

# DOWN YOUR HIGH ST

## How to Sell Online: A Guide to Turning your High Street Store into a Multi-Channel Business

Being a bricks and mortar retailer is tough. With almost [six thousand UK high street shops closing last year](#) and online retail sales souring, it can feel like you're fighting a losing battle when it comes to saving the high street.

But, with more consumers than ever before choosing to browse and shop online, high-street-only retailers are missing a trick by not merging their businesses with the online world. As the saying goes, "if you can't beat them, join them."

Consumers nowadays want a quick, easy and hassle-free shopping experience at their own convenience, so a visit to the high street often just isn't worth it for them.

To combat the high street blues, many independent retailers across the UK are now opting to list their businesses through online marketplaces, opening themselves up to a whole new customer base and more income.

If you're an independent retailer looking to start selling online, but have no idea how to start an online business, this easy guide will help you to get started.

From finding the right online selling site to learning how to market your business, you'll soon be able to transition from a in-store-only retailer to a multi-channel retailer.

### **Benefits of selling online**

There are many reasons why independent high-street retailers choose not to sell their products online; whether it be down to lack of time, lack of understanding or

simply not knowing where to start. There are lots of benefits to selling both online and in-store, not to mention the fact it's what your customers want - and, whether you like it or not, *the customer is always right*.

## Available to a wider range of customers

Becoming part of an online marketplace will instantly open your business up to thousands of new customers. Selling products online means you are now no longer just a local business owner, you are a nationwide seller. You could have hundreds of people visiting your online shop at any one time - lots more than you'd be able to fit in your physical shop!

With the added bonus that people can shop online when they want, your business will no longer just be a 9-5 store, but a 24 hour store, attracting people that perhaps can't get to the high street during normal opening times.

## Customers can browse before going in-store

As a retailer, you will be more than aware of the term 'window-shopping'. Customers love to browse before they buy, see what else is out there and *then* purchase. The physical art of browsing the high street is time consuming and can be disappointing for customers if they don't find the item they are looking for - especially if they feel they have wasted time that could have been better spent elsewhere.

By showcasing your products online, you allow customers the option to browse online in their own free time - something individuals tend not to have too much of these days. If customers find something they like, they can then either buy online with ease, or opt to purchase in-store from your physical shop.

## Customers can shop when they want

Once again, shopping all comes down to time - finishing work at 5pm and trying to get to the shop before it closes, rushing to the high street on a lunch break with very little time to spare, or making time in a busy weekend to visit the high street. We are all a lot busier, working often unsociable hours with endless life admin and we simply don't have *time* to shop.

Providing customers with the option to shop your independent high street store online, at whatever time of the day or night that suits them, is something that will help you to compete with the bigger e-tailers. Lots of people prefer to shop local, but convenience means they go to bigger stores.

## Increase turnover

As expected, having an online presence is a great way to increase your turnover - opening yourself up to more customers opens yourself up to more transactions, more money and, ultimately, more revenue. Online marketplace convert, Antony Derdak, found that since going online, his Merchant Menswear shop [increased in turnover by 10 percent](#) each month. Within minimal time and effort, being a part of an online marketplace makes it *that* easy to increase turnover.

## Transitioning to Online

For independent retailers that depend on their bricks and mortar store as their only source of income, it can be hard to make the transition to selling online as a multi-channel retailer. After all, internet shopping is the main reason for the decrease in footfall across high street businesses. However, it looks as though online shopping is here to stay, so to make the best out of your independent store and keep the high street alive, we need to integrate the two.

As mentioned earlier in this guide to going online, there are lots of benefits to starting your online business, but there are also few things you'll need to bear in mind to get the best out of your online store...

## Finding the right online selling site

Finding the right online selling platform for your business niche is paramount to success. Most marketplaces are relatively inexpensive and very easy to use, meaning even the least tech-savvy of shop owners can benefit from an effortless user experience.

Here are three popular online shopping marketplaces you can expect find online:

### [Shopify](#)

Shopify is an eCommerce platform targeted at all types of retailers, no matter how big or small. Pricing plans start at \$29 a month, plus credit card fees. The platform is extremely easy to use with a drag and drop store builder allowing retailers to personalise their webpage. A brilliant business hub, Shopify also allows retailers to integrate products within their own blogs and has the option to connect your Shopify account to other online marketplaces.

With Shopify, you can take a look at the analytics of your online store, with information on sales, orders and audience to help you tailor your products and marketing. Alongside this, the platform offers an electronic point of sale app

which connects your website to any in-store sales. This is a brilliant way to align online and offline sales, giving you a complete overview of your sales and stock levels and gain consumer details.

### [Amazon Marketplace](#)

Another popular online selling platform is Amazon Marketplace. Available to independent retailers, Amazon Marketplace Pro costs £25 a month and allows sellers to list products either in all EU marketplaces or within the UK only. It's a great option for retailers who are just starting out online, as there is no website creation or design involved - you simply upload your products and start selling. One of the benefits of Amazon Marketplace is their 'Fulfillment by Amazon' option. This sees retailers sending their products to Amazon's fulfilment centre and Amazon taking charge of the packaging, delivery, returns and customer service. With this feature, you have the chance to earn Amazon's 'Prime' and 'Fulfilled by Amazon' badges, making your products seem much more legitimate and opening yourself up to the platform's most loyal of customers.

### [Down Your High Street](#)

Down Your High Street is a free-to-join online marketplace for independent UK retailers with physical high street stores. A brilliant way to showcase products online, Down Your High Street does not charge a joining fee or membership fee, but charges a 5% commission fee on all sales accrued through the platform.

To maximise your online selling potential, you can even integrate your Shopify store within your DYHS page. With a hands-on team ready to help you get started and selling online as soon as possible, Down Your High Street caters for all types of retailers - from those with no online presence to those with transactional websites.

## **Imagery is key**

When shopping online, customers don't have the luxury of seeing, holding or trying on the physical product. This means that the imagery you use to sell your products is extremely important. With clothing products, shoppers like to see how the item fits a model, and with furniture products, customers like to see a 360 view.

To increase the number of product clicks and amount of transactions, you must invest in great photography. It's easy to take great quality pictures these days, all you need is the right equipment.

With most smartphones boasting high definition cameras nowadays, you can easily use your phone to take photographs. Alternatively, if you're a little more tech-savvy you may want to purchase a quality DSLR camera. You can even invest

in a portable photography studio kit or backdrop to make your images look even more professional.

However, if you don't feel confident taking your own photos, hire a professional - it's literally their job to make your products look fantastic. The better the imagery, the more customers your products will attract and the more like you are to sell them.

## **Marketing your online business**

Now that you've got an idea of how to start selling online, you'll need to learn how to begin marketing your new online business. There are many ways to advertise your business online, whether it be through a social media page, social media ads, Google ad campaigns or even Amazon ads.

### **Social Media**

With [78% of online purchases influenced by social media](#), creating a few social profiles for your business is a no-brainer. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are the main social media sites used by businesses today. Each of these platforms allows you to create a business account, view insights and demographics and create promoted posts (paid for ad campaigns).

### **Google Adwords**

A quick way to get your business page listed in Google search results is to create a search ad campaign with Google Adwords. All you need to do is write your ad - this can be as simple as a business bio and link to your website - select a list of keywords that your target audience might search for in Google when looking for a retail business like yours, then set a daily budget. Google ads are pay per click, which means you will only pay when someone clicks on your ad. Keywords cost different amounts per click depending on their popularity, so it's a good practice to choose a range of keywords so you can target a variety of consumers.

If you are completely new to the world of online marketing, it is best to hire a professional to run your Adwords account - this will ensure your budget is spent in the correct way with maximum return on investment.

### **Create a Blog**

Another great way to market your business is to create a blog. On your blog, you should write articles that target your ideal customers - whether this be about your business, about your retail sector or newsworthy articles based on current

affairs in your industry. By providing your target audience with inspirational and educational content, you are presenting yourself as an expert in the field. Add links to your eCommerce to allow readers the option to shop with you.

Now that you've gained an insight into the benefits of selling online, you should be a little more clued up on how to merge your high street business with the online world.

Should you have found the suggestions in this article helpful, please feel free to refer back to the post as much as you need. You may also find it useful to continue carrying out your own research; with so many different online marketplaces and ways to advertise your high street business, it's always best to do plenty of research before going ahead with a decision. After all, every business is different.

The UK high street is a part of our heritage and the rise in online shopping doesn't have to be the downfall of it. Let's instead continue to merge the high street with the online world, allowing online consumers to shop local and keep independent retailers in business.

*For more information, tips and advice for independent retailers, the following organisations may be of interest:*

[Save The High Street](#)

[The Great British High Street](#)

[BIRA](#)