade of "blue" it is.



*This retailer shows nine different alternate views of the product, making it easy for a customer to visualize what they are purchasing*

For best display, your product photos should be taken on a white background and you should always use high quality images that still look clear when zoomed in.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video is worth a million. A static image can't speak to the audience, explain nuisances of a product or show off the product in use. Embed videos within the product description fields; this allows users to get a retail-like experience when shopping online. The videos don't necessarily need to be professionally produced to be helpful, but the more you can assure your visitors of the product and let them know exactly what they're buying, the higher chance of conversions (and lower chance of returns). If you can, film high-quality, close-up scenes of the product. When appropriate, include a human interacting with the product.

## Product Pricing

Online shoppers do not want to be shocked by the product price or shipping price for an item. An unexpected price cause a visitor to exit your site, never to return. State the price clearly, accurately and prominently on a product page.

### Competitively priced

Ecommerce shoppers are getting savvier every year and this means more comparison shopping. One way to optimize for higher conversions is to ensure that your products are competitively priced. If a visitor can buy an identical item somewhere else for cheaper, they probably will.

### Easy-to-understand pricing

For products with a complex pricing structure, such as where items are sold separately, ensure you use the additional product description fields to clarify this information. You may clear up any pricing confusion in these ways:

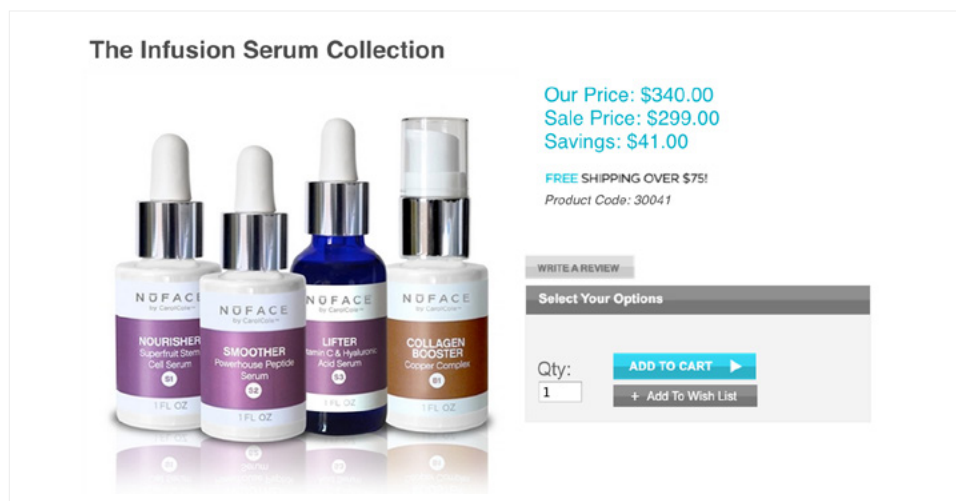
- Create a table denoting various pricing levels or if price differs by size
- Communicate exactly what's included through a paragraph or tab on the product page

Along with making product price easy to understand, you should clearly communicate shipping rates. Some sites choose to include a promotional header badge that reads "Free Shipping" or "\$5 Flat Rate Shipping," while others might promote free shipping within a homepage slideshow. Whatever your shipping rate is, make it clear. If you can't offer a shipping promotion, clearly state that rates are based off real-time USPS (or whichever carrier you use) shipping rates through a [shipping section](#) on your site.



## The Volusion Advantage

As seen in the image to the right, Volusion stores clearly articulate the pricing through bolded “Our Price” and “Sale Price” fields that display on the category and product pages. Additionally, as a Volusion store owner, you have the option to enable a free shipping icon for qualifying items.



### Trustworthy pricing

As we mentioned earlier, pricing should be clearly visible on a product page perhaps it's called out in bold, a different color, or a larger font size. Visitors shouldn't have to hunt to find the price, and they may exit the site if they cannot easily find it. To reiterate, the price should be accurate and not misleading so that there are no surprises when a visitor gets to checkout.

### Reviews and Ratings

By having prominent and transparent reviews, you help reassure shoppers that they're not alone in purchasing with your store and you may ease some of their questions about the product.

Authentic reviews can resolve lingering apprehensions and appeal to human instinct to trust “real people.” In fact, studies have shown that positive reviews not only lead to more conversions, but a higher average transaction value. An eVOC Insights study showed that 63% of consumers indicated that they are more likely to purchase from a site if it has product ratings and reviews.<sup>1</sup>

If potential customers can see honest opinions and reviews about your product, they'll feel more confident buying and know they'll get exactly what they're paying for. A lady may be unsure of buying a dress online, but if she reads a review that says “this brand runs big; I am normally a M/L, I ordered a M and it fits perfectly!” she may feel confident the fit will be right. For this reason, reviews are an effective, yet non-salesy, sales tool.

*“Adding customer ratings increased our sales and decreased our costs.”*

*John Lazarchic, VP of ecommerce at Petco*



## *The* Volusion Advantage

Volusion makes it easy to include reviews on your website with a built-in review functionality and easy-to-activate email review prompts.

### **Require approval for reviews**

Requiring approval for reviews allows you to decline spammy or inappropriate reviews and filter out reviews that are not constructive.

### **Always monitor and respond to comments**

By monitoring and responding to reviews, you are able to be transparent. This gives you a chance to thank people for glowing reviews and if you have negative reviews, you can reach out to the customer and try to resolve their issues. They may naturally take down their review, but a few less-than-perfect reviews can add to the authenticity of your site.

## Products Summary

*Since your customers cannot touch the product they are purchasing, it is critical your product pages eliminate doubts and provide a persuasive reason to buy. Revisit your product titles, images and pricing to ensure they are clear and compelling.*

### *Your Products Checklist*

Ensure product names are accurately descriptive and include critical keywords

Modify product descriptions so that they contain all the details required to make a purchasing decision

Provide technical specifications in a separate tab

Use multiple image views (and video if appropriate) for every product, including various angles and closeups of the details

Clearly convey the pricing for all products

Enable reviews for products



Checkout

A top-down view of a wooden table. In the upper left, there's a white mug with a handle. Below it, a red plate contains a salad with green leafy vegetables, dark purple beets, and small white cubes. In the lower left, a red bowl is filled with a salad of green lettuce, sliced tomatoes, and purple onions. A silver fork is placed in the bowl. The background is a light-colored wooden surface.

# Checkout

*You've discovered a new deli in town that you're excited to try out. Walking in, you grab a menu and your mouth starts salivating over the delicious sandwich choices. You decide on one that sounds great. As you step up to the counter, you discover that the deli only accepts cash, and all you have is credit cards. You are disappointed, as this wasn't clearly communicated anywhere and frustrated because — don't they want your business? Any existing excitement is now crushed, and now you have to go elsewhere for lunch.*

It's not easy getting customers excited about buying, so make sure you don't do anything to disrupt the purchase process. In this section, learn how to reassure your customers and facilitate a positive checkout experience.

You have put a lot of effort into building your site, but the single best way to increase conversions is to make sure that your checkout abides by all of the industry standards and best practices. The checkout page is ultimately where the transition from shopper to buyer occurs; it's also where about two-thirds of abandoned shopping carts take place, so it's an area that should receive extra attention.



## Quick Tip

The “s” in https:// stands for secured and is something many online shoppers look for on the checkout page before they will enter their credit card information.

## Security and Trust

Security is more important than ever, so online businesses need to make it a top priority to maintain security and build trust.

### PCI Compliance

Any online store that is accepting credit cards needs to be PCI (Payment Card Industry) compliant. The PCI Data Security Standard sets forth a set of security requirements that needs to be met to ensure that all credit card information is being transmitted and stored securely. Individual stores do not need to be certified, but their providers must be to ensure that proper security procedures are being followed and cardholder data is safe.

### SSL Certificate

There are a number of visual elements that can help boost the feeling of security for shoppers. The presence of a security seal, like an **SSL**, can reassure shoppers that their credit card data and personal information is being transmitted securely. Once an SSL is installed, visitors to the site can click on the seal that appears on the site to verify that the site is secured, and the checkout page will display as https:// instead of just http:// as well.

### Trust Seals

Some online businesses belong to industry-specific associations or hold accreditations that prove that they are well-respected in their industries. These are a great way to appeal specifically to your target audience and add credibility to your online business. The important thing to remember is that in the case of industry badges, quality is definitely more important than quantity. Sometimes businesses will add as many badges as they can fit on their website and it ends up looking cluttered. This clutter reduces the overall effectiveness of the badges and can make the business appear disingenuous and unprofessional.







## The Volusion Advantage

Reiterate these guarantees on the most prominent areas of your site, such as the homepage, header or navigation menu for better continuity.

## Encourage the Purchase

Running an online store is all about making sales, but sales do not just happen — they must be encouraged. Finding ways to get visitors to look at products, add items to their cart and then complete the purchase is the name of the ecommerce game.

### Reduce Purchase Anxiety

With most purchases, there is some degree of purchase anxiety that the shopper feels before, during and after the purchase. Online shopping has a higher level of purchase anxiety than retail shopping because shoppers cannot physically hold the products they are purchasing. The most successful online businesses are the ones that do the best job of reducing this added purchase anxiety.

Using phrasing like “Proceed to Checkout” and “Place Order” is less anxiety-inducing than blunt phrasing like “Pay Now.”

### Make Guarantees

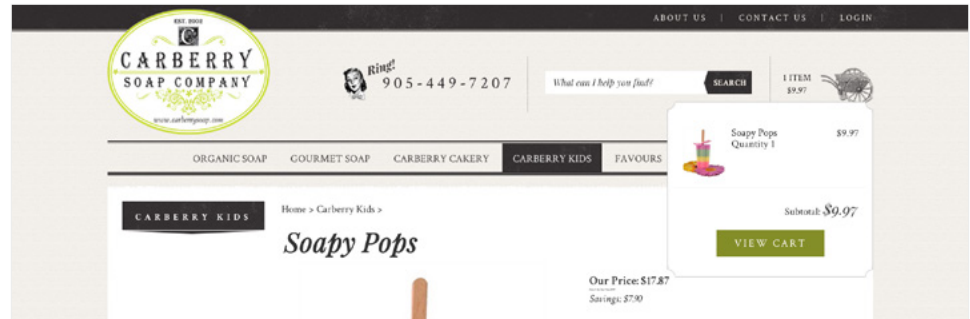
Offering guarantees is another effective way to reassure shoppers about their purchases. Money-back guarantees allow shoppers to try products without risk and can, therefore, increase sales. However, make sure the details of guarantees are clearly articulated. Include specifics like:

- Timeframe associated with the guarantee (ex. “Guaranteed to prevent weeds for 30 days.”)
- Any fees associated with returning the product (ex. “Not satisfied? Just pay the return shipping and send it back to us to get a refund.”)
- What kind of proof is needed that the guarantee was not met (ex. “Guaranteed to never peel. If it does, just send us a photo and we’ll refund your money.”)

### Use Soft Add-to-Cart

Once you convince someone to make a purchase, research shows that the best way to increase average order value is to use a **soft add-to-cart**. When soft add-to-cart is used, shoppers are not taken directly to the shopping cart page as a default once they place an item in their carts, rather they are left on the page they were looking at previously.

This encourages shoppers to keep browsing other products while they are still in the shopping mindset, before they transition into a checking-out mindset.



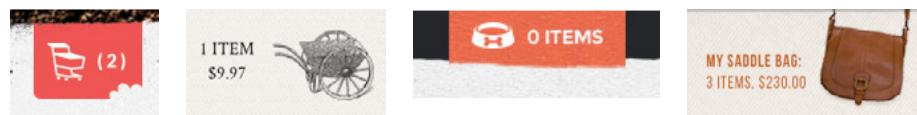
When the shopper clicks the “Add to Bag” button, the soft add-to-cart pops up in the upper right, indicating that the item is added to the bag. This allows the shopper to continue browsing the store.

## View Cart

When shoppers add products to their carts, remind them that those products are still there ready to be purchased. A clearly indicated cart icon in the header is one way to show this. An ideal View Cart icon will feature the quantity of items and subtotal in the cart. It is a big plus to also have a View Cart icon that expands to display what is in the cart when you hover over it with your mouse, as this allows shoppers to see further detail without having to click into the cart. Within the expanded display of the View Cart, it is important to make sure to include a button that allows shoppers to keep shopping in addition to the button to proceed to the checkout. Just like the soft add-to-cart, this encourages shoppers to continue browsing the site.

## Shopping Cart Button

The Shopping Cart button should be prevalent enough in the header that shoppers cannot miss it once they add items to their cart. It can be named and styled in a way that is fitting with the overall brand, but the goal in creating the shopping cart button is to make it easy for shoppers to click and complete their purchase.



## Offer Other Ways to Buy

Some shoppers prefer not checking out online. In many industries, phone or fax orders are more common, especially for large-ticket, business-related or educational purchases. Offer these additional ways to purchase if they make sense for your business and call attention to them on the site.



## Quick Tip

Not all ecommerce providers offer a one-page checkout on their carts, but it is becoming the new standard in online shopping and should be used wherever there is the opportunity to do so.

## Checkout Process

The flow of the checkout process is critical in getting shoppers to convert to buyers. When a shopper decides to abandon the shopping cart, there is rarely one single factor that results in abandonment, but rather several factors that come together to discourage a shopper from completing their purchase.

### According to shopping cart abandonment data, approximately:

- 11%** Abandon their cart because of an overly complicated checkout process
- 12%** Abandon their cart because they were asked for too much personal information
- 14%** Abandon because there was no guest checkout option available<sup>2</sup>

## One-Page Checkout

Every online store needs to obtain certain information to collect payment and ship products, but the way that information is gathered varies greatly from store to store. Some online stores use multiple pages to collect this information (having separate pages for billing address input, shipping address input, payment detail input, etc.), whereas other stores use a one-page checkout. One-page checkouts tend to have much higher conversion rates because they are less tedious for shoppers to use.

The screenshot shows a one-page checkout form with the following sections:

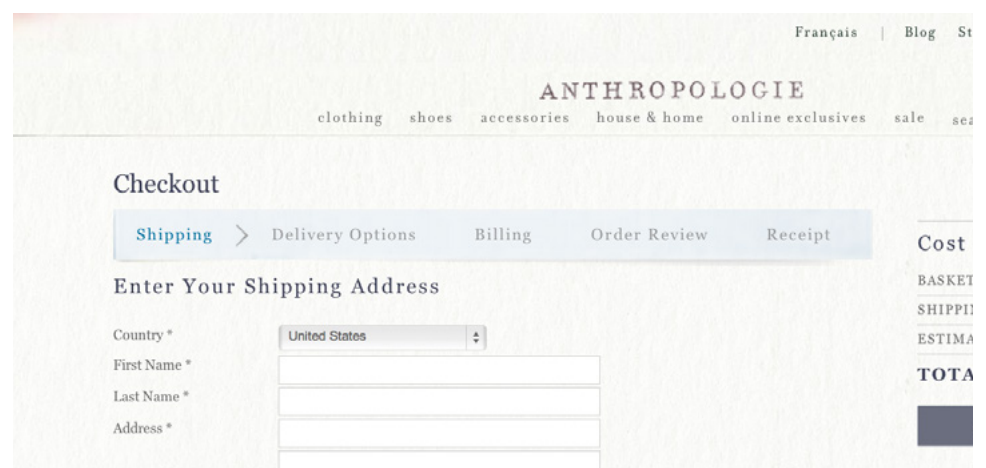
- Checkout** (Returning Customer? Sign in)
- BILLING INFORMATION**: Fields for First Name\*, Last Name\*, Company, Address\*, City\*, Country\* (United States), State\* (Then, Select State), Zip / Postal Code\*, Phone Number\*, and Email Address\*. A checkbox for "I wish to receive occasional newsletter emails from Get Busy Playin', LLC." is checked.
- REGISTRATION**: Fields for Create Password\* and Retype Password\*.
- SHIPPING INFORMATION**: A dropdown for Ship To (My Billing Address) and radio buttons for Type Of Address\* (Residential, Business).
- YOUR ORDER** (Edit): A table showing the order summary:
 

ITEM	QTY	TOTAL
Giant Dominoes	1	\$59.95
Subtotal:		\$59.95
Shipping & Handling:		\$0.00
Tax:		\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$59.95</b>

 Below the table is an "Order Comments: (Optional)" text area and a green "Place Order" button.

## Checkout Step Indicators

If your store is not using a one-page checkout, checkout step indicators are essential to communicate where the shopper is in the checkout process and encourages them to complete the sale. Using the example from above, the checkout step indicators would be: Billing Address > Shipping Address > Add-Ons > Choose Shipping Method > Payment Information > Review > Place Order. As the shopper moves through each section, a design effect (bolding, highlighting, color change, etc.) would indicate which step the shopper is on in the checkout process. If you are using a one-page checkout, you can still use checkout step indicators, but the indicators would be much simpler: Shopping Cart > Checkout > Receipt.



The screenshot shows the Anthropologie checkout page. At the top right, there are links for "Français", "Blog", and "St". The main navigation bar includes "clothing", "shoes", "accessories", "house & home", "online exclusives", "sale", and "sea". The "Checkout" section features a progress bar with five steps: "Shipping" (highlighted in blue), "Delivery Options", "Billing", "Order Review", and "Receipt". Below the progress bar, the heading "Enter Your Shipping Address" is followed by a form with the following fields: "Country \*" (a dropdown menu currently showing "United States"), "First Name \*", "Last Name \*", and "Address \*". To the right of the form, a "Cost" summary is visible, including "BASKET", "SHIPPING", "ESTIMATE", and "TOTAL".

## Data Input

When constructing the cart, make sure that the data fields your customers fill out follow best practices. Designate mandatory fields with an asterisk so that shoppers know that they are required or label optional fields with verbiage like "(optional)."

## Only Ask for What is Essential

The standard pieces of information that are required upon checkout are: name, billing address, shipping address, payment information and email address. Asking for additional information, such as birthdate or how you heard about the company, can scare shoppers off because they may not feel comfortable providing that information or may not want to take the time to provide it. Any of the extra pieces of information that companies ask for during checkout can be requested after the purchase is complete in the confirmation of purchase email.

If there is a really compelling reason to ask for additional information during the checkout process, let shoppers know why you are asking for it. For example, if you ask for a birthdate because you send customers a special gift or coupon on their birthdate, share that upfront.

#### Pre-fill information (where possible)

The best example of how you can prefill information for shoppers is the option to have their billing name and address copied over to the shipping information fields.

#### Mitigate loss of information

Making shoppers start over and re-enter all their information after an error occurs is one of the quickest ways to frustrate and lose that customer. To keep this from happening, make sure all of their valid information is saved in the fields they already filled out.

#### Give an input example

For each field that needs to be filled out, include an example of what needs to be entered in that particular field. For example, if you are asking for their shipping state, instead of just having “State” in front of the field to be filled out, put “State (ex. Texas).” This lets the shopper know that you need the name of the state spelled out, and not just the abbreviation.

## Guest Checkout

Do not make shoppers provide information they are not comfortable sharing online. It is for this reason that allowing guest checkout is so important. Some online stores require that shoppers create a login before allowing them to purchase. While creating a user login is helpful for making repeat purchases, it should not be required because some shoppers will not buy from an online store that does not let them check out anonymously.

As an online store owner, you know that there is no such thing as an “anonymous checkout,” because, in order to purchase, shoppers have to fill out the information on their credit card, their billing information and their address for delivery. However, for the most part shoppers view that as a one-time disclosure, whereas creating a login is viewed as a more long-term commitment with the store and potentially a way to be spammed with emails. There may also just be shoppers who do not have the time to think of a username and password to use on your site.



## Quick Tip

Shipping options and pricing are huge conversion influencers. View more information on [shipping best practices](#).

*J.Crew allows customers to login and check out or check out anonymously.*

## Checkout Options

Offering various options in the checkout process allows shoppers to customize their purchase experience with everything from choosing their preferred form of payment to selecting optional add-ons.

### Payment Options

Recent studies show 7% of shoppers are discouraged from making a purchase because the form of payment they wanted to use was not available.<sup>3</sup> While 7% may not immediately sound compelling, that is 7% of your potential revenue. Offering a wide array of payment options (all major credit card options alongside other payment options like PayPal and Google Checkout) is the best way to ensure that you will not be excluding shoppers who prefer to pay with one type of payment method over another.

### After the Sale

Congratulations, you've successfully sold an item! But the job is only half done. You know the old adage "It takes less effort to keep an old customer satisfied than to get a new customer interested?" This is where you start, immediately after the sale.

Your shopper has visited your store, liked what they saw and committed to a purchase. Now encourage them to return to your site for future purchases by using the following incentives.



## The Volusion Advantage

The Volusion platform offers an easy-to-enable rewards program. For information on how to set it up, [click here](#).

## Thank You Page

Also known as the Order Finished page, the Thank You page is where your customer is sent after they have completed the sale. Typically this page thanks the customer for their purchase and displays order information. This messaging should be customized to that customer. If possible, auto-populate the response to include the customer's name. Some other things to consider:

- Add a coupon code for a discount on their next purchase
- Do you have a rewards program? Create a banner with a link to your rewards program reminding them of the discounts they've earned
- Link to your newsletter signup page
- Encourage social media sharing. Get them to share their purchases like your social media pages where you can remarket to them
- Ask for feedback. An easy way to do customer research is to ask them for recommendations. They'll tell you what products they want to see, what they think of your pricing and color selection, etc. And, by asking them for their feedback, you are reinforcing your bond with them, letting them know their opinion matters
- Offer support by phone and email. Buyer's remorse is something all companies battle. You can negate this by letting your customer reach out to you at any time, by phone or at least email, should they have any problems with their order
- Follow up with Order Confirmation and Order Shipped emails

## Shipping & Delivery

How you handle the shipping of your products plays a critical role in determining the store's conversion rate.

### A study done by UPS has shown:

- Shipping and delivery timing is important during checkout
- It's all about communication. To reduce shopping **cart abandonment**, retailers should show the shipping costs, inform shoppers how much more should be ordered to get free shipping and give them the option of shipping time frames
- Customers are willing to wait for their packages, but need to know what is happening
- They want estimated delivery time clearly stated and they want email or text alerts about their delivery
- While free and discounted shipping is a big benefit, many shoppers are willing to pay a nominal fee to receive the product faster if given an option



## Quick Tip

Is everyone in your industry offering free shipping? Up the ante! Offer free shipping and something additional like hassle-free returns to set yourself apart from the competition and give shoppers a reason to purchase from you instead.

## Offer Free Shipping

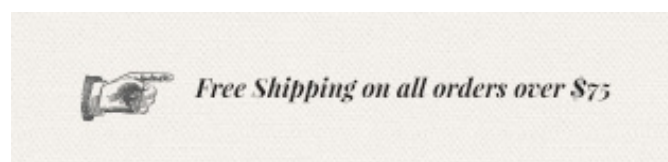
If you talk to your customers, they will tell you that they want free shipping. For whatever reason, a free shipping offer that saves a customer \$6.99 is more appealing to many than a discount that cuts the purchase price by \$10.

- A Forrester study showed that carts are abandoned 44% of the time because of high shipping costs<sup>4</sup>
- A study conducted by Compete stated that 93% of online shoppers are encouraged to buy more products if that means they receive free shipping<sup>5</sup>

If you still have to charge for shipping, make sure that you always mention the shipping costs upfront. If you can afford to offer a flat fee, do so because it makes the purchase decision much easier for the buyer

## Display the Free Shipping Minimum Order Amount Prominently

Showing 'Free Shipping' prominently on your store and not drawing user's attention to the minimum order value can work against your store. If a user notices the minimum dollar requirement late during the checkout process, he or she might feel misled and abandon the cart. Display the Free Shipping threshold amount prominently on all the pages (home, category and description pages).



## Shipping Communications

Let your customer know when they can expect delivery of their order. Sixty percent of online shoppers say an estimated or guaranteed delivery date is important at checkout. Customers are willing to wait for their orders, but they want to know just how long it might take.

Customers also like having tracking updates and delivery notifications to know when their package is arriving. These are the automatic emails that go out to users when they make a purchase on your store. And since these emails have very high open rates, it's important you pay attention to the content users see in them. While these emails are effective instruments to drive return visits to your store, it is important that your customers also perceive it as a great service.



Order confirmation emails are a great opportunity for you to offer deals that entice the user to buy more. It is also a chance to introduce the buyers to other products they might like. If you engage with your customers in your order confirmation email, they'll probably be more receptive to your future emails.

As part of your store's communication strategy, scrutinize your confirmation email messages to ensure they reinforce why your customer bought from your store in the first place, and then cross-sell other products when appropriate.

## Enable Order Shipped Emails

This is an automatic email that goes out to the buyer when the product is dispatched from your warehouse. It's triggered by your system when the product is marked as dispatched by your warehouse manager. This email is important because users are most receptive to your messages from the time they place the order till the time they receive the delivery. Apart from giving the order tracking link and user login link in your email, you can ask the users to check the action happening on your social media pages.

## Returns

### Effective Return Policy

Positive return experiences lead to repeat customers and recommendations for the retailer, while having to pay for return shipping negatively impacts the overall brand experience. Nearly two-thirds of online shoppers have returned a product purchased online.<sup>6</sup> A lenient and clear return policy is likely to lead to recommendations and repeat business from online shoppers, while reducing shopping cart abandonment.

Returns are an important part of online shopping, with 63% of customers looking for the returns policy prior to making a purchase.<sup>7</sup> Having an easy-to-find return policy will enhance the customer experience and reduce the number of inbound customer service calls.

Online shoppers who have made returns prefer the inclusion of a return label in their original package or access to an easy-to-print label. An automatic refund is also very important in ensuring a good returns experience.

A bad return experience for customers includes having to pay for return shipping, paying a restocking fee, waiting too long for a credit and a small window of time to complete the return.



## The Volusion Advantage

Positive reviews can boost conversions. [Volusion's Auto Survey](#) feature makes it easy for customers to review products shortly after delivery.

Order before 1pm PST for **FREE Next Business Day** shipping on all **Clothing**. [Learn More](#)

24/7 Customer Service (800) 927-7671 Help Live Help Log In or Register My Account My Favorites

**Zappos.com** Shoes, Clothing, Bags, etc. **SEARCH** **END-OF-SEASON CLEARANCE** **FREE SHIPPING & RETURNS** **MY CART**

POWERED by SERVICE SEARCH BY: [Slow](#), [Narrow](#), [Shoes](#), [Wide](#), [Shoes](#), [Popular Searches](#)

SHOES CLOTHING BAGS & HANDBAGS AT HOME BEAUTY ACCESSORIES SHOP BY... WOMEN'S MEN'S KIDS' ALL DEPARTMENTS

ALPHABETICAL BRAND INDEX # A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

### SHIPPING AND RETURNS

[Return Instructions](#) | [Shipping and Returns](#) | [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

**FREE Shipping:**

Unlike many other web sites that have special rules and lots of fine print, Zappos.com offers free shipping on all domestic orders placed on our website, with no minimum order sizes or special exceptions.

Just because shipping is free doesn't mean it should take a long time. Zappos.com understands that getting your items quickly is important to you, so we make every effort to process your order quickly. When you order from our website, you can expect to receive your order within 4-5 business days.

**FREE Returns:**

If you are not 100% satisfied with your purchase, you can return your order to the warehouse for a full refund (Returns must be unworn, in the state you received them, and in the original packaging). We believe that in order to have the best possible online shopping experience, our customers should not have to pay for domestic return shipping. So if for whatever reason you're not happy with your purchase, just go through our easy self-service return process (via My Account) to print out a free return label - your domestic shipping costs are prepaid.

(Self Service) Return Instructions

With Zappos Retail, Inc.'s 365 day return policy, there are no special catches or exceptions. All we ask is that you send the items back to us in the original packaging, and make sure that the merchandise is in the same condition.

- You can return your purchase for up to 365 days from the purchase date. If you purchase on 2/29 of a Leap Year, then you have until 2/29 the following Leap Year to return those orders. That's four whole years! Woot!
- Products must be in the condition you received them and in the original box and/or packaging.
- Return shipping is absolutely FREE.
- You will be provided with a pre-paid UPS domestic or USPS domestic label to return the purchase to us.\*
- Please do not send your purchase back to the manufacturer.
- Once your return is received and inspected by the fulfillment centers (usually within 72 hours of receipt), your refund will be processed and a credit will be automatically applied to your credit card or original method of payment within 7 days. Please note that depending on your credit card company, it may take an additional 2-10 business days after your credit is applied for it to post to your account. As part of our 365-day return policy, all returns will need to be received and processed by our warehouse within 365 days of purchase.

\*Please note to use our pre-paid labels, shipments must be sent from the United States.

**Return With Zappos.com - It's Easy:**

**ZAPPOS FAMILY CULTURE**  
Learn what inspires Zappos.com to provide the best service!

**ZAPPOS FAMILY CORE VALUES:**  
10 Values We Live By >

**CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS:**  
[Customers Connect >](#)

**ENJOY FUN AND A LITTLE WEIRDNESS:**  
[Check out Blogs >](#)

**THE ZAPPOS.COM EXPERIENCE:**  
[Share Your Videos >](#)

**UNIQUE CUSTOMERS:**  
[Furry Customers >](#)  
[Customers In Training >](#)

**BECOME A PART OF THE ZAPPOS FAMILY CULTURE:**  
[Careers >](#)

**SHOP WITH CONFIDENCE**

**SHOPPING ON ZAPPOS.COM IS SAFE AND SECURE. GUARANTEED!**

You'll pay nothing if unauthorized charges are made to your credit card as a result of shopping at Zappos.com.

**SAFE SHOPPING GUARANTEE**

All information is encrypted and transmitted without risk using a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) protocol.  
[Learn How We Protect Your Personal Data >](#)

*Zappos is well known for their hassle-free return policy. It is both clearly communicated and customer-centric.*

In short, when possible, post a link to your return policy prominently during the checkout process, making sure it is clear and easy to understand. Be sure to include:

- Timeline for returning items
- Cost associated with returning items
- How to return items
- What is returnable
- When an item can be returned (if you're not happy, if it's defective, etc.)

## Checkout Summary

*There are dozens of ways you can make a misstep in the checkout process. All the work you've done to get people to checkout is meaningless if customers can't easily make a purchase. From trust and security to data entry and shipping options, carefully examine your checkout process to ensure it is as seamless as possible.*

### Your Checkout Checklist

- Clearly communicate my security certifications by displaying appropriate seals
- Detail the requirements for any guarantees featured on the site
- Enable Soft Add-to-Cart
- Provide a clear indicator that communicates when items are in the shopping cart
- Utilize One-page Checkout when available
- Ensure checkout step indicators are clearly displayed during the checkout process
- Verify that site is configured for easy data input
- Allow for guest checkout
- Provide multiple payment options
- Optimize Thank You page to encourage return visits
- Offer free shipping if possible and clearly communicate shipping fee structure if not
- Ensure shipping communications are accurate and timely
- Have an easily accessible return policy



# Promotions

*Steven was searching online for monogrammed pocket knives as groomsmen's gifts for his upcoming wedding. He had planned to purchase these closer to the wedding date, but wanted to get an idea of the options and pricing. He happened upon one website that had the type of knives he was looking for. On the homepage was an enticing banner advertising free monogramming. Initially intrigued by the free monogramming, he explored the site and quickly noticed a featured coupon for 30% off any purchase.*

The combination of savings made it too good of an offer to pass up, and he wound up purchasing several months sooner than intended. So compelled by the promotions, Steven seized the savings opportunity and purchased monogrammed coolers as well.

## Coupons/Discounts

If you are offering any coupons, specials or promos that might entice a customer to purchase from you, have these displayed prominently on your website. A coupon could mean the difference between an abandoned cart and a purchase.

**Here are some ways to encourage your customers to complete the checkout process with coupons and discounts:**

### **Make a landing or category page**

This page should be just for clearance and discounted products. Be sure to have products listed on this page or hide the category if there are no current specials.



## The Volusion Advantage

The Volusion software is set up to make [coupon code creation](#) easy. Test coupon codes to ensure they work for the products that qualify and don't work for non-qualifying products and that the coupon code conveys the deal you intended. Double-checking a coupon code can mean the difference between 10% and 100% off.

### Clearly communicate current promotions

Potential customers can easily be confused by vague promotions. Make the promotions as simple as possible. A promotion like "10% off all bird feeders" should not carry any other stipulations with it, like "only if you buy 5+" or "only on bird feeders over \$60," unless you articulate that clearly up front.

### Keep promotions up to date

This is important especially if they are seasonal, as this reinforces the timeliness and may encourage a sense of urgency. A shopper seeing a coupon code that reads DADS15 around Father's Day may believe the coupon to be more of a special occasion than a generic "15OFF" coupon. A more generic coupon code may suggest the coupon has no expiration and therefore, diminishes urgency.

### Make meaningful coupons.

While we don't recommend creating a coupon that would be unprofitable for your business, users won't be compelled by a meaningless coupon. For example, if your products have a low price tag, a coupon of "5% off" may not seem worth their while to buy online.

- Most online shoppers are compelled by a percentage off or dollar amount off. In some cases, a promotion like a "free X (product)" with purchase can work
- Evaluate what similar retailers are doing in terms of coupons to generate ideas and stay competitive in the market

### Tailor coupons or promotions to your target market

If your target demographic has expendable income, a promotion awarding a complimentary gift is a great option. On the other hand, bargain hunters may respond better to free shipping and discounts.

### Share promotions and coupons on social media

Many customers on social media follow a brand to get special deals or coupons. Give followers what they're looking for by pushing out coupons or promotions through your social channels. Your followers will share the special coupons (creating new business), and the social signals can add to your organic presence. You can gain valuable insight into the types of deals that are most compelling by reviewing the amount of likes and shares each promotion receives.



## The Volusion Advantage

The Volusion platform makes featuring related products easy. Simply enable [Show Related Products](#) in the Product Settings.

## Upselling/Cross-Selling

You may have heard that it is often more expensive to gain new customers than to keep current customers. It's even more cost-effective to increase average order value per customer.

### Boost revenue with upselling and cross-selling tools and tactics:

#### Soft Add-To-Cart (or quick-add-to-cart)

This feature allows customers to see a summary of their cart without having to leave the page so they can continue shopping. When enabled, a popup showing the cart summary is displayed if the customer adds a product from a product page or hovers over the View Cart link or button.

#### Featured products

Use this tactic to highlight certain products. This may mean products with an enticing price, products you want to push more than others or top-selling products you know convert well.

#### Related products

On product pages, display related products (i.e.– Show similar or complementary products to the one a customer is currently viewing). This can help increase cart value and help a shopper discover a new product that may be beneficial for them.

#### Cart Abandonment

Once customers are in the mindset of checking out, you do not want anything to deter them from completing the process. Have someone outside your company walk through the checkout process to identify any areas that are unclear in the checkout that may cause abandonment.

- Look into cart abandonment commonalities: Are there certain items in every abandoned cart?
- Are all of your promotional coupons working?
- No site will be without abandoned carts: There are many reasons people may be abandoning the site. Some people may just be comparison shopping, some people may be adding products to their cart and coming back later to purchase, and some people may be adding certain products to their cart only to find that they have questions about the shipping and returns and wind up abandoning before getting those questions answered.



## The Volusion Advantage

Volusion has built-in support for social sharing, which gives you extra marketing opportunities for your Volusion store. Enable these product settings and your product pages will display buttons for Facebook, Twitter, Email, Google+ and Pinterest.”



## Quick Tip

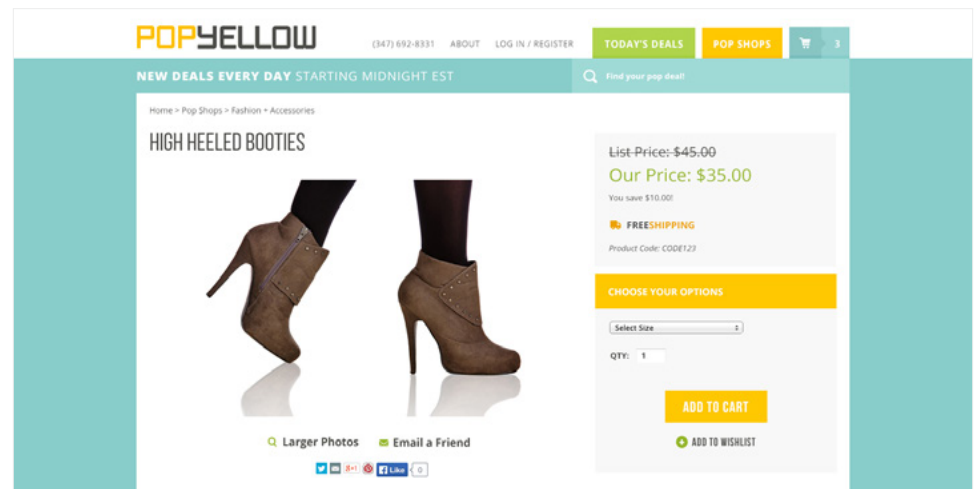
To obtain Trusted Store status, you must adhere to Google’s quality guidelines and maintain a certain level of sales. If eligible, you can apply for Google Trusted Store certification [here](#).

## Social Proof

Perhaps the best type of promotion is the promotion others do on your behalf. 90% of polled consumers reported they trust recommendations from people they know and 70% claim to trust unknown users.<sup>8</sup> Nearly 50% of shoppers have made a purchase based on something they read on a social media channel. Take advantage of the new word of mouth by having a strong social presence.

## Social Sharing Widgets

The easiest way to earn social proof is by building your social media presence and earning endorsements from your followers. If you have a lot of Likes or Followers on Facebook, promote (and increase) that number by including a Facebook Like widget on your homepage. Embed another widget on product pages to encourage Likes and sharing of individual products.



*As you can see in the icons below the product, it would be very easy to share these shoes across any social platform.*

## Google Trusted Store Certification

Google can also give your store some social influence through their Trusted Store Program. If your store is eligible according to Google’s criteria, you will be able to display an icon in shopping feed results. This will not only differentiate your result from the pack, giving you a very real advantage over competitors who have not been approved for Trusted Store status, but it will also increase your perceived credibility to consumers.



## Promotions Summary

*Promotions not only help you make that first sale, but they keep customers coming back again and again. Ensure promotions are compelling, aligned with your brand and displayed prominently. Thoughtful promotions may even increase average order value and lead to complementary cross-sells or upsells.*

### Your Promotions Checklist

Clearly communicate current promotions and coupons

Feature a landing page dedicated to current specials

Ensure my promotional messaging is seasonal and up-to-date

Share promotions on social media channels

Take advantage of features like Soft Add-to-Cart, Featured Products and Related Products to encourage cross-selling

Activate social sharing features on the homepage and product pages



# Marketing

A photograph of two young women standing on a city sidewalk. They are both wearing dresses; one is white with lace and a brown belt, the other is pink with a grey belt. They are holding a large bunch of colorful balloons (blue, green, purple, yellow, pink, white) together. The background shows a multi-story building with balconies and a clear sky.

# Marketing

*Kate was out to lunch with her friend Jessica and really liked her dress. She asked where Jessica had purchased the dress, and Jessica referenced an online store. Later that evening, Kate typed the name of the store into Google, but the store name did not appear anywhere in the results. The store did not display for their brand because they had not optimized their site correctly for organic search and were not using paid search to bid on their brand name. They missed out on the sale and a potential long-term customer.*

For people to arrive at your site and convert, they need consistent ways to find you online, whether that is through a search engine, email, social media or another channel.

## Organic Search

Your customers need to be able to find your site by searching in Google, Yahoo, Bing or their choice of search engine. **Optimizing** for keywords that accurately describe your products and drive the right traffic to your site can result in increased conversion.

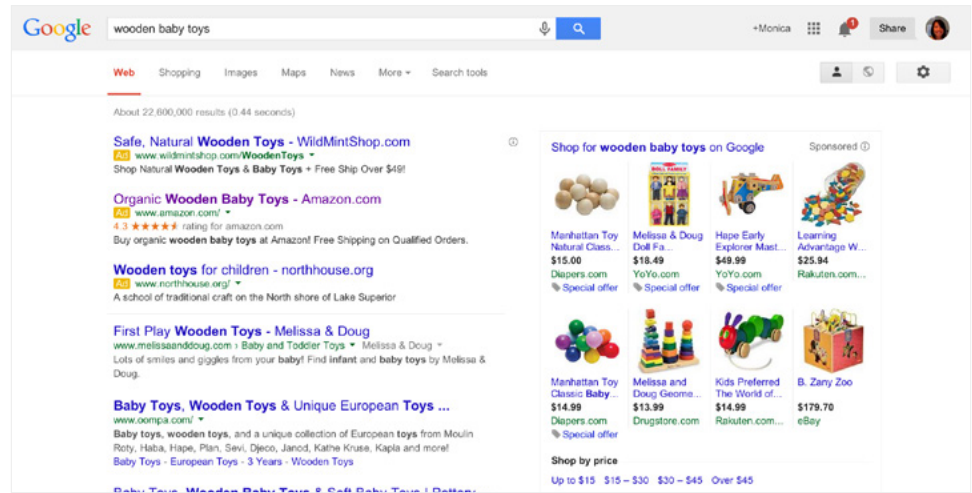
Sometimes certain search terms may appear attractive, but if they don't truly fit your product offering, then you may be inviting the wrong traffic. At best, visitors won't convert, and at worst, search engines may penalize the site for deceptive behavior.



## The Volusion Advantage

Most Volusion stores have product attributes marked up through schema.org microdata vocabulary. The product-level markup allows for the review stars, rating, number of reviews, price and stock status to show up in a Google search result as seen below in the second snippet. That means a click is an extremely qualified lead that is likely to convert

For example, doing a search in Google for “wooden baby toys” brings up a list of results of sellers who sell wooden baby toys. If you do not sell wooden baby toys, you would not want to optimize your site for this keyword because people arriving at your site would not find what they are looking for and would most likely not convert to a sale.



## Advertising

PPC, Shopping Feeds, Remarketing, Display Ads — all of these can bring traffic to your site. But all of these forms of advertising may have different conversion rates depending on the industry.

PPC, or **pay-per-click advertising** usually refers to text ads on the search engines. They can be extremely effective for clients whose products are easy to understand through brief ad text with unique selling points or promotions.

**Shopping Feeds** is a type of advertising where merchants submit a product data feed to shopping engines. The product image and information then appears in the shopping engines for shoppers to browse and click. These are sometimes referred to as Comparison Shopping Engines because it allows for easy comparison of price and features. This is why it is important for merchants who choose to list products on shopping engines not only have great product information, but also competitive prices.

**Facebook Advertising** displays ads on Facebook with a small image and text. These can be effective for merchants who want to demographically target their ads. These can help in establishing trust, building brand awareness and loyalty and building a community of fans for your business that you can market and extend offers to in the future.



## Quick Tip

Make sure not to overuse emails. Emails more than once a week can cause high unsubscribe rates and low open rates.

The aforementioned are the most popular forms of online advertising, but there are other channels merchants may choose to undertake. Some of these include Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, StumbleUpon and Reddit advertising, display advertising and industry-specific websites. Above all, make sure to choose advertising that fits within your business and your branding and, most importantly, shows up where your customers naturally congregate.

## Emails/Newsletters

Email and newsletter campaigns tend to have higher conversion rates because you can send targeted promotions to your existing customer base. If you often run promotions or have new categories of products you want to promote, email campaigns can be beneficial for your business. Because it can take time and investment to set up and run email campaigns, they work best as a supplemental channel for retailers who are already making sales and have a large customer email list.

## Retargeting Campaigns

Have you ever noticed the same ads following you around from site to site? This is retargeting. It focuses on showing a website's customized ads to shoppers who have already visited that site. This has many benefits, including keeping your site top of mind and reminding customers of their interest in your products.

## Social Media

Social media pages are extremely helpful for developing a relationship with your customers. Some companies use social media pages for customer service, while others use them as a method of building a brand image. Social media is also a great place to share promotions and exclusive coupon codes and tie in messaging with upcoming holidays or seasons, depending on the product. Also, if you have a blog, you can share links to those blog posts through social media to generate more traffic to your blog and site. Common social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn and Pinterest.

## Blog

Having a blog on your site is not only beneficial for SEO, but it positions you as a thought leader and gives you another place to share tips, product updates and product promotions. This type of content attracts customers at all stages of the purchasing cycle, increasing your pool of potential conversions.

### Types of posts:

#### Product Updates

Sharing product updates on your blog is useful because it gives you an easy place to talk in-depth about product features, share photos and tell your customers why that product is so great and why they should purchase it from you.

#### Industry Knowledge

Industry-specific posts can position you as a thought leader and instill trust in your brand, increasing the likelihood that when it comes time to purchase, your audience will choose your trustworthy brand over less familiar options.

#### Company Updates

People are very interested in a behind-the-scenes look at some companies. For example, people like to see the professionalism behind your business or put a face with the business name. If you have an offline store and open a new retail location, spread the word and share photos. Again, this builds trust and brand affinity, both of which enhance conversions.

#### Tutorials/How-To's

A how-to post quickly demonstrates how a product works. For example:

- Clothing: How to accessorize or style an outfit
- Electronics: How to install and set up a stereo
- Fishing equipment: How to choose the best lures
- Running shoes: How to choose the best shoes for your foot arch

Providing detailed product information of this nature eliminates lingering doubts, thus increasing the likelihood of purchase.

## Marketing Summary

*In order to bring customers to your site to convert, they must be able to find your online store. Attract and remarket to visitors through search engine optimization, paid search strategies, social media channels and email marketing.*

### *Your Marketing Checklist*

Ensure my website is optimized with relevant keywords and content for organic search

Choose advertising channels that fit with my target market

Use emails to stay connected with my current clientele and encourage repeat purchases

Maintain a blog to share company and product updates and attract customers at various stages of the purchase cycle

# Glossary

## 301 Redirect

A 301 Redirect is a permanent redirect that communicates to search engines that a page has permanently moved. Since the move is permanent, the search engines know to transfer any SEO value from the old page to the new one. [p. 34](#)

## Below the Fold

The part of a Web page one can only view by scrolling down. The first part of a Web page a viewer initially sees is above the fold. It is widely believed that most readers will pay less attention to the content below the fold or potentially not see it at all, depending on how far they must scroll down. [p. 24](#)

## Browser

A software application used to access, search and explore sites. Examples include: Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox and Safari. [p.35](#)

## Call to Action

A message directed at the user to cause a reaction, asking them or encouraging them to physically do something. In most cases, it will be a succinct, attention-grabbing imperative such as: "Contact us at," "Shop now" or "Save money and order now!" [p. 19](#)

## Cart Abandonment

When a shopper/customer adds items to their virtual cart and then leaves the site without making a purchase. This information does not have to be completely negative, as it can be used to follow-up and remind customers later of their intended purchases. [p. 56](#)

## Content Management System (CMS)

An intuitive Web publishing software or string of applications that allow a person or organization to create, edit, search, publish and remove content from the Web. Some examples include Blogspot, WordPress, Joomla and Drupal. [p. 20](#)

## Custom 404 Page

The Web page directed to users to announce that the server cannot find what they're looking for. Traditional 404 pages offer no explanation to users and make pressing the back button their only option. In order not to lose views or customers, a custom-made 404 page can keep the user on the website and direct them to a more helpful page like the homepage, site search or contact page. [p. 28](#)

## Duplicate Content

Content that can be seen on multiple sites or locations on the Internet. In most cases, this duplication is not done on purpose or for harmful reasons. It is up to search engines to figure out which content is best to index, rank and refer, and this can create problems for site traffic. [p. 39](#)

## Facebook Advertising

An advertising strategy that takes Facebook users' available information (age, interests, location, etc.) to target their advertisements accordingly. This strategy helps filter out the groups unlikely to purchase their products or services. [p. 69](#)



**F-pattern**

The pattern in which readers scan a web page, often focusing on the first few paragraphs of content from left to right then rerouting their attention completely downward. Shape may change depending on the use and layout of product images, headings and bullet points, which grab readers' attention. [p. 22](#)

**Indexing**

The act of compiling, analyzing and storing information from websites. After the search engine bot comes back from its crawl, it will store the desired data into an index in order to better answer search queries. [p. 32](#)

**On-Page Messaging**

The actual content on a website, such as product descriptions and company background, that can be optimized and manipulated to include higher quality keywords and entice customers to make the final purchase. [p. 11](#)

**Optimizing**

Making changes to a site in order to garner the most organic search traffic possible to the site. This may include incorporating keywords into content and tags, blogging, engaging in social media, etc. [p. 68](#)

**Organic Search**

The outcome of a user clicking a site that was listed to them through natural search engine results from their queries – not paid. These search results are the most relevant data when it comes to analyzing site traffic. [p. 68](#)

**Pay-Per-Click Advertising**

The paid way to obtain visitors via search engine results pages. Companies or advertisers pay search engines or some sort of advertising platform a small amount for each click on their promoted ad. These ads typically appear at the top and bottom of the search results. [p. 69](#)

**Redirects**

Servers can redirect users or search engines to a different URL for a number of reasons, including maintenance, new domain, updated information, canonical URLs, etc. The most common redirect is the 301 Permanent, used when URL pages have permanently changed to a different URL. [p. 34](#)

**Search Engine Crawling**

A method a search engine bot or spider takes to retrieve and index (store) a website's data including the website URL, titles, meta tags, content and hyperlinks. Usually, it involves the search engine crawler visiting a list of website URLs then following the indexed hyperlinks. [p. 32](#)

**Shopping Feeds**

Lists of product information provided to shopping channels in a specific format in order for these channels to properly display the products. This will usually include a product title, image, description and marketing message. [p. 69](#)

**Site Architecture**

The blueprint of a website that takes into account content, design and functionality. A good site architecture will allow the users and search engines to easily navigate the website with sound categories, subcategories and links. Site maps, wireframes and user interactions all contribute to the site architecture. [p. 32](#)

**Soft Add-to-Cart**

An online shopping feature that allows users and customers to add items to their virtual cart without having to leave the shopping experience. A full summary or breakdown of the contents of the customer's cart is available for viewing as each item is added. [p. 49](#)

**Tagline**

A short and succinct promotional slogan that a company uses to describe who they are/what they do. Taglines can also be used for products to increase sales as well. Some examples include: Nike's "Just do it," Skittles "Taste the rainbow" and DosEquis "I don't always drink beer, but when I do..." [p. 11](#)

**Target Market**

The group of people a business chooses to communicate with, ideally the people most likely to buy the products being sold. This market should be narrowly defined by demographic and psychographic factors. [p. 9](#)

**Template**

A website template is a frame that surrounds each page of a website. It provides a consistent feel to the website, regardless of which page your visitors are on. [p. 12](#)

**Title Tag**

A brief text describing the main theme or topic of a particular Web page. This is the most important SEO real estate on a page, so it should contain the most relevant keywords for search optimization and is a crucial component in user experience. Visitors will typically see the Title tag on browsers and search engine result pages. [p. 33](#)

**Value Proposition**

A statement of assurance that companies use to guarantee customers a beneficial or quality experience from their services, products or company values. Simply put, it is an explanation of why customers should buy from that specific company. This sort of proposition should be present in all the main areas of the website. [p. 10](#)

**Website Analytics**

A compilation of organized data used to measure a variety of data around a website. An analytical tool can track the success of channels like organic search and paid search, as well as site traffic, number of clicks, how long viewers stayed on a page, click-paths, etc. In the big picture, this data could serve as market research and determine changes in business strategy. [p. 11](#)

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